



# *The Decisive Duel* *Spitfire vs 109* David Isby

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‘A splendid work. A detailed account of two important wartime fighter aircraft enlivened by the words of those who flew them’

**Len Deighton, author of *Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain***

‘The epic struggle between the Spitfire and the Messerschmitt 109 upon which so much of Western Civilization depended in the summer of 1940 has found the ideal biographer in David Isby. I write “biographer” because, like the men who flew these remarkable fighter planes, Isby sees them in almost human terms, transcending the mere mechanical’

**Andrew Roberts, author of *The Storm of War***

‘This is a book from an author with an intuitive feel for his subject-matter: his father flew with the USAAF 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, his grandfather was an RAF instructor. At the same time, as a seasoned commentator on contemporary military affairs in Washington D.C., Isby is able to bring a sense of clinical analysis as well as fresh perspective on how these two aircraft fared against each other – and the vicissitudes of fate, politics and tactical decision-making (good and bad) – in all the major military theatres of the Second World War. This is an important book on an enduring subject that should satisfy experts and newcomers to the field alike.’

**Nick Cook, Author of *The Hunt For Zero Point*  
and former Aviation Editor, *Jane’s Defence Weekly***

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**In the Battle of Britain, when the Spitfire and Messerschmitt Bf-109 met in decisive combat, they proved to be like two champion boxers. This is their story, from the men who designed them to the teams that built them and the pilots who flew them.**

Recently, it was revealed that British farmer David Cundall had ploughed £130,000 of his own money into attempting to salvage and make flyable 12 Spitfires after a US veteran claimed that the planes had been buried in Burma. The story reached the British parliament and David Cameron laid plans to secure the planes, buried for more than 67 years. What was it about the Spitfire that meant that one man’s personal passion would become a matter of national importance? In *The Decisive Duel*, David Isby gives us the Spitfire’s compelling story from the people who created them to their finest hour in the Battle of Britain.



press release

15<sup>th</sup> September, 1940. In the smoke-clogged skies of London, fighter planes are warring overhead. They are the German Bf-109 and the British Spitfire. It is a struggle that is to become one of the most iconic scenes of the Second World War – not only as an intense battle fought bitterly near civilian land, but as the one of the greatest key changes of WWII. Behind this battle are the planes' fascinating creators: Willy Messerschmitt, the German designer with a love for gliders and admiration for Hitler; and RJ Mitchell, his brilliant British counterpart, who struggled against illness to complete the design of the Spitfire.

In fascinating detail, Isby describes the crucial role these two opposed planes played, from the drawing boards, to Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, to the final battles over Germany. In 1940, with the Luftwaffe's massive air assault aiming to force Britain to sue for peace or, by seizing air superiority, make possible the cross-Channel invasion Hitler's generals were planning, Churchill himself watched the climactic battle unfold from the RAF operations room in Uxbridge. He asked what reserves the British had in the battle over London: 'There are none', came the reply. Every available squadron was in the air. The Spitfire's subsequent victory became an Agincourt of the modern era – and it continues to invoke passion more than half a century after it was sent into action.

### Author Biography

**David Isby** has written and edited twenty-six books of military history and analysis, many on Second World War aircraft and operations. A Washington-based attorney and consultant on national security issues and a former congressional staff member, he has testified before the House Armed Services Committee on tactical airpower. He frequently appears in the media and has lectured at staff colleges and other institutions. He is an experienced pilot and a life-long model builder.

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**For further information please contact Zoë Hood, Publicity Manager,  
020 7911 8070, [zoe.hood@littlebrown.co.uk](mailto:zoe.hood@littlebrown.co.uk)**