

Detail Note

When you think "Battle of Britain" almost invariably it's an image of this iconic airplane that comes to mind. Unfortunately for history, it turns out that those famous air-to-air photos were not actually taken during the Battle proper, but were taken in late June. We have seen at least three different serials attributed to DW-K in those photos, but our research has proven beyond a doubt that it was P9495. No. 610 Squadron had at least four different Spitfire Mk.I's coded "K" before and during the Battle of Britain. See next page for more information.

Detail Note

The RAF issued an order mandating the use of the new "Sky" color to take effect from 6 June 1940. There was initially much confusion among everyone involved as to what the exact color was supposed to look like, the in-depth discussion of which is beyond the scope of this project. Suffice it to say that a whole rainbow of colors could be found on the lower surfaces of RAF fighters. However, we have uncovered documentation that indicates that the two squadrons based at RAF Gravesend, No. 610 and No. 32 (Spitfires and Hurricanes, respectively) used RAF Sky Blue No. 1 to comply with the order. All lower surface markings were overpainted, and roundels were not mandated until 11 August 1940, and so would not have been present at the time of the famous photos in June. It is likely that wheel wells, and possibly even the gear legs and the inside of the gear doors may have been painted blue. Spitfire Mk.I P9495 was issued to 610 Squadron via 8 Maintenance Unit on 2 June 1940, and was damaged in combat with a Bf109 near Dover on 12 August, receiving Category 3 damage (beyond repair). She was struck off charge on 24 August.

No IFF "cheese slicer" antennas during this period.

Detail Note

RAF Sky Blue No.1 is a pale blue color, approximately FS 35550, but a bit lighter in tone.





We can hear you saying it... "Really? You're doing DW-K again?" The answer is yes, we're doing DW-K again! Why? Quite simply because we felt we had new information that allowed us to come to some conclusions that flew in the face of widely accepted "truth" about this iconic aircraft. Of all the illustrations, paintings, and decals that have ever been done of her, we don't feel that any of them is 100% correct. And here's why...

The subject of RAF fighter markings in the period from the beginning of the war until some time after the Battle of Britain is a huge morass of confusion and misinformation, which has led to a lot of inaccurate information being put out as fact. The subject as a whole is far too complex for us to tackle here, but we do feel confident enough in what we've learned about Spitfire Mk.I P9495 to draw some conclusions that we think, barring a lot of new information that seems very unlikely to exist, will put the question of her colors and markings to rest once and for all.

Spitfire Mk.I P9495 was manufactured by Supermarine at Woolston, making her first flight on 16 April 1940. She was delivered to No. 8 Maintenance Unit shortly afterward, and was delivered on to No. 610 Squadron on 2 June 1940. At the time she was delivered, her camouflage would have consisted of the standard Dark Green and Dark Earth upper surface colors (in the "B" pattern, consistent with her odd numbered serial). The lower surfaces would have been finished in the Night/White/Aluminum scheme, with the lower fuselage aft of the wing, the lower surfaces of the horizontal stabilizers, and the lower portion of the nose painted Aluminum, the port wing in Night, and the starboard wing in white, split down the centerline. It is likely her serial was applied in the standard location on the aft fuselage in 8" high characters.

At the time, specifications called for upper wing Type B roundels of 55" diameter. From late February 1940, the fuselage roundels applied by Supermarine were a 35" Type A. The diameter of the red center spot could (and did) vary, but the one applied to P9495 was 7" in diameter, consistent with the 7" rings of the 35" roundel. No lower wing roundels were specified at that time.

Now here's where the story gets interesting! In May, while P9495 was still at No. 8 MU, the order to modify fuselage roundels to Type A1 (with a yellow outer ring) was issued. After much pouring over photos and measuring using every computer aided method at our disposal, we have come to the conclusion that P9495's roundels received a very odd 5" wide yellow ring. The blue and white rings of the roundel were each 7" wide, and it could simply be the case that adding another 7" wide border to it made it too large in the opinion of whomever was in charge of doing it that day! Clearly, the resulting 45" diameter roundel, which met and overlapped across the top of the fuselage was enormous, and making it 49" (as is almost universally quoted for this aircraft) was simply too big in their eyes. We have analyzed every known photograph of P9495, and we are 100% convinced of these roundel dimensions.

At the same time as the order to modify the fuselage roundels was issued, an order to add fin flashes was also issued. Apparently the order was not particularly clear as to the dimensions for the flashes, as a staggering variety of MU and squadron applied flashes were to be seen after May 1940. Those applied to P9495 were 15" wide by 30" tall, with the red leading, as was correct.

Upon arrival at No. 610 Squadron, P9495's unique identification markings were applied locally. In every single 1940-era photo of a 610 Squadron Spitfire we have found, the serial on the aft fuselage has been overpainted. We see no evidence of them being sensed from photos, so it appears that they were in fact overpainted by the squadron to keep prying eyes from gleaning any more information than absolutely necessary. All those little English school boys with their notebooks, collecting serial numbers!

Squadron codes were applied in the specified Sea Grey Medium, but here again, almost every published reference on this aircraft gets the dimensions wrong. After carefully analyzing all of the photos at our disposal, we have reached the conclusion that at least on P9495, the squadron codes were 32" high, not 36" as is almost universally quoted. We tried and tried to make 36" high codes fit on the airplane the way we see them in photos of her, and we simply couldn't do it. When you reduce them to 32", they fit like a glove. You go with what the photographs show you! As with most Fighter Command codes at this time, they were applied by hand, and in most close-up photographs from nearly every squadron, it's clear that the edges were rarely perfectly straight, corners were rarely perfectly square, and curves rarely had perfect radii.

As noted on page 1, we have found documentary evidence that the two Fighter Command units at Biggin Hill when the order for "Sky" lower surface camouflage was issued chose to utilize existing stocks of RAF Sky Blue No.1. All lower surfaces were to be painted, and given the frenetic pace of operations, it's extremely unlikely that any stencil data would have been reapplied after the re-spray. Photos are inconclusive on whether the wheel wells, gear legs, and the insides of the gear doors (which would have been painted Aluminum at the factory) were overpainted, but anything is possible.

P9495 was damaged in combat with a Bf109 on 12 August near Dover. She received Category 3 damage, and was beyond economical repair. She was struck off charge on 24 August, thus ending her short career with the RAF. Although she may not have achieved a great measure of glory, P9495 has come to represent the pugnacious determination of the RAF and the British people to stem the onslaught of the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain. We hope that our information will allow modelers to - at long, long last - accurately portray this icon of the Battle as she actually appeared that momentous summer.

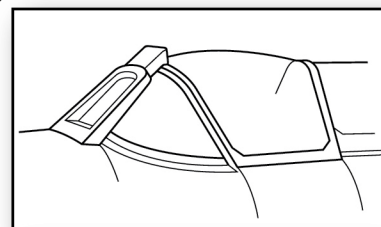


We believe this photo shows P9495 on the ground at RAF Gravesend, Kent. It was shot by a press photographer who was there to document the squadron, and we believe it was probably shot on the same day as the air-to-air series that is so well known. Evidence that it is P9495 includes the 15x30" fin flash, the oddly proportioned fuselage roundel, and the B pattern camouflage scheme.



An atmospheric shot taken that same afternoon showing another 610 Squadron aircraft. This is not P9495 based on the larger 7" yellow ring on the fuselage roundel, although it is otherwise similar looking.

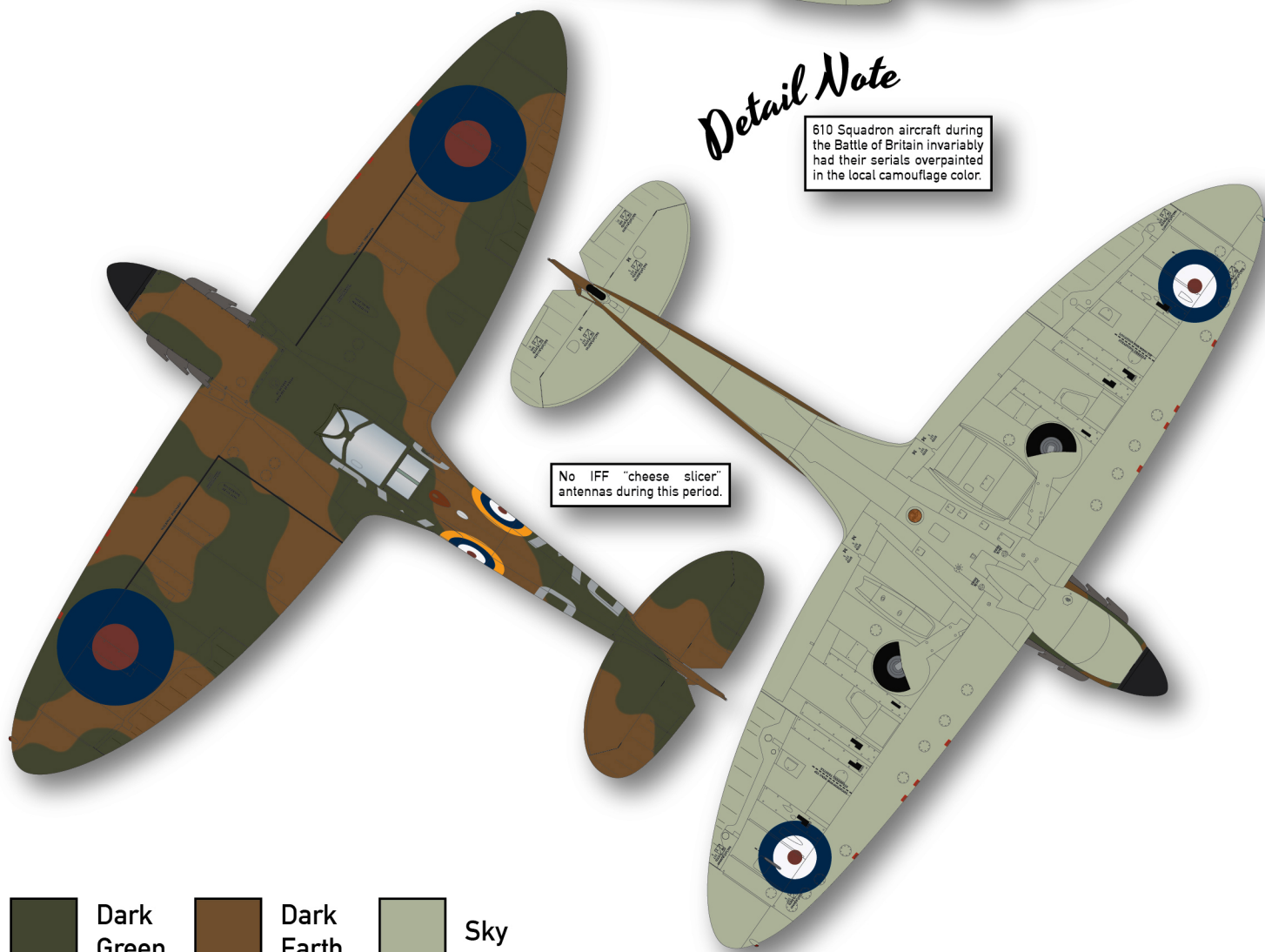
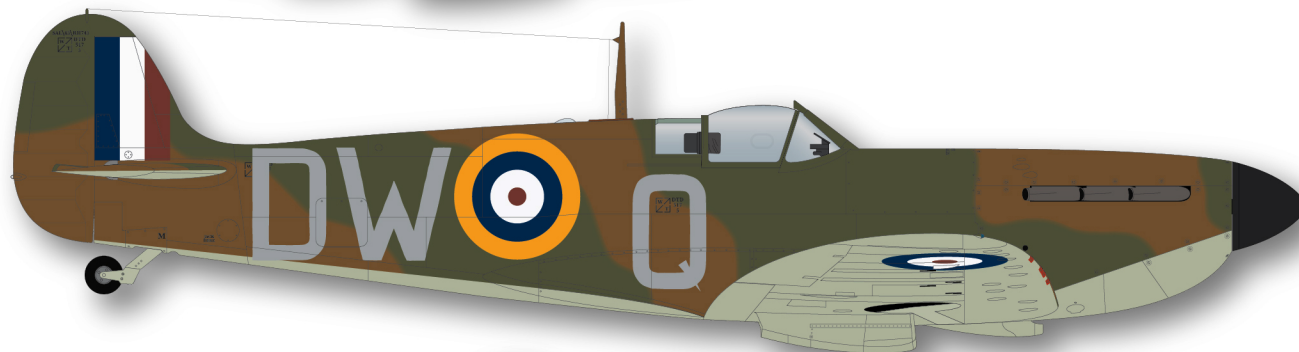
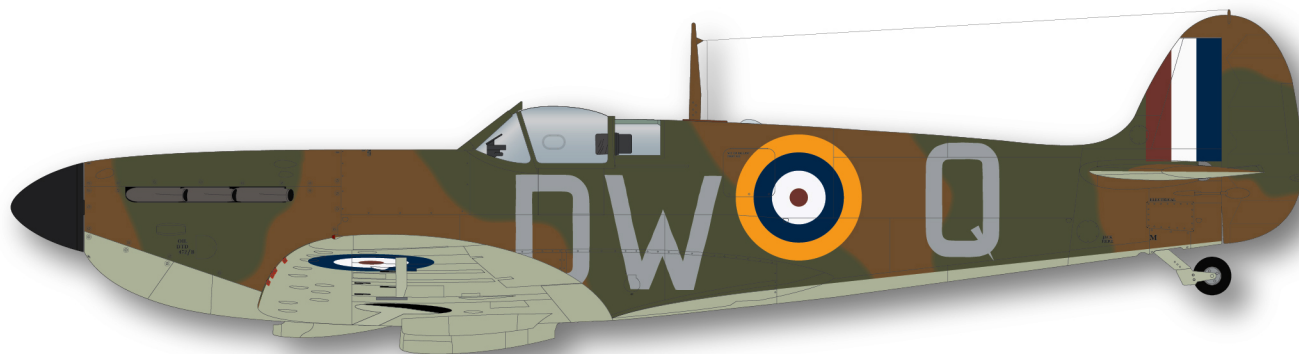
Detail Note



Unit/MU style rear view mirror housing. Somewhat shorter than the factory style seen on R6891.



Showing one of at least four 610 Squadron Mk.I's coded "K", this later aircraft carries the later style production standard 35" A1 roundel as measured over the yellow outer ring.



Detail Note

610 Squadron aircraft during the Battle of Britain invariably had their serials overpainted in the local camouflage color.

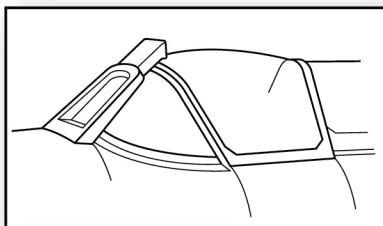
No IFF "cheese slicer" antennas during this period.





Although of poor quality, this is the only known photograph of R6891. Points to note are the first production style rear view mirror housing and an otherwise bog standard production Mk.I airframe configuration. R6891 led a relatively short life in the summer and autumn of 1940 (which was characterized by especially fine weather), so wear and tear and weathering was probably minimal.

Detail Note



Initial factory production style rear view mirror housing.

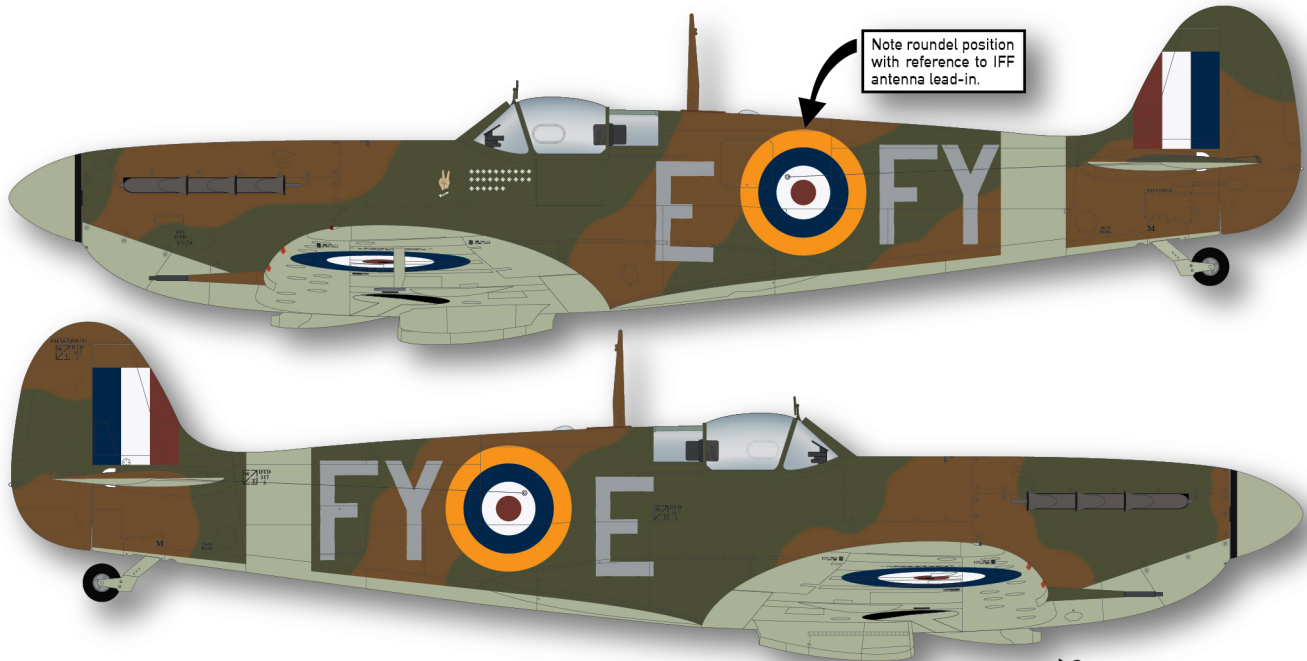


Many publications, profiles, and decals over the years have portrayed aircraft of 610 Squadron, with their gaudy oversized, oddly proportioned roundels and "DW" squadron codes. But the famous air-to-air photos that have become so iconic are almost universally mis-quoted as being from the Battle of Britain, when in fact they were actually taken in late June 1940, weeks before the start of the battle proper.

This aircraft is representative of a 610 Squadron aircraft at the very height of the battle, in mid to late August. Spitfire Mk.I R6891 first flew at Castle Bromwich on 4 July 1940, and delivered to 8 Maintenance Unit the same day. After a period of storage, she was issued to 610 Squadron on 13 August - Adlertag - the very day the Battle of Britain officially started. 610 was stationed in the thick of the fighting at Biggin Hill in Kent during that period. It was coded "Q" (one of several Spits that wore the "DW-Q" code), and remained with 610 until being written off after Cat. 2 damage on 19 November 1940. Note the unique treatment of the tail of the "Q" - in the form of a spike! We have never seen another RAF aircraft with this type of lettering.

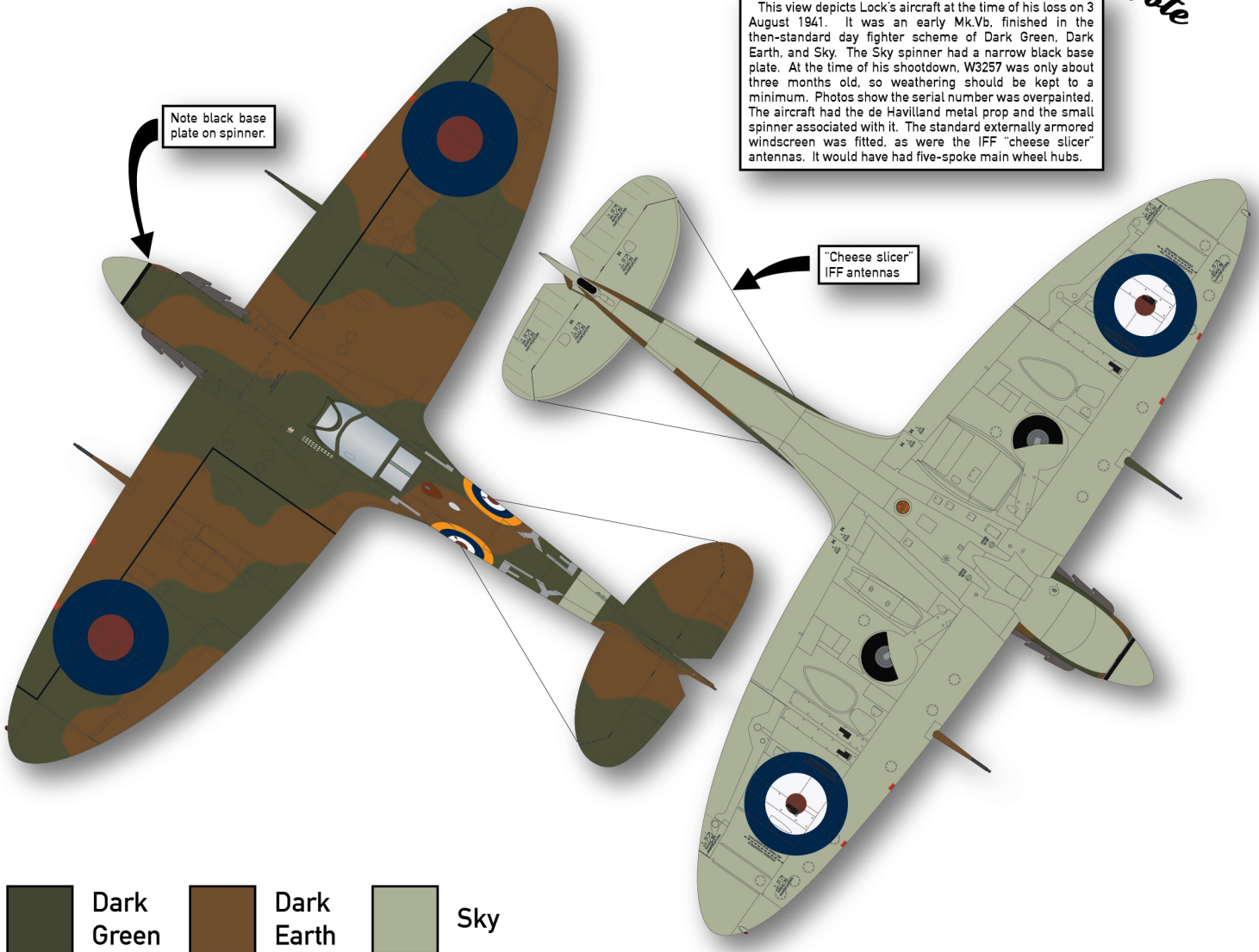
She was a standard Mk.I, with a factory applied Sky belly, presumably with full stencils. The lower wing roundels were probably added by 8 MU before she was issued to 610, overlying the stencils. The order reinstating the use of lower wing roundels was issued at the exact time R6891 was issued to 610 Squadron. She appears to have carried the initial factory production box style rear view mirror.

On 24 August R6891 was flown by Sgt. Ronnie Hamlyn when he scored five kills, becoming one of the very few "aces in a day" of WWII. Hamlyn went on to score three more victories in short order, the last in "Q" on 30 August, when he brought down the Bf109E flown by Ofw. Karl-Heinz Harbauer of JG.2.



Detail Note

This view depicts Lock's aircraft at the time of his loss on 3 August 1941. It was an early Mk.Vb, finished in the then-standard day fighter scheme of Dark Green, Dark Earth, and Sky. The Sky spinner had a narrow black base plate. At the time of his shootdown, W3257 was only about three months old, so weathering should be kept to a minimum. Photos show the serial number was overpainted. The aircraft had the de Havilland metal prop and the small spinner associated with it. The standard externally armored windscreen was fitted, as were the IFF "cheese slicer" antennas. It would have had five-spoke main wheel hubs.



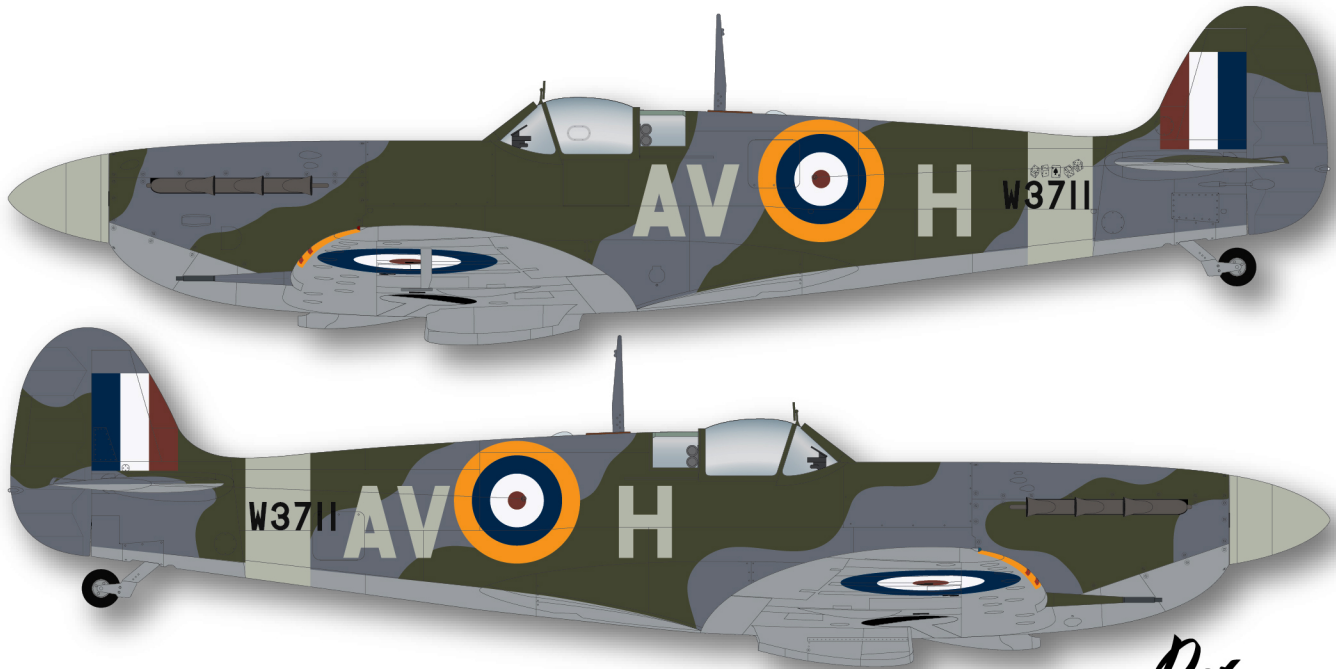
Flt. Lt. Eric Stanley Lock was an early Spitfire ace, achieving his first victory during the epic battles of August 1940. He was injured, and spent time off of flying duties, but returned with a vengeance, eventually racking up an impressive 26 victories.

Lock joined 611 Sqn as a flight leader in early July 1941. By this time the vertically challenged "sawn-off" Lock was already something of a celebrity. He was one of the RAF's leading aces with 23 Luftwaffe aircraft to his credit. Once with 611 Sqn Lock added three more Bf109Fs to his score.

On 3 August 1941 Lock led a Rhubarb mission while flying Spitfire W3257 "E - Eric" over occupied France. Near Calais he was seen diving to strafe a German column, but was never heard from again.



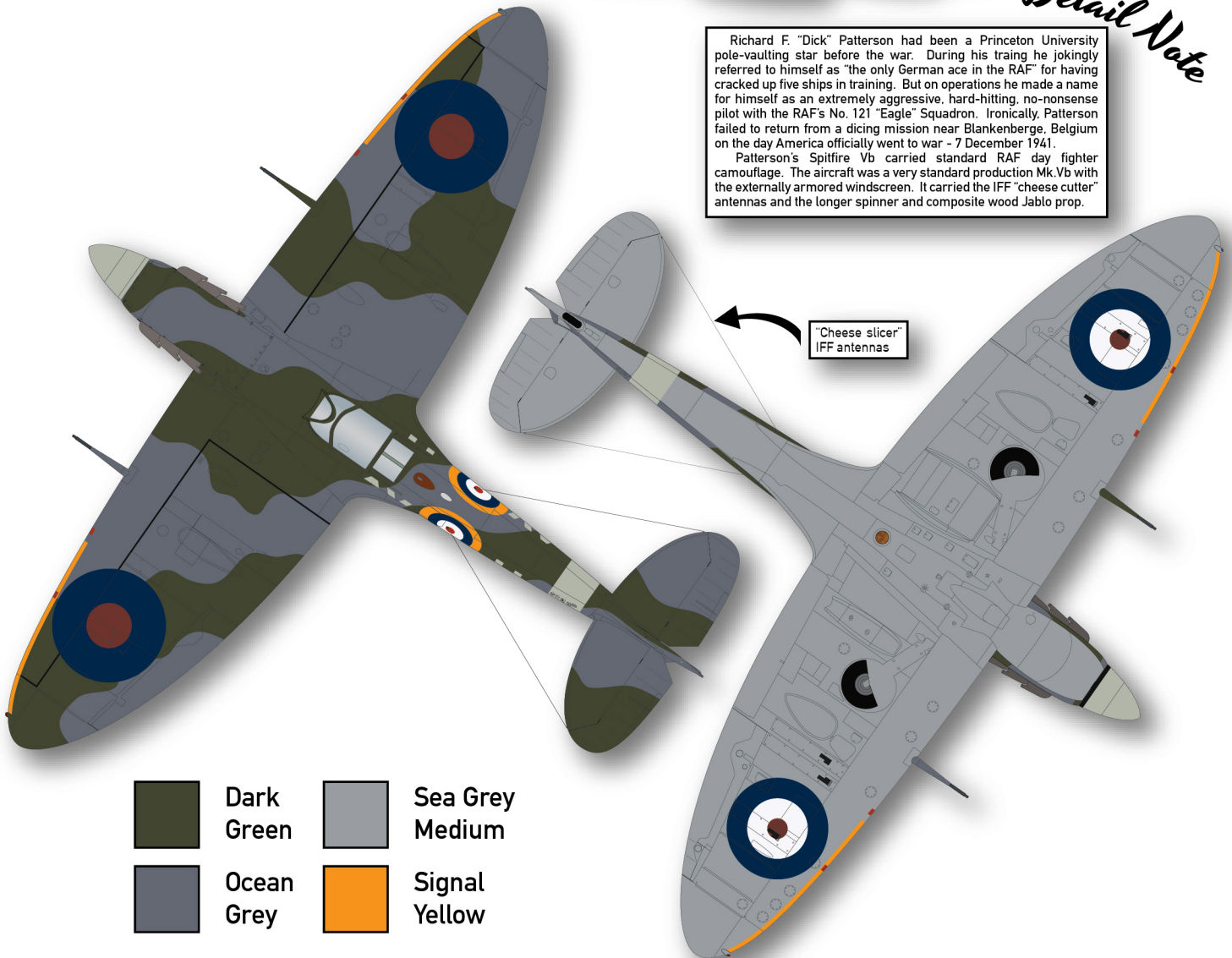
Left to right: Flight Lieutenant E.S. Lock, Pilot Officer W.G.G. Duncan-Smith, Flying Officer P.G. Dexter, and Sergeant W.M. Gilmour, taken 7 July 1941.



Detail Note

Richard F. "Dick" Patterson had been a Princeton University pole-vaulting star before the war. During his training he jokingly referred to himself as "the only German ace in the RAF" for having cracked up five ships in training. But on operations he made a name for himself as an extremely aggressive, hard-hitting, no-nonsense pilot with the RAF's No. 121 "Eagle" Squadron. Ironically, Patterson failed to return from a dicing mission near Blankenberge, Belgium on the day America officially went to war - 7 December 1941.

Patterson's Spitfire Vb carried standard RAF day fighter camouflage. The aircraft was a very standard production Mk.Vb with the externally armored windscreen. It carried the IFF "cheese cutter" antennas and the longer spinner and composite wood Jablo prop.



- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Dark Green |  | Sea Grey Medium |
|  | Ocean Grey |  | Signal Yellow |

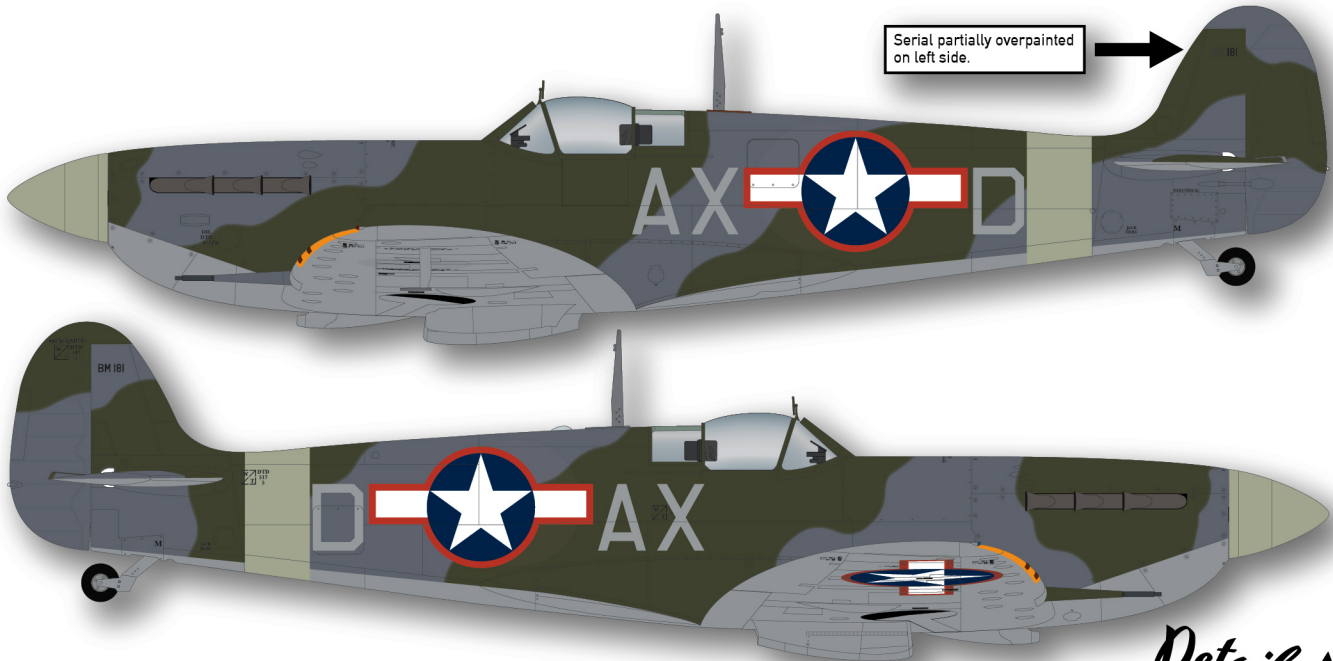


A dapper looking Dick Patterson poses with his mount, decked out in his RAF flying gear. Such "tail art" was extremely unusual in the RAF, but in keeping with Patterson's reputation as something of a maverick. He was, after all, an American and a Princeton man! Unfortunately the lucky 7-11 of his Spit's serial number didn't hold for Patterson. Note the "cheese slicer" IFF antenna and the slightly irregular edges of the code letter.

Members of No. 121 "Eagle" Squadron at North Weald in November of 1941. Patterson is seen second from right. The American flag flying over an RAF station prior to the official U.S. entry into the European war is very unusual.



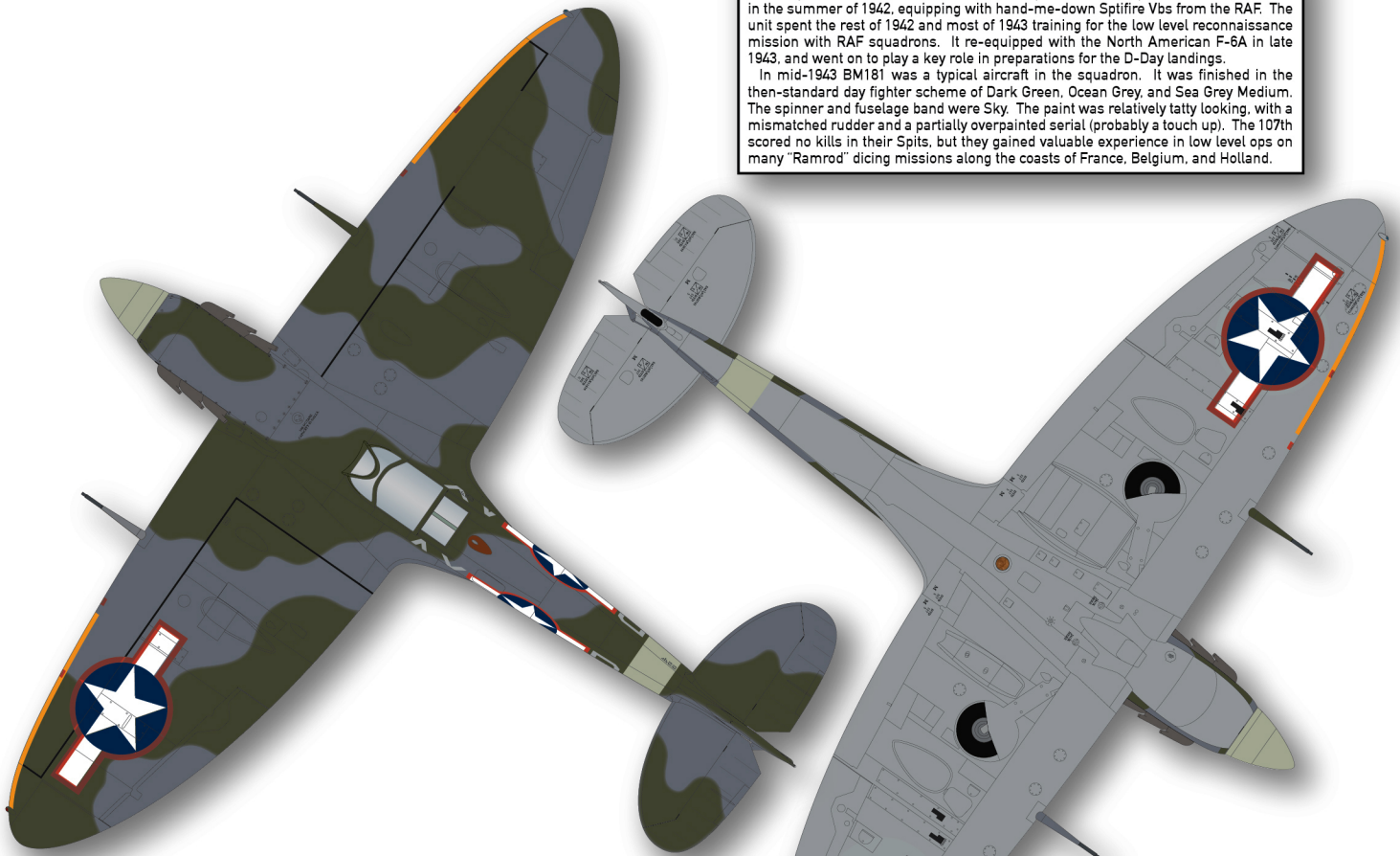
Fighter pilots being fighter pilots! "There I was, I had him dead to rights..." Patterson (apparently with his aircraft) listens to a squadron mate relating his latest exploit.



Detail Note

The 107th Observation Squadron, federalized from the Michigan National Guard, formed part of the new 67th Observation Group in 1941. The squadron moved to the UK in the summer of 1942, equipping with hand-me-down Spitfire Vbs from the RAF. The unit spent the rest of 1942 and most of 1943 training for the low level reconnaissance mission with RAF squadrons. It re-equipped with the North American F-6A in late 1943, and went on to play a key role in preparations for the D-Day landings.

In mid-1943 BM181 was a typical aircraft in the squadron. It was finished in the then-standard day fighter scheme of Dark Green, Ocean Grey, and Sea Grey Medium. The spinner and fuselage band were Sky. The paint was relatively tatty looking, with a mismatched rudder and a partially overpainted serial (probably a touch up). The 107th scored no kills in their Spits, but they gained valuable experience in low level ops on many "Ramrod" dicing missions along the coasts of France, Belgium, and Holland.



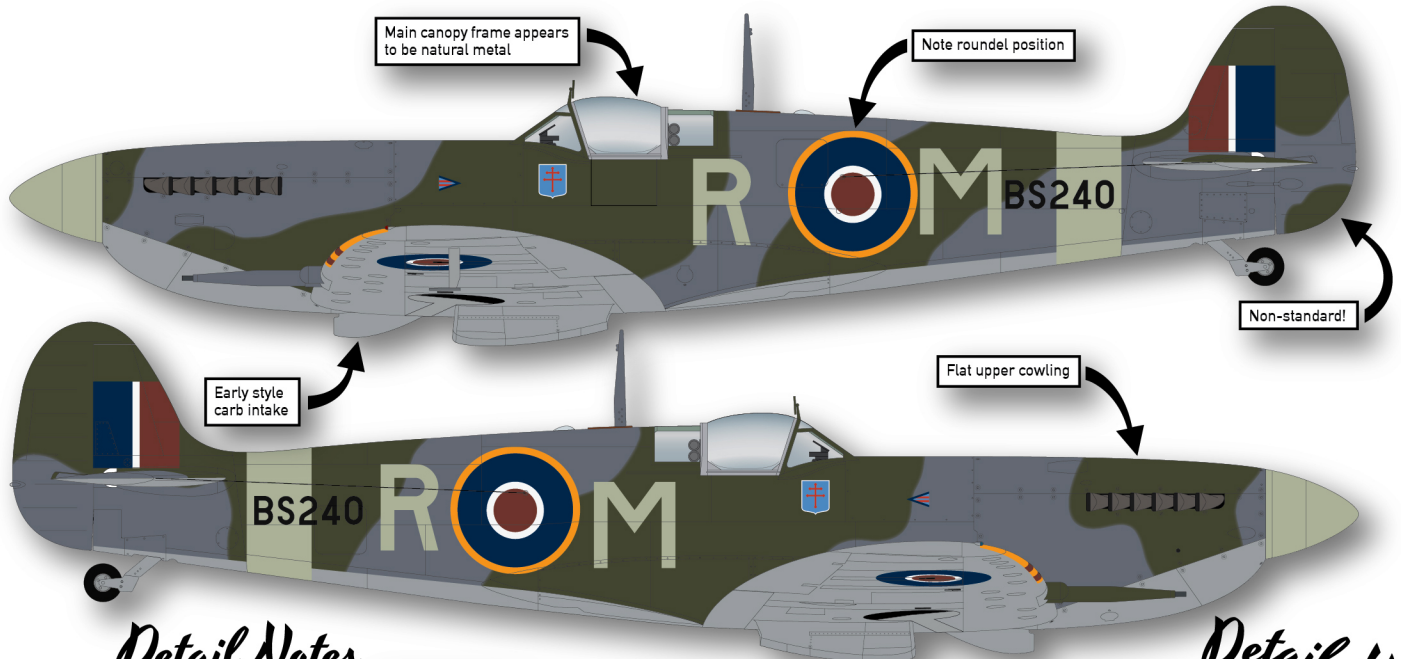
- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Dark Green |  | Sea Grey Medium |
|  | Ocean Grey |  | Signal Yellow |
| | |  | Sky |



A well known portrait of BM181 parked, probably at RAF Membry during the latter part of 1943. Note the partially overpainted serial on the tail, and the mismatched camouflage on the rudder. It has been suggested the rudder could be in desert colors, but we can never know for sure.



A gaggle of 67th Observation Group Spitfire Vbs from the 12th (ZM) and the 107th (AX) Observation squadrons cruising above an English undercast, late 1943. All were hand-me-downs from the RAF, and some looked pretty ratty. Note the mix of long spinners (Jablo wooden props) and short spinners (de Havilland metal props). Contrary to many published images and previous decals, the squadron codes were light grey (probably Sea Grey Medium) rather than Sky.



Detail Notes

Detail Note

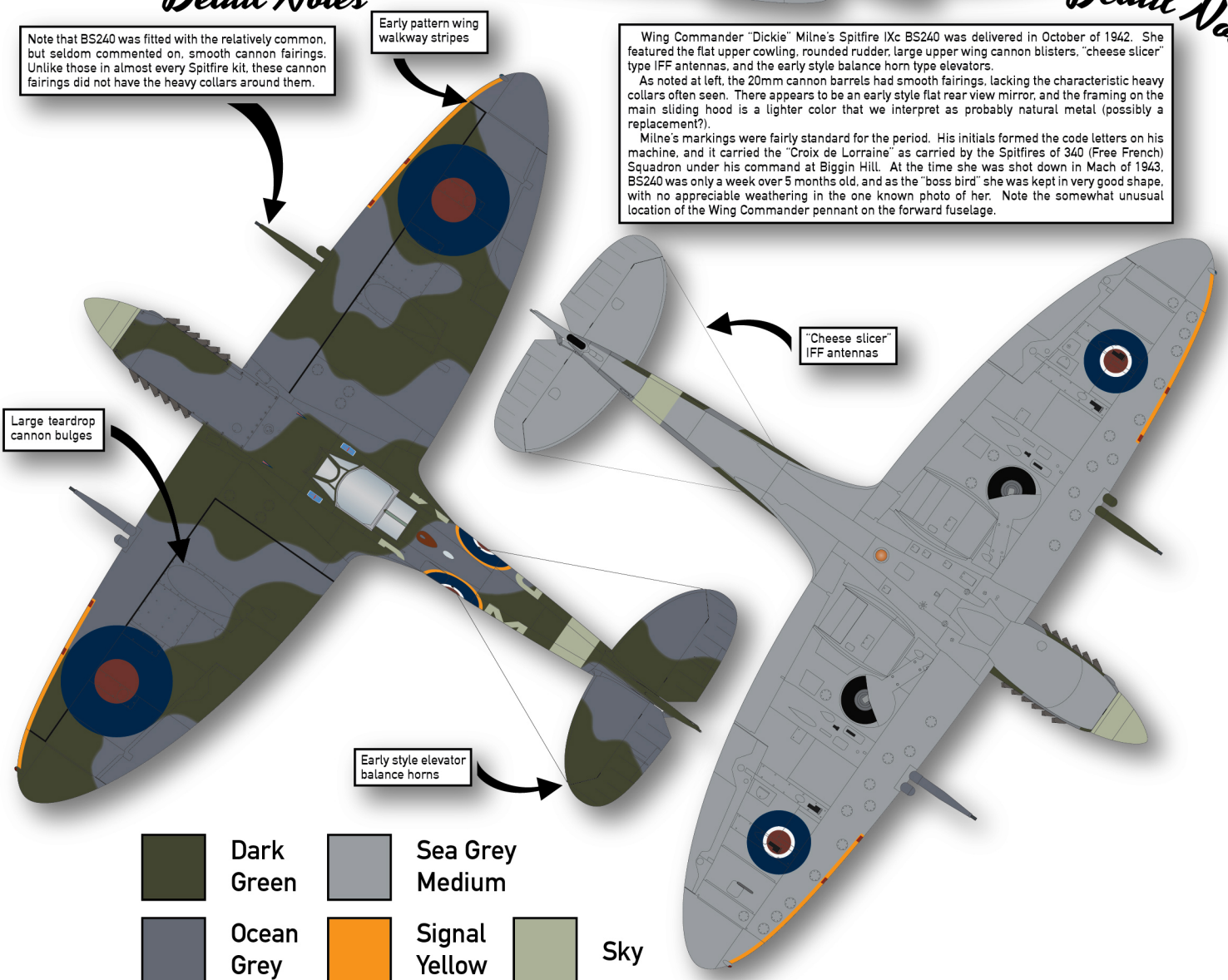
Note that BS240 was fitted with the relatively common, but seldom commented on, smooth cannon fairings. Unlike those in almost every Spitfire kit, these cannon fairings did not have the heavy collars around them.

Early pattern wing walkway stripes

Wing Commander "Dickie" Milne's Spitfire IXc BS240 was delivered in October of 1942. She featured the flat upper cowling, rounded rudder, large upper wing cannon blisters, "cheese slicer" type IFF antennas, and the early style balance horn type elevators.

As noted at left, the 20mm cannon barrels had smooth fairings, lacking the characteristic heavy collars often seen. There appears to be an early style flat rear view mirror, and the framing on the main sliding hood is a lighter color that we interpret as probably natural metal (possibly a replacement?).

Milne's markings were fairly standard for the period. His initials formed the code letters on his machine, and it carried the "Croix de Lorraine" as carried by the Spitfires of 340 (Free French) Squadron under his command at Biggin Hill. At the time she was shot down in March of 1943, BS240 was only a week over 5 months old, and as the "boss bird" she was kept in very good shape, with no appreciable weathering in the one known photo of her. Note the somewhat unusual location of the Wing Commander pennant on the forward fuselage.



	Dark Green		Sea Grey Medium
	Ocean Grey		Signal Yellow
			Sky

Wing Commander "Dickie" Milne DFC & Bar

Wing Commander "Dickie" Milne was born in Edinburgh in July of 1919. In 1937 he received a short service commission and completed his flying training, receiving first place marks in flying, gunnery, and ground school.

Early in WWII he flew Hurricanes with 151 Squadron, where he scored 7 kills in France and the Battle of Britain. By late 1941 he had assumed command of 92 (East India) Squadron, later moving on to command 222 Squadron at North Weald.

Milne was appointed commander of the Biggin Hill Wing in January of 1943. While at Biggin Hill, Milne upped his score to 15 against the Luftwaffe. His tenure as CO was short however, as his last kill on 14 March 1943 was also his last ever. After destroying an Fw190, Milne was in turn shot down himself over the Channel. A German rescue launch fished him out of the drink and he became a POW, spending the balance of the war as a guest of Reichsmarschall Göring. He was repatriated in May 1945.

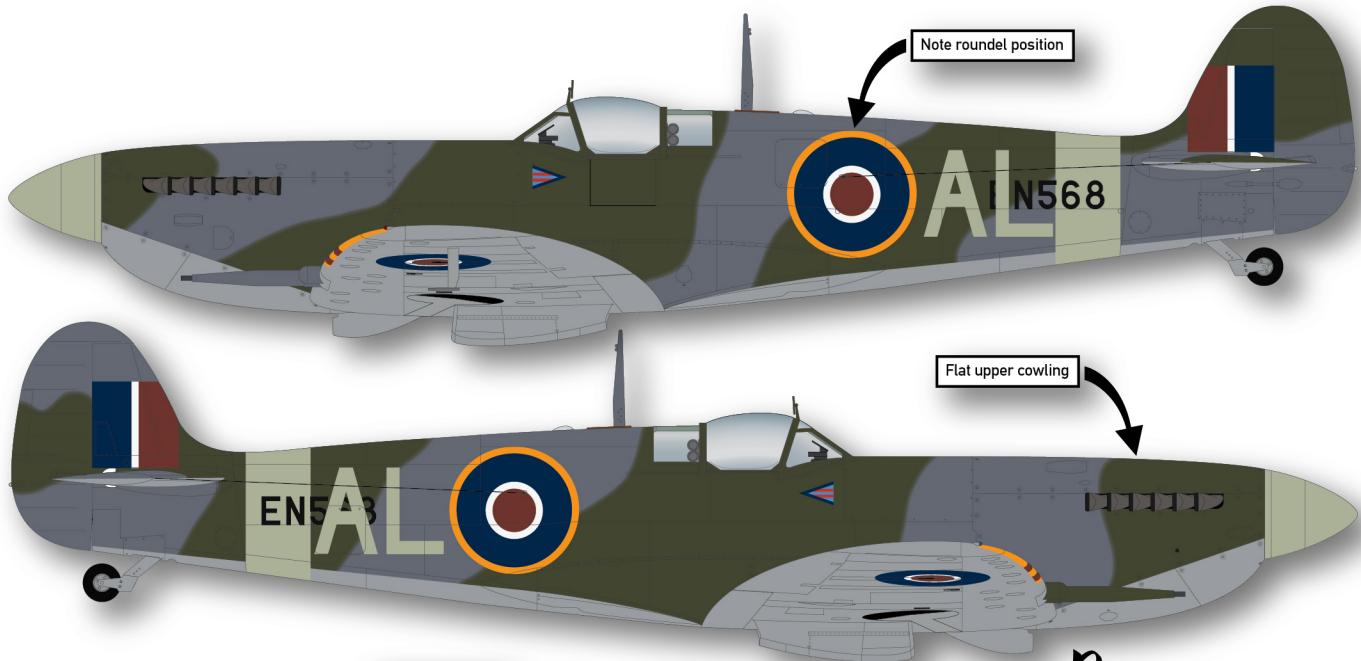


Coloured by
BRUCE THOMAS



An exceptionally well colorized photo of the then-new Commander of the Biggin Hill wing in January 1943. Dickie Milne was all of 23-years old at the time. Note the light colored sliding hood frame.

Milne's Spitfire IXc BS240 showing the non-standard Dark Green patch at the lower edge of the rudder. Also barely visible are the Croix de Lorraine (just above his head) and the Wing Commander pennant forward of it. Note the light colored sliding hood frame. We interpret this as being a replacement hood with an unpainted frame.

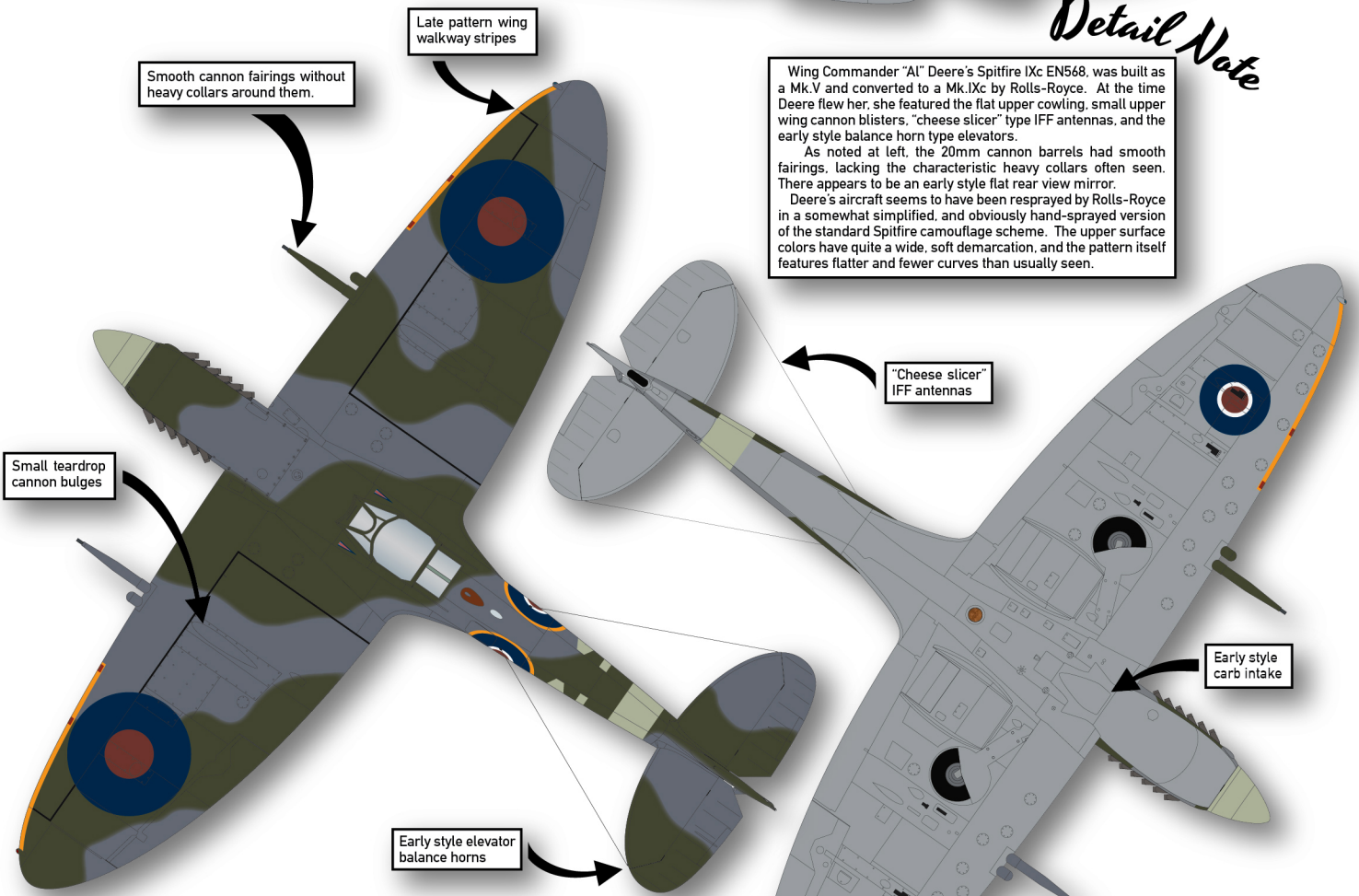


Detail Note

Wing Commander "Al" Deere's Spitfire IXc EN568, was built as a Mk.V and converted to a Mk.IXc by Rolls-Royce. At the time Deere flew her, she featured the flat upper cowling, small upper wing cannon blisters, "cheese slicer" type IFF antennas, and the early style balance horn type elevators.

As noted at left, the 20mm cannon barrels had smooth fairings, lacking the characteristic heavy collars around them. There appears to be an early style flat rear view mirror.

Deere's aircraft seems to have been resprayed by Rolls-Royce in a somewhat simplified, and obviously hand-sprayed version of the standard Spitfire camouflage scheme. The upper surface colors have quite a wide, soft demarcation, and the pattern itself features flatter and fewer curves than usually seen.



	Dark Green		Sea Grey Medium
	Ocean Grey		Signal Yellow
			Sky

Wing Commander "Al" Deere DSO, OBE, DFC & Bar



A formal portrait of Deere by Cuthbert Orde done after his flying accident in 1941.

New Zealander Alan Christopher "Al" Deere, like his predecessor Dickie Milne, joined the RAF in 1937 under a short term commission. An accomplished boxer, Deere joined the RAF boxing team, and a boxing tour of South Africa delayed his flying training until 1938. After completing flying training he was posted to Nos. 54 and 74 Squadron prior to the outbreak of the war.

With the Battle of France, Deere was once again with 54 Squadron, where he racked up an impressive kill list. He was shot down by a Do17 near Dunkirk and escaped unharmed. During 1941 Deere was with the RAF's pilot training establishment, where he was involved in a near-fatal collision, losing most of his tail to the student pilot's propellor. Bailing out, Deere was trapped against the aircraft, and his damaged chute failed to open properly. He landed in an open sewer, which broke his fall and saved his life. This near-miss gave Deere a break from operations for a period.

In May of 1941 Deere was posted as a Flight Commander with 602 Squadron at Ayr, Scotland. On 5 June he suffered engine failure over the North Sea and glided back to a forced landing on the coast, crawling out the small side door after the Spitfire flipped onto its back, destroying the canopy and temporarily trapping him. At the end of July he took over as Commander of 602 Squadron, and on 1 August it moved back to Kenley. On the same day he shot down another Bf109.

After an early 1942 lecture tour of American fighter bases, passing on lessons from the Battle of Britain, Deere returned to action on 1 May, taking command 403 Squadron RCAF, at North Weald. In August he went on a course at RAF Staff College and was subsequently posted to Headquarters 13 Group on staff duties.

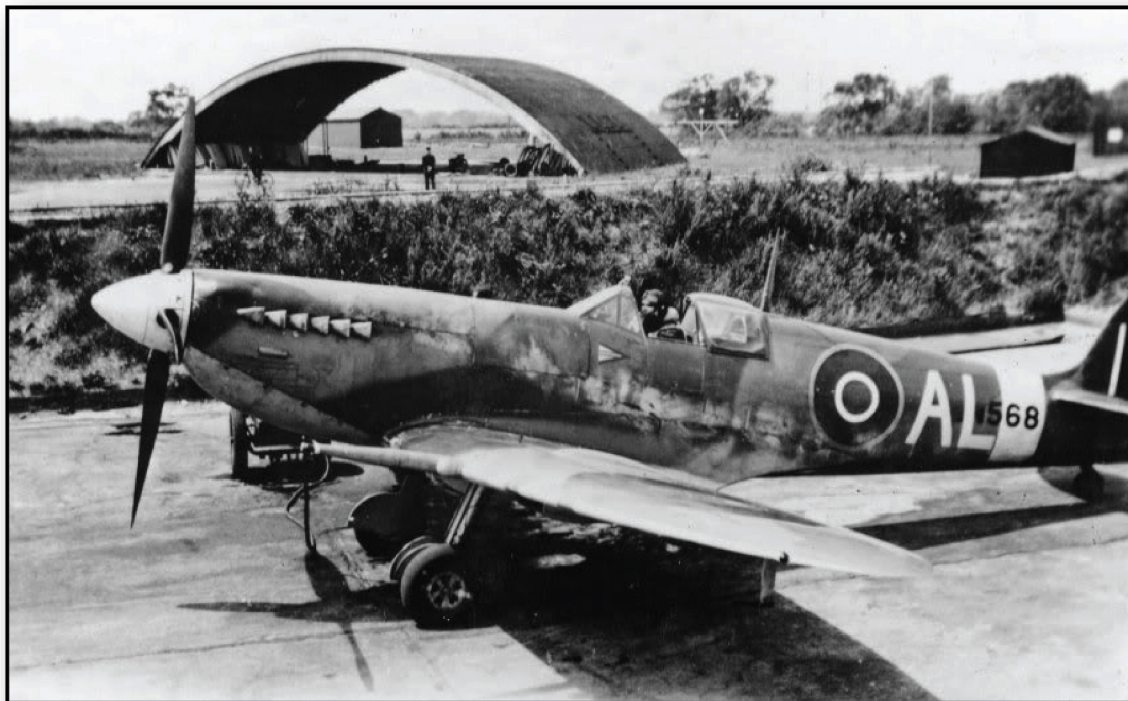
In February 1943 Deere managed to finagle himself an assignment to 611 Squadron at Biggin Hill to get back into combat. He did just that, claiming an Fw190 destroyed on the 16th. He was ready to take command of the Kenley Wing when "Dickie" Milne was posted missing. It was decided that Deere would stay on at Biggin Hill as the new Wing Leader. On 4 May Deere (in Spitfire IXc JK769) destroyed an Fw190 near Calais. Later Deere switched to his own personal Spitfire IXc serial number EN568, bearing the name "AL" instead of his initials. Flying "AL," Deere damaged an Fw190 on 10 June, destroyed an Fw190 on the 23rd, and a probable Fw190 on 14 July. These were Deere's final claims of the war. He led the Biggin Hill Wing until mid-September 1943 stepping down due to illness.

Deere retired from the RAF in 1967, and died in 1995.



Deere is seen to the left of Air Vice Marshall Hugh Dowding (wearing a civilian suit at center) posing with other notable Battle of Britain veterans in 1942.

Wing Commander "Al" Deere DSO, OBE, DFC & Bar



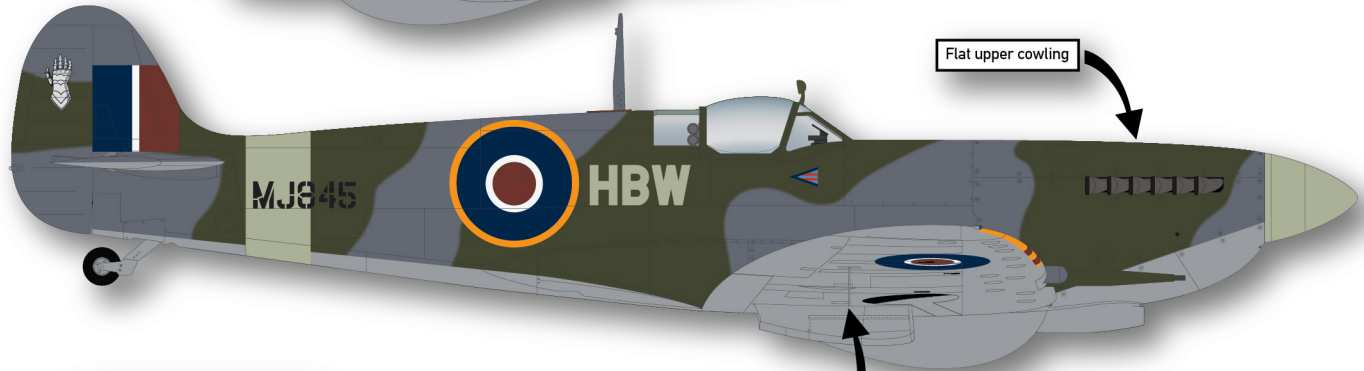
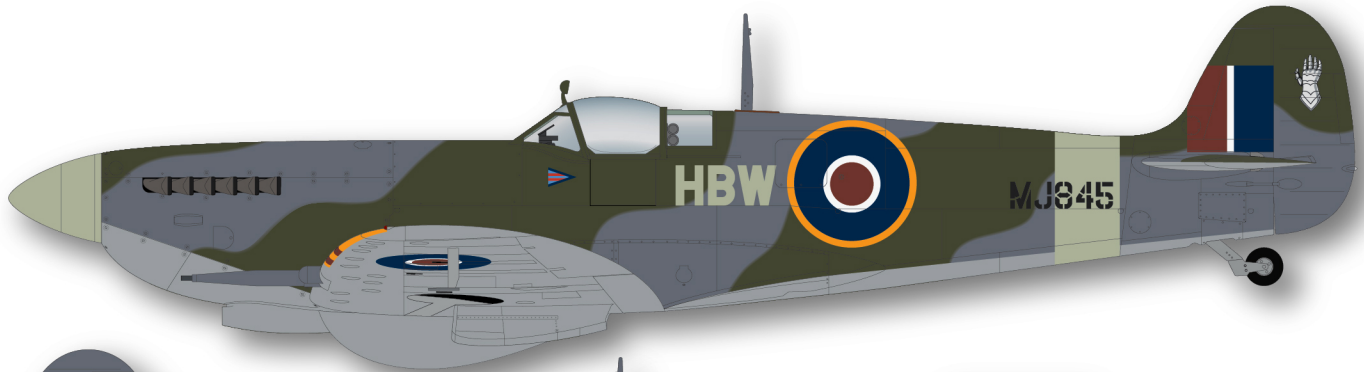
Deere's Spitfire IXc, EN568, is quite an interesting machine. Built as a Mk.V, it was converted to a Mk.IX by Rolls-Royce. Despite that fact, by the time Deere adopted it as his personal mount, it had received a standard early (flat) style Mk.IX upper cowling, and the narrow cannon blisters on the upper wings. Probably as a result of being repainted by Rolls-Royce, the camouflage scheme is somewhat simplified (fewer curves), and it has much softer demarcations between the upper surface colors. Note how tatty looking the aircraft is, and the size, location, color, and extent of the exhaust staining on the side of the fuselage.



A "little friend" escorting a "big friend", Deere is seen off the left wing of a US Army Air Forces 8th Air Force B-17 in 1943.



EN568 seen in a blast pen at Biggin Hill. Note the narrow cannon blisters and the 'cheese slicer' IFF antenna.



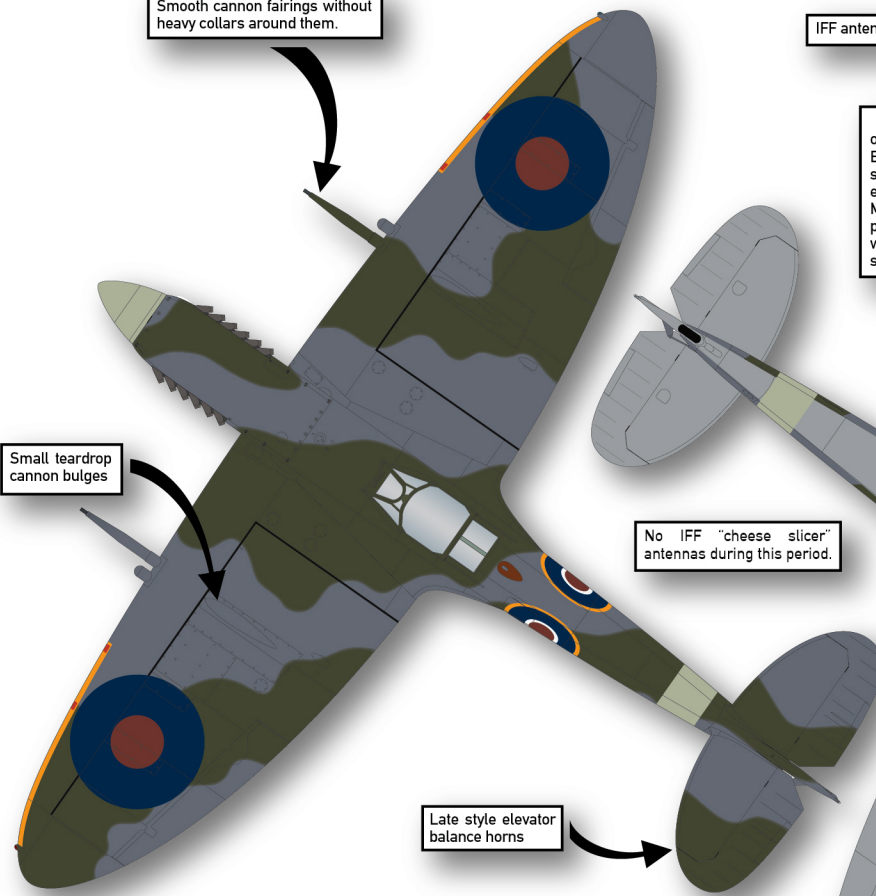
Smooth cannon fairings without heavy collars around them.

Flat upper cowling

IFF antenna

Detail Note

Spitfire Mk.IXc MJ845 was delivered on 29 November 1943 from Castle Bromwich. It survived the war to be struck off charge in 1947. It was in every way a standard looking mid-war Mk.IXc, featuring the flat upper cowling, pole type IFF antenna under the right wing, late style elevator horns, and the smooth, collarless cannon fairings.



Small teardrop cannon bulges

No IFF "cheese slicer" antennas during this period.

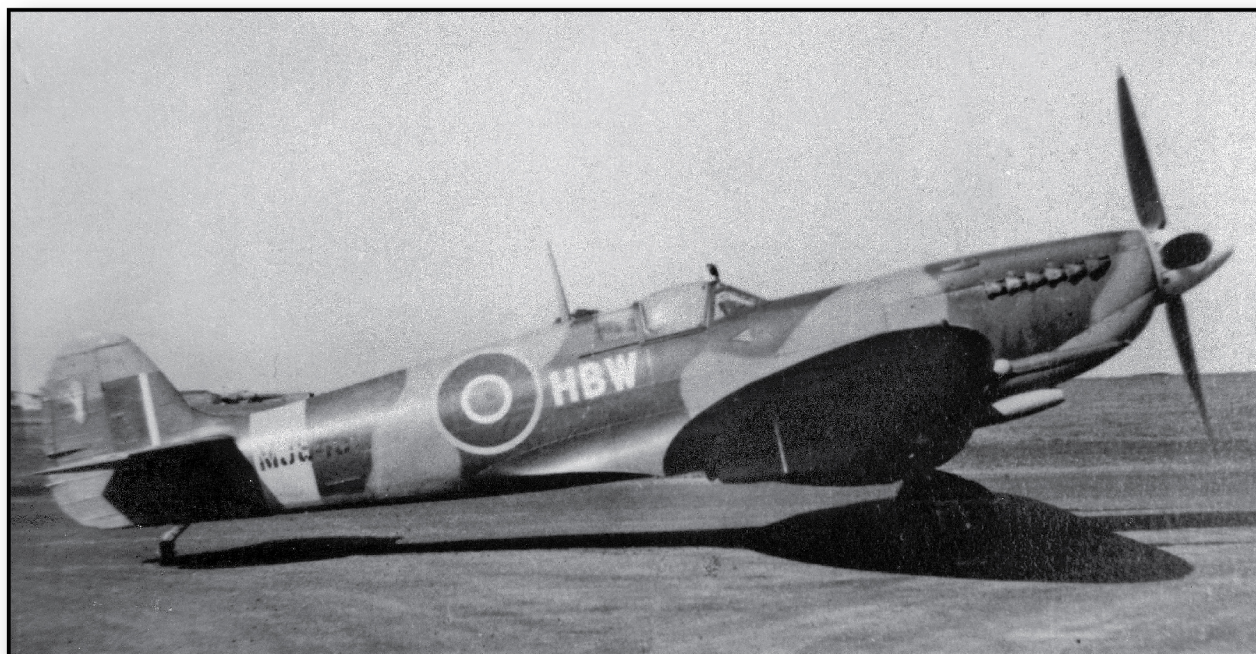
Late style elevator balance horns

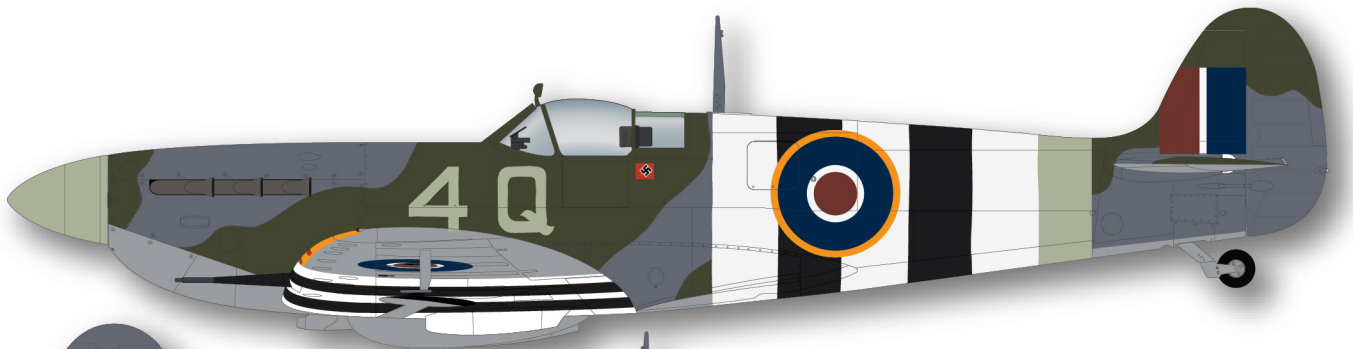


Wing Commander Harold "Birdie" Bird-Wilson, Royal Air Force

Harold "Birdie" Bird-Wilson flew Hurricanes with 17 Squadron during the opening months of the war and saw considerable action in both France and the Battle of Britain. This association explains the squadron's armored gauntlet seen on subsequent aircraft flown by him. In 1941 Bird-Wilson was posted to 234 Squadron and then 1942 saw him posted to 152 Sqn before appendicitis sidelined him. After he recovered he spent a short time with 118 Squadron before he was given command of 66 Sqn which he led until May 1943. Bird-Wilson then led 121 Wing before moving to 122 Wing.

As leader of 122 Wing Bird-Wilson flew Spitfire MJ845 bearing his initials as its code letters. He was on R&R in January 1944 but returned to combat leading Spitfires of the Harrowbeer Wing before switching to Mustangs with the Bentwaters Wing. Bird-Wilson finished the war with a tally of 3 enemy aircraft to his credit, plus 6 shared, 3 probables, 3 damaged, and 1 destroyed on the ground.





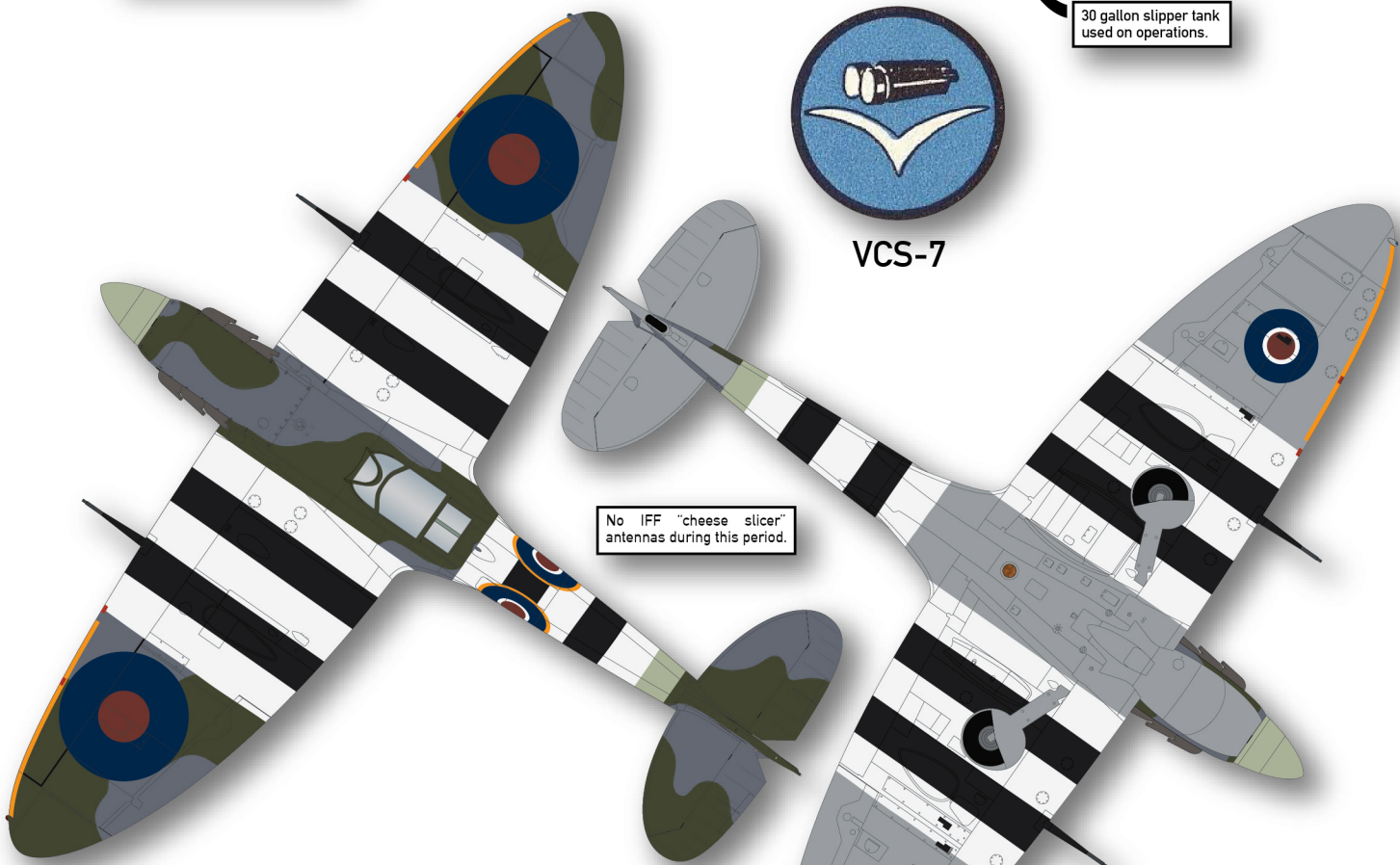
Note that invasion stripes partly obscure Sky fuselage band.

30 gallon slipper tank used on operations.



VCS-7

No IFF "cheese slicer" antennas during this period.



- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Dark Green |  | Sea Grey Medium |
|  | Ocean Grey |  | Signal Yellow |
| | |  | Sky |

Naval gunfire was to play a major role in Operation Overlord in June 1944. The catapult flights from the battleships USS Nevada, USS Texas, and USS Arkansas, plus those from the cruisers USS Quincy, USS Augusta, and USS Tuscaloosa were brought together as Cruiser Scouting Squadron Seven (VCS-7). They were originally equipped with Curtiss SOC Seagulls and Vought OS2U Kingfisher floatplanes, but it was thought those types would be too vulnerable to enemy fire, so the squadron was equipped with borrowed Spitfire Mk.Vbs.

The floatplanes were stored at RNAS Lee-on-Solent, while the squadron's pilots were transitioned to the Spitfire by USAAF pilots of the 67th Reconnaissance Group at RAF Membry. The Navy pilots, used to flying slow, relatively low performance floatplanes, picked up the finer points of flying a high performance inline-engined fighter quickly however, and graduated by flying a 20 aircraft formation fighter sweep almost all the way to Paris.

The squadron received its own Spitfire Vbs at the end of May, with command going to LCDR William Denton, USN. The squadron code "4" plus an individual aircraft letter were applied in Sky on the forward fuselage. It appears that serial numbers were either not applied, or were overpainted (see next page). As with other Allied aircraft, late on 3 June the order to apply broad black and white identification stripes came down, and VCS-7's aircraft were so decorated. As you can see from these photos, the stripes were relatively neat, but still clearly hand applied, with slightly uneven edges.

For operational missions, a 30 imperial gallon slipper tank was fitted to the belly. Missions were flown by two-ship formations, with the wingman 2000' above the leader to provide cover, while the leader's job was to direct fire from the big guns aboard the ships to targets on and behind the beachhead.

On D-Day, the squadron received very little attention from the Luftwaffe. On D+1 however, the Luftwaffe realized the damage being caused by these pesky little Spitfires, so they began to be targeted. After D+4, the advance of the troops and declining German resistance within the range of naval gunfire reduced the need for spotting. VCS-7 participated in strafing missions on targets of opportunity across the front.

Most VCS-7 pilots flew upwards of ten missions in the fourteen days that they were actively engaged in combat following D-Day. Ens. R.J. Adams became the first Navy pilot to land on continental Europe when his aircraft was damaged in combat, forcing him to land at one of the recently constructed advanced airfields just inland from the beaches.

The squadron was in existence for only 50 days before being decommissioned. As noted, it does not appear that serials were carried, but known serials flown by the squadron include W3245, W3825, W3902, AA728, AR390, AR395, BL247, BL366, BL437, BL530, BL729, BM190, BM316, BM430, and BM526. Known codes are 4G, 4Q, 4R, 4X, and 4Z. Given its short life and the secrecy surrounding its operations, it appears that few photographs of VCS-7's Spitfires exist.



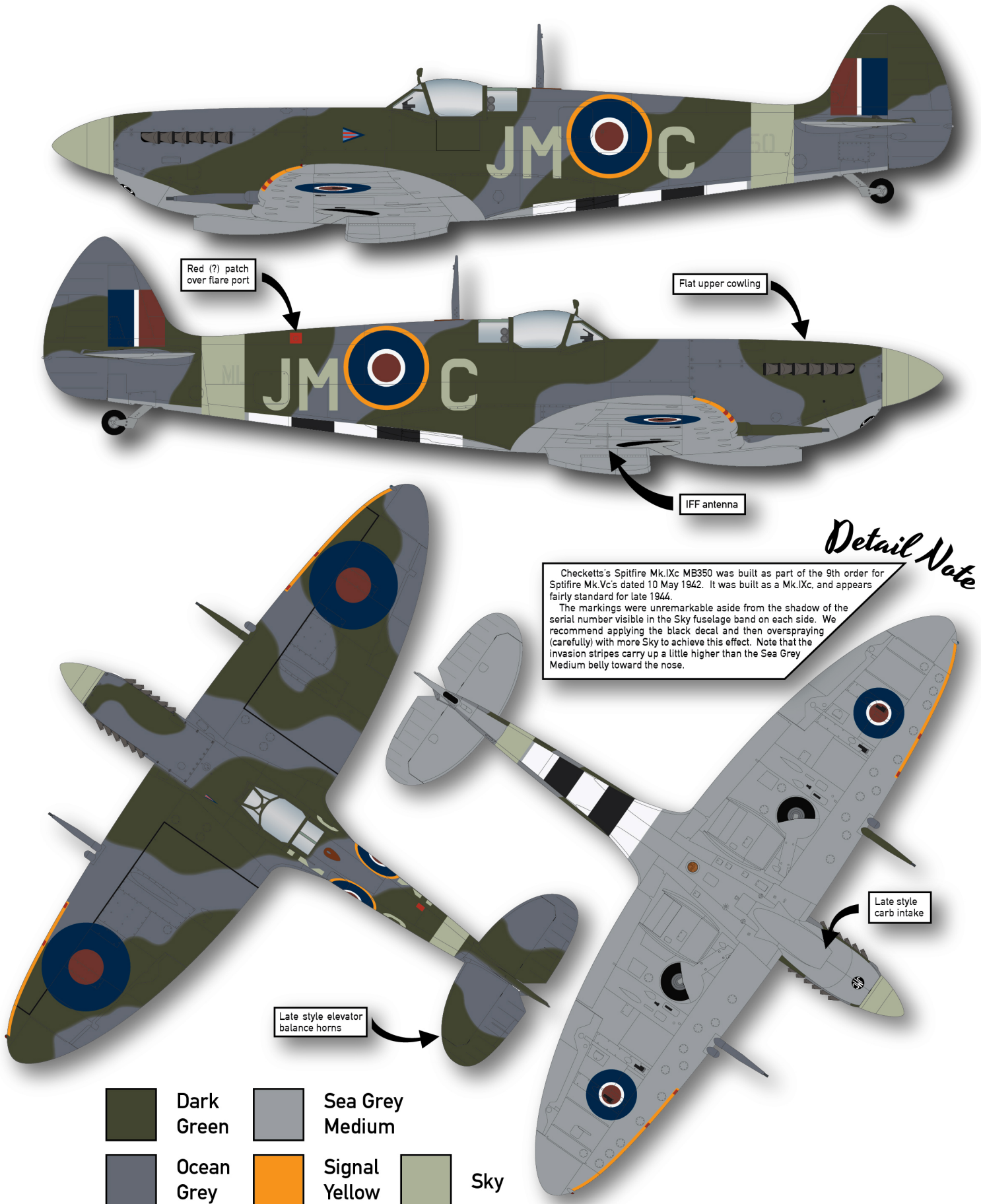
We have no record of any VCS-7 pilot achieving an air-to-air victory, so we assume the kill mark seen on "4Q" comes from its earlier life with an RAF squadron.



Above, below, and above right are other VCS-7 aircraft. The photo below appears to show "4Z", and is interesting in shown a very hard edged camouflage scheme with what appears to be a much lighter grey than the standard Ocean Grey.



"46" may be the aircraft landed in France by Ens. R.J. Adams, but appears to show that no serial numbers were visible.



Red (?) patch over flare port

Flat upper cowlings

IFF antenna

Detail Note

Checketts's Spitfire Mk.IXc MB350 was built as part of the 9th order for Spitfire Mk.Vc's dated 10 May 1942. It was built as a Mk.IXc, and appears fairly standard for late 1944.

The markings were unremarkable aside from the shadow of the serial number visible in the Sky fuselage band on each side. We recommend applying the black decal and then overspraying (carefully) with more Sky to achieve this effect. Note that the invasion stripes carry up a little higher than the Sea Grey Medium belly toward the nose.

Late style elevator balance horns

Late style carb intake

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Dark Green |  | Sea Grey Medium |
|  | Ocean Grey |  | Signal Yellow |
| | |  | Sky |

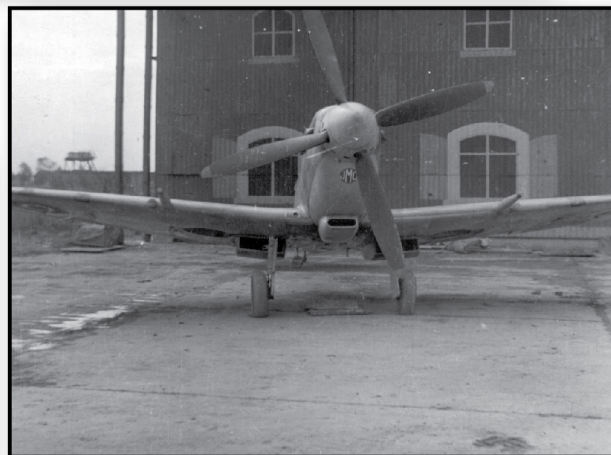
Wing Commander John M. Checketts, Royal New Zealand Air Force



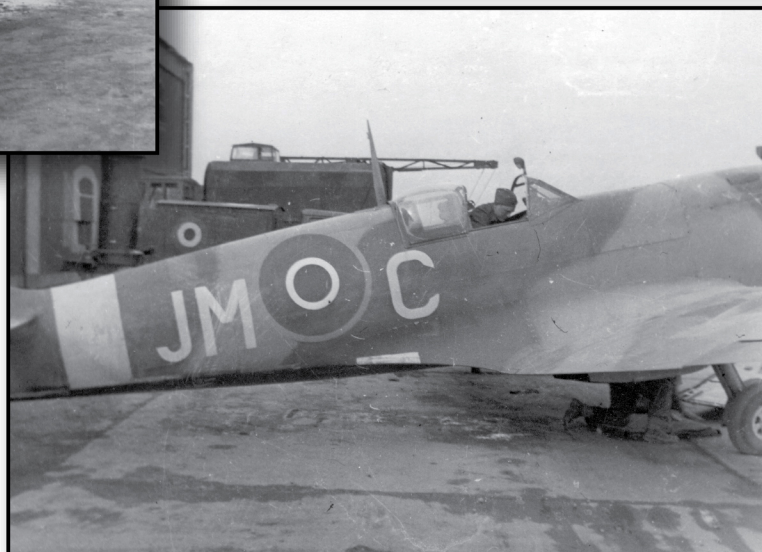
A Kiwi from Invercargill, New Zealand, Johnny Checketts joined the RNZAF in 1940. He was posted to 485 Squadron, RNZAF in 1941 flying Spitfire Mk.Vbs. In early 1943 he became a flight commander on 611 Squadron and began making claims. By June he had returned to 485 as it's Squadron Leader.

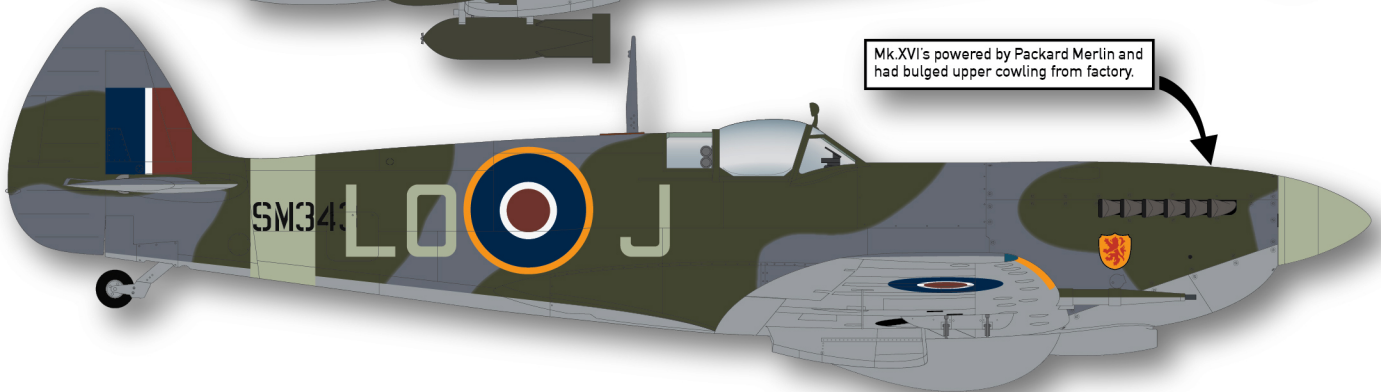
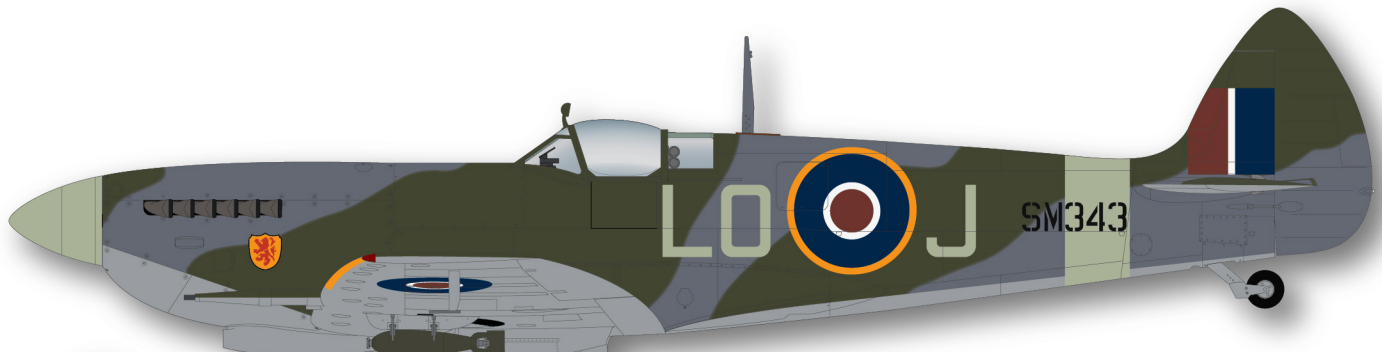
His tally began to mount, and by the time he was shot down and taken POW on 6 September 1943 his score stood at 12 enemy aircraft destroyed plus three probables and seven damaged. But the war was not over for Checketts. Immediately after he was captured by the Germans he was freed by the Resistance and made his way back to England.

The following year Johnny Checketts was promoted to Wing Commander and given command of 142 Wing part of Air Defense of Great Britain (ADGB) initially flying Spitfire LF Mk.Vbs. During the summer he claimed one Bf109 destroyed, one damaged, and 2 V-1s destroyed. On September 25th, now flying his personal Spitfire Mk.IXc ML350, coded JM-C, the Wing Commander shared in the destruction of an Bf109 in the skies above Arnhem. Checketts was taken off operations the very next day.



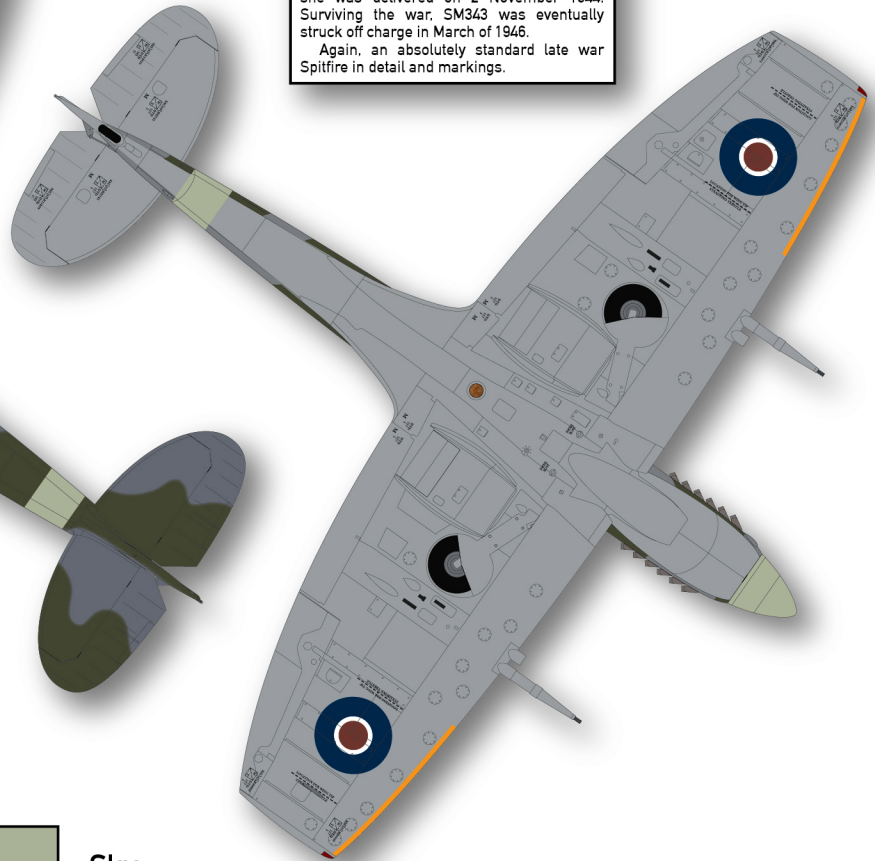
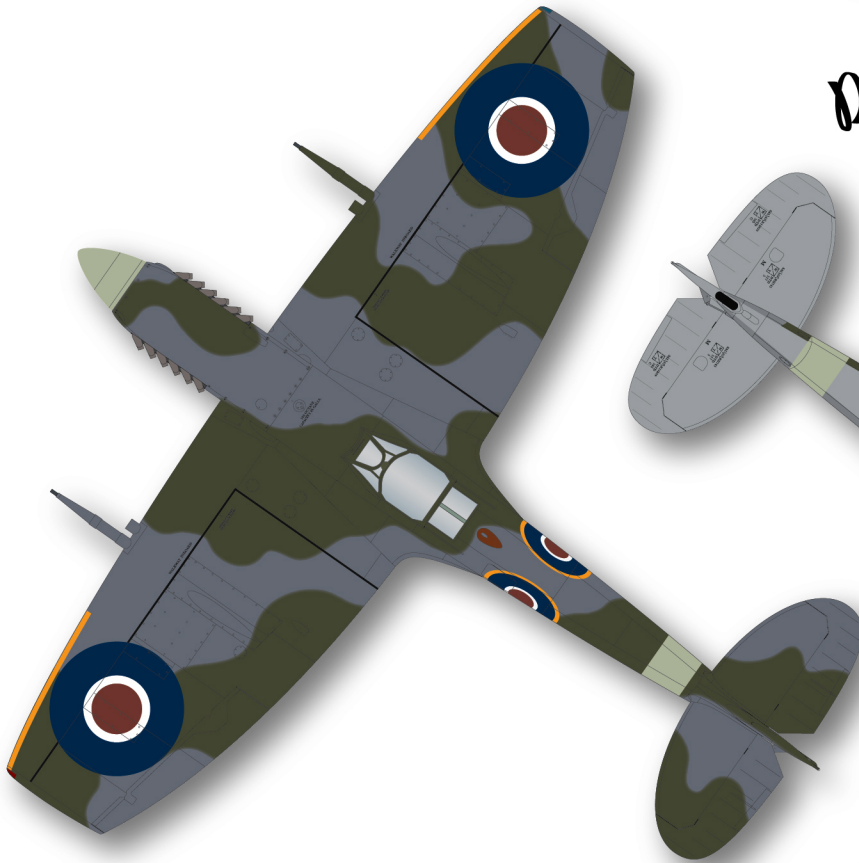
Three photos of MB350. Things to note are the disk containing "JMC" under the nose, the truncated invasion stripes under the fuselage, and the shadow of the serial number visible on both sides in the Sky fuselage band. We can't explain that, but there it is! We recommend applying the supplied black decals and then carefully overspraying with Sky to achieve just a faint shadow.





Detail Note

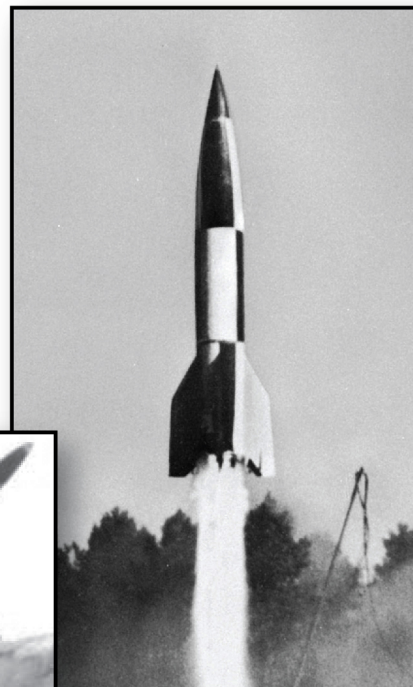
Spitfire Mk.XVIe was built to the 16th order for Spitfire Mk.21s dated 1 February 1944. Built as a Mk.XVIe with the Packard Merlin, she was delivered on 2 November 1944. Surviving the war, SM343 was eventually struck off charge in March of 1946. Again, an absolutely standard late war Spitfire in detail and markings.



Flight Sergeant Cecil J. Zuber, Royal Air Force

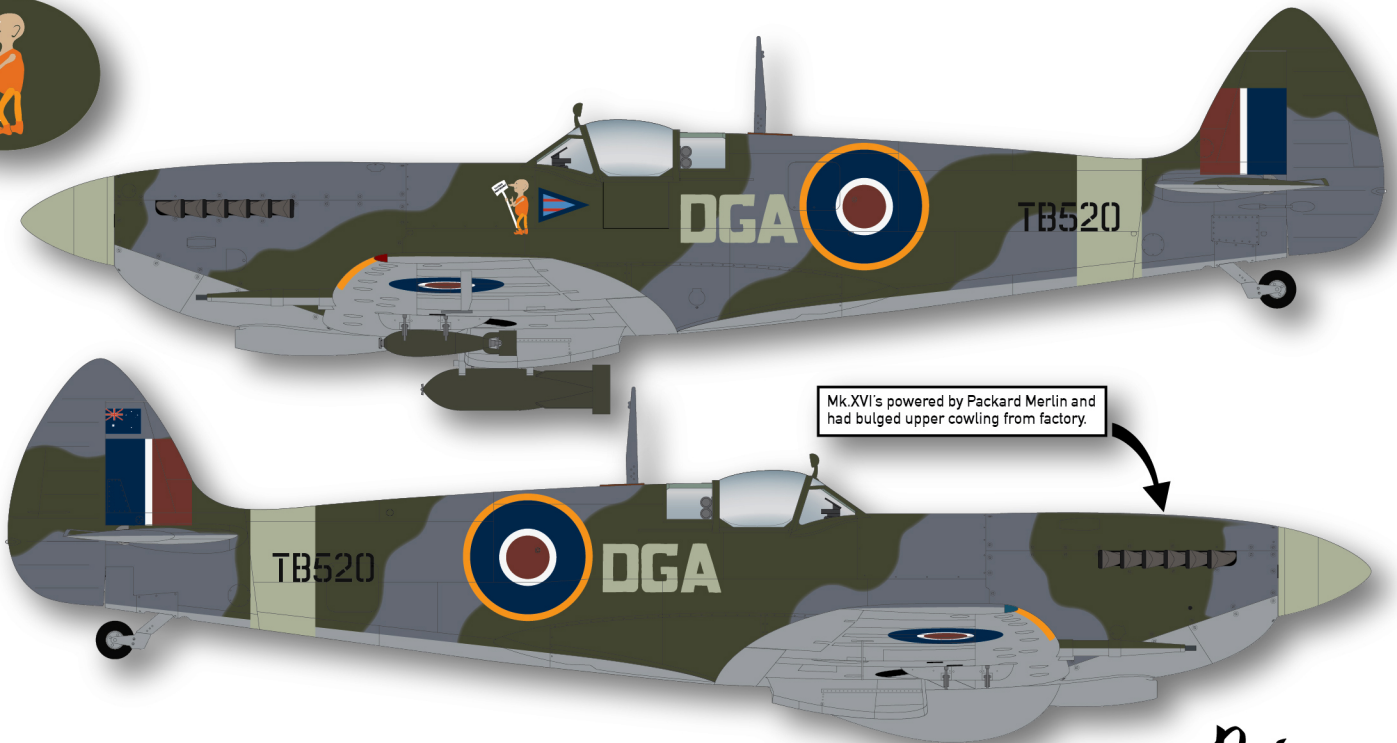
By early 1945 the Germans were launching well over 200 V-2 rockets a month, many of them aimed at Britain. Along with other squadrons, 602 Squadron flew bomb laden Spitfire XVIs with the intent of destroying Germany's ability to launch V-2s against Britain. Known as "Operation Big Ben" these raids were carried out against the mobile launch sites and other targets related to Hitler's terror weapon.

One such site was the Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij (BPM) office building located in The Hague. The building was known to be a communications hub for the Luftwaffe but it was also believed that one floor was devoted to V-2 operations. Led by S/L Max Sutherland, six Spitfires of 602 Squadron carrying 1000 pounds of bombs (1x 500 lb bomb, and 2x 250 lb bombs) attacked the building in a daring low level horizontal raid on 18 March 1945, with Zuber flying SM343.



Above left: Not the best photo, but the only one we have showing Zuber and SM343. Given its relatively young age, the aircraft appears to be well used, reflecting the pace of anti-V-2 operations.

Left: The 602 Squadron flight planning room late in the war. Pilots pour over maps in preparation for the next mission. Note Zuber's name on the locker furthest to the left.

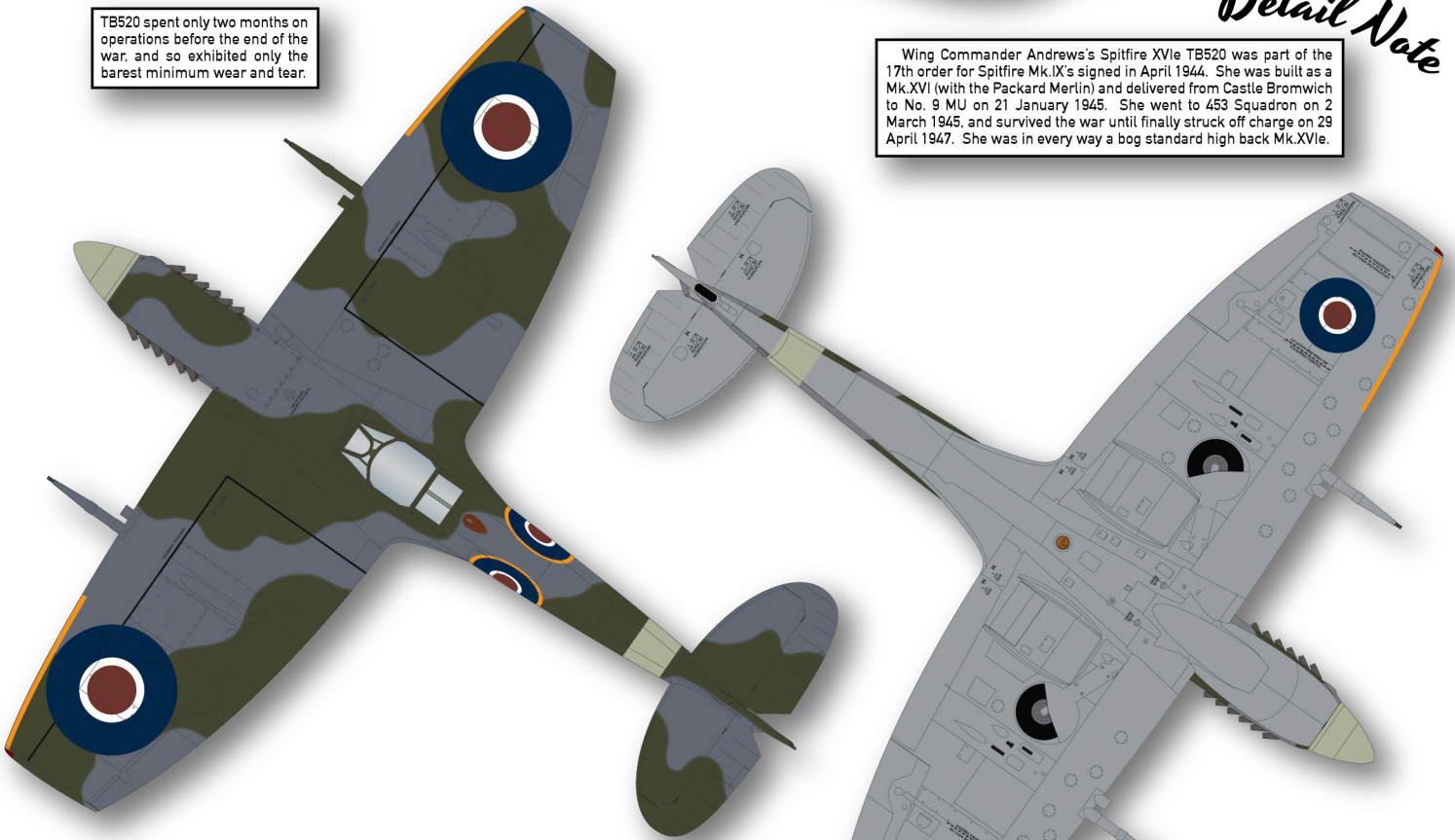


Mk.XVI's powered by Packard Merlin and had bulged upper cowling from factory.

TB520 spent only two months on operations before the end of the war, and so exhibited only the barest minimum wear and tear.

Detail Note

Wing Commander Andrews's Spitfire XVIe TB520 was part of the 17th order for Spitfire Mk.IX's signed in April 1944. She was built as a Mk.XVI (with the Packard Merlin) and delivered from Castle Bromwich to No. 9 MU on 21 January 1945. She went to 453 Squadron on 2 March 1945, and survived the war until finally struck off charge on 29 April 1947. She was in every way a bog standard high back Mk.XVIe.



- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Dark Green |  | Sea Grey Medium |
|  | Ocean Grey |  | Signal Yellow |
| | |  | Sky |

Wing Commander Donald G. Andrews, Royal Australian Air Force



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Above: W/C Andrews (R) poses with S/L Esau beside Esau's kite. Note that the Australian flag was only carried on the right side of the fin (and painted backward to boot...).

Right: Andrews dismounting from his bird, showing the gremlin cartoon with the admonishment "You have been warned!" on the sign. Note the rough edges to the initials and the very unusual W/C pennant with the dark blue border all the way around.



Wing Commander Donald George Andrews hailed from Southport, Queensland. He did his flight training in Australia and Canada before arriving in the UK in 1941. Initially, Andrews flew Hurricanes with Nos. 615, 245, and 175 Squadrons. During this period he was involved in low level sorties including operations supporting the ill-fated Dieppe landings. In December 1942 F/L Andrews was transferred to 453 Squadron (RAAF) as a flight commander, flying the then-brand new Spitfire Mk IX. In September 1943 he became acting Squadron Leader.

In February 1945 Andrews took command of the Australian Spitfire Wing (451 and 453 Squadrons, RAAF) whose primary role during the last five months of the war was the destruction of German V-2 rocket launch sites. Andrews finished the war with one Fw190 destroyed, plus one probable and one damaged, along with numerous ground targets bombed and/or strafed.

-2-

Every attack we made was different, of course, but the general procedure was always the same. Before we left base, we were very carefully briefed for a particular target, and when we'd finished our general reconnaissance of the area we checked up on our information about the target. Then the leader got ready for his bombing run, and began to talk up, giving the approximate time when he was coming down...and the time gradually worked down to about a 30-second warning, and the last order was "Going down now". Then everybody peeled off after him in a very steep power dive from 9,000 feet down to 3,000. We got a good view of the target in that dive and were able to aim our bombs. Everyone followed the leader in and attacked in rapid succession, and then we'd use the tremendous speed gained in the dive to zoom climb and to gain height. The pull-out followed by the vertical climb usually resulted in blackout lasting 10 to 15 seconds...during that time the aircraft flew itself...but I always felt quite normal when I came to, and I never heard anyone complain.

An interesting anecdote from S/L Esau. Accuracy was key when hitting targets like V-2 sites. The "interesting" part is about the 10-15 seconds of blackout in the days before speed jeans!