



Left: The 131 Squadron line up from the other side, with AD411, NX-B and AD425, NX-E in the foreground, showing the fuselage roundels in the process of being updated. Of note is the stencilled style serial number and the oversized 7 inch diameter red centre to the fuselage roundel.



Main image: Line up of No 131 Squadron Spitfire Mk Vbs, with BM420, NX-A, (which was subsequently converted in to a Seafire Mk IIb), in the foreground. The photograph was taken during the changeover to the later style national markings, in May 1942, at RAF Merston, West Sussex, a grass airfield satellite to RAF Tangmere, as it can just be discerned on BM420 and the aircraft immediately behind it, that the pre-May 1942 style underwing roundels are still in situ. Also of note are the different Rotol and de Havilland spinners on the squadron's aircraft.

Right: A detailed close up of a Mk V's Rotol spinner showing the small fillets fitted just in front of the prop blade bases. The emblem on the nose has been obliterated by the censor.



Main image: Spitfire Mk Vb, BM252, MT-E 'Bombay City' of 122 Squadron, photographed at RAF Hornchurch circa May 1942. Of note is the way the upper surface camouflage colours extend below the lower cowling panel line. Also note the wheel covers which were fitted to prevent dust damaging the brakes.

Below left: A squadron dog taking an interest in the servicing of a Spitfire Mk Vb fitted with a 30 gallon slipper tank. Also of note again, is the way the upper surface camouflage colours extend below the lower cowling panel line, a feature on many Spitfire Mk Vbs of this period.



Spitfire Mk Vbs of No 81 Sqn, in the summer of 1942, after the unit's return from its sojourn in Russia, and re-equipment from Hurricane Mk IIbs. The squadron flew Spitfire Vbs until October 1942, when it received Spitfire Mk Vcs, while based at RAF Fairlop in Essex.

Main image: A clipped-wing Spitfire Mk Vb, (possibly EP605), FU-Z of No 453 (RAAF) Sqn, undergoing routine maintenance overlooking the sea while based at Perranporth on the Cornish coast in the summer of 1943. The effects of operational wear and tear can be seen on the fuselage and rudder, contrasting with what appears to be a freshly painted Sky rear fuselage band, (obscuring most of the serial number), and individual aircraft letter.

Right: No 19 Squadron's Spitfire Mk Vbs dispersed, possibly at Perranporth, which the squadron regularly moved in to and out of throughout the period May to October 1942, while undertaking 'Rodeos' (fighter sweeps) over the continent. The aircraft in the foreground obligingly displays its well worn standard A Scheme camouflage pattern.





Port and starboard views of AA936, AZ-E of No 234 Sqn, at Deanland, East Sussex, in May 1944. Despite the introduction of the Spitfire Mk IX almost two years earlier, many front-line squadrons were still equipped with the Mk V, albeit for operations at lower levels over the continent. For this role, the Mk Vs, were progressively updated, but rather degradingly referred to by the pilots and ground crews alike as 'Clipped, Cropped and Clapped' – relating to the 'clipped' wing tips which improved the rate of roll below 10,000ft, the 'cropped' engine supercharger blower which improved power, again below 10,000ft, and 'clapped out' due the fact that the airframes had seen intensive service with several squadrons already!

Originally built in October 1941, AA936 had served with five front-line squadrons before being allocated to 234, and had been progressively updated, so by the summer of 1944, it was fitted with 'clipped' wing tips, six-stack exhaust manifolds and wing stiffening strakes over the main undercarriage wheel wells. The pilot sitting on the wing root is thought to be Flt/Sgt Dennis Sims, AA936's regular pilot, who added a blue swallow silhouette in a white disc under the windscreen, (see inset on the illustration opposite), at some point prior to 6 June 1944, when it would also have had full 'invasion stripes' applied.

Flown on 234 Squadron's first patrol of D-Day, between 0520 and 0610 hrs, by Flt/Sgt Sims, he and AA936 were last seen flying at 500ft ten miles south of St Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight, and it was assumed that he had been shot down by anti-aircraft fire, either from Allied ships or coastal defences... ie lost to 'friendly fire'.



SPITFIRE Mk Vb AA936 AZ-E 234 SQUADRON



Modeller's notes

Aircraft:
Pointed Rotol propeller spinner with Jablo wooden blades
Six-stack exhaust manifolds
Internal bullet-proof windscreen
Fully blown canopy hood
Clipped wing tips
IFF Mk III aerial under starboard wing (no wires)

Colours:
Ocean Grey and Dark Green Day Fighter Scheme in the A Scheme pattern
Medium Sea Grey under surfaces
Sky code letters AZ-E
Sky propeller spinner and rear fuselage band

Discussion points:

The serial number is in a stencilled form which was fairly common on progressively updated airframes that had been repainted at MUs. AA936 was also fitted with wing stiffening strakes over the main undercarriage wheel wells, introduced from mid-1942. The aircraft carried a dark blue Swift silhouette in a white disc under the windscreen which was added at some point prior to its demise (see inset).



WING STRENGTHENING STRAKES

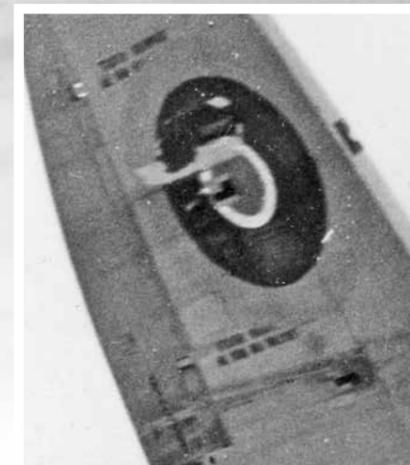


The early Spitfire's thin upper-surface skin of metal over the wheel wells was already showing signs of fatigue during the Battle of Britain. To temporarily solve the problem, bracing strips were applied internally from February 1941 before more robust external strips were introduced in July 1942. These strips were retro-fitted to as many Mk I, Mk II and Mk Va and Vbs as possible. The Mk Vc didn't need them as the 'c' wing had been strengthened with thicker metal skin.

Above: Bearing in mind the above statement, this is an extremely rare photo! Mk Vc, EE721, DU-E of 312 Squadron, (note the large cannon blisters of the 'c' wing), with a single set of strengthening strakes over the port wheel well. An in-service repair perhaps?

Right: Mk Vb, EP509, RF-G of 303 Squadron fitted with wing stiffeners over the mainwheel wells. This particular aircraft is also fitted with multiple (six stack) exhaust manifolds, clipped wing tips and what appear to be extended horn-balanced elevators, making it an LF Mk Vb sub-type. The stencil style, small serial number presentation is also interesting. The aerial under the starboard wing is the later IFF Mk III.

Top right: Close-up of the size and shape of the wing stiffening strakes.



Three more photos of EN821, SN-M of No 243 Squadron, (from the formation shot on page 1), showing the stencil style serial number presentation, and how the individual aircraft letter 'M' was displayed under the nose. Note the repainted underwing roundels and the way that the underside colour has been sprayed over the skyband and quite high up the fuselage under the tailplane. The close up shows how only part of the 'trestle here' stencil remains.