

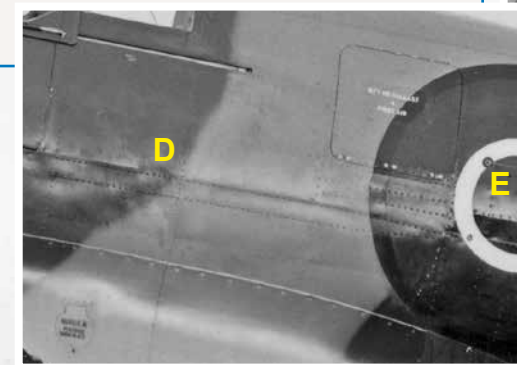
This converted Mk V had the serial BF274 applied in error - it should have been BS274 (BF271 and BF273 were also incorrectly marked). BS274 was converted by Rolls-Royce at Hucknall and spent its career as a test machine. Seen here on test at A&AEE Boscombe Down in 1942, BF274/BS274 (and other Rolls-Royce Hucknall produced 'modified airframe' Mk IXs), were converted from existing Mk Vcs.

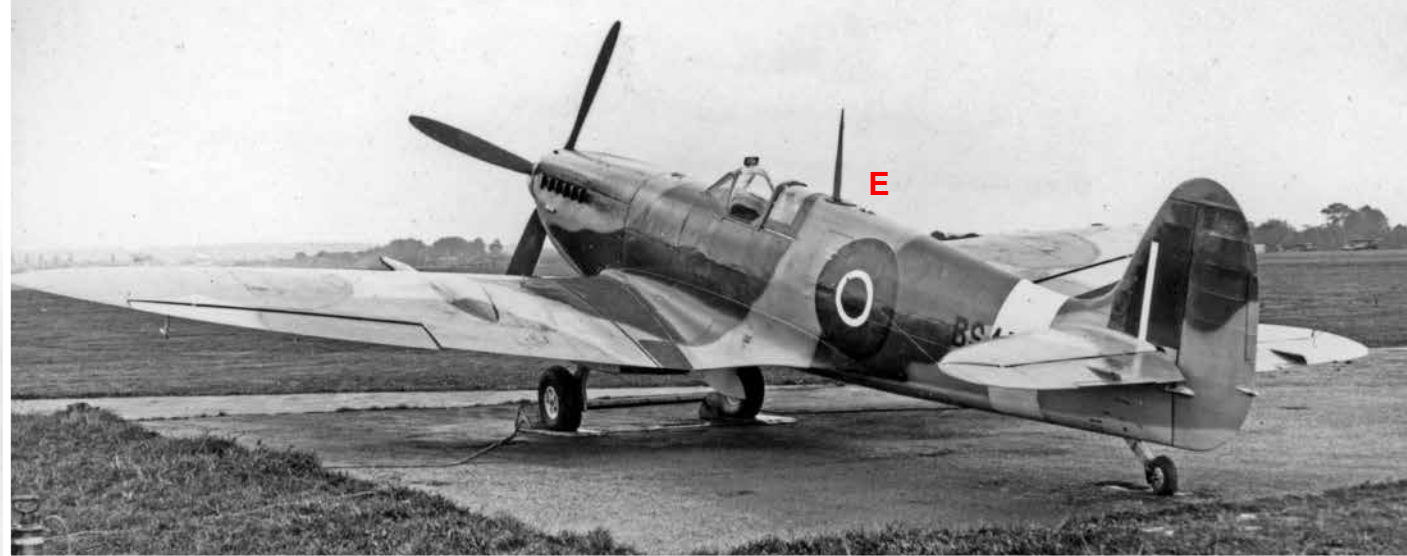
The Merlin 61 had a two-stage supercharger with an intercooler that protruded above the engine (see page 25). As a temporary measure 'clearance holes' were cut into the top cowling panels, which were faired over by pair of oval-shaped 'blisters' (A) until Supermarine designed the definitive cowling. BS274 is carrying a 30 gallon slipper tank modified to fit around the deeper and wider carburettor air intake fitted to early Mk IXs. Many of the Rolls-Royce converted Spitfire Mk IXs also had incorrectly camouflaged noses, noticeable by the steep angle of the Dark Green camouflage demarcation from in front of the windscreen to the leading edge of the port wing.

Left: The 'C' wing has the early broader gun blisters. The elevators are the standard Mk V size and BS274 is fitted with a VHF aerial mast and IFF aerials from the tailplane to fuselage (arrowed).

Right: BR592 was one of the converted Mk Vs, as can be seen by the butt joints (A) between the standard cowling and the 9 inch extension panel. It also displays two 'bumps' (B) at the position of the intercooler.

Main picture: The factory fresh BS452 before delivery to 306 Squadron. Again, it was a converted Mk V but the joints of the extension cowlings are less visible. A single 'bump' (C) now covers engine ancillaries. Note the raised rivets from behind the pilot's door (D) on the rear end of the datum longeron, which ran from below the radio hatch to the engine firewall, and then supported the upper engine bearer. Note also the IFF aerial bush (E) in the roundel.





Two more views of BS452. Note the capital 'B' in a circle on the front of the propeller blades (A) and the early rectangular mirror (B). Although appearing dark here, the extent of the yellow leading edge is clear - compare with the yellow outer ring of the fuselage roundel. The opening (C) in the wing root is for the gun camera on Merlin 61 or 63 powered machines, but housed a fuel cooler on other engines, causing the camera to be moved to the starboard wing root on LF and HF models. The 'straight taper' of the early 20mm cannon fairing (D) is clear (arrowed). The identification light (E) is behind the aerial mast.



Moving on in production history, MJ271 was built as a 'thoroughbred' Mk IX - an LF IXc fitted with a Merlin 66 optimized for performance at around 22,000 feet. MJ271 was constructed at Castle Bromwich and first saw service with 118 Squadron in February 1944, was transferred to 132 Squadron in April 1944, then to 401 (Canadian) Squadron. After the war it served with the Dutch Air Force and became a museum exhibit. Following a restoration to airworthy condition between 2016 and 2019 it emerged in an all metal 'silver' finish and completed a 'round-the-world' flight as G-IRTY 'The Silver Spitfire' between August and December 2019.

(A) 'Hooks' to aid slipper fuel tank jettisoning.
 (B) Mk III IFF dipole aerial which replaced the earlier wires.

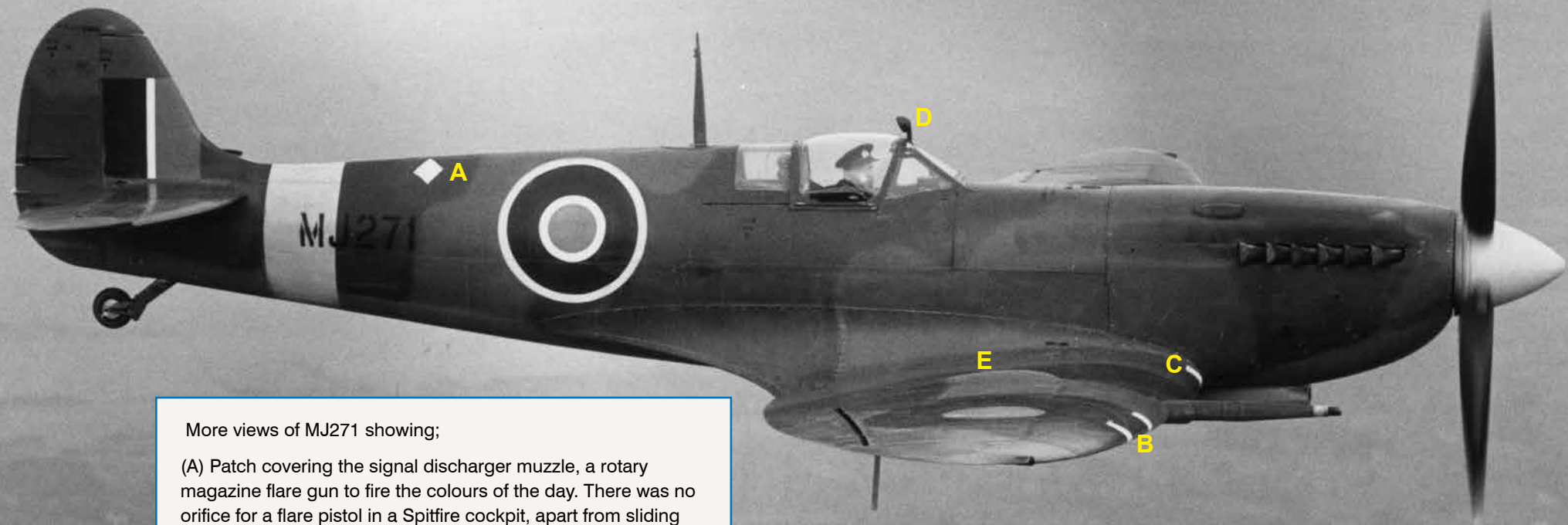




MK177 was another Castle Bromwich built LF IXc.

Above: This crisper photo allows us to see that the riveting behind the cockpit is now flush, the bumps on the cowlings and the dorsal identification light have gone (compare with BS452 on page 7). The wheel hubs are fitted with wheel trims marked with 'anti-creep' marks - two on the port wheel and four on the starboard.

Below: A perfect head on view showing the wing dihedral, (a total mystery to several kit manufacturers), and the profile of the propeller blades. It's also interesting to note the 'toe-in' angle of the mainwheels in relation to the undercarriage legs and the angle of the pitot tube and IFF aerial to the wings.



More views of MJ271 showing;

- (A) Patch covering the signal discharger muzzle, a rotary magazine flare gun to fire the colours of the day. There was no orifice for a flare pistol in a Spitfire cockpit, apart from sliding back the hood!
- (B) Patches covering the .303 machine gun ports.
- (C) Patch covering the camera gun in the starboard wing root - moved from the port side due to a fuel cooler on the port side.
- (D) Round streamlined mirror.
- (E) Narrow cannon blister.