

## R. J. Mitchell



Reginald Joseph Mitchell CBE, FRAeS, (20 May 1895 – 11 June 1937) was an aeronautical engineer, best known for his design of the Supermarine Spitfire. His career also saw the production of Schneider-Trophy-winning seaplanes and aircraft designs that broke the world air speed record on five occasions.

Mitchell was born in Kidsgrove, north Staffordshire and received his education at Queensbury Road High School and then Hanley High School before gaining an apprenticeship at the Kerr, Stuart & Co. Locomotive Works at Fenton in 1911.

In 1917, he joined the Supermarine Aviation Works at Southampton. Advancing quickly within the company, Mitchell was appointed Chief Designer in 1919. He was made Chief Engineer in 1920 and Technical Director in 1927.

He was so highly regarded that, when Vickers took over Supermarine in 1928, one of the conditions was that Mitchell stay as a designer for the next five years.

Between 1920 and 1936, Mitchell designed 24 aircraft including light aircraft, fighters, bombers, several seaplanes and flying boats such as the Supermarine Walrus and Supermarine Stranraer. However, he is best remembered for his work on the Supermarine Schneider Trophy series of racing aircraft culminating in the Supermarine S.6B and the Supermarine Spitfire.

The S.6B won the Schneider Trophy in 1931 and later broke the world air speed record. Mitchell was awarded the CBE in 1932 for his contribution to high-speed flight. Mitchell's experience with high speed aircraft such as the S6B prompted the Air Ministry to issue specification F7/30 to Supermarine, primarily a seaplane manufacturer, for the design of a new fighter aircraft.

R. J. Mitchell sadly died of cancer on 11th June 1937. The first Spitfire flight had taken place only one year before in March 1936.