

I started work at BAC Preston in 1956 on the Development & Experimental Dept. based in Wellfield machine shop.

Early in the year 1960 the department was transferred with the machines to a larger shop, it being adjacent to Strand Road. It housed possibly five or six dozen skilled personnel in all trades, more were added as time went by. The area was segregated from the rest of the factory, each person was allocated a special pass with the enclosed area known as working 'Behind the Curtain'.

It was then our first experience of working on the TSR.2 took off. I worked on an old Cincinatti hydraulic milling machine, worst of the work was freehand: it was this metal titanium which created a further interest. The machine was old and pre-war, but on one would say which was a Royal Navy plate attached.

The first finished assembly (part fuselage), which left the factory sheeted on a low-loader, was cheered on its way through the then large gates. A memorable occasion never experienced the likes before or after. The workers to a man saw a great future ahead, alas, it was not to be.

After 2-3 years, totally involved in producing parts for the TSR2, it was plagued with rumours for and against the future. Most of the workforce accepted a conflict of commitment amongst politicians and just got on with their respective jobs.

Julian Amery, the Tory MP, had served the aircraft workers with hope, but Harold Wilson had other ideas.

When the end eventually came, it was hinted by many paid-up unions members that they would cancel the 'political levy'. Some members went to work in the States, many lost their jobs.

I machined a number of orders of Trunion Barrels over the years, there was no fixture, just held between 'Tail stock & Dividing Head'. I was working on an order when the plane was scrapped and actually finished them about five weeks after. I served my time as a fitter in South Yorkshire. I worked for BAC for 29 years, the last eight years I worked on the 'Marking out Table'.

Eric Kitchen