

From Fred Cowell, ex-Bac Warton 31/32 Hangar

My involvement with TSR2 was at Boscombe Down and the run up to first flight. Volunteers from Warton flight sheds 31 & 32 hangars were asked for, so (being a keen 20 something) away I went.

The time I spent at Boscombe can only be described as hectic. Newspapers and the media were reporting political pressures for cancellation on cost and other grounds. Everything we did had to be done like 'yesterday'. Health and safety would have had a field day had they been around at that time. Double shifts, ghosters, a day shift followed by a night shift all common place 40 years ago. Of course, the extra money was always an incentive, but I like to think there was a great sense of dedication and commitment also.

I remember one incident during refuelling of 219. The refuel connection was, as I remember in the nose wheel bay, the hose became jammed half on half off. Fuel cascaded everywhere. The lad's initial reaction was to get out of the fuel spray, but after a couple of seconds, back in he went, struggled, completed the connection and came out after what seemed like an age, totally drenched in Avtur but still smiling. How's that for commitment?! There were times when 219 was being towed back into the hangar with guys walking alongside removing screws and panels, such was the urgency.

The one incident utmost in my mind though was when XR220's rear fuselage arrived at Boscombe from Weybridge on an articulated low loader. The fuselage was packed with instrumentation and was a key part of the project. The vehicle drew up at right angles to the hangar's doors. Everyone who was anyone was present, from top management down, all waiting to get their hands on No.2. After several minutes of discussion the driver was asked to make a right turn into the hangar. What happened next was dramatic! The artic started its turn but instead of the trailer following the cab, the front wheel of the trailer instead of turning acted as a pivot. The trailer tipped over at a crazy angle sending the much awaited XR220 rear fuse falling onto the hangar floor coming to rest with the right hand

taileron spigot dug into the concrete. Many a head was buried in hands on that day as you can imagine.

After many high level meetings my last tasks were drilling out fasteners and removing skin panels around the area of impact to check for hidden structural damage. I often wonder if this incident had any impact on the subsequent cancellation of the project. I hope this story adds to your collection and eventually hope to read your publication.

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