

From George Seyfang, at the time a BAC Warton apprentice

1962.....Having failed to join the RAF as a pilot (eye-sight) I decided that 'if I could not fly fast-jets, then I would build them'. So I went for interview down the road at Warton to become a student apprentice. The interview went well and I answered all the questions satisfactorily, but when asked if I had any questions to ask the company (salary, holidays, prospects etc), all I could ask was 'when will TSR2 fly?'

1964.....Part of my student apprenticeship included some shop-floor experience at Strand Road and Samlesbury. It was quite a 'rude-awakening' for someone from a grammar school and I really learned how to swear whilst 'helping' the skilled fitters make some of the smaller parts of Canberras, Lightnings and TSR2s. I was surprised at how the 'piece-work pay incentive system' was allowed to operate. The fitters were able to 'save-up' large numbers of 'work tickets' and then submit them for payment at Christmas or Holiday times.....meantime the progress and cost-accounting system was not aware of whether jobs had been done or not. No wonder that politicians were able to mis-quote the costs of TSR2, even the company did not know all the facts!

1965.....I was living in Preston, under the Warton flightpath, and the TSR2 prototype flew over several times and seemed very noisy, even compared to Lightnings. Further shop-floor experience during student apprenticeship, helping to assemble TSR2 wings at Samlesbury.....but then a few weeks later all of us apprentices were sent to Filton or Stevenage whilst the aircraft were destroyed and some of the people were sacked.

1966.....The model aircraft club at Warton was able to acquire a substantial stock of balsa wood that had been purchased to fill between the inner and outer skins of the TSR2 intakes. As a member of the club I bought some of this wood and some of it went into making a semi-scale flying model of TSR2. I hope to make another model of TSR2 soon, but this time with radio control.

1968.....I was working in the future projects office at Warton and was soon helping to size and design the MRCA / Tornado with former wartime enemies from Germany and Italy.....a unique opportunity enabled by the cancellation of TSR2. Some of my BAC colleagues had worked on TSR2 for many years and one had been on the flight test team at Boscombe when XR220 fell off the lorry. He was the one who had to make 'the telephone call' to Freddie Page and tell him the news. He remembered passing the 'good news' and expecting an angry reaction, only nothing came down the line for several minutes so he eventually hung up. He long believed that somewhere in Warton there is a telephone handset still swinging.....

1970s till today.....I regularly visit aircraft museums and see the remaining TSR2 aircraft at Duxford and Cosford, and am always amazed how big they are relative to Jaguar, Tornado and Typhoon.

Recently.....During a visit to Russia I was walking at midnight across a deserted Red Square in Moscow and was struck by the chilling thought that this spot would have been a prime target for TSR2 squadrons if the Cold War had turned Hot.....