

From Denis Potter

For my part, I arrived in Flight Test as an undergraduate apprentice in my final year on 4 January 1965 and spent a few weeks working on Lightning odds and sods. But then XR219 managed to get out of the hangar at Boscombe and started flying again, although it wasn't until about flight 10 that its wheels managed to get up. I was first asked to analyse approach and landing films on a system called BOSCAR. This was exciting stuff, especially as my analysis showed that it was leaving the runway during the landing - however, compensation for the runway profile showed that Bea was actually greasing along the runway while trying to get the bogies to do the right thing.

Then I was moved onto analysis of the aircraft's flight performance, searching the A13 films (reels of light sensitive paper onto which instrumentation signals were recorded in flight) for any period, however short, when the aircraft was fairly steady and I could analyse its performance. Only on one flight was any steady state cruising scheduled and there were three periods of tens of seconds for me to analyse. The analysis involved measuring all the relevant parameters and entering them on a large paper spreadsheet and then making the appropriate calculations. The engine performance was derived from an engine performance brochure produced by Rolls-Royce (Bristol Siddeley). The results, principally drag coefficient, were then passed onto Aerodynamics by Sandy Burns when he was happy that I had made no errors.

The general buzz at the time was that drag was close to prediction. I recall that the airbrakes were never fully closed but were held cracked open an inch, but I can't remember why this was, probably something to do with closure of the airbrake jacks.

There was great excitement all round when XR219 flew up to Warton from Boscombe, on flight 14 I think, although the first attempt had to be abandoned, with the result that all the assembled newspeople rubbished the aircraft. However, when she did arrive, having gone supersonic en-route, there was great

jubilant at TSR2 having come home to Warton. We apprentices had to shepherd the newspeople so we saw it all from the front line.

It was then that Flight Test numbers increased dramatically, with the arrival of Derek Hargreaves, Barry Tyler and other team members, who had been down at Boscombe for months on end. I think that there was a surge of births about nine months later.

Meanwhile, down at Boscombe, other members of the team were getting XR220 and XR221 ready for engine runs and flight, XR220 being close to first flight on Budget Day. I think that John Ritchie was its runner. Bob Price was down there as Airworthiness - it was he who rang up Freddie Page when XR220 (I think) fell off its transporter when the driver tried to make a turn that was too tight.

Bea, Jimmy Dell and Don Knight all flew XR219 and it was Don who went out for flight 25 (I think) but had to return to dispersal because of a hydraulic leak. That was its last outing because the programme was cancelled in the Budget - a huge shock to us all.

When XR219 was about to take to the air, Air Traffic would notify Blackpool and Woodvale that this was about to happen. On one occasion there was an Air Squadron cadet up in his Chipmunk over Woodvale when he was notified. His reaction was reported to be "Where is it? Quick, I'm coming straight in."

After the cancellation, we spent a few weeks mopping up the analysis, but working without enthusiasm. Then it was decided that we would prepare a proposal to fly the three serviceable aircraft for research purposes, not least with relevance to the Concorde programme, and we all set to with enthusiasm on this. But the proposal was rejected out of hand and we were instructed to destroy all the data, presumably along with the destruction of

the jigs. This we did, including the engine brochure. The day after I had torn that up into tiny pieces, Barry Tyler asked me for

it and I had to tell him the sad news - I think it was required to help with developing work on the Olympus 593 for Concorde.

Dickie Dickinson was CFTE at the time, Mike Henney being his deputy and staying on Lightning. It was Dickie who had the unenviable task of calling in all the FTEs who were made redundant shortly afterwards - I think it was only three months later - there were some who had stayed on Lightning who thought they would be safe but redundancies were not restricted to people who had been on TSR2 - we apprentices were safe due to a policy decision.

After the redundancies I was put on Lightning work, running XG331, one of the radar development aircraft, but it was on an extended lay-up during my tenure and I handed it over to Neville Fraser shortly before it took to the skies again, when I was redeployed to other tasks before going back to Cambridge in 1966 to do my PhD.