I worked for the British Aircraft Corporation at Weybridge Surrey for about four years transferring to Filton Bristol for about two more years my main work was assembling the VC10 & BAC 111.

My involvement with the TSR2 at Weybridge was one-off jobs with the main airframe. The airframe contained a lot more stainless steel and titanium which created greater problems to hand tools, twistdrills etc most other airframes are constructed out of light alloy.

As far as I can recall there were about four main fuselage assembly jigs all being worked on at the same time.

I saw the first airframe loaded on to a articulated trailer sent off to Boscombe Down for final assembly and test flying.

I always worked with a partner and the leak testing I described is the only job I can remember with any detail of my own involvement.

It required us to make a temporary piece of fuselage skin from transparent plastic to seal the tank top, then fill the tank with de-min water, fit and seal the cover, pull a vacuum, and note where any air bubbles entered the tank through riveted frames and stringers at the tank bottom. As there was no access to this area from inside the airframe assembly, this was the only way we could find the leaks. We carried out this test repeatedly all under the supervision of an design office engineer taking us about a week and finally giving up when there was no sign of success at all.

What happened to this area I have no idea but what it really needed was a flexible liner and such a small a volume was not worth the bother.

The only other incident I am aware of is the fuselage rolling off a trailer when being reversed into the hanger at Boscombe after delivery from Weybridge.

This was only hearsay as I did not witness it but heard the story from our foreman and associates so believed it to be true.

I never did see it fly unfortunately but heard great results of test flight success. I took the picture below of XR222 at Duxford on 15 August 2003.

Michael Bryant