

From Alan Daniels (*see also Photo Album page 590*)

In 1964/65 I was the representative, located at Warton, of BAC Weybridge, who were the System Design Authority for the project.

One of my responsibilities was attending meetings with the Warton management regarding design issues between the two teams. As is normal in these circumstances, any suggestion from Warton was viewed with great suspicion by Weybridge and the reverse was also the case.

During one of my first meetings a contentious point arose and Bob Hollock, Warton's works manager at the time, responded to my input by saying "That's the trouble with you bloody Southerners!" "Hang on a minute Bob", I said "How far South of York do you have to be born to become a Southerner?"

"Jesus Christ!" said Bob "You're not a bloody Yorkshireman are you?"
Much worse!!

Part 2

I worked closely with Darrel Helliwell, a Principal Engineer at Warton and Barry Tyler, a Principal Flight Test Engineer. XR219 had made a few flights since its arrival at Warton from Boscombe Down but never more than one in a day. The incident I and Darrel witnessed was against this background. XR219 had flown during the early afternoon, I cannot recall whether it was Bee or Jimmy Dell who had piloted, but on return had reported no failures or problems so the aircraft was being prepared, late afternoon, for a second, unprecedented flight.

Darrel and I stood at the entrance to Hanger 2 and looked out on the apron at the activity around XR219. Eventually the canopy closed and I was about to make a call to Weybridge to boast that we were about to fly

a second sortie in the one day. All of a sudden the canopy opened, moments later the Crew Chief (Alan Perry, I think was his name) started to walk towards us. He got within 20 yards and said "Pressed the f***** fire extinguisher button!!" He was furious. For the pilot, who I suppose ought to be left anonymous, it was to be his first flight.

There was, however, some mitigation for the error. During run up various cautionary warnings of the systems normally come up. This causes the master caution light, high up on the coaming panel, adjacent to the head up display to illuminate and initiate an audio warning signal. This is cancelled by pressing the lamp unit. Unfortunately, alongside the master caution light, about one inch away, is the engine fire warning/extinguisher button; pressing this initiates the engine fire extinguisher which fills the engine with fire suppressant foam. I think it took about three weeks before we were ready to fly again. Needless to say there was no boasting to Weybridge about this!

On the day of the cancellation, I went out to my car in the car park and listened to the budget speech. Towards the end the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Denis Healey) announced that TSR.2 was to be cancelled with immediate effect. Although it was half expected, I was stunned.

During the following months, I looked down on XR219 from my office in Hanger 2. Initially the aircraft was kept in flying condition and Barry Tyler and I proposed, to the Ministry, various high speed taxi trials to prove the rough ground capability of the undercarriage. All to no avail. They were determined it would never fly again; they had killed a world beater.

I was transferred to the Warton Division and some months later, working in Advanced Projects under Ollie Heath and Gerry Willox, we were presented with a "new" Air Staff Target for MRCA, supposedly generated by the Labour Government. It contained the same paragraphs and spelling mistakes as that for TSR.2, how strange!

Fortunately it was to become a joint international programme, not too easy to cancel, which eventually became Tornado. At least this successful aircraft emerged largely as a result of what we had learned on TSR2.

I have a limited edition painting by Keith Aspinall entitled 'Testing Time'. Jimmy Dell, a personal friend of mine, had it signed for me by Bee, Don Knight and himself, the only 3 test pilots who flew XR219. A very special trophy for me.

Alan Daniels