

I was employed on XR219 shortly after joining the Warton Flight Test Instrumentation Dept after completing an Aircraft Fitter apprenticeship at Strand Road, Preston.

During my apprenticeship I well remember being involved with the manufacture of tooling to be used during the production of TSR2 structural components, little knowing that in the none to distant future, I would be actively working on the very first aircraft on its prolonged Engine Runs leading up to its first Flight at Boscombe Down and subsequent Flights at Warton.

I will never forget the pressure that all concerned at Boscombe were under in order to effect a 1st Flight at the earliest opportunity. As is the case with all new A/C types this is easier said than done.

One day that I well remember was the delivery of the second A/C Fuselage to Boscombe from Weybridge.

I was gathered with one or two workmates watching with interest the vehicle and its precious load being manouvered in thro' the rear of the hangar. Unfortunately the trailer jack-knifed in some manner with the trailer/aircraft fuselage then toppling over with a resounding crunching noise.

The Superintendent (I forget his name at the moment) was totally bereft and tearing at his hair as he ran to the scene of disaster and screaming at the top of his voice "I've never lost

an A/C in my life...I've never lost an A/C in my life". His antics were so comical that we could not stop ourselves from bursting into laughter. The poor soul heard us ,then whipped round and threatened us all with the "sack" before sprinting off again gesticulating with arms flailing to the bereft driver of the vehicle.

Needless to say we heard no more of our "sacking" as he was obviously involved in ongoing post mortem and recovery activities.

I returned to Warton shortly before the aircraft was due to depart from Boscombe. I continued working on the TSR2 until the dreaded news of its cancellation, shortly after which I was made redundant at the age of 22 with a wife and young baby to support. In order to find work (there was none in the area) I had to go to Leicester and work for the Beagle Aircraft Company living with my wife and baby in a wooden hut which leaked rain water down the wall of his bedroom.

I will however never forget the tremendous buzz and pride that all who were connected with the TSR2 aircraft had either directly or indirectly.

Then there was also the unfortunate Test Pilot who whenever he flew the aircraft at Warton, more often than not, he had to nurse it back to base with fire engines following him after landing.

Another memory is the one regarding the navigator who made the first Flight with "Bee". I remember when he had his first opportunity to take part in "Engine Runs " on XR219 when his knees were knocking so much we thought he would never be able to climb into the aircraft.

Happy, happy days (and nights) which at the time were also fraught with disappointments and ongoing technical challenges.

But one hell of an aircraft was to become a sacrificial lamb to politics and so cruelly cancelled.

Jim Iddon