

Grandad writes .....

I started work at Vickers in 1936 and have worked on the following aircraft:- Vikings, Wellesley, Wellington, Viscount, VC10

I was working on a VC10 when I was asked to work on new aircraft the TSR2, as a charge hand, to build the first fuselage and fuel tanks. The fuselage was made of machine shaped panels riveted together

After the fuselage was finished we took the first plane out of the jig onto the shop floor to have the wings fitted the wings were fuel tanks and so was the middle of the plane we all called her the "flying bomb" because if she had crashed she would have exploded like a bomb. We had to make covers to fill holes in the fuel tanks so we could pressure test the holes. After the fuel tanks had been inspected the engines were fitted and the cowlings, rudders etc after that. Most of the electrics had to be fitted on the port side in front of the port engine and then they were covered by a large door fixed with bolts (in the photo in "Pension update" you can see the door just behind the cabin). You could not get to the instrumentation placed in here from the inside of the plane only from the outside through the door.

I worked on all 14 planes. There was high security on these planes and we had to have a special pass to get in the hangers to work. I carried on working there until they came to cut them up. They were broken up by a company called

Cowley's of Kingston who took away the cut up planes for scrap. It was hard to watch the planes being broken up we had all worked so hard on them, everybody was upset, lots of the guys lost their job but some like me were filtered off although I lost my position as charge hand. I was lucky, I was sent to work on Concorde until I retired.

I have two photographs of the planes given to me by the foreman, Vic Barnard, he told me one of them is her taking off at Boscombe and one is her being refuelled.

Fred Howells (Age 92)