

The second TSR.2 XR220 arrives at Boscombe Down and causes some headaches

Final assembly of the TSR.2s was at the BAC factory at Weybridge, Surrey, where they were completed and fully system checked. Because the runway at Weybridge was too short for the TSR.2 to safely fly from, the first two aircraft were then dismantled for road transport to the Ministry's Aircraft and Armaments Experimental Establishment site at Boscombe Down, Wiltshire, where they had to be re-assembled and re-tested before taxiing and flight trials could start. What an incredible waste of time and money!

So, when the second TSR.2, XR220, arrived at Boscombe it famously fell off the back of the lorry, and is seen here in the keeled over state.

The resultant damage was not severe, but nonetheless assessment and repair took some considerable time: had the incident not occurred, the aircraft would undoubtedly have flown long before the date on which the cancellation was announced.

Reference books indicate that subsequent aircraft were to have flown from Wisley, Surrey, and Warton, Lancashire, but no others left Weybridge before cancellation. It might be suggested that this ridiculous state of affairs stemmed largely from the internal politics within the new BAC organisation and lack of control from the various government bodies, rather than any degree of common sense or pragmatic approach to getting the job done.

Leonard Ridgway supplied the photos seen here and contributes the following. I spent a considerable amount of my time at the Weybridge works of BAC on this project and later at Boscombe Down up until it was scrapped. My main job on the aircraft after the initial build was the installation of the hydraulic systems and their functioning and believe me that was what we now call working 24/7.

When the second aircraft fell over on its arrival at Boscombe Down, I was heavily involved with getting it back on its undercarriage, a job that took two weeks. Firstly, to go back a step, when a TSR.2 was ready to leave Weybridge for Boscombe Down, here's an idea of what was involved in getting it loaded onto the trailer.

The aircraft was put on to its wheels and a steel girder was attached to the jacking points, this was longer than the actual width of the fuselage, and on to the ends of the girder were bolted web plates which had jacking points, these bolts were 1 in. diameter. if I remember correctly and there were quite a few of them so it was quite a dockyard job.

The next thing was to jack the aircraft with all the steel work and then raise the main undercarriages, which at this stage had to be done with hand rigs, and then remove the nosewheel. We then pushed the trailer under the aircraft from the rear and when in position lowered



the aircraft and ironwork onto the trailer. The nosewheel structure picked up to a tripod that was previously bolted to the trailer and the girder attached to the aircraft jacking points was bolted to the trailer, all we had to do then was remove the web plates from the girder, stow them on the trailer and hey presto we were on our way to Boscombe Down.

I'm coming now to the arrival of XR220 at Boscombe, and that wasn't without incident..... I got down there from Weybridge before the aircraft, so some of the lads and myself decided to go for an evening meal in the

camp as we knew we would be in for another late night. You can't imagine how we felt when we came back and saw what was had happened, just couldn't believe it. Service photographers turned up and started taking photos and it was decided that no more could be done that evening, so we went in to Amesbury for a pint and an early night while we had the chance.

Next morning, the military turned up and also the air force to see how it could be righted in case it ever happened in service and they would know what to do. We removed the covers to see what damage we could see



and found that the iron work used for lifting had broken out of its place on the trailer and had punctured the aircraft skin in several places.

The stress people now took over to discuss the best way to separate '220 from the trailer without causing any undue stresses. The time it took wasn't surprising, I think one of the main concerns was the fact that the main elevon shaft on the port side was taking the weight of aircraft and trailer. Well it was decided to lift 220 and trailer together and then separate while they were supported on cranes. This involved, if I remember correctly, six cranes and it wasn't easy as the iron work was heavy and of course it was at an awkward angle. However it was done and the two bits were separated and we were left with a hanging fuselage albeit at 90deg to normal.

Well here we are with one fuselage hanging on cranes 90deg from its normal position and how to turn it. The first thing we did was to get a steel girder that could be bolted to the wing pick up points that had a central shackle that we could hook on to yet another crane, this crane then took most of the load.

The next job was to get the starboard main undercarriage out but it first meant getting the doors open to get in to connect a hand pumped hydraulic rig, not easy considering the angle of the fuselage but it was done and we started to pump out the undercarriage, It was a bit tricky because the crane that was attached to

the wing pick up points had to be raised as the undercarriage moved further out and turned the fuselage. The undercarriage was eventually pumped right out and into lock, the weight of this was sufficient to bring the aircraft more or less into normal position and it was lowered until it was touching the ground so now we had 220 on its starboard undercarriage, hanging on the central crane with a crane at the nose and one at the tail to keep it level.

The port main undercarriage was then lowered and locked down and then the nosewheel was fitted, the cranes were removed and there she stood on her own - albeit with a few holes in the skin. It was only the heavy weight of the undercarriage that made the fuselage turn. Without it I don't know how we would have done it, so now all we had to do was to tow it into the hangar and it didn't seem to be much the worse for wear. And that's it and that is where the fortnight in time went!!