

# SOPWITH AVIATION AND HAWKER AIRCRAFT CANBURY PARK ROAD, KINGSTON



## In 1912 Sopwith bought the roller skating rink in Kingston

Sopwith Aviation retained its sheds at Brooklands for flight testing but the wide span and level flat wooden floor of the skating rink was ideal for building aircraft. Kingston offered other benefits. Craftsmen with woodworking and fabric skills were available, there was ample housing for a hoped-for expanding workforce, it was close enough to the aerodrome at Brooklands for transport of aircraft by lorry but away from the prying eyes of competitors, and the nearby River Thames was a natural runway for floatplanes. The first aircraft from the skating rink was the Sopwith Bat Boat (centre). By 1914 it was producing Tabloid scouts (right).



## By 1915 Sopwith were successful enough to start building this 51/2 acre factory farther along Canbury Park Road, with a handsome office block on the corner

The new factory was busy building Sopwith Dolphins (right) in 1918 and Sopwith leased another bigger factory nearby in Ham to build hundreds of Sopwith Snipe fighters

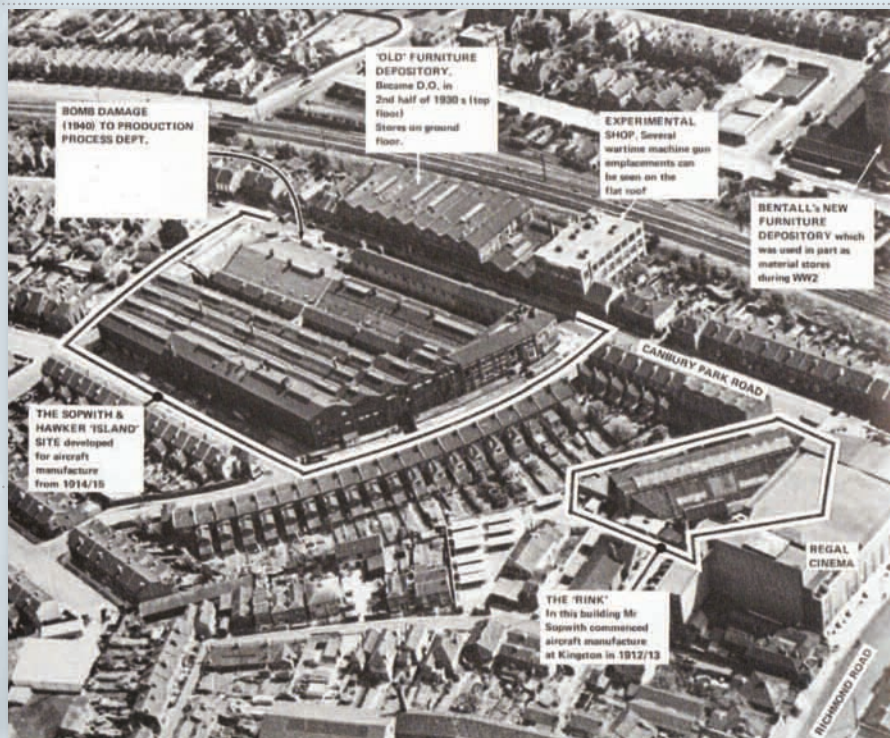


Sopwith Aviation was succeeded by Hawker Aircraft in 1920 and it was some years before the factory became busy again with Hawker Horsley bomber production (far left) and then Hawker Hart and Fury Biplanes through the 1930s. (left)

## In the early 1930s Hawker Aircraft had expanded to the railway side of the road

A furniture depository became a store with the design office above and by 1935 there was a new three story experimental shop in which the prototype Hawker Hurricane was built.

During the war other local buildings were used including the second floor of Bentalls department store as an office.



The Canbury Park Road factory remained in use by Hawker Aircraft until 1958 when the Ham factory, purchased in 1948, had been developed to accommodate the whole business