

HAWKER, HAWKER SIDDELEY AVIATION & BRITISH AEROSPACE AT DUNSFOLD

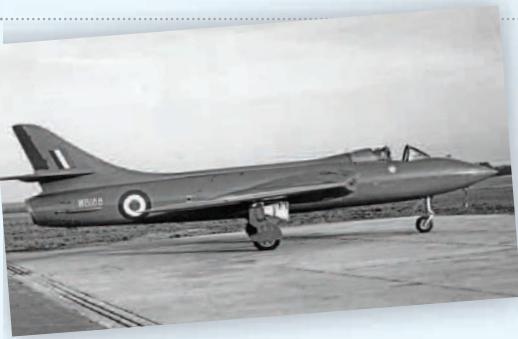


Hawker Aircraft final assembly and flight testing moved from Langley to Dunsfold in 1951

Dunsfold Aerodrome was built in 20 weeks in 1942 by the Canadian Engineers in collaboration with the Air Ministry. It was used by the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Royal Air Force, the Royal Dutch Naval Air Service until 1946 after which it was made available to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for use by the airline and charter company Skyways Ltd. Their most famous job was participating in the Berlin Air Lift of 1948, but business declined and in 1950 Skyways went into voluntary liquidation. In 1951 the Ministry of Supply offered the airfield to Hawker Aircraft Ltd who needed a new site because Langley's grass runway was not suitable for jets and because of the proximity of Heathrow, London's new airport.

Hawker Hunters at Dunsfold

The initial 35 Hawker Sea Hawks from Kingston were assembled and flown at Dunsfold before production was moved to Armstrong Whitworth in 1953. The first major programme at Dunsfold was the flight development and assembly of the very successful Hawker Hunter. As the pace of Hunter production increased, Hawker built a new three bay assembly hangar. Hunter production of new and refurbished aircraft continued until 1975.



In 1953 Neville Duke set a new World Speed Record of 727.63 mph

Flown by Chief Test Pilot Neville Duke low over the sea off Littlehampton, on 7th September 1953, the Hunter became the fastest aircraft in the world. Preparation and development testing for this flight was done at Dunsfold. The prototype Hunter, WB188, painted red, was fitted with a pointed nose, a raked windscreen fairing and a mildly reheated Rolls-Royce Avon engine for the flight. Later marks of Hunter would have this thrust from unreheated production Avons.

The Hawker Siddeley Gnat trainer programme moved to Dunsfold in 1961

After Hawker Siddeley bought the Folland Aircraft Company, flight development and production of Folland Gnat trainers was moved to Dunsfold from Chilbolton in 1961. Many Folland design staff moved to Kingston where they played a major part in the Hawk programme.



Hawker V/STOL P.1127s at Dunsfold in the early 1960s

Historically the most significant Dunsfold project was the P.1127. The first of 6 aircraft was flown from Dunsfold by Chief Test Pilot Bill Bedford in October 1960. The entire V/STOL P.1127 flight development programme and those of the subsequent Kestrel, Harrier Sea Harrier and Harrier II were all carried out at Dunsfold.

Hawks at Dunsfold

All Hawk final assembly and flight development was carried out at Dunsfold from 1974 to 1989. British Aerospace Headquarters at Warton then decided to transfer Hawk design and production to BAe Brough in Yorkshire, taking away Kingston's most profitable product.



Harriers at Dunsfold until 2000

All the P.1127s and Kestrels, and all development and production Harriers, Sea Harriers and UK Harrier IIs were finally assembled at, and flown from, Dunsfold. The last production unit to leave the factory before its closure by BAE Systems in 2000 was the final United States Marine Corps AV-8B fuselage. Facilities at Dunsfold had been continually improved, right up to closure.