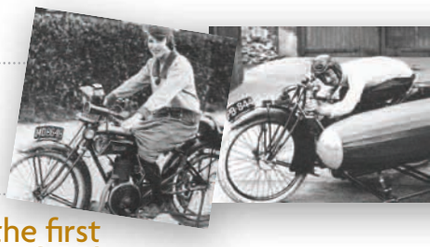
H.G. HAWKER ENGINEERING CO.

The H. G. Hawker Engineering Company was formed in 1920 by the previous directors of the Sopwith Aviation Company starting all over again with less than 20 staff

The HGHEC took over all the Sopwith patent rights as well as the Government contracts for reconditioning Sopwith Snipes. The name was changed to avoid confusion, pilot Harry Hawker's being adopted as it was well known and as Tommy Sopwith considered Hawker to be largely responsible for the growth of the Sopwith Aviation Company during the war. Sadly, on July 12th 1921, Hawker was killed in a crash, caused by a faulty carburetor, while test flying a Nieuport Goshawk.



Hawker Engineering built Hawker motorcycles, sidecars and aluminium car bodies whilst seeking orders for their new aircraft designs

The Hawker Woodcock night fighter was the first Hawker production aircraft, 57 were bought for the RAF

In 1921 Chief Designer Herbert Smith left for Japan and Captain B Thompson took his place starting with the very unsuccessful Duiker. His Woodcock also suffered from flutter and serious control deficiencies. Wilfred George Carter, a Sopwith Aviation draughtsman and designer, replaced Thompson and created the Woodcock II which entered RAF service in 1925.

Sydney Camm, Hawker's greatest designer, joined the Company in 1923. His designs were to make the Company's fortune and led to great industrial expansion for Thomas Sopwith and his team

After leaving school in 1908, aged nearly 15, Camm was a founder of the Windsor Model Aeroplane Club. He started work in 1914 as an aircraft woodworker for the Martin and Handasyde (later Martinsyde) Company of Woking and Brooklands. He progressed to be a draughtsman and in 1923 when Handasyde was dissolved the 30 year old Camm as taken on by Carter as a senior designer-draughtsman. In 1925 Carter left Hawker following a disagreement with Sigrist and Camm was made Chief Designer, a title he was to hold for 34 eventful years until becoming Chief Engineer in 1959.

The 1924 Hawker Cygnet was Sydney Camm's first design for Hawker

Soon after joining Hawker Engineering, Camm was directed by Carter to use his modelling experience to design an ultra lightweight two seat aircraft. The result was the Hawker Cygnet, a significant design achievement with an empty weight of only 373 lbs. Two were built and entered with some success in the 1924 and 1926 light aircraft competitions.

The 1925 Hawker Horsley bomber was designed by Carter. Camm was given the task of converting the wooden construction to metal

The Horsley at ten times the weight of the Cygnet illustrated Camm's design versatility. The Horsley I had a traditional wooden airframe, the II was part wood, part metal, and the 'III' was all metal. 124 were built. They were fitted with various engines and one made an extraordinary 3,420 mile non-stop flight.

The Sydney Camm era of design leadership started with the Danecock interceptor fighter for the Danish Government

His Hawfinch fighter was deemed "exceptionally pleasant with no vices" but lost to the Bristol Bulldog. His all-metal bomber, the Harrier, was unsuccessful but his next bomber design, the Hart, would mark a turning point in the fortunes of the Company.

The 1928 Tomtit was Hawker's first primary trainer which introduced the Reid & Sigrist blind-flying panel

The Tomtit, with its all metal construction and unique blind-flying instrument panel with a turn and bank indicator, was a great advance over the existing RAF primary trainer, the venerable Avro 504. The Tomtit was officially assessed as roomy, robust, docile and viceless with construction far superior to light aircraft and performance superior to contemporary training types. Only 24 were bought for the RAF and 5 by private owners, probably because of its cost.