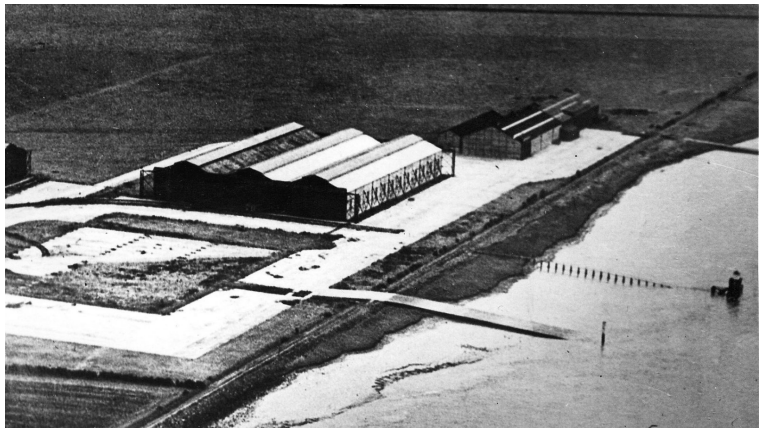
Brough, East Yorkshire

Britain's oldest remaining aircraft factory.



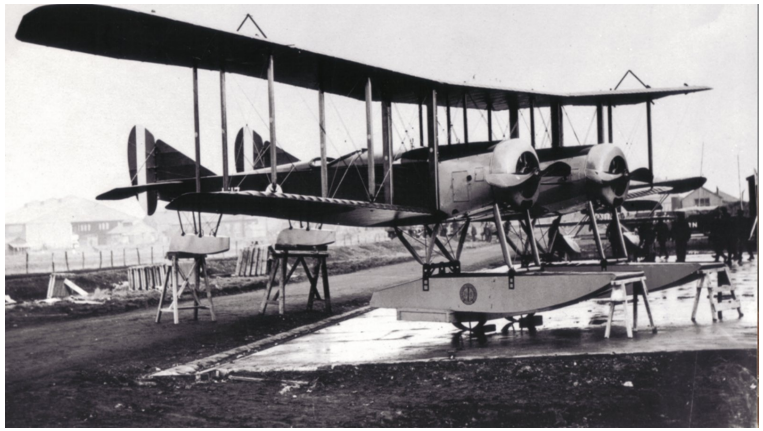
More information

BAE Systems Heritage

The information shown is based on that available at the time of the content creation. If you have any

Whilst the aircraft manufacturing side of the factory on the banks of the Humber may have reduced, the BAE Systems facility at Brough in East Yorkshire still maintains a vital role in the company's military aircraft business as the engineering centre for the Hawk trainer, many hundreds of which remain in service with air forces throughout the world and as the UK centre for Military Aircraft Structural Testing.

Having set up his business in 1910, aviation pioneer Robert Blackburn incorporated the Blackburn Aeroplane and Motor Company in 1914 and established a new factory at Brough in the East Ridings of Yorkshire in 1916.



The Blackburn TB would have been one of the first aicraft to be built at Brough in 1915

The First World War was raging in Europe and Blackburn was rapidly producing seaplanes for the allied forces and

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the Humber River would prove to be a convenient test facility. Whilst the Blackburn family relate that Robert identified the site himself, some however, have laid claims that it was chosen by Mark Swann, an aide to Blackburn, due to its proximity to 2 pubs!

During the mid-war years, Brough concentrated on the continued production of torpedo bombers, seaplanes and patrol aircraft, creating many designs for consideration and use by the Fleet Air Arm. Aircraft such as the Blackburn Dart, Ripon, Baffin, Shark and Skua were being produced in their hundreds as were a series of mighty three-engine flying boats culminating in the Blackburn Perth armed with a 37mm anti-shipping cannon.

Civil aircraft were not ignored with the introduction of the two-seater side-by-side Bluebird club aircraft which subsequently developed into the B2 trainer. It was a Bluebird that won the prestigious King's Cup Air Race in 1931 and another Bluebird IV was used by Mrs Victor Bruce in her famous round the world flight in 1930-1931.

Throughout most of the inter-war years Brough was a centre of Reserve Flying Training for the Royal Air Force, becoming No.4 Elementary and Reserve Flying Training School in 1935 and then as No.4 EFTS, providing wartime training for a range of pupils.

Flying training led to the construction of the Flying School in 1937, designed by the Hull Architect's Williams & Jopling

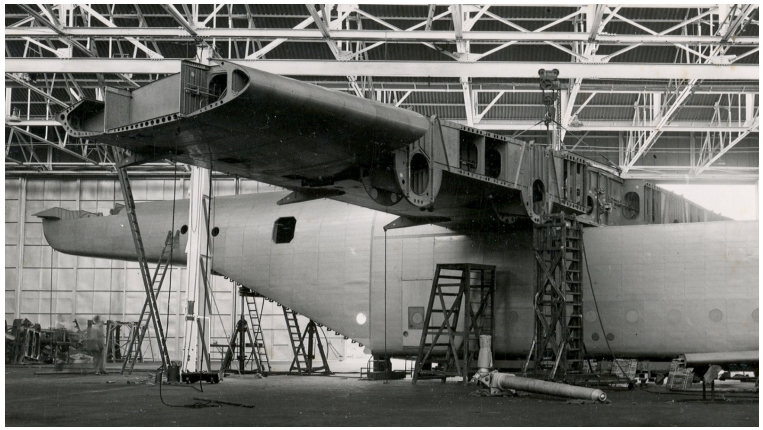
In 1934, Blackburn acquired Cirrus Hermes Engineering and moved the company into a new building on the Brough Site where it was subsequently renamed it as Blackburn Engines Ltd. The Blackburn Engine Company remained in business until rationalisation of the aircraft industry in the 1960s where the name was subsumed into Hawker Siddeley Aviation.

With the outbreak of World War II, Brough intensified its production of the Botha light bomber / trainer and latterly, the Fairey Barracuda naval torpedo bomber.

New Blackburn sister factories were built, one at Dumbarton for production of the Shorts Sunderland flying boat and the Brough designed Blackburn Botha with another at Sherburn in Elmet building the Fairey

Swordfish. During the same period Brough was also involved in considerable amounts of work adapting nearly 4000 American aircraft and repairing damaged aircraft.

An amalgamation with General Aircraft Limited (GAL) in 1949 resulted in the arrival of the GAL Freighter prototype at Brough, an aircraft later modified to become the Blackburn Beverley with production reaching its peak in 1953.



Fitting the mainplane to the fuselage of a GAL Freighter 1949

Between 1949 and 1957 the Runway and airfield Perimeter Road became a race track at occasional weekends and can lay claim to be the venue where Sir Stirling Moss recorded his first ever race victory.

Brough received a number of VIP visitors during these busy periods including Earl Mountbatten who opened

the new high speed wind tunnel during the late 1950s.

Earl Mountbatten of Burma opens the new high speed wind tunnel in March 1958

With the exception of a single YB2/HP88 research aircraft, Brough and Blackburn's first venture into the jet age was with the introduction of the Buccaneer, a carrier-borne attack aircraft. Designed by Barry P Laight in the 1950's, the Buccaneer remained in service with the RAF until 1994 and proved to be one of their most successful products having entered service with the Royal Navy in 1962.

Buccaneer Production 1962

With the rationalisation of the aircraft industry in 1963, Blackburn Brough became part of Hawker Siddeley Aviation and concentrated on the Buccaneer although it became increasingly engaged in component manufacture and testing work for other parts of the organisation.

A few years later, Brough was selected as the 'Sister Design Organisation' for the 170 Rolls-Royce powered, McDonnell F4 Phantom aircraft which entered service in 1969 with the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy. During its UK service career, fifty Phantom squadrons were supported by the Brough engineering teams and there were 296 returns to Brough for modifications and repair.

The combination of responsibility for Buccaneer and Phantom meant that from 1972 until 1978 the Brough factory was responsible for both of the Fleet Air Arm's

formidable front line aircraft. Other projects continued alongside and these included work on the Trident airliner fuselage, structural component machining for what is now Airbus as well as BAe 146 airliner parts.

Extensive work was carried out on the Harrier Jump Jet and the Hawk trainer projects with the latter subsequently being produced as a complete aircraft.

During the 1970s, Hawker Siddeley was amalgamated further with British Aircraft Corporation to become British Aerospace and the production of components for the Harrier at Brough ceased in 2003.

The airfield was closed during the 1990s but flying resumed when the company decided that Hawk aircraft would be flown direct from Brough to Warton and this resulted in a temporary resumption of flying from the Brough runway in 2008.

Hawk 100 (ZJ951) departing Brough

Brough site is now downsized to producing a number of Hawk component parts, effectively bringing to an end an illustrious history of complete aircraft production at the UK's oldest remaining aircraft factory.

Site Timeline

1916	Blackburn Aircraft Company
1939	Blackburn Aircraft Limited
1949	Blackburn and General Aircraft Limited
1958	Blackburn Aircraft Limited
1963	Hawker Siddeley Aviation
1977	British Aerospace
1999	BAE Systems

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