

“A number of us ‘technical’s’ had joined a union common at the drawing office at Osborne - The Draughtsman's and Allied Technicians Assciation - or DATA as it was known. The management didn't want to recognise our membership as it would compromise the other members of the Southern Employers Association. So a strike lasting about 6 weeks took place.

I was on the strike committee and was a bit of a spokesman reporting back to the lads from the meetings. It was not too devisive, just a nuisance really and resulted in some job analysis and worth evaluation, etc. We were ‘recognised’, as I remember.”

MIKE ELLIOT
Rocket Engineer

STRIKE!
STRIKE!
STRIKE!
STRIKE!



THE 1960S WERE A TIME OF GREAT SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN BRITAIN. INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES WERE NOT UNCOMMON AS WORKERS WANTED TO IMPROVE THEIR PAY AND WORKING CONDITIONS.

Notwithstanding the secrecy and importance of the work being undertaken at the rocket test site, it was not immune to strike action by some its workers.

In the mid 1960s the test site became unionised. A number of the Westland Aircraft engineers joined the Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians Association (DATA) as they sought to improve their pay. Westland Aircraft management did not want to recognise the membership so the men called a strike in July 1964.

The strike was probably of greater significance to some workers than others at the site. While it may have had some short term impact on the working of the site, it didn't have any lasting effect on the rocket test programme.

Highdown is very exposed to the weather which would have made standing on a picket line at the site very uncomfortable. It was a good job then that the strike was called in the summer months!

A spokesman for Westland Aircraft stated that only a small percentage of the labour force was involved and the strike of 24 men - described as engineers and triallists - was having no effect on the rocket test programme at Highdown.

Although the men had picketed the Highdown site and the company's main office at Osborne, East Cowes Mr Ticehurst (the divisional organniser of the association) said there was no intention of calling out the other 120 members employed on the Island”

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