



Hucknall is one of the oldest airfields in the country that has seen continuous use since it was built in 1916, in those 90 years it has seen many advances in aviation technology. The first occupants were a Canadian Training Unit using Curtiss Jenny's followed by a number of units of the RFC and RNAS returning from action in France most of the units with DH9 aircraft.

Following the unification of the of the RFC and RNAS to create the Royal Air Force in April 1918 the aerodrome became RAF Hucknall until 1919 when it closed.

Eight years later the RAF moved back and in 1928 No 504 County of Nottingham RAF Aux. Sqdn was formed at Hucknall March 1928 as a day bomber squadron equipped with Horsleys. In February 1935 it re-equipped with Wallaces, which were replaced by Hinds in May 1937, having been transferred to the Auxiliary Air Force on 18 May 1936. They were joined by two more bomber squadrons 98 and 104 in August 1936 operating Hawker Hinds, 98 sqdn moved out in May 1938, 104 converted to Fairey Battles in June the same year moving to Scampton in 1940. On 31 October 1938 No 504 became a fighter squadron and in November 1938 flew Gloster Gauntlet II changing to Hurricanes in May 1939 before moving to Digby June that year.

In 1939 Hucknall become home for No. 1 Group Bomber Command HQ, No. 1 Ferry Pilot's Pool for transport of repaired aircraft back to operational squadrons and 12 fighter group who moved to a new underground bunker at RAF Watnall late 1940, the groups communication flight remained at Hucknall. In 1941 No. 1 (Polish) Flying Training School formed, No. 25 (Polish) Elementary Flying Training School and the training of many of the polish ground and maintenance staff arrived operating DH 82A Tiger Moths, Fairey Battles and Airspeed Oxford, No 1 moving that same year and No 25 disbanding in 1945. No 504 sqdn returned to Hucknall 1947 operating DH 98 Mosquito NF. 30 converting onto Spitfire F. 22 in 1948 moving to Wymeswold in 1949 when converting to Gloster Meteors. In 1949 No 664 Army co-operation Sqdn reformed at Hucknall operating Auster aircraft until 1957 when due to cut backs all Aux Sqdns were disbanded and the RAF again moved out of Hucknall.

From 1935 until 1971 Hucknall was the Rolls-Royce flight test establishment. It was here that all the company's engine types, from the Kestrel to the RB211 were developed, installed in flying test beds. Full ground-testing facilities was also an important feature of its activities, a feature that continues today. Test flying commenced with biplanes with a top speed of around 150 mph and progresses to the mach 2 Lightning and Phantom. During the Second World War, Hucknall became a Civilian Repair Unit and undertook the repair of Hurricanes during and after the Battle of Britain. One hundred of these aircraft were also converted to Mark IIs with the Merlin XX engine. The first Spitfire Mk.Vs, with the Merlin 45 engine were produced at Hucknall in a conversion programme and nearly 300 Spitfire Vs were converted to Mk.IXs. Otherwork concentrated on the development of power plants for Beaufighters, Lancasters and other types.

The flight development of the gas turbine Commenced in 1942 with a Whittle unit installed in the tail of a Wellington, progressing To Nenes and Avons in Lancastrians, turboprops in the noses of Lancasters and Lincoln bombers, ending with the RB211 in the VC-10. Notable firsts accomplished at Hucknall were the first flight of the Merlin installed in a Mustang, the world's first turboprop flight by the Trent Meteor and the world's first manned jet-borne operation by the Flying Bedstead.

Merlin Flying Club have been on the airfield since 1962 and now maintain and operate the airfield providing flying training to Rolls-Royce employees.

