

The Saunders-Roe SR.A1 jet flying boat.

edited by Stephen Berry

The Saunders-Roe SR.A1 was a prototype [flying boat fighter aircraft](#) designed and built by Saunders-Roe. It was the first [jet-propelled](#) water-based aircraft in the world.

The concept behind the SR.A1 originated during the [Second World War](#) as a reaction to Japan's successful use of military floatplanes and the emergence of the turbojet engine. Saunders-Roe presented an initial proposal of their jet-powered seaplane concept, then designated SR.44, to the Air Ministry during mid-1943. In April 1944, the Ministry issued a specification for the type and supported its development with a contract for three prototypes. Development was protracted by Saunders-Roe's work on other projects, the war having ended prior to any of the prototypes being completed.

On 16 July 1947, the first prototype made its maiden flight. The SR.A1 was evaluated by the Royal Air Force (RAF), which concluded that the design was incapable of matching up to the performance of land-based designs. Despite interest from foreign governments, including the United States, no orders for the SR.A1 materialised. As such, it never entered volume production or saw service with any operators.

The only existing SR.A1 can be seen today at Solent Sky at Southampton, alongside the famous Short Sandringham flying boat *VH-BRC Beachcomber*. Prior to her new life at the Southampton-based museum the Sandringham was registered *VP-LVE Southern Cross* and owned by Antilles Air Boats.



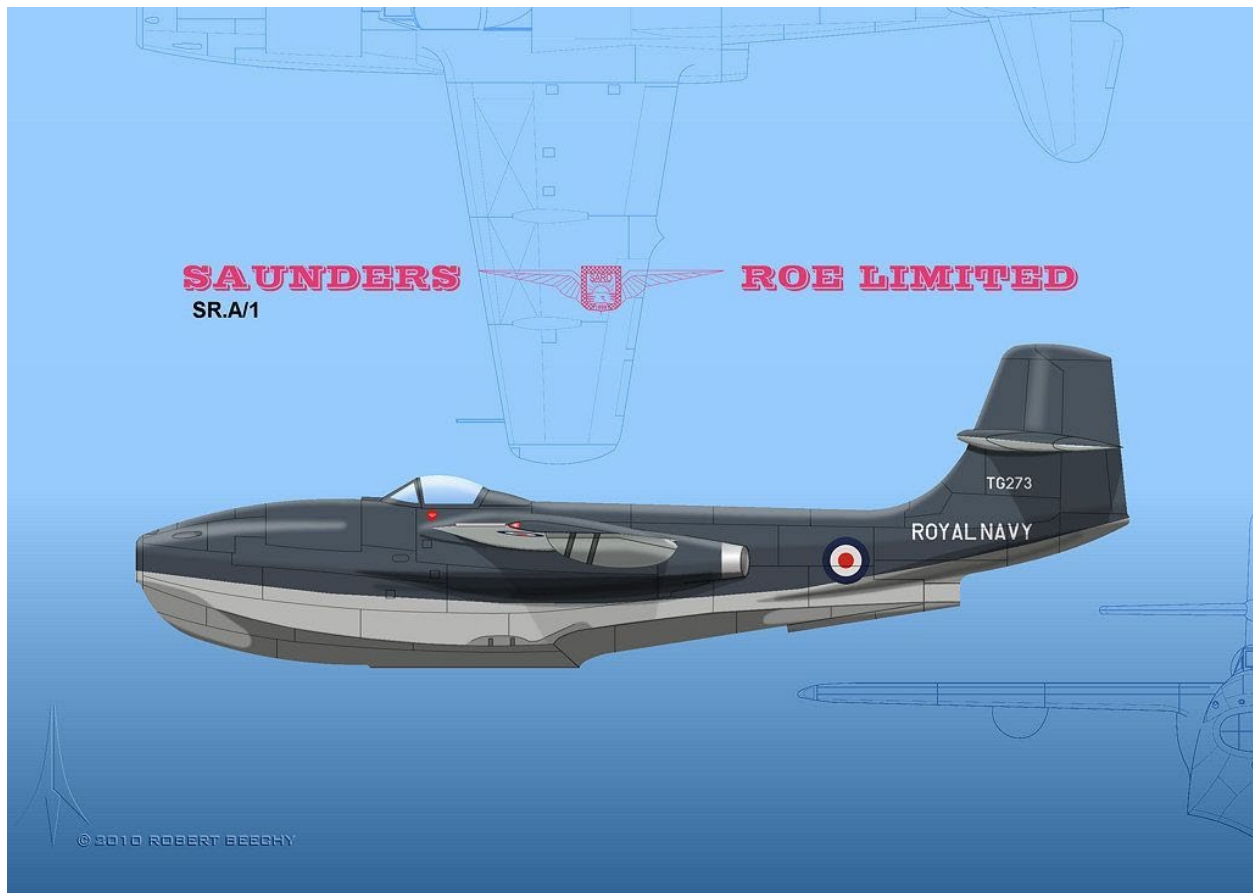
The prototype SR.A1 jet flying boat taking off for the first time on 16 July 1947.



The SR.A1 jet flying boat resting after its maiden flight on 16 July 1947.



A fine shot of the SR.A1 prototype jet flying boat on her maiden flight on 16 July 1947. In command was the famous Saunders-Roe test pilot Geoffrey Tyson.



An artist's impression of the Royal Navy version of the SR.A1 jet flying boat.

(all photos from the Stephen Berry collection)