

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SIKORSKY R -4B HOVERFLY MK.1 KL110 (With parts of KK995)  
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 66/AF/765

From a total of 100 R-4B airframes built for the USAAF, US Navy and US Coast Guard, 52 were supplied to Britain under lend/lease arrangements in 1944-45 as the Hoverfly MK.1, serials KK969 KK999 and KL100 - KL113, Lend-Lease requisition numbers BSC41203/41623. All built by Vought - Sikorsky at Stratford, Connecticut. These were the first true helicopters to be operated by the RAF.

27 Dec 44	Accepted as USAAF 43-46596.
5 Jan 45	Delivered to Floyd Bennett Field, Newark.
11 Jan 45	Despatched by sea from USA to Britain.
26 Jan 45	Taken on charge by RAF 'en route to UK'
03 Feb 45	Arrived in Britain.
05 Feb 45	Arrived at Martin Hearn Ltd (No. 7 Aircraft Assembly Unit), Hooton Park, Cheshire, for assembly.
27 Feb 45	Air tested at Hooton Park.
02 Mar 45	Arrived at No. 48 MU, RAF Hawarden, for acceptance checks and storage.
22 Oct 45	Flown Hooton Park – Cosford, 1.20 hours, by Sgt James Wood Wilson, then two further staged flights that day, Cosford – Wellesbourne Mountford (1.15 hrs.) and Wellesbourne Mountford – Watchfield (1.05 hrs.) and Watchfield – Andover (35 minutes).
22 Oct 45	Arrived at the Helicopter Training Flight, No. 43 Operational Training Unit, RAF Andover, which had operated the Hoverfly since May 45, operating 9 Hoverflies to convert Army AOP pilots in a 5 week course, involving 30 hours flying instruction; a total of 29 Army pilots being converted. Possibly coded 'D'
31 Oct 45	Air tested at RAF Andover.
28 Nov 45	'Thruvton Duty Run' (20 minutes) – Wilson logbook, and return.
3 Dec 45	Return Thruvton Duty run (Wilson logbook)
28 Jan 46	Following the disbandment of the Helicopter Training Flight that month, KL110 was allocated to the Transport Command Development Unit (TCDU), RAF Brize Norton.
6 Feb 46	Arrived at RAF Brize Norton.
9 May 46	One hour's local flying from Brize Norton (Wilson logbook)
14 May 46	45 minute air test (Wilson logbook)
24 May 46	15 minute air test (Wilson logbook)

25 May 46	25 minutes of local flying (Wilson logbook)
28/29/31 May 46	Further local flying on each day (Wilson logbook)
3 Jun 46	15 minute air test (Wilson logbook)
10 Aug 46	30 minute hovering and air test flight (Wilson logbook)
Jul/Aug 47	Detached to AFEE Beaulieu for training of King's Flight pilots.
9 Aug 47	Flown to RAF Dyce (Aberdeen).
28 Aug 47	Transferred to the Kings' Flight for carrying mail between RAF Dyce (Aberdeen) and the Royal residence at Balmoral Castle, making a Dyce - Balmoral run in the morning with a return service later in the day to connect with the regular mail flight to London.
05 Sep 47	Flown by Sq. Ldr 'Jeep' Cable giving a demonstration at Beaulieu, Hants, where an experimental rotary wing flight was based.
28 Sep 47	To King's Flight at RAF Benson.
30 Sep 47	Returned to the Transport Command Development Unit, RAF Brize Norton.
12 Dec 47	To No. 29 MU, RAF High Ercall for storage.
08 May 48	To General Aircraft Co, Feltham.
13 May 48	Assessed Cat. B. Damage. Repaired at the General Aircraft Company's Works at Feltham.
1 Jul 48	Awaiting collection.
05 Jul 48	Again detached to Kings' Flight at RAF Benson, Oxon and used from 3 Aug for Balmoral Mail Flights from Dyce (Aberdeen), landing on the cricket pitch at Balmoral Castle. One of 4 Hoverflies in use with the Kings' Flight at the time. Painted silver overall.
7 Oct 48	Returned to RAF Benson.
24 Jan 49	With the withdrawal of the Hoverfly from RAF service that month, transferred to Royal Navy (No.705 Squadron) at RNAS Gosport. Last UK Hoverfly flight was in Jul. 1950; the RAE at Farnborough last flew a Hoverfly I the previous month.
26 Jan 49	Taken on charge by Royal Navy.
26 May 51	Struck off charge
51	Allocated to the College of Aeronautics at Cranfield, Beds. The main rotor head was fitted with a slip - ring and the aircraft was used in ground vibration/resonance tests. While at Cranfield KL110 was painted pale blue. Photos - Aeroplane Monthly Sep.74 p. 872 (taken 19 May 52); Control Column Mar 67 p.6; The College of Aeronautics (017930); Hoverfly File (Air Britain) p.72; Wrecks and Relics – The album (colour) p.31; Great Aviation Collections of Britain (Ellis) p.170.

Also at Cranfield at this time was a second Hoverfly Mk.1, KK995; there has been some confusion over the years as to whether KL110 or KK995 is the machine now preserved at Hendon; the history of KK995 is as follows;

### **HOVERFLY MK.I KK995**

Built by Vought - Sikorsky at Stratford, Connecticut to Lend-Lease Requisition BSC - 41023 as 43-46558.

10 Oct 44 Accepted by USAAF.

17 Oct 44 Delivered to Floyd Bennett Field, Newark, New Jersey.  
Possibly modified and flown to Patuxent River facility.

26 Oct 44 Crated.

10 Nov 44 Departed for UK.

18 Nov 44 Taken on charge by RAF 'en route to UK'.

06 Dec 44 Arrived for assembly at Martin Hearn Ltd, Hooton Park.

17 Jan 45 Air tested at Hooton Park.

08 Feb 45 Arrived at the Helicopter Training Flight, No. 43 OTU , RAF Andover. Coded 'E'  
Photos; Aeroplane Monthly Sep 74 p.872; Air Extra No.36 p.24; RAF Rotors  
(028349)

6 Feb 46 To Hooton Park following closure of Helicopter training at Andover.

13 Feb 46 Arrived at No.48 Maintenance Unit, RAF High Ercall,for storage

18 Oct 46 Arrived at Martin Hearn Ltd, for modifications to contract 6/Acft/555, completed  
12 Nov1946.

22 Nov 46 At Airborne Forces Experimental Establishment, Beaulieu, Hants for training of  
No.657 Squadron pilots until Feb 47 at least.

17 Apr 47 Arrived at No. 29 Maintenance Unit, RAF High Ercall for storage.

08 May 48 Arrived at the General Aircraft Company, Feltham, Middx.

31 May 48 Assessed as damaged Cat. B.

15 Nov 48 Struck off charge Cat. E1 for spares to repair Hoverflies KK987 and KL110.

- Oct 51 - The remaining structure, lacking the main rotorhead, was allocated to the college of  
Aeronautics at Cranfield. Photo as of 19 May 1952 - Aeroplane Monthly Sep 74  
p. 872. Used for static vibration trials by 1952.  
Presumed scrapped in the 1950's, with some parts incorporated into KL110, although  
in June 1960 it was reported extant at Cranfield as 43-46558.

### **KL110**

10 May 66 Offered to Aviation Museums in UK by the College of Aeronautics.

16 May 66 Accepted by the RAF Museum and formally donated 14 Jun 66.

c. Jun 66 Arrived at RAF Henlow for storage by the RAF Museum. Missing 2nd pilots' seat  
and 5 instruments only.

- Dec 67 To No. 71 MU RAF Bicester for refurbishment to static display condition between 28 Dec 67 and 6 February 1968, and given identity KK995 - the appearance of serial KK995 on some parts during restoration led to a case of mistaken identity, including a cabin door, although J.M.Bruce recorded at the time that KK995 appeared many times 'even to correct position on fabric' although Cranfield staff confirmed the identity as KL110 - the nominal identity retained by the composite aircraft.
- 14 - 15 Jun 68 Displayed at RAF Golden Jubilee Review at RAF Abingdon - Photo - Air Britain Digest Jul 68 p.195; Aeromilitaria 4.84 p.102.
- 05 Jul 68 Displayed at RAF Hendon Founder's Day display.
- Jul 68 Moved from Hendon to RAF Gaydon,Warwicks. By No.71 MU. Displayed at the Sept.68 Battle of Britain display.
- 20 Sep 69 Displayed at Gaydon's Battle of Britain Air Display.
- Feb 70 Moved from Gaydon to RAF Henlow by No.71 MU. Photo at Henlow May 1970 - British Museum Aircraft p.101.
- Dec 70 Arrived at Hendon from Henlow, again moved by No. 71 MU./ Displayed at Hendon ever since. Photos on display; Air Extra No. 36 p.25; RAF Yearbook 1973 -4 p.46; FlyPast Jun 97 p.31; Aircraft Illustrated May 2003 p.68.
- 23 Apr 03 Moved into new Milestones building at Hendon for suspended display.
- In the USA, R-4B 43 - 46506 is preserved by the USAF Museum.

**TEXT: ANDREW SIMPSON**

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