

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SUPERMARINE SOUTHAMPTON 1 N9899
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 67/A/705

Aug 24 Ordered 'off the drawing board' as one of six wooden-hulled Southampton Mk.I aircraft - the first production batch, serial numbers N9896-N9901. Ordered on contract No.516531/24 to specification R.18/24, to be equipped with two 470hp Napier Lion V engines.

Eighteen wooden hulled Southampton Mk.1s were delivered to the RAF from total Southampton production of 78 aircraft. Most were later (1929-1933) converted to metal hulled Mk.II standard. The first Mk.I N9896, flew 10 Mar 25, and the type flew with the RAF until Dec 1936.

Jul 25 N9899 taken on charge by No.480 (Coastal Reconnaissance) Flight, Calshot, Hants, who were partially re-equipped with the Southampton I in the summer of 1925, who operated this aircraft until Nov 1926. N9899 was the first Southampton I delivered to the unit. Likely photo of aircraft at this time - Janes (1926) p.83; Flight 6 Aug 25 p.493.

The logbook of Flying Officer J H Bentham (DoRIS Ref.B1898) records a number of flights in N9899 whilst flying with No.480 (CR) Flight.

- 20 Jul 25 1.05 hour dual flying experience flight - pilot Sqn Ldr Holmes; Crew Aircraftmen Fraud and Mason. First flight of N9899 with the unit.
- 21 Jul 25 25 minute dual flight with Sqn Ldr Holmes and AC Fraud, followed by 25 minute solo flight again with AC Fraud
- 04 Aug 25 20 minute air experience flight for 3 naval midshipmen from battleship HMS Royal Oak, plus AC Parry.
- 03 Sep 25 20 minute flight - pilot Flt Lt Shoppe. Crew - AC Parry and Warren and Cpl Machin. Flew Calshot - Portland for commencement of 480 Flight cruise, followed by a 1.45-hour flight at Cattewater (Plymouth). The cruise was due to last for 20 days, covering 10,000 miles around the British Isles; In addition to this, N9899 was carrying Coastal Area commanding officers for an intended flight from Felixstowe to Plymouth, thence to Carrickfergus, Belfast Lough, on to Oban and along the Great Glen to Cromarty, down to the Firth of Forth and back to Felixstowe.
- 05 Sep 25 3¼ hour flight from Cattewater to Pembroke, South Wales.
- 07 Sep 25 2.05 hour flight - Pembroke - Belfast - engine failure 15 miles SE of Wicklow Head. Machine towed 100 miles by HMS Calliope to Belfast Lough. See report in Flight 17 Sep 25 p.599.

Crew of 7 sent SOS signals and were taken on board the Calliope which towed the Southampton into port.

- 21 Sep 25 Following repairs on one of the slipways at Harland and Wolff's shipyard, 45-minute test flight from Belfast Lough. Photo at this time - glass negative donated July 2000 showing a moored N9899 at Belfast; held by Photographic Dept; see also No 230 Squadron RAF (Warner) p.25.
- 25 Sep 25 Five hour flight from Belfast Lough to Pembroke, with thick mist, rain and fog. Crew as before.
- 26 Sep 25 Attempted flight Pembroke - Calshot - Forced to return to Pembroke with faulty port engine, after 15 minutes.
- 27 Sep 25 Successful 3 hour flight Pembroke - Calshot.

The logbook of Flt Lt W J Dadde-Langlois covers further flights of N9899 with No.480 Flight; (DoRIS Ref.B1071).

- 19 Feb 26 1.05-hour flight Calshot - Portland - crew of seven, followed by 40-minute return flight.
- 22 Feb 26 1.20-hour flight to Portland for exercise. 5 crew.
- 23 Feb 26 4¼-hour flight over English Channel. Two such flights 24 Feb and 3.40-hour flight also over Channel 25 Feb.
- 11 Mar 26 50-minute flight - weather too bad for practice landing by Daddo-Langlois, then still a 2nd pilot.
- 12 Mar 26 One-hour local test flight at the usual cruise height of 1000 feet.
- 17 Mar 26 4-hour flight at 1000 feet over English Channel - reconnaissance for torpedo attack practice.
- 18 Mar 26 Two local flights from Calshot.
- 26 Mar 26 Two-hour flight to Cattewater at 1500 feet.
- 29 Mar 26 5¼-hour flight at 300-1000 feet.
- 31 Mar 26 1.55-hour flight to Calshot from Cattewater.
- 13 Apr 26 1¼-hour flight for camera gun practice and test flight. 5 minute camera gun flight later in day also.
- 22 Apr 26 1.05-hour landing practice flight from Calshot.
- 26 Apr 26 35 minute flight to Studland.
- 27 Apr 26 2.55 hour flight to Exmouth and anchored there.

- 28 Apr 26 1.20 hour flight to Cattewater and landed there to replenish oil tanks, then made 2¼ hour flight to Salcombe and anchored there.
- 29 Apr 26 Flew to Calshot, landing at Torquay on the way with broken radiator control.
- Apr 27-Feb 28 Flew with Development Flight, MAEE Felixstowe, Suffolk. Used in training of newly formed Far East Flight aircrew but never officially part of that unit.
Used until first metal hulled Southampton, N218, was delivered.

The logbook of Flt Lt F W Wilson, who flew with the MAEE at Felixstowe, details further flights in N9899; (DoRIS Ref.B3080).

- 01 Apr 27 35 minute local flight. DoRIS. See file copy also for Pilot's logbook of D.V.Carnegie which adds that this was a flying practice in perfect weather.
- 02 Apr 27 Carnegie LB records one hour local flight practicing formation flying with Southampton and wooden-hilled Kingston flying boat.
- 08 Apr 27 Carnegie LB – Felixstowe to Southampton, taking Schneider cup team to the Supermarine S.5 – good weather all the way.
- 14 Apr 27 Carnegie LB - Five minute local flight – engine test, 2180revs both engines climbing with full load.
- 30 Apr 27 Carnegie LB – 1.25 hour local flight – Hanging weight trials, dropping red and silver marker dyes (?) which dispersed invisible on the water
- 02 May 27 Two local flights each of 25 minutes. (Carnegie LB also for one – three landings with hanging weigh (night landing trials at 800ft altitude– failed to work first time- red, white and aluminium dropped- failed)
- 04 May 27 55-minute flight - hanging weight trials.
- 05 May 27 1.30 hour flight, Carnegie LB – Felixstowe to Deal- test of Mk XII anchor, anchoring south of the pier and holding position well, and 55 minute return flight – W/T problems – report submitted.
- 07 May 27 30 minute local flight – Carnegie LB.
- 12 May 27 45 minute local flight –Carnegie LB, testing sea marker which dispersed in a few minutes. Further 10 minute local flight the same day, in fine weather. Port water temperature gauge broke.
- 18 May 27 20 minute local flight, Carnegie LB, as part of Far East Cruise Flight – attempted to take off with chassis and wheels; unsuccessful; local flight after.

- 19 May 27 Ten- minute local flight, Carnegie LB – took off with chassis in position – wheels off – heavy take off – landing OK.
- 20 May 27 5.45 hour flight – Carnegie LB – as escort to Hawker Horsley on non-stop flight to India, flying as far as North Foreland area, returning to Orfordness.
- 24 May 27 35-minute local flight, Carnegie LB, practiced landing on a mark and take off and landing side into wind.
- 27 May 27 35 minute local flight; sea flat calm; practiced landing on a mark and formation flying with a metal hulled Kingston flying boat.
- 2 Jun 27 30-minute local flight (Carnegie LB) as flight rest after engine and rigging overhaul prior to flight to Ostend; weather fine; landing and take-off side to wind.
- 5 Jun 27 1.20 hour flight Felixstowe to Ostend (Carnegie LB) in company with Southampton S1059 to attend Ostend sailing regatta; landed at Ostend and taxied in. (Carnegie LB) Returned to Felixstowe the same day, taking off in the canal astern of S1059; refuelled from floating deck for return.
- 6 Jun 27 Further flight Felixstowe- Ostend (Carnegie LB), and return to Felixstowe the same day, making a circuit over Ostend after departure. (Carnegie LB)
- 7 Jun 27 30-minute local flight, taking off at various angles of tail setting;; sea choppy; refuelled from floating dock afterwards (Carnegie LB)
- 8 Jun 27 1.05-hr local flight (Carnegie LB), practicing take off and landings; weather fine; 350 gallons of fuel on board.
- 20 Jun 27 20-minute local flight (Carnegie); visit of Naval staff college, with circuits and landings; Singapore, two Southamptons and a Fairey IIIIF also flying.
- 22 Jun 27 45 minute local flight (Carnegie LB) landing alongside a buoy from different heights, followed by 20 minute flight Felixstowe to Brightlingsea and a 20-minute return flight.
- 24 Jun 27 30-minute local flight (Carnegie LB) testing cellulose painted airscrews in heavy rain around Ipswich; sea rough. (Carnegie LB)
- 27 Jun 27 5-minute local flight (Carnegie LB) to floating dock to refuel; very heavy rain during refuelling; returned to moorings (10 minute flight)
- 29 Jun 27 3.25 hour flight, Felixstowe to Southampton for conference; rain at intervals most of the way (Carnegie LB)
- 30 Jun 27 2.20-hour flight Southampton to Felixstowe, in company with metal-hulled Southampton N218. Weather fine. (Carnegie LB)

- 6 Jul 27 35 minute local flight christening new slow-speed course – five landings and take-offs (Carnegie LB)
- 28 Jul 27 1.10 hour flight, Felixstowe to Short Bros, Rochester, Kent to bring back crew of Singapore, returning to Felixstowe same day.
- 26 Aug 27 10-minute local flight (Carnegie LB); Engine and rigging test. Sundry water leaks, none serious-rigging OK; aircraft previously flown by another pilot that day. Further 30-minute local flight practicing landings on a mark.
- 27 Aug 27 1.15-hr flight to Burnham and vicinity; survey for suitable place for living aboard practice in N218. Weather fine. Lost ¼ gallon – water leaks.
- 29 Aug 27 1.50-hour local flight- practice for Sqn Ldr Bayley in landings and take-offs.
- 30 Aug 27 1.35-hour local flight – landing practice for Sqn/Ldr Bayley. Four circuits by Flt Lt Cully. Leaks now OK (Carnegie LB)
- 31 Aug 27 One-hour local flight; further landing practice; refuelled 220 gallons from floating dock.
- 1 Sep 27 Three-hour flight; Felixstowe to Southampton; collected spares for damaged Southampton S1059 ; light winds but foggy patches; rear cylinder of inboard block of port engine leaking. Returned to Felixstowe same day; landed at Eastbourne for refuelling, and at Dover to fill up radiators. (Carnegie LB)
- 3 Sep 27 40- minute flight to Felixstowe; test of engine leaks; one cylinder still leaking’ took off twice OK; landing poor. (Carnegie LB)
- 6 Sep 27 15- minute local flight (Carnegie LB); metal airscrew test; heavy rain shower (Carnegie LB)
- 19 Sep 27 1.10 hour flight, Felixstowe to Rochester in company with Short Singapore being returned to Messrs. Shorts ; returned same day in company with a Short ‘Calcutta’ for Imperial Airways ; returned via Bawdy Ferry (Carnegie LB)
- 20 Sep 27 1.15-hour flight Felixstowe to Rochester; took off in company with five Calshot-based Southamptons; flew via Bawdy Ferry; weather fine. Returned to Felixstowe, bringing back pilot of the Singapore, returning via Southend (Carnegie LB)
- 21 Sep 27 3.30-hour flight, Felixstowe to Southampton, taking a crew to Messrs Supermarine to collect second long-distance cruise machine. (Carnegie LB)
- 06 Feb 28 25 minute bombing flight.
- 20 Feb 28 55 minute camera gun practice flight (by Mar 28 Wilson with 480 [CR])

Flight).

c.Mar 1928

N9899 returned to No.480 (CR) Flight, Calshot.

23 Nov 28

Parted moorings in gale and wrecked on breakwater at Portland. Photo: RAFM photo collection P8877 after salvage with wings collapsed. One of the three Southamptons sunk in the gale - only the engines of N9899 were salvaged and re-used.

See report in Flight 13 Dec 28 p.28 recording a parliamentary question - `Sir S Hoare, on 5 Dec, in reply to Mr Day, said the aircraft damaged at Portland in the gale of Nov 23 were three Royal Air Force flying boats. One of these, a wooden hulled boat (N9899) parted from her moorings, was wrecked against the breakwater and was, he feared, a complete loss except for the engines, which had been salvaged and were being repaired.

c.1929

Sold to a Mr Kemp and used as a houseboat. The top superstructure was cut back and replaced by a clerestory roof to provide extra windows and headroom. Skylights were fitted to the dorsal gun positions and a large aperture for a sliding door cut in the starboard bow. A floor, bunks, cupboards etc. were installed inside the hull. By then the wings and tail surfaces had been removed.

Around this time two flying boat hulls, perhaps including N9899, were towed from Felixstowe and converted by Bawdsey Ferry resident Herbie Kerry; at least 5 Flying Boat hulls were in use as house boats in the 1930s, including Vickers Valentia N126 and Fairey Titania N129.

1951

By this date at least the Southampton was situated on tidal mud flats of the River Deben at Bawdsey Ferry 3 miles north of Felixstowe, Suffolk (see letter from Dr D R Shaw, Air Pictorial Dec 67, p.450. Photo Sep 56: Aeroplane Monthly Mar 96 p.72. Photo Apr 62 - Wrecks and Relics 15th edition p.316. Photo (Aug 60) Wrecks and Relics 1st edition, also 3rd edition (1963) p.17. Photo as of Summer 67 - Air Pictorial Dec 67 p.450; also Air International Mar 89 p.133 and Conservation Awards update Spring 96 p.2. The hull lay on a cradle of old railway sleepers and was let to holiday makers. Alongside lay the hull of Fairey Atlanta 1 N119 in similar use. This was broken up due to poor condition c.1964. Photos of Southampton Atlanta together - Air Britain Digest May 1966 p.129; Air Pictorial Jul 57 p.247; Flight 11 Nov 1960 p.756. There was also a second Southampton Hull which disappeared in 1953 and another hull of possible 1914-1918 date as a `potting shed' which disappeared c.1953, gales and flooding 31 Jan of that year having damaged several flying boat hulls extant in the area

1966

By this date the hull of N9899 was owned by Mr Keith Coombs of Felixstowe, and was under threat since the local authority viewed it as an eyesore.

- Sep 67 Following contact by Mr Coombs, the RAFM purchased the hull for £75.00.
- 10 Oct 67 A six-man RAF team from No.60 MU RAF Leconfield arrived to recover the hull, which was craned onto a Queen Mary Low Loader (Photo: Aircraft Illustrated Jan 89 p.47) -and left for the RAFM store at Henlow 13 Oct 67. When recovered the water soaked hull weighed 2½ tons; by 1971 drying out at Henlow had reduced this to 1½ tons. Photo leaving Felixstowe - Aviation News Mar 11-24 1995 p.153. Account and photos of recovery operation -Epics of Aviation Archaeology (006874) p.49-55 and RAF News w/e 2 Dec 67 p.3. Photo at Henlow as delivered - Epics of Aviation Archaeology p.56; The Flying M Autumn 2008 p.15. Photo at Henlow with later appendages removed - Air Extra No.3 p.28 (c.1972).
- c.1973 To RAFM storage and restoration centre at Cardington, Beds. Photo: Wrecks & Relics 6th Edition p.88, taken 30 Apr 77, also Wrecks and Relics 15th edition p.316, also in 1977.
- Jan 84 Restoration began at Cardington including replacement of 70,000 ½inch brass screws. Photo: Aeroplane Monthly Jul 84 p.342.
- Oct 84 Hull inverted for restoration on specially made cradle to permit restoration of lower hull and planing surface - see photos Aeroplane Monthly Jan 85 p.3.
- 09 Nov 88 Roll-over ceremony at Cardington to permit upper fuselage restoration following rebuilding of lower hull and keel. Photos: Aeroplane Monthly Jan 89 p.5; Aircraft Illustrated Jan 89 p. /47; FlyPast Jan 89 p.34; Great aviation Collections of Britain (Ellis) p.191.
- 1995 Work at Cardington completed, including construction of new tail unit. Photo at Cardington nearing completion - Wrecks & Relics 14th Edition; Ogden - Aircraft Museum and Collection of the World - Vol. 2 - GB & Ireland (025490) p.90
- 23 May 95 Delivered by road to RAFM Hendon. Photos: Aeroplane Monthly Aug 95 p.7; FlyPast Jul 95 p.12; Great aviation Collectons of Britain (Ellis) p.172. Photo as displayed Sep 95 - Wrecks and Relics 15th edition p.316; Aeroplane Monthly Aug 96 p.6.
- 14 May 96 Awarded prize as winner of Museums and Galleries Commission Conservation Awards 1996.
- 24 May 96 Southampton Exhibition and walkway formally opened. Photos: Conservation Awards Update Spring 96; Museums Journal June 96 p.43; Transport Digest Summer 96 p.28.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON

