

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

WESTLAND BELVEDERE HCI XG474/8367M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 74/A/15

Built by Westland Aircraft Ltd (Bristol Helicopter Division) at Old Mixon, Weston - Super - Mare as one of 26 Belvederes for RAF service.

- 14 Mar 62 Off contract.
- Apr 62 Six Belvederes including XG474 crated for transfer by cargo ship to Singapore.
- 08 Jun 62 Joined No. 66 Squadron at RAF Seletar, Singapore as the unit's second aircraft to arrive since moving to the Far East from RAF Odiham, where it formed from the Belvedere Trials Unit, equipped with eight Belvederes, on 15 Sep 1961. Given the individual code O. Squadron engaged in trooping, supply work, jungle and air - sea rescue and casevac throughout Malaysia. Photo being assembled at the Royal Navy Air Station Sembawang - Flypast March 1998 p.70. Also photo of the aircraft being serviced.
- 18 Jun 62 First operational flight - 5 minute air test.
- 21 Jun 62 First cross - country flight from Sembawang to Butterworth via Kuala Lumpur. For full flying history see Aircraft Dept. Belvedere history file.
- Aug/Sep 62 All Belvederes grounded pending investigation of a fatal crash in Germany.
- 18 Dec 62 - XG474/B was one of three Belvederes (plus XG473/A and XG 476/F) detached to the oil -rich Sultanate of Brunei (Borneo) until 21 Mar 63 to support the anti - rebel forces in mopping up following the Dec 62 Brunei revolt which had started with rebel attacks on 8 December. The Belvederes were based at Brunei airport, having flown the 800 miles via Kuching to Labuan. from Singapore on 17 Dec; They carried out varied flying tasks including prisoner transport, troop lifts,(including SAS and Royal Marine patrols) and moving a damaged Whirlwind helicopter to HMS Albion on 02 Jan 63.
- 18/22 Jan 63 Operated in the Jesselton - Khota Belud area of Borneo on the flood relief operations which followed a period of exceptionally heavy rainfall, carrying 34,200 pounds of freight.

- Feb 63 Freight handled by the detachment included two Ferguson tractors, bulldozer blades, a tipper/trailer, powered rollers and other plant equipment lifted into Long Seridan where Ghurka engineers were building an airstrip.
- 17 Mar 63 Moved from Brunei airport to island of Labuan where the Belvedere detachment was reduced to two aircraft - the staging post on Labuan Island, 35 miles off Brunei, was the main British base during the revolt.
- Apr/Jun 63 Unserviceable due mainly to cracks in the intermediate gearbox mounting structure.
In Borneo natives named the Belvederes 'flying longhouses'.
- 25 Jun 63 10 minute air test.
- 29 Jun 63 Ferried back to Brunei from Labuan.
- Jul 63 Undergoing repairs at Brunei; Further trouble with the Avpin starting system necessitated an engine change.
- 04 Aug 63 50 minute air test.
- 05 Aug 63 Ferried to Kuching, joining two other Belvederes for operations in Sarawak (Borneo) including troop lifts, reconnaissance flights and casevacs, a continueing requirement following the formation of the Federation of Malaysia and the ensuing Borneo Confrontation with Indonesia from Sep 1963.
- 18 Dec 63 Returned to Singapore , flown from HMS Albion - 6 passengers. Not flown Jan - Mar. 64.
- 24 Apr 64 Returned to squadron from 2nd line servicing - made several continuation training flights Apr - May 64.
- 14 May 64 Piloted by F/Lt J Spreadbury, embarked on carrier HMS Centaur for shipment to Aden, to join No. 26 Squadron at Khormaksar, bringing that unit up to strength (seven aircraft) for operations in the Radfan area. Whilst with 26 Squadron the Belvedere received the individual code 'F' and the Springbok head, as depicted on the squadron badge, appeared on the rear rotor unit casing.
- 22 May 64 Arrived off Aden - F/Lt Spreadbury flew off XG 474 to Khormaksar where it joined No 26 Squadron. During its service with No. 26 Squadron the aircraft logged 218 hours of operational flying, mostly support duties in the Radfan area - in operation Flamingo - freight and up to 62 troops, the main Radfan assault operation ending mid-June.
- 25 Aug 64 Logbook of Master Pilot Alexander. T. Davidson (Copy in DoRIS) records a large number of flights in XG474, starting this date with an Operation Flamingo flight, with others on 27th and 31st August.

- 01 Sep 64 Piloted by Master Pilot Davidson (see logbook) one of two Belvederes Detached to Riyan in the Eastern Aden Protectorate to assist a situation developing in Mukulla (an expected rebellion).
- 03 Sep 64 Continuation training flight (Davidson logbook)
- The trouble in operation 'Chatburn'. did not materialise and XG474 returned to Khormaksar on 13 Sep, resuming Radfan operations after this 13 day detachment where it gave helicopter experience to local Hadrami Bedouin Legion and Mukulla regular army troops.
- Nov 64 No operations flown - official offensive action ended 18 Nov 64, and the Belvedere force was grounded until 17 November following a fatal crash of a Belvedere at the end of October.
- Dec 64 Davidson logbook records field survey flights on 7/10/12 Dec.
- Jan 65 No operations flown, only air tests and training following another Belvedere crash. Davidson logbook records three flights that month.
- Feb 65 No operations - Vibration problems. Davidson logbook records Air Tests and Support Training.
- Mar 65 Davidson logbook records Air Test.
- 01 Apr 65 Again detached (With one other Belvedere) to Beihan at the request of the Sharif of Beihan for support following enemy attacks. Operated with No 2 Federal Regular Army.
- The fine sand blowing around this area was very troublesome to the Belvederes and XG474 suffered considerably in this respect, necessitating a double engine change whilst on this duty. The rear engine change required a hole to be dug into which the engine could be lowered. Photo - RAF Helicopters - The First Twenty Years (026151) p.296-A. The Avpin starting system also continued to give trouble and caused minor fires on four occasions.
- The main tasks during this detachment were the delivery of rations and supplies to forward troop positions and the re-positioning of 105 mm guns and their crews, plus casevac and passenger carrying sorties. XG474 acquired a bullet in one of its rotor blades during the transit flight to Beihan.
- 18 May 65 Flown back to Khormaksar following a period of unservicability from 24 Apr, for a major inspection.
- No operational flying for the next 5 months owing to unservicability caused by vibration problems. Colour profile at this time – Airfile RAF Middle East & Near East 1945 – 1979 (Steve Webster) ; overall aluminium with underside of fuselage in light stone as additional protection from sand-blasting effect of landing on rough desert airstrips.

23 Nov 65 (A week before No. 26 Squadron disbanded) - embarked on HMS Albion in Aden Harbour for return to the Far East Airforce, along with the other remaining three Belvederes of No.26 Squadron.

25 Nov 65 Sailed for Singapore and a return to No. 66 Squadron.

04 Dec 65 Arrived off Seletar on HMS Albion and rejoined No. 66 Squadron.

17 Dec 65 20 minute air test. Davidson logbook records flight this month.

03 Jan 66 Davidson logbook records flights in Feb/Mar/Apr/Jun/Jul/Sep/Oct 1966.
Load lift trial of Bloodhound missile.

May 66 No operational flying.

Aug 66 No operational flying.

12 Aug 66 Formal end of Borneo Confrontation with Indonesia.

23 Sep 66 Carried Far East Air Force Commander, Air Marshal S.W.R.Hughes,CB,CBE, AFC. On the same day it ferried six British MPs from Seletar to Air House Changi and return.

27 Sep 66 Pilots Flying logbook of Sqn Ldr P.L.Gray (copy held by RAFM Archives) records 40 minute flight, including deck landing on USS Mars. Crew F/Lt Cocks and FS Halls.

1 Oct 66 One-hour flight – instrument flying; Gray LB

5 Oct 66 2.10-hour flight – day categorisation – loads and landing in clearings. Gray LB.

18 Oct 66 1.10 hour flight – night flying – Gray LB.

20 Nov 66 1.15-hour flight, Seletar to Terendak for exercise Winged Haggis. Gray LB.

20 Nov-2 Dec 66 Used for exercise ‘Winged Haggis’ in Malaysia at Terendak.

15 Dec 66 30-minute instrument flying. Gray LB.

17 - 23 Dec 66 Detached to Butterworth, Malaya.

Davidson logbook records flights in Jan/Feb/May/Jun/Jul/Sep/Oct 1967.

21 Jan 67 25-minute air test. Gray LB. Same on 25 Jan.

24 Jan 67 1.30-hour night flight. Gray LB.

20 Feb 67 All Four Belvederes flew a farewell formation at Kuching and were then shipped back to Singapore.

Mar/Apr 67 No operational flying.

9 May 67 30-minute trooping flight; Gray LB.

16 May 67 1.05-hour flights – into clearings. Gray LB.

19 - 29 Jun 67 Exercise based on Paroi, an army airstrip in central Western Malaya.

22 Jun 67 5.5-inch gun lift; 2.40-hour flight; Gray LB.

23 Jun 67 55-minute flight, Ex. Casevac. Gray LB.

24 Jun 67 3.50-hour flight, troop carrying Kuala – Titi; Gray LB.

04 Jul 67 Again detached to Butterworth with two other Belvederes for ‘Operation Hill climb’.

18/31 Aug 67 Assisted in air - lift to the 2,600ft high Western Hill, Penang of new radar equipment - 50,000lb in all valued at £11 ¼ million as part of 'Operation Hill Climb' .

Oct 67 All three Belvederes returned to Seletar from Butterworth. Photo at this time, coded O-Oscar - Aeroplane April 2000 p.33. Continued in the logistics role, moving troops and equipment for jungle exercises.

27 Oct 67 Eleven of the 12 No. 66 Squadron Belvederes then on strength flown in formation - the largest Belvedere formation ever assembled. Photo - RAF Helicopters - The First Twenty Years (026151).

No further operational flying for the remainder of 1967.

1968 Continued to operate in Singapore and Malaya following the British withdrawal from Borneo (excepting Brunei). Training included exercises with No 28 (Commonwealth) Brigade. Davidson logbook records flights in Feb/Apr/May 1968.

25 Jan 68 1.30-hour flight, landings on HMS Intrepid, with BBC team transit also. Gray LB.

29 May 68 Davidson logbook records Formation, close, tactical flight.

14 Oct 68 1.30-hour categorisation flight – formation flying. Gray LB.

4 Dec 68 4.40-hour flight – Scottish Aviation Twin Pioneer aircraft trial lift; Gray LB.

Feb 69 Deployed in Malaya for exercise 'Crowning Glory'.

- 15 Feb 69 1.30-hour flight – Seletar-Terendak-Seletar. Ex. Crowning Glory reconnaissance flight. Gray LB.
- 6 Mar 69 S/Ldr Grays' last 1.55-hour training flight in XG474.
- 20 Mar 69 No .66 Squadron disbanded at Seletar as the first and last Belvedere unit. XG 474 was one of six Belvederes to fly during the disbandment parade and the last to touch down after lowering its underslung load of a 105mm howitzer onto the former flying boat slipway, where the six helicopter- delivered guns fired a salute. Photo of the Squadron's aircraft assembled before the Flypast- RAF Helicopters - The First Twenty Years (026151).
Scraping of the other nine Belvederes by Chinese labourers began the next morning, and with the wind down of the Far East Air Force Seletar closed as a flying station a few days later.

XG474 statistics

Freight carried	(66Squadron)	320 tons
" "	(26 ")	220 "
Troops, Passengers and casevacs	(66 ")	6,670
" "	(26 2)	1,716

XG 474 was shipped to the UK for preservation through the efforts of No. 66 Squadrons' CO, S/Ldr Paul.L.Gray and FO (later Wg Cdr) Lionel Parkin, who was Officer I/C rear party at RAF Seletar. He asked HQ FEEAF if it could be sent to the nascent RAF Museum; they agreed if it could be done at no charge. The helicopter, filled with available spares, was towed by tractor to Seletars' former flying boat slipway – by then the home of the local yacht club – pushed onto a pontoon and shipped north along the Johore Strait to the Royal Navy Dockyard. Photo - RAF News w/e 12 Jul. 69 p.13.

- 1st Week of Jun 69 Left Singapore aboard HMS Albion, having fitted onto the deck lift with a margin of three inches or so to be transported below decks (Although Wg Cdr Parkin thinks it was sister ship HMS Bulwark) Had flown 1,675 hours (Life expired at 1,700 airframe hours) See servicing documents DoRIS ref. Box 185.
- 01 Aug 69 Arrived at Portsmouth.
- 6 -7 Aug 69 To RAFM store at RAF Henlow, Beds.
- 25 Mar 71 Moved from Henlow to Hendon by No. 71 MU and displayed ever since. Photo in transit – Royal Air Force Historical Society Journal 61 p.107. Photo Nov 71 - Air Pictorial Nov 72 p. 417.
- 5 Sep 73 Allotted RAF Instructional serial 8367M.
- 3 Aug 98 One of a number of aircraft donated to the RAFM by the MoD.

Other Belvedere Survivors

XG452 International Helicopter Museum, Weston - Super - Mare

XG454 Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester. (RAFM loan)

XG462 (nose only) International Helicopter Museum.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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