

**INDIVIDUAL HISTORY**

**AVRO ROTA K4232 / SE -AZB**  
**MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 79/A/1785**

- 14 Feb 34 Ten Avro 671 (Cierva C-30A) Rota aircraft, serials K4230 -K4239 ordered under contract No. 294074/33 and built under licence by Avro,K4232 with the constructors number R3/CA/40. Two others, K4296 and K4775 were ordered for experimental trials and all 12 delivered between Aug 34 and May1935. (In addition to the RAF machines, 65 C30 As were built by Avro- 37 for the UK civil market and 28 for export including foreign air forces between July1934 and June 1938).
- 25 Aug 34 Delivered to the RAF School of Army Co-operation at RAF Old Sarum, Wilts by an RAF pilot from Manchester. This unit was allocated nine autogiros, but they were delivered without operating/maintenance manuals and were initially stored at Hanworth and Hamble. Photos including K4232- Aircraft Illustrated Feb 81 p.68; Aircraft Illustrated Annual 1982 p.29; Flight 27 June 1935 p.722; cover of "Flying" 7 Jan 1939; Aeroplane Monthly 1986 UK Aircraft and Museums Guide p.26. Colour scheme - overall silver, polished cowling, roundel on sides and top of fuselage, black lettering. Pilot training course commenced 10 Sep1934, using six C30A aircraft.
- 15 Feb 36 To No.2 Squadron, RAF Hawkinge, Kent then flying Hawker Audax army co-operation aircraft.
- 21 Aug 36 To A&AEE Martlesham Heath, Suffolk for type trials.
- 04 Oct 37 Returned to School of Army Co-operation.
- 05 Sep 38 To No.26 Maintenance Unit Cowley (Repair Depot), having flown 88 hours (surviving Rotas were withdrawn to No.26 MU between April and September 1938). Some were sold off for civilian use, though four, including K4232, remained in storage at Hanworth and Hamble.
- 06 Mar 39 Struck off charge
- May 39 K4232 was sold to the Warden Aviation & Engineering Co (Prop. Richard Shuttleworth) at Old Warden Park, Biggleswade, Beds,

apparently acquired from nearby RAF Cardington, together with fellow Avro Rotas K4233 and K4235 and various spares including 'two good fuselages' (K4230 and K4238, both scrapped at Old Warden in late 1939) the three airframes costing one guinea each as discovered by researcher Gordon Fraser in 2002/4. Offered for sale on the civil market at £100 each, minus engines and instruments, but not sold due to the outbreak of WW2.

Not flown, and retained RAF identities; under the Compensation (Defence) Act, 1939, requisitioned (rather than impressed as happened with active civilian owned aircraft), as requisition no.1090, officially as of 3 May 1941, with £60 per aircraft paid as compensation.

- 1 Jul 40 To newly formed No. 5 Radio Maintenance Unit, RAF Duxford, Cambs. (Unit CO was Flying Officer R.A. Brie)
- 21 Sep 40 Unit retitled No. 5 Repair and Servicing Section.
- Feb 41 To Calibration Flight, No.74 (Signals) Wing, Duxford, Cambs as one of 4 Rotas still on charge, with another 13 civil Rotas impressed. Used for radar calibration. Used for the slow, precise flying needed to calibrate the aerial arrays of coastal defence Chain Home radar installations. The autogyros usually operated on individual detachment, flying from an airfield close to the radar station to which they were assigned for calibration. Fighter escorts were provided, and occasionally needed, in areas where enemy aircraft might be encountered - (see Flying Review Dec 1962 p.25 for such an encounter in Jul.43.). These included Gladiators, Skuas and Hurricanes.
- 3 May 41 Rather belated formal requisition order as an impressed aircraft, presumably a paper 'tidying up' exercise. K4232, K4233 and K4235 all impressed on this date.
- Feb 42 Autogyros of No.74 Wing became No. 1448(Radar Calibration) Flight. On Detachment each machine worked with a designated radar station, the detachment staff consisting of pilot, fitter, and rigger.
- 02 Mar 42 Flight moved to RAF Halton, Bucks.
- 10 Oct 42 K4232 suffered Cat.B. damage - to Cunliffe Owen for repair.
- 11 Mar 43 Returned to No.1448 Flight, by then at RAF Halton.
- 15Jun 43 No 529 (Rota) Squadron formed at Halton from No. 1448 Flight and K4232 transferred to the new unit from 23 Jun. .This was the first and only operational Autogyro Squadron, Coded KX -

- 18 Aug 44 Unit moved to Upper Culham Farm, Wargrove, near Reading, Berks. At this time the unit operated 12 Hornet Moths, 1 Tiger Moth and 15 C30s.
- 15 May 45 K4232 flown to No. 5 MU RAF Kemble, Glos along with AP507 now displayed in the Science Museum, South Kensington (This latter aircraft was originally allotted for preservation by the Air Historical Branch 21 March 1946, - PRO AIR 2/10, 187);
- Five other C30s followed the same route that day, the last seven C30s going to Kemble in November 1945; HM580 (now at IWM Duxford) making the last ever RAF autogyro flight on 26 November 1945.
- 20 Dec 45 No 529 Squadron disbanded - all of its Autogyros went to No 5 MU for disposal. By 15 Feb 1946 there were 15 C.30A type Autogyros stored at Kemble.
- 21 May 46 K4232 sold to Cierva Autogyro Co. Southampton, Hants.(Cierva purchased five former No.529 Squadron C30s).
- c. Jul 46 To Sweden. Sold to Rolf von Bahrs Company, Helicopter - Flyg, a long established Autogyro operator.
- Jun 52 Appeared on the Swedish register as SE- AZB.Flew in overall silver with blue lettering on fuselage sides as one of 7 C30As operated by the company, 3 of them ex RAF machines. Photos - Aircraft Illustrated Annual 1982 p. 27 & 31. At one time fitted with modified tailfin/rudder for flying training.
- 1967 Used for test flying of 2-blade rotor at SAAB airfield at Linkoping. CoA expired the same year. By then carried the engine from C30 A SE- AFI and the rotor head from. SE-AEA Latterly stored at Linkoping. (These two aircraft also survive in museums; 'AFI at Schipol, 'AEA at Stockholm)
- 1977 Still stored by SAAB at Linkoping. Negotiations underway between the RAF Museum and Rolf von Bahr. Purchased by RAF Museum for \$15,000.
- Jun 78 Shipped from Sweden via Tilbury Docks, with some spares, on the SS Stellaria, arriving 11 June.
- 14 Jun 78 Delivered to RAF Museum Reserve Collection and Restoration Centre, Cardington.  
Photos - Aircraft Illustrated Sep 78 p.462; Aeroplane Monthly Dec.78 p.619; The Flying M May 1981 p.15.

Restored at Cardington to pre-war condition. Photo Jun 80 prior to installation of Genet Major engine- Aircraft Illustrated Sep 80 p.428; Photo fully restored at Cardington- Aircraft Illustrated Feb 81 p.69.

- Jan 81            Delivered by team from RAF Abingdon to RAF Museum Hendon for display. Photos as first displayed - Air Extra 36 p.22; Flypast Feb 1999 p.55; Air Enthusiast July/August 2003 p.33.
- 28-29 Aug 96    Dismantled prior to movement on one-year loan to Spanish Air Force. To be used as pattern aircraft in construction of replica in conjunction with the Juan de la Cierva Foundation - the replica C30A incorporates some original components, some including original rotorhead and blades provided by the RAFM.
- 19 Sep 96        To Cardington for temporary storage pending collection by Spanish Air Force from RAF Northolt.
- 23 Jan 97        Collected from Northolt by Spanish Air Force, and flown out in the hold of a Spanish Air Force C-130H Hercules to the military airfield at Albacete in south-east Spain . As the pattern aircraft, K4232 was dismantled and its parts measured to permit construction of a tailplane and new steel tubular fuselage and wooden fuselage ribs.
- 26 Jan 98        Returned to RAFM via RAF Northolt and placed back on display. Photos; Flypast January 2003 p.49; The Flying M Spring 2007 pp.10-11.
- 21 Sep 07        By road to RAF Halton for display at RAF Halton Aircraft Apprentices Association Triennial Rotorcraft Display on 22 September, returning to Hendon later that day.

Other surviving ex RAF C30A aircraft.

- K4235 (G- AHMJ) Kermit Weeks, USA 1998 -ex Shuttleworth Trust, Old Warden.
- AP506 (G-ACWM) International Helicopter Museum, Weston Super-Mare - (parts)
- AP507 (G- ACWP) Science Museum South Kensington.
- HM580 (G-ACUU) Imperial War Museum, Duxford.

**TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON**

**ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM 2007**