

**INDIVIDUAL HISTORY**

**BOULTON PAUL P.108 SEA BALLIOL T.MK.21 WL732**  
**MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 69/A/626**

18 Dec 50	First production batch of 20 Sea Balliols, WL715-WL734 ordered under contract no.6/ACFT/5972/CB9 (A). To be fitted with Merlin 35 engine.
Sep 53 - Aug 54	Delivery of above-mentioned Balliols. There was also a second, final batch of 10 Sea Balliols, WP324-WP333. The Balliol was the last production Boulton Paul aircraft. Both batches of Sea Balliols were built at the Pendeford, Wolverhampton, Staffs factory, the last, WP333, being delivered to the AeAEE at Boscombe Down 8 Dec 1954. The type was used for deck landing training and found favour as a general unit 'hack' aircraft.
30 Jun 54	First Flight; WL732 flight tested by Boulton Paul at Pendeford.
05 Jul 54	Delivered by air to RNAS Anthorn, Cumbria, for storage, having flown 1 hour 55 minutes since new.
06 Jul 54	Officially taken on charge at Anthorn and placed into long term storage there - the fate of many Balliols and Sea Balliols in the types' short career.
24 Sep 54	Aircraft preserved.
24 May 55	Aircraft Embalmed.
26 Aug 57	Aircraft de-preserved and prepared for flight.
09 Sep 57	Preparation completed - aircraft transferred to RNAS Lossiemouth for long-term storage. This move may have been prompted by the end of Anthorn's aircraft storage/preparation role in December 1957.
16 Sep 57	Aircraft flown from Anthorn to Lossiemouth. AHU (Aircraft Holding Unit) for further storage.
07 Oct 57	Aircraft preserved.
21 Apr 58	Engine removed.
30 Jul 58	Aircraft Embalmed.
24 Jan 62	Aircraft declared 'ADW'.

- Sep 63 Last active Royal Navy Sea Balliols withdrawn, from Abbotsinch Station Flight. (The RAF flew its last Balliols in 1960.) This left WP333 at Boscombe Down as the only active Balliol variant in the UK. (Those in Ceylon flew until 1969.)
- 16 Mar 64 Due to be sold for scrap to J.G. Williams & Son, Elgin, but sale cancelled.
- 06 May 64 WL732 officially allocated to A & AEE, Boscombe Down, as 'Support aircraft for carrier trials, communication duties, day and night continuation training' - Quote from movement card.  
The aircraft had been purchased from the Admiralty by the Ministry of Aviation.
- 22 Jul 64 Arrived at Boscombe Down, by road. See Airframe log books, DoRIS Ref: B3204; B3236-7; UA Box 176.
- 03 Sep 64 Rebuild to flying condition commenced at Boscombe.
- 29 Sep 65 Engine replaced. This was a very leisurely rebuild.
- 06 Oct 65 Royal Navy Log Card for WL732 officially closed - aircraft transferred to 'C' Squadron at Boscombe - the Naval Test Unit.
- 28 Oct 65 Completion of rebuild after 'transit and removal from storage'. full check and taxi test carried out this day. Used at Boscombe as a chase aircraft, photographic platform and general 'hack' replacing fellow Sea Balliol WP333, officially wef 29 Jun 1965. WL732 also served as a conversion trainer for pilots newly appointed to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, demonstrating in particular the phenomenon of 'Torque Stall' under the tutelage of C Squadron pilot Lt Cdr Brian Bullivant.
- (WP333 was the last Sea Balliol built, and hence the last production Boulton Paul aircraft, first flown 7 December 1954. Its last recorded flight was 10 Aug 1965. It was SOC as life expired at Boscombe 17 Jun 1966 but retained to supply spares for WL732 and as a test bed for proving spare engines, still being present Oct 1968, when put up for disposal as '7,100lbs of mixed metal', being sold for scrap to RJ Coley & Son 1969). This left WL732 as the last Balliol flying in the UK.
- 21 Feb 66 Visited Lee-on-Solent from Boscombe Down (Air Britain Digest May 1966)
- Photo at Boscombe in 1966 – 'In Wiltshire's Skies' Colin Cruddas, Tempus 2004, p.119.
- 8 Jul 66 Made deck landing on HMS Hermes, delivering a passenger and flown by Lt Cdr Bullivant. Details and photos – Boulton Paul Association Newsletter July/August 2003 pp.15-17. The flight involved delivering a senior engineer involved in Sea Vixen trials.

'The ship was operating in the area of Lyme Bay so it was a short hop from Boscombe. When we arrived at the ship they needed some extra time to set the correct tension on the arrestor cables to prevent the rear end of the aircraft being pulled away from the front!

Eventually all was declared ready and we entered the circuit and landed on –...the passenger was off-loaded and the aircraft was manhandled back along the flight deck to the position which gave the longest available take-off run.

I completed the checks and quite quickly applied maximum power while keeping straight by use of full rudder. Airspeed built rapidly (the ship was making 25 knots into a moderate breeze) and the Balliol lifted off abeam the island' (Bullivant)

- 19 Mar 68 Replacement Merlin 35, 222205, fitted in place of 222735, which had come from WP333 22 Dec 1965. (In 1973 the A&AEE donated to the RAFM Merlin 35 222771/A583561 (RAFM 73/E/632) presumably held as spares for the Sea Balliols)
- 14 Jun 68 Displayed at RAF 50th anniversary Royal Review at Abingdon, representing an RAF Balliol with its 'Royal Navy' titles painted out. Photo; Air Britain Aviation World Spring 2014 p.49.
- 28 Oct 68 Movement card records 'aircraft released from task'.
- Nov/Dec 68 Still flying at Boscombe, including flights to Bedford, Hucknall and Lee on Solent.
- 02 Dec 68 Treasury authorisation for transfer of WL732 from Min Tech to RAFM.
- Jan 69 Still flying at Boscombe - to Brawdy (9th) Yeovilton (27th) and Yeovilton again (31st).
- 29 Jan 69 Officially allocated to RAFM, Henlow.
- 05 Feb 69 Flight to Brawdy. This brought the aircraft's recorded airframe hours to 386¼ (861 landings). Estimated airframe fatigue life was 750-800 hours.
- Afternoon of 07 Feb 69 (Not 31 Jan as given in several published sources). Last flight of WL732, to Coltishall, then base of the BBMF, where its Merlin was exchanged with a time-expired example, also from Boscombe, for use by Spitfire Vb AB910. Boscombe seem to have kept '732 as long as possible - its last 2nd line inspection was 24 May 1968, with the next due 24 Feb 1969.
- This last UK Balliol flight commenced at 1400 and took 55 minutes. Photo on arrival; Control Column May 1969 p.10.
- Aug 69 Transferred by road to RAFM store at Henlow, Beds by this date - noted there by BAPC party, (Control Column Aug 69)

- 25 May 70                      Displayed at RAF Henlow Gala - Colour photo in Balch, AM `Testing Colours).
- 23 Aug 79                      Movement order for transfer to Cosford - arrived there by Nov 1979, and stored/displayed there ever since. Moved by team from Abingdon.
- Displayed painted in late Fleet Air Arm colours - silver overall, black anti-dazzle panel and walkways, Dayglo high visibility areas - lower engine cowling, rear fuselage, fin and outer wing panels. Photos at Cosford - FlyPast Aug 92 p.70; Aircraft Illustrated Sep 92 p.48; Jul 93 p.41; Wingspan Jun 93 p.61; Aircraft Illustrated Mar 1999 p.99.
- Summer 1993                      On display in `experimental' aircraft hangar at Cosford.
- Spring 1995                      Damaged in high winds whilst parked outside - wingtip badly bent when a jury strut bolt sheered and the wing fell on the adjacent Victor bomber. (BPA newsletter July 1995). Wingtip repaired by BPA.
- 2014                              After a period of storage, returned to display at Cosford . Photo – Flypast November 2014 p.13.

### **Other Balliol Survivors:**

- CA302    ex-WG227                      Sri Lankan Air Force Museum, Aircraft Preservation and Storage Unit, Ratmalana Air Base (inside display).
- CA310    ex-WG224/G-APCN                  Previously on Parade Ground, SLAF Ground Combat Training Unit, Diyatalawa; now also at Sri Lankan air Force Museum, Ratmalana on external display.
- WN149 and WN534                      Cockpit sections latterly with Boulton Paul Association at Wolverhampton, ex Failsworth.  
    ‘534 originally as spares source for ‘149 under restoration as a complete aircraft using original Balliol engine bearers, spare canopy sections, tailwheel oleos, undercarriage legs and main wheels from a variety of sources. A Merlin 35 has also been acquired.  
    Cockpit of ‘534 also under restoration also by Alec Brew from 2002; moved to Otherton, Staffs in April 2013 upon closure of Boulton Paul Heritage Centre and now at Tettenhall Transport Heritage Centre; WN149 moved to storage at RAF Cosford April 2013 upon closure of Boulton Paul Heritage Centre.
- WN516                              Cockpit section initially NEAM, Sunderland. Scrapyard condition, ex Failsworth - stored. Moved to RAF Millom museum, Cumbria April 2008, and to the Staffordshire Aircraft Restoration Team at Baxterly in 2011, and Tettenhall Transport Heritage Centre from 11 April 2015.

These are all Balliol T2 standard - WL732 is the only complete extant Sea Balliol, though in April 2010 the remains of two Sea Balliol cockpit sections were reported still extant at the site of the former Williamsons scrapyards at Brumley Brae, near Elgin, one consisting of cockpit floor with throttle quadrant and control column bases. These were acquired by Darren Speechly and stored at Crowland Aerodrome, Lincs by October 2017.

**TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON**