****

**WESTLAND DRAGONFLY HR 3 WP495/G-AJOV**

**History**

Built at Yeovil, Somerset for service with the Fleet Air Arm with Constructor Number WA/H/80. Serials batch WP493 - WP504; one of 58 Dragonfly HR 3 aircraft built, the most numerous of all Dragonfly variants.

20/05/53 First flight flown by Mr DAS Colvin

05/06/53 Delivered to Gosport

22/06/53 Stn Flt Ford (982/FD named Madame Guillotine, then 921/FD)

09/04/55 Whilst aircrew discharging rescued crew of yacht on beach, a civilian sightseer Mr M Phillips ran into the tail rotor and was killed, Cat LQ. Lt J Walden and N/A GV Mephan

27/02/56 AHU Lee-on-Solent

18/07/56 Stn Flt Culdrose (912/CU)

06/06/57 RNAY Donibristle (Recon and conversion to HR5)

14/07/58 RNAY Fleetlands

09/10/58 NAIRU Lee-on Solent

16/02/59 RNAY Fleetlands

30/04/59 SF Victorious (967/V)

11/12/59 RNAY Fleetlands

27/05/60 SF Centaur (978)

26/07/60 AHU Fleetlands

23/09/60 SF Victorious (967)

01/10/60 RNAY Fleetlands

21/12/60 705 Sqn Culdrose (547)

16/06/61 Hydraulic failure and a precautionary manual landing made at Dewdrop Farm, near Carclew, Falmouth. Cat LQ. L/C RR Edwards and L/C RDR Hawkesworth

27/02/62 Stn Flt Culdrose (915/CU)

28/01/63 RNAY Fleetlands (Long Term Storage)

01/06/64 SOC and sold to Anglo Diesel Co London

02/05/65 To Blackbushe by road, stayed till 9/66

1974 With the Combined Cadet Force at the King’s School, Wimbledon, bearing the code 915.

04/76 To Warnham, West Sussex where the Surrey Aircraft Preservation Society (SAPS) established the Warnham War Museum at Doffold Hill

1977 To Banstead, Surrey with the Surrey and Sussex Aircraft Preservation Society (S&SAPS), still coded 915

Early 1979 Front portion to Biggin Hill, Kent in poor condition, for the British Airways Collection; rear portion with accessories stored at Banstead

02/1980 To Aerospace Museum, RAF Cosford, Salop, by road on loan to RAF Museum from the Surrey and Sussex Aviation Preservation Society. Restored and painted to represent the original BEA Sikorsky S-51 trials aircraft G-AJOV which on 1 June 1950 began the first ever sustained regular scheduled passenger helicopter service, between Liverpool (Speke) and Cardiff (Pengham Moor)

26/07/17 To Morayvia at Kinloss, on long term loan from S&SAPS. Transferred to Spey Bay, Moray for storage.

08/08/17 Repainted in RN colours as WP495, Coded LM 915 and remained in storage.

06/01/19 Transferred to Morayvia for display

**Lt Cdr John Sproule RN**

One individual whose name became synonymous with the Dragonfly helicopter was that of Lieutenant Commander John Sproule. A pre-war record breaking glider pilot with a fertile mind and impressive engineering ability, Sproule was appointed as Commanding Officer of the new Search and Rescue element of Station Flight RNAS Ford, Sussex.

At Ford, together with former TAG aircrewman CPO SW ‘Jan’ Lock, he devised a series of self-designed and engineered helicopter improvements which blazed a trail for future SAR and ship-borne helicopter operations. These included the “Sproule Net” for fishing survivors or bodies from the sea, the Ford “Carry-Cot” Stretcher for recovering injured personnel from ships and the “Harpoon”.

This latter device automatically secured a helicopter to the deck of a rolling ship at the moment of landing by spearing a metal grid let into the ship’s deck with a vertical harpoon member located on the belly of the helicopter. In 1955 this prototype, fashioned in the RNAS Ford workshops, was demonstrated to both British and French interested parties, but subsequently discounted by the Admiralty. The French, however, went on to successfully develop the invention, it later becoming incorporated on the Anglo-French Lynx, but Sproule had to fight to be recognised as its originator. Duly, in 1978, he was belatedly awarded a “royalty” of £5000 for his invention, by the MoD Awards to Inventors Committee.