



South Australian Aviation Museum

Aircraft Profile

WESTLAND WESSEX HAS31B HELICOPTER N7-224 (WA224)

Single engine military anti-submarine detection/transport helicopter

History of N7-224 (WA224)

This is one of 27 Wessex helicopters built for the Royal Australian Navy. It first flew in August 1963 and served on HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Stalwart*.

On 8 April 1968, during a normal flight the aircraft suffered an engine overspeed. The pilot LEUT J.W Nichol and Co-pilot SBLT R Giffen managed to regain control of the aircraft and nurse it back to HMAS Melbourne.

On the way the Observer, SBLT M. Bayliss and the aircrewman POACM Trainor were ordered to abandon the aircraft. They jumped into the sea and were picked up by HMAS Parramatta. The Wessex landed safely aboard the carrier.

In its long career it was used on a variety of missions both at sea and at Nowra, NSW, and still carries its Pennant No. 834. It became an instructional airframe in 1987 before going on display at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Nowra. SAAM acquired the aircraft in October 1998.





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N7-224 on board HMAS Melbourne in 1974.



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History of Type

The Wessex was built in England by Westland Aircraft Ltd under licence from Sikorsky Helicopters of the USA. 384 Wessex were built, including 43 HAS3 types modified from the original HAS1. The first production aircraft flew on 20 June 1958 and entered front-line service from July 1961.

Australia's Wessex were also used on HMAS *Sydney* when it was a troop carrier with 725 SQN on anti-submarine patrols on trips to Vietnam. In 1969 817 SQN received modified Wessex 31Bs fitted with AQS Sonar systems for underwater detection and refitted with the more powerful Napier Gazelle engine. RAN Wessex were fully withdrawn in 1976 upon replacement by Westland Sea Kings.

Technical Specifications

Engine: 1,600 SHP (1193 kw) Napier Gazelle Mk165 free power turbine

Maximum take-off weight: 6,169 kg

Rotor diameter: 17.07 m

Length: 15.3 m

Height: 4.35 m

Cruising speed: 120 kts (222 kph)

Range: 517 km (280 nm)

Capacity: 2 pilots and 10 persons