

# Saunders-Roe Skeeter - XL812 (G-SARO)



The Saunders-Roe Skeeter is a two-seat training and scout helicopter that was developed and produced by British manufacturer Saunders-Roe (Saro) of Cowes and Southampton, in the United Kingdom. The fuselage is all metal construction and the main rotor-blades make use of a composite construction, using a steel-tube spar that was bonded to wooden veneers, formers, and ribs, as well as brass balance-weights; these reportedly delivered a cost-effective and relatively simplistic rotor blade that also possessed favourable fatigue properties.

In September 1957 the Skeeter entered military service and served with the British Army Air Corps, the German Navy and the German Army. It has the distinction of being the first helicopter to be used by the Army Air Corps (AAC) and was used until 1967. The HAAF Skeeter XL812 was delivered to the AAC in March 1959 and served until 1967.

The British Army ordered 64 Skeeter 6's, to be designated as the Skeeter AOP.12 (Air Observation Post (AOP) - artillery direction & control), Several Skeeter AOP.12s were operated by the Central Flying School of the Royal Air Force. Thirty-two Skeeters are known to still exist, 1 in Australia, 1 in The Netherlands, 1 in Poland, 8 in Germany and 21 in the UK. None of the remaining Skeeters are airworthy and the Historic Army Aircraft Flight (HAAF) one last flew in 2006.

- **Construction Number:** S2/5097
- **Army Role-** Two-seat Airborne Observation Post (AOP), Reconnaissance and Trainer.
- **Engine Manufacturer and Model:** 1×De Havilland Gipsy Major 215hp) 4-cylinder air-cooled inverted engine, 215 hp (160 kW).
- **Dimensions:** **Length:** 26 ft 8 in (8.13 m), **Height:** 9 ft 6 in (2.90 m), **Main rotor diameter:** 32 ft 0 in (9.75 m).
- **Max Speed:** 105 mph (169 km/h, 93kn)
- **Ceiling:** 12,800 ft (3,900 m)
- **Range:** 260nm (480km) at 86 mph (75 kn; 138 km/h) – 2hrs 20min.
- **All Up Weight:** 2,300 lb (1,043 kg)

## AIRCRAFT HISTORICAL TIMELINE

- 12/2/1959 – ABR as a Skeeter 7 (AOP12) by Saunders Roe at Eastleigh Southampton.  
13/3/1959 – Delivered to Army Air Corps, Middle Wallop, with serial number XL812.  
23/4/1959 – Delivered to 652 Sqn and known to be with 9 flight April 1964.  
15/6/1967 – To 15MU and noted at Odiham the following day.  
27/5/1968 – Declared NEA and bought by Leeds University 28 May 68. It had left by mid-1971  
30/4/1978 – Left Rotherham to Blackpool by road for restoration to flying condition (completed 1979)  
17/07/1978 – Registered to Francis Fitzralph Chamberlain, Ipswich (Major F.F. Chamberlain).  
4/6/1979 – Noted hangared at Dyce Airport Inverness carrying the registration G-SARO / XL812.  
15/11/2000 – Registered to Benedicta Chamberlain – Ipswich  
14/04/2010 - Reg Cancelled by Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

## SURVIVING SKEETERS

### Australia

- XK482 -Saro Skeeter AOP10 (G-BJWC) Restoration at Tyabb airport, Victoria.

### Germany

- XL556 – Skeeter AOP.12 stored at Gatow museum, Berlin,
- XM563 - Skeeter AOP.12 Private owner Seifertshofen.
- XN339 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display outside at Stuttgart – Mohringen.
- XN341 – Skeeter AOP.12 Private owner Seifertshofen.
- XN345– Skeeter AOP.12 Private owner
- XN348 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at the Hubschraubermuseum Bückeburg in Bückeburg, Lower Saxony.
- XN349 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display outside at the Schwenningen museum.
- XN354 - Skeeter AOP.12 under restoration at Hermeskeil museum.

### Netherlands

- XN341 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display outside Maasbracht, Valkenpower.

### Poland

- XL767 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at the Polish Aviation Museum in Kraków.

### United Kingdom

- XL736 - Skeeter AOP.12 stored at The Helicopter Museum in Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset.
- XL739 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at the Norfolk Tank Museum in Fornsett, Norfolk.
- XL762 – Skeeter AOP.12 in storage at the National Museum of Flight in East Fortune, East Lothian.
- XL763 – Skeeter AOP.12 stored at Storwood (floor pan only, boom separate)
- XL764 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at Newark Air Museum in Newark-on-Trent, Notts.
- XL765 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display Sandown Airport Museum, Isle of Wight.
- XL770 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at the Solent Sky Museum in Southampton, Hampshire.
- XL809 – Skeeter AOP.12 (G-BLIX) stored Wilden area, Bedford.
- XL811 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at The Helicopter Museum in Weston-super-Mare, .
- **XL812 - Skeeter AOP.12 used for static display by the HAAF, Hampshire.**
- **XL813 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at the Army Flying Museum, Hants.**
- **XL814 – Skeeter AOP.12 stored at the Army Flying Museum in Middle Wallop, Hampshire**
- XM553 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at the Yorkshire Air Museum in Elvington, York.
- XM555 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at the NE Land, Sea and Air Museums in Sunderland.
- XM557– Skeeter AOP.12 stored at The Helicopter Museum in Weston-super-Mare, .
- XM561 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at Doncaster Museum as XM651.
- XM564 – Skeeter AOP.12 stored at Bovington Museum, Dorset
- XM565 – Skeeter AOP.12 stored at Storwood.
- XN344 – Skeeter AOP.12 on static display at the Science Museum, London in London.
- XN345– Skeeter AOP.12 stored at The Helicopter Museum in Weston-super-Mare, .
- XN351– Skeeter AOP.12 on static display in museum at Kinloss - Morayvia, Moray
- S2/5081 – Skeeter 8 on static display at the Solent Sky Museum in Southampton, Hampshire.