



looking for. Phil describes the type as having a “presence like no other helicopter” adding that it was “an icon of the 1960s”.

Getting hold of one to operate in a civilian manner as a ‘warbird’ outside of the USA proved to be far from easy. Though finding ‘Huey’ specialist North West Helicopters of Olympia, Washington, USA, was straightforward and Brian Reynolds and team proved to be masters of their craft.

As with many restoration projects, it was the paperwork that proved to be the test of character! Here Phil was faced with acquiring a weapon-of-war and exporting it from the USA.

Across the globe, members of the ‘Huey’ family are in use with a large number of air forces (including the UK) and a growing number of civilian operators. Several companies – not least Bell – are also reworking former US Army ‘Hueys’ for further service.

Phil found a good aid in Marvin Kottman who handled the mountains of paperwork that acquiring the ‘Huey’ generated. It took 19 months of form-filling and negotiation to get clearance to bring it to the UK.

Getting various US departments to appreciate that this was being bought by an individual to fly for pleasure as a ‘warbird’ was an uphill struggle – Marvin and Phil encountered many mandarins in that 19 months...

One office queried Phil’s description that he wished to display the helicopter in the UK. It even went so far as to ask him to *name* the people who would be seeing it! Phil found all of this close to a nightmare. I just kept repeating: “I will not be ground down by this”.

Eventually, all of the forms fell into place and the export documentation arrived on March 25. The ‘Huey’ had been flight-tested at Olympia and now

it awaited a space on a Boeing 747F freighter to bring it to Gatwick.

In the UK, London Helicopters at nearby Redhill was ready to receive it and check it out. On July 16, the ‘Huey’ arrived in the UK. Phil could finally start to appreciate his dream machine. For now, it is US-registered as N41574, but it has the very appropriate UK registration G-UH1H reserved for it.

### FLYING MEMORIAL

Phil was “absolutely delighted” to discover that his chosen machine - UH-1H 72-21509 - had flown and fought with the 129th Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam. The helicopter has been finished in their authentic markings, including their motto ‘Bite and Strike’.

From the start of the project, Phil and his team wanted to use the ‘Huey’ as a memorial to the Vietnam era and the personnel involved in that emotional and contentious conflict. They plan to stencil the 34 names of the 129th’s aircrew that were killed in action on the side of the ‘Huey’. Phil is keen to find anyone who has 72-21509 in their logbooks.

The ‘Huey’ has been returned as near as possible to its Vietnam spec. There are post-1973 modifications and upgrades that have been made that cannot be readily removed, for example the air filter system, radar-warning ‘bubbles’ on the nose, cable-cutters etc, but otherwise, this machine is very much ‘stock’.

As in the days of the Airmobile making their LZ arrivals, the ‘Huey’ can be flown with the doors bolted back and that is how Phil and team intend it to be seen at airshows. To this end, they have gone to the expense of refitting the pintel mounts for the

*Like all of the ‘Huey’, the cockpit is as ‘stock’ as possible.*

M60 machine-guns. The guns and their ammo belts – all inert of course – have also been added.

Phil pointed to a couple of patches in the cabin roof and reciprocal repairs in the floor. This ‘Huey’ took some ‘incoming’ during its time in ‘Nam’.

While showing the *FlyPast* team around the cockpit, Phil and Ralph grinned as they confessed that they had installed a very non-period item in the instrument panel. Secreted away is a CD player.

The UH-1 has a long ‘wind-down’ routine after landing. The engine is spooled down and everything is switched off; this takes a couple of minutes as those big blades slow to a stop. On their first sortie, Phil turned to Ralph as they started this process and said, “let’s have some music”.

He had no idea what was going to come out – they both collapsed into laughter as Elvis boomed out – ‘A whole lot of shaking going on!’ This is *exactly* what a ‘Huey’ does at that time! Phil’s ‘into’ rock music and already has a theme for the ‘Huey’ – Bruce Springsteen’s *Born in the USA*.

As revealed in the October issue, the UH-1 has already had its airshow debut, at Redhill on August 14. (More on that show on page 74.)

As well as airshows, Phil hopes that the helicopter will attract the attention of TV and movie crews. This he has already achieved, with an appearance in the TV series *Ultimate Force* starring the testosterone-laden Ross Kemp. Filming was staged in a disused quarry at Chinnor, Oxfordshire. (See the panel for contact details.)

Phil “could not be happier” with the ‘Huey’. After a session for Duncan Cubitt’s camera, he and Ralph admitted that they were already looking for a stablemate. With a glint in his eye, Phil said that “an AH-1 Cobra would be great” and Ralph added “and an [Hughes] OH-6 Cayuse, that would complete the scene”.

A Vietnam helicopter set-piece at a UK airshow? Having seen how determined and polished Phil and his team are, I don’t doubt it will happen.

### ‘Huey’ goodies and contacts



The Huey UH-1H on-line shop serves to help raise funds for the operation of G-UH1H and offers a wide variety of items, from stickers (£2.25) to tiepins/cufflinks (£5.25) to clothing and models. Also available is the incredible DVD *In the Shadow of the Blade* (£16.50), 105 minutes of the stories of a battle-scarred ‘Huey’ and is crammed with

stories from veterans of the Vietnam war. Contact via [www.huey.co.uk](http://www.huey.co.uk) or write to: Huey Team, MSS Holdings, Fleetwood Road, Kirkham, Lancs, PR4 3HD. Other useful sites: Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association [www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org) and the 129th Assault Helicopter Company [www.129th.net](http://www.129th.net)