

KEILKRAFT

Handbook Reference Guide

By Ian Miles & Steve Betney

The KeilKraft handbooks are little gems, well worth collecting and preserving for posterity, especially as the kits are no longer in production. If you've been collecting them, you will no doubt have noticed that it's quite difficult to tell if you have a complete set. Some have the year on them, some have two years, some years there were no handbooks and others have no dates at all. What I have tried to do here is provide a reference guide for the collector of what I think is the complete set.

The information presented is based on my own observations over many years of collecting, and as far as I can tell is complete, but of course there's always the chance that something hitherto unseen will turn up one day. That's just part of the fun of collecting. If you know of other handbooks or publications that aren't mentioned here, we would be pleased to hear from you (note – this article doesn't cover the trade price lists).

Of course there are many other kinds of KeilKraft memorabilia to collect such as the single sheet leaflets, the trade price lists and of course the kits and accessories themselves. Some of these items changed over the years and the information in the table below can be used to date those in your collection. For example, the leaflets can be dated by looking at the price of the Junior Flying Scale Kits as this changed almost every year. Other clues include the address, KeilKraft moved from Hackney road to Wickford in 1955 and then on to Lancing in the mid-late 1980's. I hope you find this article of help in your quest to "collect them all".



Reference Summary of KeilKraft Handbook Publications

Year		Price	Pages	JFS Kit Price	Featured Plans	Notes
1946		1/-	48	-	Bantam HLG (p28 -29), Scorpion & Strato Baby (reduced)	
1947a		1/6	56	-	Bantam HLG (p28 -29), Scorpion & Strato Baby (reduced)	First edition
1947b		1/6	56	-	Bantam HLG (p28 -29), Scorpion & Strato Baby (reduced)	Revised summer edition.
1948		9d	40	-		
1949		9d	48	-	Pirate (not full size)	
1950	1950 - 51	6d	90	-	Imp - Jetex	
1951		-				None published
1952	1952 - 53	1/3	98	3/8		
1953	1953 - 54	1/3	102	3/6		
1954		-				None published
1955		9d	48	3/6		
1956		9d	56	3/9		
1957		1/3	56	3/9		
1958		1/6	64	3/9	Imp - Jetex	
1959		1/6	64	3/9	Flicka - Hand Launched Glider	
1960		2/-	72	-		Marine models catalogue
1961		2/-	60	4/2	Cyclone - Control Line	
1962		-				None published
1963		2/-	90	4/6		
1964		-				None published
1965		2/6	90	4/8		
1966		-				None published
1967		-				None published
1968a		2/6	90	6/3		First edition
1968b		2/6	90	6/3		Second print (possibly the same)
1969		3/6	90	6/4	Gnat - Jetex	
1970		-				None published
1971a		3/6, 17½p	90	45p - 9/0		Dual currency edition
1971b		20p	90	45p - 9/0		Decimal edition
1972		20p	90	44p - 8/10	Mustang - Control Line	
1973		-				None published
1974		-				None published
1975		50p	90	75p - 15/0		
1976		-				None published
1977		-				None published
1978		-				None published
1979		95p	96	£1.95 - £1 19 6	Katie - Hand Launched Glider	
1980		?	40	-		Harry Butler RTP Catalogue



1946

This one has a wonderful introduction written by Eddie Keil himself. With typical post war modesty he apologises for not being able to produce enough kits as he was busy building Mosquitos for the War effort! A range of rubber powered flying scale models is introduced, comprising a Lysander, Mustang, Typhoon, Thunderbolt, Spitfire V, Firefly, Piper Cub, Zero and FW 190. I have never seen any of these for sale anywhere. (See the end of this article for a picture of this range of models.) Does anyone know if there are any still in existence?



1947a

This edition introduces some new models, the Contestor, Competitor, Rover, Slicker and Hornet. This must have been a time of enthusiastic development and change as they felt the need to publish a revised edition later that year. A hand-launched glider called the Bantam is the free full size plan included in this and the previous edition. Although not listed in the 1946 edition, on page 2 there is a photo of a model described as a "modified Eaglet" with a petrol engine installed and seemingly decorated in pseudo Military colours. However it looks more like a Bandit to me – nice though.



1947b

In the revised introduction the development of a powered flying wing is mentioned, but it seems this was never produced. The charismatic control line Phantom now makes its debut appearance in a splendid full-page advert and quickly becomes a best seller. The Contestor, Competitor and Eaglet trio make their appearance. Many kits are advertised in full-page spreads in these first issues and they really show the models off nicely. It makes you want to rush out and buy them, which is exactly what an advert should do.



1948

With a new format, slightly stiffer cover and better quality paper, it's surprising there aren't more of these still around. We are introduced to the Scout biplane and Stuntmaster control line models. This issue contains some great photos of the original Phantom prototypes, the Southerner and Playboy models. Tethered cars make their first and last appearance as catalogue items, as does the Atlas model yacht. Galoon kits are introduced and the range of engines expands to include Mills, NORDEC and E.D. Jetex 100 & 200 motors along with the Skyjet 100 & 200 kits quietly appear.



1949

This is a particularly nice handbook and very hard to find, especially in good condition. There are many fine photos, including a great one of Eddie Keil and his beautiful Falcon. Other pictures include an early Skystreak prototype and a fabulous photo of Ernie Webster hard at work in his workshop building models. Nice work if you can get it the caption says! Too true. The Skyjet 50 model is introduced.



1950

This handbook introduces the Pixie semi-scale free flight rubber model. The Piper Cub is now the only remaining flying scale model from the original series. We are introduced to the Stunt King, the Chief A2 Glider and the Skystreak series. There is a great article on the development of the Skystreak. The Slicker gets a fabulous full-page spread advertisement, listing a string of trophy wins over four years.



1952

This issue sees the introduction of purchase tax and the new Junior Flying Scale Series, initially comprising 14 rubber powered planes of 16–21" span, one glider and 6 Jetex powered models. All were priced at a modest 3/8 and which replaced the earlier series completely. This range was substantially expanded in the coming years and must have introduced many young modellers to this fine hobby.



1953

The Topper and Dolphin gliders are introduced. The Spitfire, and Hurricane are finally added to the rubber powered Junior Flying Scale Series. The Javelin, DH110, Avro 707 and Supermarine Swift were also added to the Jetex Junior Flying Scale range. By this stage the "how to" articles in the handbooks are becoming quite comprehensive and well worth reading.

			
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1955</u></p> <p>Cover price reduced to 9d but now only 48 pages. KeilKraft move from Hackney Road to new factory in Wickford. There is a nice article about the new factory in the August 1955 edition of Model Aircraft Magazine. EeZe-BILT Sedan and Sportster introduced along with Aerokits boat kits.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1956</u></p> <p>The rather splendid cover on this issue shows the Pacer Class B Team Racer against a backdrop of a chequered flag. 3/6 Flying Scale kits now priced at 3/9. There is a nice drawing of the new Wickford factory on page 1. Lots of nice photos including an early Phantom with no cockpit, several of the Mk1 Ranger, two pictorial articles showing how to build the Dolphin and the Spitfire.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1957</u></p> <p>Back to landscape format again, but for the last time. The rather curious cover picture almost seems more old fashioned than previous years. The Phantom Mite was introduced. KeilKraft began marketing plastic assembly kits with the introduction of the new Highway Pioneers classic car kits from Gowland. This was in response to the increasing popularity and availability of plastic models.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1958</u></p> <p>This handbook introduces the new Hurricane Mk.2c plastic assembly kit and announces that this will be followed by a Sopwith Camel, a Stuka and a Chipmunk. The Stuka and Chipmunk never appeared though. The cover picture for this issue was later used on the box art for the plastic kit of the Sopwith Camel. A vastly expanded range of plastic kits appears, though none from Airfix curiously.</p>
			
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1959</u></p> <p>This issue sports a lovely colourful picture (front and back covers) of the ever-charismatic Spectre control liner. There are also some nice colour pictures on the inside covers, the 1/72nd plastic Hurricane in the front and the Swan & Cygnet EeZeBILT Boats at the back. The foreword is all about Balsa - sanded balsa in fact, which KeilKraft have now started producing. The range of marine modelling accessories has now been greatly expanded. Remember to read the comments from satisfied customers in these handbooks, there are some real gems. The free plan in this issue is the "Flicka" contest chuck glider, a neat clean design.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1960</u></p> <p>In 1960, KeilKraft decided to concentrate heavily on supplying the needs of the marine modeller and this issue contains only marine modelling items and articles. It is however a seriously comprehensive issue and well worth having in your collection. It remains the one and only KeilKraft marine models catalogue, although there are one or two marine modelling leaflets out there. It would appear that KeilKraft chose not to print a model aircraft handbook this year, and so even though this issue only covers boats, it probably belongs in the 1960 slot.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1961</u></p> <p>This issue was printed in the same format as the 7¼" x 9¾" Aeromodeller magazine, so that it would stack neatly with your collection. The Junior Flying Scale kit price has now risen to 4/2 due to inflation. There is now a heavy marine modelling content and the EeZeBILT boat range has expanded. The catalogue section now includes the Contest kits range of aircraft and the Superquick 1/72nd scale card model railway buildings now make their first appearance.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1962</u></p> <p>First of the 6¾"x 8¾" 90 page format handbooks, a size that remained for all but the last of the series. The Mercury range of kits and accessories is now included along with the WEN-MAC RTF plastic control line models. The Junior Flying Scale kit price has now risen to 4/8. The new Mk.2 Ranger appears for the first time due to Class A Team Race rule changes, but no mention is made of this in the handbook. An announcement was made in the January 1962 Aeromodeller however.</p>



1965

This edition has some interesting (though very small) photos of the inside of the Wickford factory at the front. They give a good idea of the scale of the operation. The cover shows a young chap holding a Phantom Mite whilst watching his chums start up a Spectre. This appears to be the one featured in the catalogue with its distinctive diamond colour scheme. A large range of Mercury kits is now included in the catalogue section.



1968 a & b

Radio control is becoming very popular now as the technology improves. Consequently there is a large RC content in this issue, both kits and equipment and the cover features a KeilKraft Intruder in flight. Digital proportional control is starting to emerge. Superquick have now introduced a range of 1/32nd scale slot car trackside buildings, which today are as rare as hens teeth. This edition was so popular that they had to do a second print run.



1969

On the cover, a superb Hawker Fury at the 1969 Southend Gala. It's not a KeilKraft model but it makes a great front cover! On page 6 there is a photo of a chap holding a Marquis and a call for photos of built up KeilKraft models with a reward of two Guineas for those selected. The Phantom and Champ are now available as "Deluxe" kits, which include an engine, fuel, propeller, dope, sanding sealer and brushes – a fantastic present for some lucky modellers!



1971a

Here we have a picture of Dave Hughes holding an Outlaw (new version) converted to multi radio control, once again at the Southend Annual Gala (Leigh Marshes in the background). There is a nice cover story article on page 29 covering the conversion. The cover price is given in both decimal and Sterling, as this was when the currency was about to change. The prices in the catalogue are all decimal and I imagine there was a lot of head scratching going on at this time.



1971b

This was re-issued with a modified cover price in decimal only and slightly increased. The contents remained unchanged though, including the decimal conversion table.



1972

David Rawlins on the cover with an Elmira, also designed the free plan in this issue – a neat little control line Mustang. There is a great article on building a Marquis with many excellent photos.



1975

David Rawlins on the cover again, it's been 3 years since the last issue and his hair has grown a bit. Harry butler writes about electric RTP models and Rex Boyer writes in depth on RC.



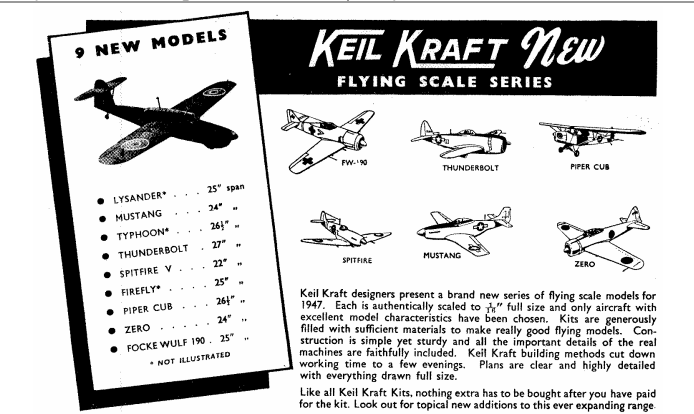
1979

A complete range of Harry Butler kits and accessories is introduced in this issue. The prices are printed on a separate sheet this year, each one is dated, so there may be several versions.



1980

This was probably the last KeilKraft publication. Although not strictly a KeilKraft handbook it contains a comprehensive catalogue of Harry Butler RTP kits and accessories. It also suggests converting KeilKraft Junior Flying Scale series, EeZeBILT, and Super Scale series kits to RTP. It has no date or cover price so its quite difficult to place



Keil Kraft designers present a brand new series of flying scale models for 1947. Each is authentically scaled to 1/4" full size and only aircraft with excellent model characteristics have been chosen. Kits are generously filled with sufficient materials to make really good flying models. Construction is simple yet sturdy and all the important details of the real machines are faithfully included. Keil Kraft building methods cut down working time to a few evenings. Plans are clear and highly detailed with everything drawn full size.

Like all Keil Kraft Kits, nothing extra has to be bought after you have paid for the kit. Look out for topical new additions to this ever expanding range.