



Issue 23 - Feb13 - Mar14

# Contrails

## Newsletter of the Christchurch Aviation Society

CAvSoc

### Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance

For our first meeting of 2014 Annette Plaistow-Trapaud gave us a talk about the work of the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance (DSAA). Annette opened with the sobering news that the DSAA operates as a Charity with no financial assistance from the Government (as it considers helicopter rescue to be a costly enterprise) or the National Lottery (which doesn't support statutory services, which the AA should be). England and Wales has 18 AA charities, the first in Cornwall created in 1987, but Scotland's AA service is government funded due to the nature of the terrain. The DSAA helicopter, like many of the other 30 helicopters in use, is the Euro-copter 135 and like most is leased from Bond Air Services which provides all maintenance required. The helicopter was new in March 2009 and can carry two stretcher cases although it is normally configured to carry one giving more space for additional equipment and a seat for a person accompanying the casualty. Henstridge airfield provides the base and is reasonably central with flying times of 19mins to West Somerset and 12 mins to the south east at Swanage. With up to 3 sorties per day there have been 9,500 missions since 2000. Because of equipment and human resource costs there are only 3 major trauma centres which are Southampton, Bristol and Plymouth although the AA can land at others like Bournemouth which has a landing pad. Each of the 3 teams consists of



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a pilot and two highly trained paramedics. The paramedics are supplied through the NHS but everything else is paid for. With all this cost why is it worth it? The helicopter has a number of key advantages – it can operate in remote areas close to an incident – it can travel direct to the best choice of hospital – and above all it is fast, both in getting to the incident and the onward journey to the hospital. The critical 'golden hour' which reduces mortality and time in an ICU, is far more achievable by helicopter than by road bound ambulance.

The DSAA is an expensive operation at £1.7m per year – say £4,600 a day or approximately £2,500 per mission– so a large effort is made for fund raising. Key activities are the recycling of clothes and shoes from the yellow containers seen at places such as Castlepoint, which provides £2000 a week and the DSAA lottery where for £1 a week people have the chance of winning £1000. Many organisations support the DSAA and legacies, Gift Aid, collecting boxes fetes and merchandise all play their part in keeping the ambulance flying.

#### Meetings List

**7 May14** AGM followed by “How to Make a Spitfire Mk26BV6 “ by Martin Laking

**03 Sep14** Mission Aviation Fellowship by TBC

**Visits - dates tba - names to Steve Robson**

Planning is underway for a visit embracing the WW2 bunker at RAF Uxbridge and the deHavilland Heritage centre Salisbury Hall in North London

#### Vulcan

The last flying Vulcan XH558 has had to have some wing leading edge modifications including strengthening to continue to fly safely. Work was made possible by a fund raising scheme 'Operation 2015' and the demanding shaping of the panels was recently completed by Beagle Technology Group in Christchurch. Meanwhile the usual winter maintenance work continues; including fitting a new #5 Stbrd fuel tank and a series of deep X-Ray NDT inspections.

#### Air Festival - 28-31Aug 2014

Eight Merlins in formation may be seen/heard this year because another Lancaster is expected to be in England (from Canada) at the time of the Air Festival. The Red Arrows will be flying on all four days.