



Issue 12 : Apr11 -May11

# Contrails

## Newsletter of the Christchurch Aviation Society

### March Talk - 'Find the Konigsberg' by Kevin Patience

At our March meeting Kevin Patience gave a talk on the *Konigsberg* incident – dramatised in the film *Shout at the Devil*. Kevin grew up in East Africa and as a boy at Mombasa saw the guns salvaged from the German cruiser *Konigsberg* and the British cruiser *Pegasus* used during the WWI East African land campaign. *Königsberg* had evaded 3 British cruisers and then passed into the Simba Urunga channel in the Rufiji River delta awaiting resupply of fuel and a suitable target. In Zanzibar harbour *Konigsberg* sank HMS *Pegasus* before taking refuge in the Rufiji again following machinery failure. She remained elusive and eventually aircraft were brought in for reconnaissance. A civilian pilot was hired with his Curtiss seaplane and although his plane was shot down, the whereabouts of the hidden cruiser was revealed. A pair of RNAS Sopwith 807 seaplanes were tried with the intention of scouting and even bombing the ship, but they soon fell apart in the glue-melting tropical heat. A trio of Short seaplanes also fared little better, managing to take photographs of the ship before they were grounded by the tropical conditions and German anti-aircraft fire. In July 1915, the British used a plan involving the shallow draft monitors *Severn* and *Mersey* together with



Caudron Aircraft

Caudron and Henri Farman spotter aircraft. As they closed within firing range one of the planes dropped several bombs near *Königsberg* as a diversion. Aided by the aircraft to spot the fall of shells, the monitors engaged in a long-range duel with *Königsberg* opening fire at a range of 10,600 yards. *Königsberg* returned effective fire and after the British had fired over 600 rounds with few hits they withdrew. Four days later the monitors used a carefully rehearsed system for aerial observation. *Königsberg* was low on ammunition and could not maintain the same rate of fire as the two monitors and following many hits the German cruiser was scuttled. Kevin finished with a display of artefacts including medals from both sides of the conflict.

### Visit Report - Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum Reserve Collection at Cobham Hall and Royal Navy Historic Flight

Whilst most aviation people know about the Fleet Air Arm Museum, fewer know what lies in a large green hangar to the North of the main museum.

The Reserve Collection is larger than that of many other aircraft museums and is housed in a Heritage Lottery funded climate-controlled building called Cobham Hall containing more than 30 historic aircraft and some 2 million records and 30 thousand artefacts on 5 miles of shelving. It has a large collection of Westland Helicopters, a Supermarine 510 - the first swept wing jet aircraft to land on an aircraft carrier and the Gazelle helicopter in which HRH The Duke of York learnt to fly. The world's oldest surviving aircraft carrier, the *Lighter T3* is under restoration here. This sixty feet long streamlined craft was towed behind fast RN destroyers, allowing aircraft to take off at sea during World War 1. Members were allowed to wander around this

vast collection to take photos but our guide, David Morris, was on hand for questions or a structured tour. Of great interest was the resident Sea Vixen. In the afternoon we were escorted across the airfield to see the hangar of the Royal Navy Historic Flight where the *Swordfish* and other aircraft are maintained and prepared for the show season. Again there was great freedom to get close to the aircraft which included a *Sea Hawk*, 3 *Swordfish* and two *Sea Furies*.



DeHavilland Sea Venom stored in Cobham Hall

### Meetings List

**04May11**, AGM followed by talk and video on Dorset Police Air Support Unit by Philip Cottrell

**07Sep 11**, From Eagle to Raptor by John Batchelor, a cutaway artist (including drawings for the Eagle).

**02Nov11**, Guns of the Spitfire, by David Warhurst, the story of the Poole Royal Ordnance Factory

Web site [www.christchurchavsoc.co.uk](http://www.christchurchavsoc.co.uk)

### Other Events

**14 May**, Poppy Appeal 2011 - 90 years of the British Legion, Saxon Square, 1030am

**13 Sep**, visit to Rolls-Royce at Bristol, early start as visit at location is 09.45 to 14.30 approx and includes lunch. Limited to 12 people. Names to Steve Robson

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