



Issue 17 - Nov12-Feb13

Contrails

Newsletter of the Christchurch Aviation Society

Christchurch Airfield

Our November speaker was Mike Phipp covering the history of Christchurch Airfield and its 'inhabitants'. Early use of the field was at the Highcliffe/Somerford end by a Frances Fisher flying an Avro 504 (reg G-EBVL) in a rented area now covered by PC World. Fisher Aviation Co provided flights for 5/-. In the early 30's Sir Alan Cobham operated his National Air Day flights (known unofficially as the flying circus) to large crowds. A clubhouse was built which attracted airlines such as the Portsmouth Southsea and Isle of Wight Aviation (PSIOWA). (This company became Portsmouth Aviation after WW2.) Aircraft used were the Airspeed Courier and Envoy and along with the regular services the airfield became Bournemouth Airport. At this stage Sir Alan Cobham was involved as a founder director of Airspeed, Chairman of Bournemouth Airport as well as operating his airline of Cobham Air Routes.

The flying club also became Bournemouth flying club well established with Avro 504 and deH Gipsy Moth aircraft but with war looming the airfield was closed. In 1939 the Air Defence Research Establishment (which became the Signals Research and Development Establishment) was built for the development of radar and operated several aircraft types included Hurricanes which were dispersed to Sway to avoid any bombing. In June 1940 deHavilland became the owners of Airspeed and the Airspeed factory built that year commenced production which led to over 4,000 Airspeed Oxfords being built. The Horsa glider was produced after the prototype flown by George Errington at Heathrow in 1941 was towed aloft behind an Armstrong Whitworth Whitley. However, when laden, the Horsas needed to be towed by Short Stirlings or Handley Page Halifaxes. Also the original concept was to parachute out of the gliders but it was found that the glider could cope with landing when fully loaded thus enabling the men to form up quickly. Nearly 700 Horsas were produced at Christchurch with the remaining over 4000 being produced in component form at carpentry factories and assembled at RAF sites. In 1944 the runway was extended for the USAAF to operate their P47 Thunderbolts. Post war work continued with refurbishment of Horsas and Mosquitoes. From a requirement identified by the Brabazon Committee,

Other Events

Bournemouth Aviation Museum, 5th Annual Vintage Transport Day 3rd March 2013

Airspeed produced the all metal twin engined Ambassador airliner with a first flight by the prototype G-AGUA flown by George Errington on 10th July 1947. In operation two fatal crashes and the entry of the Viscount meant that the Ambassador was out of BEA service by 1958. Meanwhile popularity of the Vampire and Venom brought more de Havilland work along with the Sea Vixens for which some assemblies were made at Airspeed in Portsmouth. The factory and airfield were finally closed in 1962 as production contracts finished and work was concentrated

Druitt Hall

The Council have put in two planning applications which involve demolition of Druitt hall before a replacement is provided despite the offer by a benefactor of refurbishment and building of a new hall.

The planning applications will be heard at 6pm on the 3rd Jan and if anyone can be at the council offices to show their commitment that would be great. The Friends of Druitt Hall website will provide information at www.druithall.info.

Red Arrows Crash Inquest

Following the tragic loss of Red4, Flt Lt Jon Egging, in August 2011, the coroner's inquest was held on Thursday 13th December 2012. After statements from witnesses the coroner came to the conclusion Jon's death was an accident as a result of g-force induced Almost Loss of Consciousness (ALOC) during a 6.3g turn in a routine break manoeuvre in preparation for landing. The accident report was issued on the 18th December 2012.

Meetings List

- 02Jan13, "Aviation around Poole Bay", by Kevin Patience including the early days of aviation and flying boat operations.
- 06Mar13, "New Forest Remembers" by Gareth Owen Untold stories of WWII – the part the New Forest played - a Heritage Lottery Funded Project.
- 01May13, AGM followed by "Instrument testing the 110 and changes in the cockpit" by Peter Wells. How instrumentation has changed with particular regard to the effect of GPS.
- 04Sep13, "Flybe Operations", by Capt Robert Heath - tbc.
- 06Nov13 "Flight Data Recorders" by Steve Leaper from Curtiss Wright (Penny & Giles).
- 08Jan14 "Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance"