



Issue 31 - Oct-Nov 2015

# Contrails

## Newsletter of the Christchurch Aviation Society

CAvSoc

### Cold War and a Hot Place

At the September meeting, Steve Robson gave us a view on his varied experiences as an RAF engineer, having started initially as a pilot until finding he suffered from motion sickness. He gave us a brief idea on how the RAF is organised along with the levels of aircraft servicing and then showed how he had worked in these different situations. RAF Binbrook, a front line air defence unit operating Lightnings, provided his baptism of man management being in charge of the support bays and to satisfy the demands of unforgiving aircraft operations. The cold Lincolnshire wolds were followed by as much contrast as you can get by going to an island, Masirah, in the tropics off the coast of Oman and providing visiting aircraft with turn rounds - except when they became unservicable. One particular aircraft, a Britannia, had required 3 engine changes and during this work when it was decided to move the aircraft, a main undercarriage leg broke. The aircraft was renamed from Bellatrix to Bago'trix. The Belfast was another visitor and following some rectification work Steve flew on the air test during which the flight down the island showed an aircraft wreck in the sea. This was visited later when it was worked out that the tides were low enough to allow access. Other pastimes included pistol shooting on a range with a 20knot cross wind and maintaining the only railway on the island, or Oman for that matter.

A return to England at Thorney Island gave him a squadron tour on 46 Squadron looking after the multi role Andover air-



Andover CMk1 dropping a supply bag

craft. This tour was cut short when the station was closed in the 1975 defence review. After a course at Cranwell the RAE at Farnborough enabled him to get his hands dirty doing some boring lab work but more interesting and important work during the cold war was design and development on the pilot's NBC protection equipment.

A complete change again saw him in South Wales as the production officer for overhaul of the Adour jet engine and its many modules. A secondary duty of Air Cadet Liaison Officer

er kept him busy during the periods of the Summer Camps. His first staff tour was at Headquarters Strike Command looking after the airworthiness and availability of the Andovers including those of The Queens Flight, 32 Sqn (VIP aircraft) and 115Sqn the airfield calibration squadron, which had taken some of the former 46 Sqn aircraft. Tasks at HQSTC were the review of maintenance



including the cessation of 'half lifing' of components on TQF aircraft, the control of modifications on the Hercules during the initial and follow up stages of the Falklands conflict and handling the engineering consequences following the crash of a Dan Air 748, which had the next build number to an RAF VIP Andover CCMk2 .

Returning to a station, albeit Brize Norton, the largest RAF transport station, in a coordination role seemed a bit tame - however... shortly after he arrived the station was tasked with the evaluation of the BAe146 for its suitability for The Queens Flight. As most aircraft are introduced over a 3-year period, the 6 months given to fulfil the task ensured life was not dull to find accommodation, to train technicians and to make special equipment. Also the Tristar had been purchased and the initial engineering project work added to the 'fun'. Leaving Brize Norton on promotion gave a tour at MOD in the Engineering Policy branch and this showed that staff work was not his cup of tea and Steve left the RAF having served a fascinating 19 years.

### Bird in a Biplane

Tracey Curtis-Taylor set off on 1st October in her 1942 Boeing Stearman named Spirit of Artemis from Farnborough Airport to fly 14,000 miles to Australia across 23 countries in a flight to remember Amy Johnson's achievement in 1930. By 31st October she had reached Saudi Arabia. (Similar Boeing Stearman shown below)



**Next Meeting 2016 - at Druit Hall commencing 8pm**  
Wednesday January 6th Modern Navigation - Ernie Ball