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Contrails

Newsletter of the Christchurch Aviation Society

CAvSoc

Air France DC4 Crashes by Kevin Patience

For our March talk Kevin Patience covered the air disasters involving two DC4 aircraft of Air France in 1950 on 12 and 14 June during their approach to Bahrain. Both aircraft had used the same route from Saigon to Paris with a stop at the previous airport - Karachi. Kevin was in the area as a diver inspecting pipelines when by chance he heard about the crashes. The first aircraft F-BBDE crashed into the sea with no prior warning and explanation. Two days later F-BBDM replicated the first crash. There were survivors from both, first were 6 (52 on board) of which some were rescued by helicopter and in the second 13 of 53 survived. The investigation recorded pilot error for both and recommended better approach aids at Bahrain. The bodies were buried at the Christian Cemetery and later disinterred and sent to France.



Douglas DC4 aircraft (GNU license 1.2 - Ralf Manteufel)

In 1994 Kevin was working for a diving company and decided to search for the second wreck and located a wing of an aircraft subsequently identified as that from F-BBDM. A seabed inspection of the area located two of the Pratt & Whitney radial engines and three bent propellers together with assorted aircraft debris consisting of part of the tailplane, electric wiring, small passenger items and broken bottles. A proposal to recover a propeller as a permanent memorial was agreed and Kevin enlisted the aid of divers from a passing Royal Navy ship to recover the least damaged propeller which was then sand blasted and painted before mounting in the cemetery after which the memorial was formerly dedicated by the French Ambassador.

Being curious about the circumstances, Kevin initiated an investigation from which the cause was thought to be the poor weather conditions determined reports from air traffic that were archived in the United Kingdom. Both crashes could now be attributed to extreme weather conditions now known as microbursts (but unknown back in 1950) occurring locally on the approach to the airport. With this report accepted it was recommended that the pilots were exonerated because the conditions were beyond their capability or knowledge to handle. In 1999 Kevin's work for the memorial and investigation was recognised by the award of the Chevalier of the Order of Merit by the French Government.



Picture showing Kevin with the French Ambassador at the memorial

Aero Engine Pain - New and Old

Rolls-Royce has identified the need for extra inspections in the intermediate pressure compressor on the Trent engines fitted to the Dreamliner. This will impact both operational availability and ETOPs parameters.

Following a fan blade detachment in a CFM56 engine on a SouthWest Boeing 737 from which a passenger died due to the loss of a cabin window, extra ultrasonic inspections have been recommended for engines with 20,000 cycles or more. The failure was due to metal fatigue of the blade near the hub and the crack had propagated internally so that it could not be detected by visual inspection. A similar failure occurred in August 2016.

Foxy Lady, Sea Vixen XP924 (G-CVIX) at Navy Wings

Recently I had the chance to see Foxy, and the other hangar aircraft and was very grateful for our tour by the Chief Engineer of Navy Wings. The technicalities of the the forced landing were explained and the prognosis which amounts to 'don't hold your breath'. Special repair schemes, other priorities and sourcing materials will all contrive to make a long lay up. See latest news for Foxy and others at www.navywings.org.uk

May Meeting at Christchurch Baptist Church, 49 Bargates, commencing 8pm

Wed 02May18 - AGM followed by The Air Transport Auxiliary by John Webster

Wed 05Sep18 - Battle of Britain 1935 by Steve Robson

Wed 07Nov18 - Royal Observer Corps by Neville Cullingford



Left: the tail bump stops, top is the Port one showing the touch down wear. Right: is the Air Brake showing the damage from the runway scrape

