

## **The Scottish Air Ambulance Service**

Gordon Drummond had been employed as a people development specialist but, after being made redundant, he qualified as a flying member of the Scottish Ambulance Service.

He gave members a full account of the SAAS's operations covering the whole country to bring a swifter patient transfer service than could be provided by 'traditional' ambulances by road. The current Scottish Government contract is held by Gama Aviation, that is based in Aldershot. Previously it was held by Loganair. He described the aircraft which it operates, both fixed wing and rotary, giving as much detail as a lay audience could absorb.

The workhorse of the SAAS is the Britten Norman Islander, backed up by two Airbus 145 helicopters and two charity-funded Airbus 135s. The Service has bases at Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. While the Service is government-funded, it is significantly enhanced by the charity support. It also receives operational back-up from HM Coastguard, particularly during bad weather which hampers operations.

While the SAAS operates predominantly in Scotland, has had occasional cause to venture into Germany, France, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands and, south of the border, to Jersey and to RAF Northolt, west of London.

Gordon illustrated his talk with views of the SAAS's aircraft. These well illustrated how much can be accommodated in confined spaces, and the impressive complexity of the instrument consoles facing the pilots on the flight deck! His artistic side came out in a number of aerial photographs including the Forth Bridges and spectacular sunsets.

As always, club members raised interesting questions, which to which Gordon responded helpfully.

Rob Littlejohn