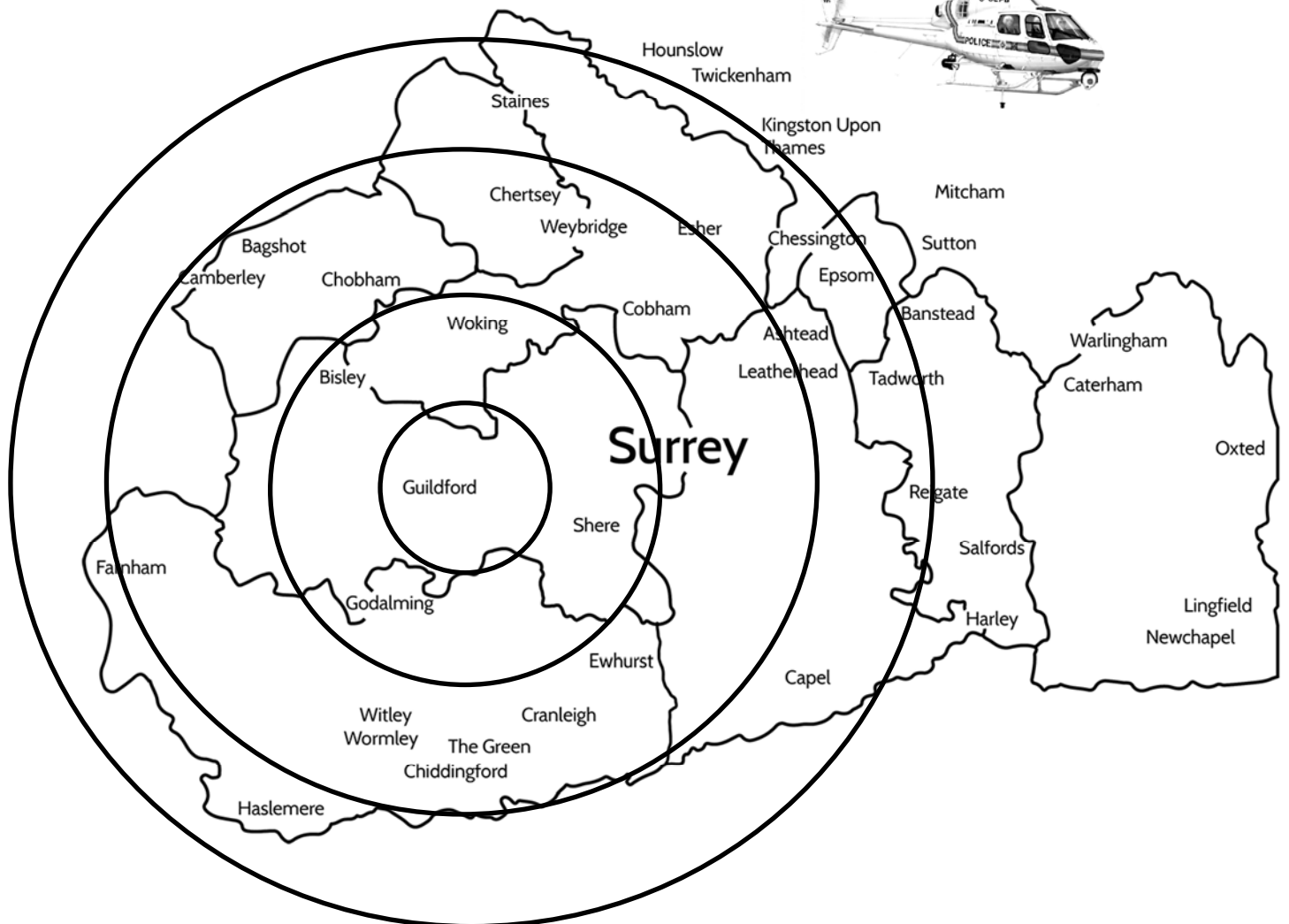


# AIR SUPPORT

# EVALUATION

SEPT.-NOV. 1989



6. TASK EXAMPLES

6.1 PAY PARTIES

It was originally planned to use the helicopter only to respond to incidents or for pre-planned justified deployment. However, the fashionable craze of "Pay Parties" or "Acid House Parties", which to an extent coincided with the trial, soon altered all thoughts of confining air support to a reactive role.

6.2 Proactive patrols tasked to overfly the county looking for evidence of Parties being set up and give early warning were introduced and remained a feature throughout the trial.

6.3 Examples - Some success can be claimed when the helicopter was used to overfly convoys of vehicles destined for undisclosed sites to set up staging amplifiers, etc. The interception of these convoys enabled ground based officers to persuade the organisers to move on, and the presence of the helicopter assured them of detection should they seek to set-up elsewhere in the Force area.

6.4 At 15.30 hours on Saturday, 9 September, the helicopter was on routine patrol searching for activity in relation to Pay Parties. In a field adjacent to the A22, at Blindley Heath, the observer saw two lorries, one transit van together with six men who were in the process of erecting staging. Whilst flying over this location awaiting the attendance of ground officers, further vehicles belonging to Party organisers were seen making towards the field.

6.5 The early discovery of this site enabled officers to prevent the setting up of the staging and turn the organisers away. This was achieved before the site could be established and any party goers arrived.

6.6 On Saturday 30 September, a riot occurred at Sidlow where a Pay Party was being held. The helicopter was used the following morning to obtain evidential photographic evidence of the party, which was still under way.

6.7 COSTING

To highlight the value the helicopter has been in relation to this area of public order policing, the following financial example is given:-

Pay Parties

Blindley Heath

2 x flying hours at £489.49 PH  
Total cost £978.98

Sidlow

Overtime to investigate  
Cost in excess of £30,000

6.8 On the day of the Blindley Heath incident the helicopter had flown in search of pay parties almost the entire areas of Western and Eastern Divisions in search of such activity. To have searched such a vast area by conventional policing methods would have necessitated the use of an immeasurable number of officers and vehicles with no guarantee that a site hidden from view from public roads would be discovered. It is without doubt the unique capabilities of the helicopter, being able to fly slowly, over hidden inaccessible private estates and country areas, which ensured the discovery of this particular pay party.

## 6.9 VASCAR

For some years, the Surrey beauty spot of Boxhill has been plagued by gangs of motorcyclists racing along the A24, Mickleham by-pass, on Sunday afternoons. Many police initiatives, using a high level of police presence, have had some effect but have not abated the noise and nuisance caused to other road users. By using a VASCAR speed/distance computer in the helicopter with a pre-determined distance fed in, the operator was able to check the speeds of motorcyclists and relay by radio their details and speeds to ground officers for them to be stopped and reported.

6.10 Example - On Sunday 10 September, the helicopter was responsible for recording five speeding motorcyclists at Boxhill. Speeds of 92 mph, 99 mph, 110 mph, 117 mph and 122 mph were recorded.

6.11 A motorcyclist who was recorded at 122 mph, failed to stop when on two occasions signalled to do so. He made off through the Surrey villages towards Sussex, returning to the A24 only when he was sure he was not being pursued by police vehicles. However, the rider was totally unaware of the presence of the helicopter which, when the opportunity presented itself, manoeuvred in front of the motorcyclist who then realised he could not escape and stopped. The rider was reported for a number of serious traffic offences.

6.12 This proved to be an example of a pursuit situation in which danger to other road users was reduced to a minimum. Additionally, the deterrent effect on the other motorcyclists congregating at Boxhill has been ongoing. For the first time we were able to produce a result which had eluded ground based officers over the years. See comment Appendix D.

## 6.13 EVIDENTIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

One of the most valuable tasks air support has performed is the ability to obtain aerial photography for evidential purposes. The helicopter has been used to obtain photographs of scenes from offences of murder to fly tipping, pay parties to burglaries, most of which are sub-judice.

6.14 Whenever possible, photographic sorties were undertaken as part of other operational deployment or, on the basis of having three or four sites to photograph, thus ensuring the most effective use of the resource. It has been possible to achieve in one flying hour photographs of sites on opposite sides of the county which would otherwise have taken a photographer many hours to obtain by conventional methods. The quality of information and detail contained in aerial photographs has aided many investigations.

6.15 Example - Photographs of a section of the A30 in Camberley proved invaluable at a re-trial for an offence of reckless driving, in destroying a defence argument. The defence solicitor, on seeing photographs showing the route taken by his client, with the distance and terrain between locations clearly identified, admitted he had no defence to offer. The offender was found guilty.

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#### 6.16 PLANNING

Photography has also been used to great effect in pre-planning major operations, in particular several ultimately successful major crime operations benefited from aerial photographs ensuring accurate information at briefings.

- 6.17 Example - Following the murder of a male person at Ash aerial photographs of the scene and surrounding area were taken for use in evidence and also for planning the direction of the enquiry. Two large aerial photographs have been in constant use in the incident room for briefings and to plot the offender's way to the scene and eventual escape route. Although difficult to quantify, this has enabled effective direction of house to house enquiries, leading to the discovery of witnesses and minimising time wasted in painstakingly fruitless enquiries.

#### 6.18 MISSING PERSONS

##### Examples

A youth of 20 years, suffering from epilepsy, was taken ill while walking on common land in Farnham and disappeared. The helicopter was requested as was a dog. A dog and handler were picked up by the helicopter and rushed to the scene. A total area of six square miles of common land was searched in a time of 45 minutes.

- 6.19 Example of foot search using an established formula (Sussex Police Helicopter Evaluation II) of:-

One square mile with police officers spaced 100 feet apart searching at a speed of 2 mph would take 53 officers 30 minutes and total 26.5 man hours to complete. It must however be recognised that this number of officers would not be readily available on one sub-division, therefore mutual aid from surrounding sub-divisions would be sought. This would of course devoid several areas of valuable manpower not only for the duration of the search but for the time taken to organise, and travel to and from the scene.

It can be seen from this that foot searches are manpower intensive and costly.

- 6.20 Comparison analysis conducted by Home Office Scientific Research and Development Branch (SRDB) and by the Police Requirements Support Unit (PRSU) also uphold searching with air support as a cost effective alternative to using conventional policing methods
- 6.21 A missing mental patient was last seen close to an electrified railway line at Merstham. Ground officers requested the helicopter to search the railway line between Redhill and Merstham. This was achieved in five minutes without the need to turn off the electric current or cause danger to the searching officers. Again, saving man hours in a fruitless search, avoiding delays to the travelling public and disruption to rail services.
- 6.22 On Tuesday, 28 November 1989, a 78 year old Franciscan Monk went missing from a religious retreat near Burgess Hill, West Sussex. Sussex Police engaged in a full missing person search over open country but the search was eventually curtailed by darkness. Overnight there was a heavy frost and fears were growing for the monk who was known to have difficulty walking any distance. The following day Surrey's helicopter responded to a request for assistance and began an extensive open country search.

6.23 The monk who weighed 18 stone, clad from head to foot in a brown habit, was eventually found by foot searchers in a collapsed state in the midst of a heavily wooded copse. The helicopter was the first and only vehicle which could get near to his location and was able to evacuate him from the scene to the retreat. An ambulance and crew were then able to render immediate treatment and convey him to hospital. Although the helicopter cannot claim to have found the missing monk, its assistance saved Sussex Police the continued deployment of searching officers, underwater search teams, dogs and handlers, as well as providing an immediate casualty evacuation vehicle, thus minimising a further deterioration in the monk's condition.

#### 6.24 ARMED ROBBERIES

The helicopter has responded to 10 armed robberies during the trial giving support to ground based officers and searching the immediate area for offenders and their "get away" vehicles.

6.25 Example - On 8 September an armed robbery occurred at Lingfield. The helicopter responded to the scene from Camberley and was overhead within 8 minutes of the event. It was then able to search all roads within an area of 28 square miles of the scene in a time of 1 hour 20 minutes, saving man hours and vehicles being used in patrolling the area.

#### 6.26 ARMED INCIDENTS

Additionally the helicopter was used in response to seven other incidents of a domestic nature where firearms or other weapons were reported as being seen. Although fortunately, these incidents did not escalate the potential for a "Hungerford" situation was always a possibility. Had such an eventuality arisen the helicopter would have performed a valuable support function in directing ground resources and minimising danger to police and public.

#### 6.27 SECURITY PATROLS

During recent heightening of security levels, following the terrorist bombings in Deal and Chelmsford, helicopter patrols over vulnerable establishments have taken place.

#### 6.28 RAPID DEPLOYMENT

Rapid deployment of specialist officers including dog handlers surveillance experts and firearms officers has improved the quality of response to incidents. (Response times across the county see Appendix B.)

6.29 Examples - On 27 September at 17.20 hours a member of the public reported hearing shots fired from within a gypsy camp at Redhill. A specialist team of four firearms officers was deployed from HQ in Guildford to a site close to the scene in 7 minutes, avoiding totally the evening rush hour and reducing response time by over one hour.

#### 6.30 ARRESTS

The helicopter has been instrumental in three incidents where arrests have been effected by either its direct or indirect action.

6.31 Example - On Saturday, 4 November, two youths were reported as causing damage to a school roof in Leatherhead, having also placed obstacles on a nearby railway line. The helicopter located the youths who ran off into a nearby copse. The helicopter circled the copse keeping the youths contained whilst ground officers were directed to the location. The youths were arrested and harm and damage to the school and railway minimised.

6.32 EXERCISE

On 29 November Surrey Fire Brigade ran an exercise to test their Special Rescue Unit at Betchworth Quarry, Dorking. The Surrey Constabulary was invited to participate using the helicopter to search for a crashed light aircraft, report its position, direct police and fire service initial response and to then provide illumination of the rescue using its "nite sun" capabilities.

This exercise proved invaluable in identifying the potential use of a helicopter in a major disaster situation and was additionally used to:

Airlift equipment  
Airlift key manpower  
Evacuate casualties

6.33 TRAINING

Under this heading, police officers and civilian support staff have been given the opportunity of flights to familiarise themselves with the unique value of air support. If nothing else, this has served to heighten their awareness to the uses of air support and has won much support from operational officers to the air support lobby. See comments Appendix D.

6.34 HIGH RISK PRISONER

A prisoner on remand, considered to be at risk from former associates, required moving from his remand prison to an inner London Crown Court. He was collected from prison by helicopter and flown direct to central London. Flying time of 2 hours 50 minutes for this and the return journey at a cost of £1386.66 plus £120 landing fees.

6.35 If this movement had been carried out by road, a minimum of 90 man hours for the return journey would have been required at a cost of £1032 plus two patrol vehicles.

6.36 On direct comparison of costs the helicopter appears to have cost more to carry out this operation but it must be remembered that the 90 man hours and two patrol vehicles were able to provide a service in maintaining their presence patrolling the streets of Surrey, while this movement was being carried out in the minimum of time and with the minimum of disruption.

6.37 More importantly, the risk to the prisoner and police from his former associates was reduced to a minimum.

8. RECOMMENDATION

That the Surrey Constabulary awaits the publication of the Home Office consultancy report on the future of police aviation before considering the future options for air support.

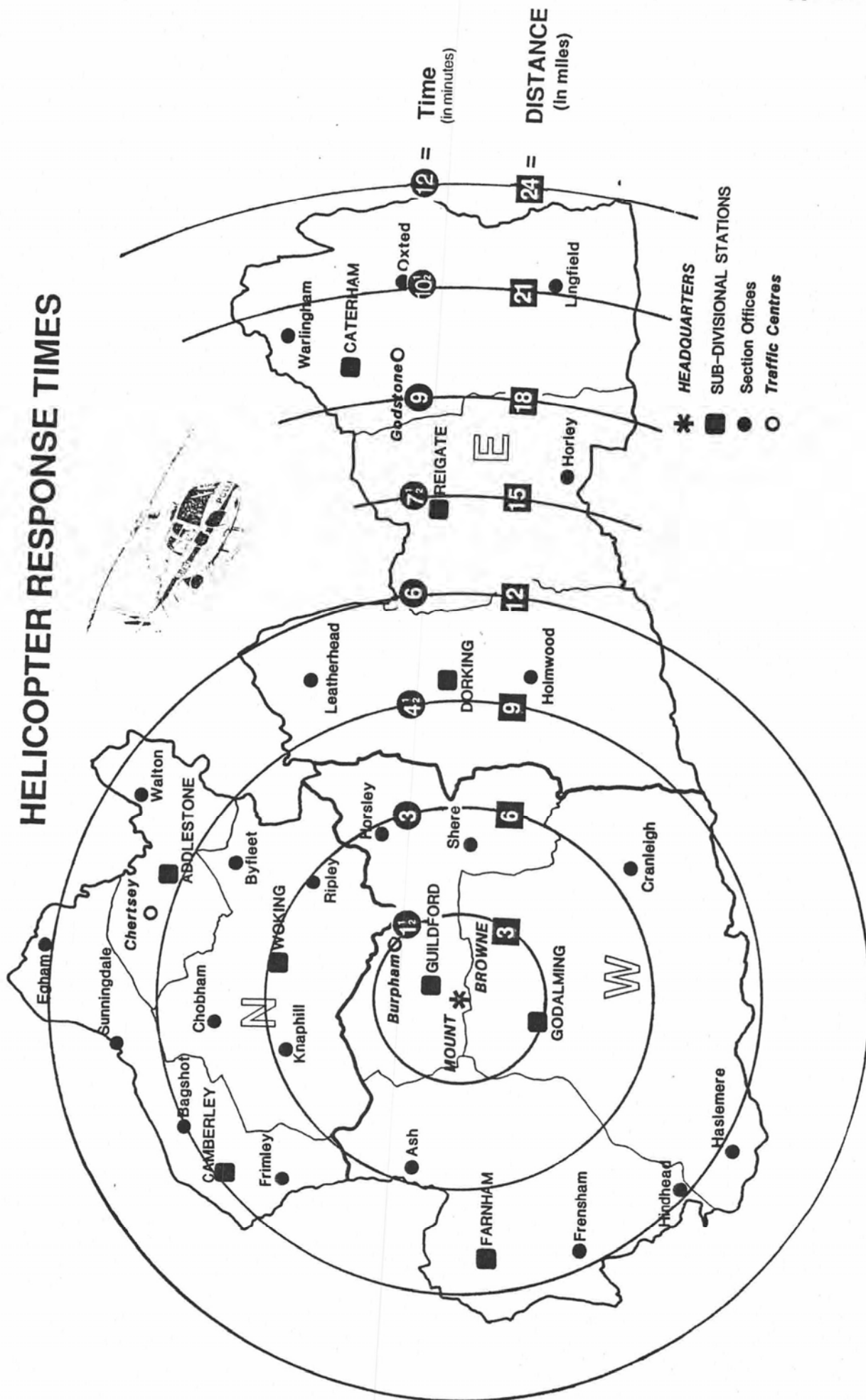


USE OF AIRCRAFT

## Uses of Air Support:-

1. reduce the time ground units are committed;
  2. save lives and prevent injury to officers through speed of response;
  3. contain an area so that a suspect does not escape, where previously any number of ground units could not achieve the same results;
  4. cover an area many times faster than ground unit or units;
  5. increase the potential number of arrests by ground units;
  6. decrease waiting time for delivery of equipment and personnel to the scene;
  7. increase public awareness and as a result elicit public support and assistance;
  8. surveillance either by "naked eye" or with technological aids;
  9. movement of high risk prisoners (currently an on-going commitment);
  10. traffic surveillance in particular M25 congestion and effects on feeder routes;
  11. traffic enforcement, ie use of vascar speed detection from the air;
  12. quick response of specialist officers, ie firearms and dog handlers;
  13. VIP or security escort.
- 9

# HELICOPTER RESPONSE TIMES





LOGISTICSTHE AIRCRAFT

For the purpose of the trial a twin engined helicopter was chosen as the most practical and versatile option. McALPINE Helicopters of Hayes, Middlesex submitted the most competitive tender.

Agreement was reached with McALPINES to provide from 1 September 1989 an Aerospacial twin Squirrel helicopter prepared in police livery and including Surrey Constabulary crests.

This machine would be fitted with temporary police communications as the fitting of more permanent equipment is not cost effective for a limited period.

It was also agreed that for the second and third months of the trial a second purpose-built helicopter in "Police Specification" would replace the original machine. The Police Specification to include sliding doors, high skids and be equipped with a 30 million candle power "nite sun" search light.

The dedicated radio call sign of OSCAR 99 was assigned to the air support helicopter and was soon to become its recognised title used throughout the force.

Unfortunately, due to technical problems, the second helicopter due to come into service on 1 October 1989 did not arrive in service until 8 November 1989. This restricted the night flying operations to the last 3 weeks of the trial.

THE PILOTS

Pilots, at the ratio of one full-time pilot for 10 hours per day, Monday to Friday and relief pilots provided to cover Saturday and Sundays, were all part of McALPINES agreement. Each pilot would be subject to satisfactory qualifications, experience and be acceptable to the Constabulary.

Additional pilots over and above the basic requirements could be provided at a cost of £200 per day, upon request.

In the main, McALPINES pilots are all ex-service personnel who are well versed in all aspects of operational flying, some also with experience of police aviation in other force areas.

OBSERVERS

A nucleus of 8 Constable observers, all volunteers, were taken from the Traffic Branch of the Force. The selection criteria included overall police experience, ability to control operational situations and aptitude for flying duties.

McALPINES undertook a one day flying aptitude assessment of the candidates followed by a 4 day training programme to include navigation meteorology, air law and safety rules.



## CASUAL OBSERVERS

In addition to the dedicated trained observers a system of familiarisation flights was arranged for casual observers. Each operational division/department of the Force was invited to nominate personnel to attend the flight office and avail themselves of an operational flight in the helicopter.

This programme has proved to be a much sought after and worthwhile exercise. Apart from days when weather or mechanical problems has prevented flying all casual observers have been given a flight. Feed back received from them has been positive and served to encourage the use of the helicopter in support of ground based officers.

## THE OPERATIONAL BASE

The Helipad situated to the rear of the Mount Browne Sports Pavilion was originally considered as the operational base of the helicopter but was ultimately disregarded for security reasons.

Discussions were held with the Management of British Aerospace at Dunsfold Aerodrome and permission was given to use their airfield as an operational base.

The facilities provided by British Aerospace surpassed all expectations. Not only was the helicopter secure within the fenced and patrolled grounds of the airfield, the pilots and crew were able to use the benefits provided by the on base air traffic control for weather and aircraft movement information. Apart from fuel, all services provided at Dunsfold were free of charge, a factor that has saved the project a considerable sum of money. Any future use of Dunsfold would be subject of negotiations.

Refuelling at Dunsfold has also proved to be a great asset to the trial as well as a saving in terms of overall cost.

As a flight office, one of the Force major incident caravans was set up alongside the air traffic control tower. Equipped with telephone and Force radio the caravan also served as an office and rest room for the crews.

## EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

Additional equipment and services provided to the unit were as follows:-

- (1) 2 x 5001 VHF radios, charger and batteries
- (2) 4 x PYE PFX UHF radios, charger and batteries
- (3) 1 x set of Sonic Walk-On-Walk-Off helicopter communication kit (can be used on any future helicopter hirings or deployments)
- (4) British Telecom exchange line telephone to flight office
- (5) 1 x Excell Cellphone
- (6) 1 x Vodapager
- (7) Bronica ETRS camera
- (8) 2 x Pathfinder lamps and charger
- (9) Additional electrical fittings to flight office
- (10) Tow flight office to site
- (11) Top-up public liability insurance to £100 million
- (12) FUJINON Stabiscopes binoculars ON LOAN
- (13) GS907/GA Day/night steadyscope ON LOAN

(These items were supplied from within existing stocks or service budgets)