

Lancashire Constabulary Air Support Unit

Newsletter

Welcome to the review of October, November and December 2010 with regards to "ON99" the Lancashire Police Helicopter.

Firstly I must wish you all a very Happy New Year and hope all the snow and ice didn't upset your plans and festive celebrations too much.

I have to say the weather has made for some challenging flying conditions in the last few months. If it wasn't gale force winds, it was the snow and ice. The first heavy snowfall on the 17th December put 9 inches of snow down on the airfield, over an 8 hour period. This subsequently had to be dug away from the front of the hanger which certainly warmed us up!

We are lucky based here at Warton, in that we have access to first class airfield services. We are able to keep operational in weather like this, thanks to the snow ploughs, deicers and the Fire Brigade that are available 24/7. The night of the 17th saw the heli pad cleared in 10 minutes where it had taken us nearly an hour to clear the front of the hanger. Still we weren't like the unlucky 1000 motorists stranded on the M6 that night so a little snow shuffling was no great hardship.

Throughout October, we attended 207 incidents. From this 27 arrests were made and from 35 misper searches we located 5 persons. Our hotspots numbered 49 and we completed 28 photographic tasks.

Throughout November, we attended 203 incidents. From this 13 arrests were made and we had a quiet month for misper searches with only 5. Our hotspots numbered 57 and we completed 32 photographic tasks.

Throughout December, we attended 187 incidents and from this we made 17 arrests. After a quiet month in November we were back to 21 searches for missing people and from this located 2. Our hotspots numbered 49 and photographic tasks 27.

Operation Bright sparks was completed successfully through October and November. This was our efforts to assist the Fire Service with anti social behavior and dangerous acts with fireworks and bonfires especially involving juveniles. This was put to good effect at Nelson where a group of teenagers had lit a fire and started stoning the Fire Brigade. We were able to track 10 of this group around the streets as we directed patrols to intercept them and offer them some words of wisdom.

Operation's Vault and Night watchman have equally been effective over the festive period, to reduce major crime. We have worked hard on these particular operations, with almost daily patrols throughout December in line with the Constabulary objectives. I will hopefully have a breakdown on our crime stats for the Pact meeting.

So here is a quick summary of our more notable jobs.

October

In Silverdale, we assisted with searching for 3 absconders, from a Children's home. 3 youths were located in a housing estate and patrols talked in, where they were found to be in possession of sat nav's, which they had just stolen from several cars in that area.

Following an accident on the M65 at Brindle and a report of the driver staggering all over the motorway, we located a male lying in thick undergrowth and directed patrols to him. The officers practically stood on him before they could see him.

In Preston, an old favorite of ours, the offender hiding in the wheelie bin scenario! Officers were sure this male hadn't escaped from back yards and sure enough, he was quickly located hiding in the bin.

November

We have had 2 good jobs in Northern Division. The first was a high class burglary in Quernmore where a number of antiques had been stolen. The burglar was disturbed and an excellent response from patrols forced the offender to run into fields. The male was located on the thermal imager (TI) hiding behind a dry stone wall, still with some of the antiques and patrols were directed to him where he was arrested.

Secondly, an accident occurred at Nether Kellet where the driver made off. Again, male located behind a dry stone wall, some way from the scene. The male was arrested and it was soon very clear he was over the drink/drive limit.

In Downholland, 3 males were arrested after information was received that 3 wanted men, were leaving the Ship Inn and heading towards Kirby. The helicopter was able to follow the taxi and update patrols on its position until patrols were in a position to stop it.

We were part of a long protracted search at Hurst Green, for a wanted male who had abandoned his car in a field. This night we had gale force winds and just to emphasize that my job does get a little uncomfortable sometimes, it took us 4 minutes to get there with a tail wind that took us at over 200mph over the ground and buffeted us all over the place. It was a challenge to let go of the handles to work the camera and also not to circum to air sickness. On leaving the job, we barely managed 30 mph over the ground and took us nearly 20 minutes to get back. We did this twice! The male was arrested by sterling efforts of eastern division officers in absolutely appalling weather conditions.

December

My favorite job for this newsletter relates to the arrest of 2 males for burglary in Houghton. The offenders made off across fields after being disturbed and went

home. Unfortunately for the 2, when the helicopter arrived on scene they could clearly see on the TI, tracks of 2 fleeing suspects in the heavy snow, across fields, right up to their front doors. With the crew directing the Dog patrol across the dark fields, 2 were arrested with the property from the break in.

In Accrington, 2 offenders were arrested following a break in at the Golf Club. From over 2 miles away, the 2 offenders were visible on the TI and were observed trying to hide in undergrowth near to the M65. Patrols talked in and 2 arrested with the golf clubs they had stolen.

And finally from Chorley, a mini bus was stolen from a Children's home in Chorley by 2 of the residents. Officers in Preston saw the bus which refused to stop. A follow was commenced and we were overhead at Kirkham and provided commentary on its progress. The Bus was finally stopped by the use of stinger in Lytham and the 2 offenders made off but failed to outrun the police dog who rounded them up for his handler.

The Pact meeting on the 6th October was a great success with over 40 people attending. My thanks to every one who attended and made it a productive and informative meeting. Updates were given on all our operations, an update on the Organizational changes and also input as to the workings of the thermal imager despite a few technical difficulties.

The next Pact meeting is 10am Thursday 10th February, at The Black Horse Hotel, Gregson Lane, Houghton. All welcome to come and join us for a brew and bacon butty. At this meeting Captain Gary Leigh will be giving a presentation on his job as a pilot for the police.

As always, thank you for your continuing support and please don't hesitate to contact me if you feel we can help with any issue or query you may have. If you are interested in attending or joining the Pact panel again just drop me a line.

Regards

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