

LiftOff

July
2024



Wiltshire
Air Ambulance
funded by you, flying for you



WHAT'S INSIDE...



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Welcome from Barbara Gray

The first half of 2024 seems to have flown by – if you excuse the pun!

Our dedicated pilots, paramedics and doctors have been busier than ever before, unfortunately having to attend a record number of missions in the first six months of the year.

The number of emergencies has increased by 25.6% in the space of six months, but we are extremely proud of how the crew has risen to this challenge, ensuring we can be there for the people who need them most across Wiltshire, Bath and surrounding areas.

As part of our long-term plan, we have increased the number

of missions we are attending with doctors on board, and subsequently the amount of potentially lifesaving medical interventions we have been able to carry out has more than doubled during the first half of 2024.

All of this is only possible because of the support we receive from the public and local businesses across Wiltshire and Bath. Whether you choose to donate on an ad-hoc basis, commit to regular gifts or play our Lottery, it all makes a difference.

We are also very fortunate to be supported across the county and in Bath by community groups, who regularly hold fundraisers

and events in aid of our lifesaving work.

In February we were delighted to be joined by Her Majesty Queen Camilla for A Unique Concert for Wiltshire at Salisbury Cathedral. The night attracted a crowd of more than 1,200 and helped to generate over £100,000 for good causes.


Her Majesty has recently confirmed the extension of her patronage with our charity, a role she has proudly held since 2009.

In June we were grateful to our wonderful ambassadors Nick and Annette Mason for opening up Middlewick House once again. Another record crowd visited the picturesque surroundings

over the course of the weekend, helping to generate over £123,000 for ourselves and the Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust.


Throughout this Lift Off magazine you will find many ways in which you can get involved with your local air ambulance and also learn about the difference you can make by supporting us.

We hope you will never need our service, but if you do, we aim to be there.



Barbara Gray
Deputy CEO



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Manager

Dr Maria Smith

Medical Director

MISSION REPORT

1 January - 30 June 2024

682
total missions



397
Helicopter



285
Critical care cars



157
cardiac emergencies



344 missions with doctors
representing 50.4% of missions so far this year

152
medical conditions
(including collapses and strokes)



57 advanced airway management
performed to create an open airway

97
road traffic collisions



43 uses of LUCAS machine
to deliver CPR to patients

43
sporting incidents
(including 15 horse riding incidents)



26 procedural sedations
to reduce pain and suffering following trauma

Top hospitals we airlifted or assisted patients to:

- Royal United Hospital, Bath – 52
- Great Western Hospital, Swindon – 37
- Southmead Hospital, Bristol – 36

Scan the QR code to view our interactive missions map



Note - 22 incidents were jointly attended by the helicopter and critical care cars, but for illustrative purposes this counts as one incident in that location.

Meet our medical director

Maria Smith is Wiltshire Air Ambulance's medical director and the first doctor to be fully employed by the charity. Explore Maria's career pathway as she discusses the importance of doctors to our critical care work.

How did your journey into medicine begin?

I grew up in Wiltshire and went to secondary school in Bath. After completing my A Levels I still didn't know what I wanted to do in life and it wasn't until I was at Chippenham College, working in finance, when I decided I wanted to become a doctor. I went to night classes to complete more A Levels.

I was at medical school in London from 1994 to 1999 and qualified as a doctor, before deciding that I wanted to specialise in emergency medicine.

Then in 2007 I was given a leaflet for MAGPAS (Mid Anglia General Practitioner Accident Service), which was a car-based emergency response service, although occasionally they would fly with the local police.

I joined MAGPAS as a volunteer and continued my emergency medicine training alongside the role. Soon after, I had the chance to speak to London's Air Ambulance and Essex & Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT), and I spent around half a year working with each of them.

By now, I had qualified as a consultant in A&E, and joined Harlow (Princess Alexandra) Hospital as clinical lead whilst still carrying out shifts for EHAAT.

I moved on to Queen's Hospital in Romford and then ultimately ended up working at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge in 2015, where I became the emergency department trauma lead.





Did you know?

Our critical care paramedics can use different, or higher strength drugs than road paramedics and have some surgical skills.

What brought you to Wiltshire Air Ambulance?

In 2017 CEO David Philpott called me about a new medical director role at the charity after a referral from then WAA pilot Nicky Smith, who I had flown with at EHAAT.

Initially I was reluctant due to the distance, but over time I began feeling it could be right for me. I still had family and a home in Wiltshire so decided to take the leap.

Initially I would spend around three days a month with the charity but that gradually increased (albeit paused during Covid).

David has been supportive throughout saying I could do as much or as little as I was comfortable with. As time went on, I felt I needed to see what was going on, on a day-to-day basis.

Earlier this year I became full time with the charity, allowing me to lead on important matters more readily than before and help with rota cover.

Why are doctors important for WAA?

Up until 2019 any doctors working with the charity were doing so on a voluntary basis.

However, we decided there was a need to increase the number of pre-hospital doctors on the rota and began paying for shifts, in addition to voluntary cover.

A lot of air ambulances operate with doctors on every shift, but that does come with its challenges, the main one being cost.

In the future I would like to see close to 100 per cent of all our missions attended with a doctor on board, as it will enhance our overall care and bolster our experience.

What do doctors add to the scene of an incident?

Doctors receive very different training from critical care paramedics. For example, we have a much greater breadth of training in anatomy and physiology, as well as the basic medical sciences, whereas the paramedics have much better practical training.

Our critical care paramedics all have a background in education, both in carrying out teaching and having postgraduate qualifications.

What doctors bring into the mix is another layer above that. A critical care paramedic might be allowed to use a drug in patient A but not patient B, whereas we could use it in a whole range of patients.

We also have a greater training in surgical skills, so we can perform operations the paramedics can't. We don't perform them often, which is good, but we have the capability.

This could involve inserting a little hole in the neck to help a patient to breathe, or if a patient has air trapped between their lung and chest wall – which can cause the lung to collapse – we are able to put a hole into the chest to let the air out and expand the lungs again.

For patients who have been stabbed in the heart, we can open the chest and perform an operation to repair the wound.



For pregnant patients who require CPR, we can deliver the baby by caesarean section.

There are a few other things we can do, which are rarer than all of the aforementioned procedures, we can amputate a limb if someone was trapped and need extricating. For some severely burnt patients we can perform a surgical procedure to release tension around the chest.

What do you see the future looking like?

Now I'm a full-time employee, I want to spend more time engaging with our crew because previously you would never find us at the airbase at the same time.

We regularly undertake training, including teaching sessions and simulations.

As the medical director, I'm also responsible for signing off on their surgical skills.

We hold regular open clinical governance days, where we invite members of the ambulance service, clinicians, nurses, doctors and neighbouring air ambulance teams to discuss cases.

We interact a lot with university students who occasionally will take courses at our airbase.

We also accept students as observers who spend time with us to undertake a project.

We are looking to become a training centre for advanced life support courses, and we also have a partnership with the RUH for their Emergency Department training.

One of the other options I want to explore is emergency department anaesthesia training, which is something I've done before.

It was common in the early days to spend a whole day sat at the airbase undertaking admin and training, waiting for the phone to ring.

Fast forward to 2024, I don't think I've been on a single shift this year where there have been zero missions. In fact, sadly it's been our busiest start to a year ever.

There have been several days where you struggle to find the time for a lunch break and you're hopping from one mission to the next, it's just so busy all of the time.

Pictures by Terry Donnelly

Meet our doctors



David Connor



Reuben Cooper



Rosie Furse



Mike Harrison



Jono Holme



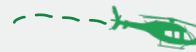
Phil Lucas



Brian Skeete says he will forever be thankful for Wiltshire Air Ambulance after suffering a cardiac arrest at the height of the Covid pandemic in July 2020.



Brian's story



Swindon-based Brian, then 58, has no recollection of the event itself and has little memory of the days leading up to the incident and several days afterwards.

He said: "I know I went out for a cycle by St James Place near Wanborough with my friends Shane and Steve. They were slightly in front of me and I then veered off into a field due to the cardiac event.

"My friends called the ambulance, with Steve speaking to the ambulance service and Shane undertaking CPR. I'm told he was doing it for around 20 minutes before the ambulances arrived and then Wiltshire Air Ambulance's helicopter."

James Hubbard was one of the Wiltshire Air Ambulance critical care paramedics who attended the incident.

He recalled: "We landed close by, actually in the field Brian had ended up in.

"It was at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, so the first thing we had to do was get into our full protective suits.

"We had a handover from the ambulance crew. Brian had been in cardiac arrest for some time and the arrhythmia he was in was not responding to shocks.

"As a critical care team we changed the position of the shock pads and used the LUCAS (Chest Compression System) machine to get consistent compressions. We also increased the energy settings on the defibrillator.

"Brian was administered an anti-arrhythmic, which the ambulance crews don't carry, and fortunately within a few minutes we got a return of circulation and a pulse.

"Then it was all about optimising everything after that to stabilise Brian by putting him on the ventilator and taking over his breathing.

"There was a discussion about where to take Brian, which is the beauty of having the helicopter. Great Western Hospital in Swindon doesn't provide the kind of cardiac surgery required out of hours on a Sunday, and we knew it was a strong possibility Brian may require that, so then we spoke to John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and decided there was the best place for him.

"We gave Brian more drugs to sedate him, manage his pain and paralysed him so we could take over his ventilation ahead of the flight. It was around a 12-minute flight to the hospital, a journey that would have usually taken an hour by road."



Brian was kept in an induced coma for three days and spent ten days in total at the hospital.

His wife Charlie recalls the moment she found out the news. She said: "I had been out with my daughter and I got a phone call from the Police. They said they wouldn't talk to me until I had pulled over. They sent a Police car to come and get me and follow Brian to the John Radcliffe Hospital.

"I really didn't know he could die; I wasn't told very much at all. With Covid, the hardest thing was being so isolated. I was on my own in the family room, just sat there waiting.

"They eventually let me go into the resuscitation unit to see Brian and give him a kiss, but it was an awful experience.

"No one else was allowed to be there and you understand why, but it was just so hard."

In March 2023 Brian and his family visited Wiltshire Air Ambulance's airbase in Semington, near Trowbridge, to meet with some of the crew that helped save his life.

He said: "To come in and meet the crew has been tremendous and closes another chapter of my life really, learning about everything that happened and all the things the team did to save me."

"In our family Wiltshire Air Ambulance has fans for life! We are significant advocates for the service because without it things could have been so different. I can't thank the charity enough."

When we attend incidents, it is often the worst day of that person's life.

A medical emergency, a road traffic collision, a trauma injury - they all represent a challenging time for both the patient and their close family and friends.

If our crew has treated you or someone you know, please rest assured knowing that our support doesn't end when we transfer the patient to hospital.

Our team will continue to be there for you. We have a dedicated Family Room at our airbase in Semington, near Trowbridge, where we can invite you, your friends and family to come and visit.

Where possible, we can look to reunite you with the aircrew who treated you or your loved one on the day of the incident. We will only do this if this is what you want and if you are comfortable.

Additionally, if you and your guests want to have a full tour of our airbase, we can also arrange for this to happen on your visit.

Get in touch with our team by scanning the QR code or email on hello@wiltshireairambulance.co.uk.



Are you looking to support Wiltshire Air Ambulance?

Get in touch with our fundraising team, we'd love to hear from you!



New partnerships

We announced a new significant partnership with Hartham Park Estate in Corsham.



On the pitch at Swindon Town

We hosted a Play on the Pitch experience at the County Ground in Swindon. The final score was 6-4 to the red team and raised £2,784 for our charity.



Keeping schtum for charity

Amelia and family visited us for a cheque presentation after raising over £800 from a sponsored silence fundraiser in February!



A touch of class

Members from the Stonehenge Chamber of Trade visited our airbase to present a cheque for £1,000 raised at their Gala Dinner in 2023.



A refreshed space for visitors

Local business FurnitureBox supported the revamp of our family room at our airbase by donating sofas and volunteering to paint the room.

Could you support our lifesaving work by joining our Regular Giving scheme or lottery?

What is 'Regular Giving'?

It's a regular donation made by direct debit, which is a simple, secure and effective way to support our lifesaving work.

You could choose to donate monthly, quarterly, bi-annually or simply yearly. The donation amount is up to you, we are grateful for whatever you are willing to give.

Why a regular donation?

More of your money goes directly to our lifesaving service, as regular giving direct debit admin costs are lower.

With reliable income that we can depend upon and predict, it means we are able to plan our finances more effectively.

It's also easy to set up, change or cancel at any time.

How does it work?

It's simple to get signed up and can all be done online in a matter of minutes. All you need to do is decide how much you want to donate and how frequently.

To get started, simply scan the QR code on the right or visit our website: wiltshireairambulance.co.uk/savelives.



Lifesaving Lottery



Be in with a chance of winning £1,000 every week!

We also run a Superdraw, which could land players a rollover jackpot of £25,000, think what you could spend that on!

Importantly, with around 40,000 entries into our Lottery and Superdraw each week, it helps to fund one in every four missions.

It costs just £1 a week to play our Lottery, with a weekly cash prize of £1,000 up for grabs and four additional winners banking £25 each.

For a further £1 you can also enter the Superdraw, which offers the chance for larger prizes.

Our Lottery began in 2009 and, up to this point, has generated over £12 million for the charity.

To sign up visit our website, wiltshireairambulance.co.uk/lottery or scan the QR code on the right.

£3 could help us buy a box of 10 scalpels, used to perform lifesaving surgical procedures.

£17 could help us buy a ventilator circuit to deliver oxygen to our anaesthetised patients.

£25 could help us buy a sling to stabilise a patient's pelvis and reduce bleeding.





Could you join our GroundCrew and support Wiltshire Air Ambulance?

From attending events throughout Wiltshire and Bath, giving informative talks about the charity or bringing our mascots to life, there is a huge variety of volunteering opportunities on offer with Wiltshire Air Ambulance.

You could make a difference:

- Collect and distribute tins
- Attend cheque presentations
- Volunteer at local fundraising and community events
- Bring our mascots to life
- Help in our Charity Shop
- Deliver informative talks
- Gardening around our airbase
- Charity office support

Our volunteers, collectively known as the GroundCrew, give their time to the charity to help spread awareness about our essential service.

Volunteering offers you the chance to meet new people, enjoy new experiences, and connect with the local community, all while supporting our lifesaving charity.

Interested? Get in touch with our team today by scanning the QR code.

“For anyone who is considering volunteering, don’t just think about it, get on and do it! What else could you do that will give you so much fun, take you places you may not go to otherwise and do your bit to keep the critical service flying, all at the same time?”

*Ian and Lorna Best
Volunteers since 2013*



Congratulations to two of our dedicated volunteers who have received awards for their work in the community.

Anne Hooper was handed the 2024 Community Award from Corsham Town Council for her Family Fun Day and Dog Show.



The event has been running since 2018, raising vital funds for our charity.

Shop volunteer Tom Gaiger collected a 2024 Civic Award from the Devizes Town Council, the ‘Service to the People’ category.

Tom was recognised for his voluntary work with Community Fridge Devizes, which helps share surplus food to people who need it most.



Will you make a difference?

A gift in your will costs nothing in your lifetime and means we can continue to save lives in the future.

Around one in four of our lifesaving missions is funded by gifts in wills, ensuring the Wiltshire Air Ambulance aircrew can get to the patient in the fastest possible time, enabling them to treat and stabilise patients before providing transportation to the right hospital for their needs.

Wiltshire Air Ambulance has a range of partnerships which allow you to write a will for free.

Secure a solicitor drafted will

We have partnered with Parker Bullen LLP, an award-winning and long-established law firm with a base in Salisbury, to assist you from start to finish with a will.

Get a will online

We work with Make A Will Online to offer an online will writing service, which is a great way to receive a solicitor-checked will at your own pace.

Write your will at home

We've teamed up with The Goodwill Partnership to enable you to write your free will from the comfort of your own home, at a time and date which suits you.

You don't need to include a gift to WAA in your will in order to use our free wills service, but if you are able to support us after taking care of your loved ones, we will be very grateful.

If you are interested in our expansive wills service or would like more information about how it can benefit your local air ambulance service, scan the QR code.



“Completing the will online, in the comfort of my home, meant I could take my time and decide the intricacies of where we wanted various parts of my will to go.

I knew from the very beginning that Wiltshire Air Ambulance was the first thing I was going to include in my will.”

Pete Burch, below, who was airlifted by Wiltshire Air Ambulance after a road traffic collision on his motorbike in 2015.



Upcoming events



9 August

Summer at the Base

Bring the whole family to our first Summer at the Base event. We will have something for everyone, from a bouncy castle, games and face-painting, to a wide range of traders and food vendors.



8 September

Skydive over Salisbury

Get ready to experience a rush like no other! Your skydive will take you over the beautiful Wiltshire countryside, taking in Salisbury Cathedral and Stonehenge from the skies above.



9 September

Brew with the Crew

Enjoy a brew with our pilots, doctors and paramedics at our airbase in Semington. Book your tickets to meet our lifesaving aircrew and have a chat over a cuppa and cake.



25 September

Annual General Meeting

Join us as we look back over the last year and look ahead to what the future holds for our charity. A number of key supporters will speak about how and why they got involved with the charity.



26 September

Charity Golf Day at Bowood

Establish new and lasting relationships with businesses and individuals that all have a common interest – golf and supporting the lifesaving work of Wiltshire Air Ambulance.

To find out more, scan the QR code or visit: wiltshireairambulance.co.uk/events



28 September

Valuation Day with Paul Martin

Join us in Salisbury for our Valuation Day with Flog It's Paul Martin. Let our ambassador cast his expert eye over your prize possessions. Our previous event proved extremely popular.



6 October

CycleFest @ Castle Combe

Whether you are an elite cyclist or want to enjoy laps around the iconic circuit near Chippenham with your friends and family, CycleFest is the perfect event for you!



1 December

In Celebration of Life Service

Held in The Barn at Lowden, our annual free event gives you and your family the space to reflect, share and remember a loved one. There will be readings, music and a moment of reflection.



5 December

Carols in the Abbey (Bath Abbey)

Back by popular demand! Kick off the festive season and join us for an evening of Christmas Carols, held in the stunning Bath Abbey. Tickets will be available to purchase later this year.



12 December

Carols in the Chapel (Marlborough College)

Back by popular demand! Our second Christmas Carol concert will be taking place in the beautiful chapel at Marlborough College. Tickets will be available to purchase later this year.

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