

New Red Arrows team pilots announced for RAF centenary year

Red Arrows announce new team pilots for RAF centenary year

A new line-up of Red Arrows pilots who will be part of the team in the Royal Air Force's 100th anniversary year has begun training.

The latest appointments to the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team will spend seven months preparing and working towards the 2018 season, which is the Service's centenary.

Among those pilots joining is a new Team Leader – Squadron Leader Martin Pert, who will fly as Red 1.

It is his second term with the Red Arrows, having been a team pilot between 2012 and 2014, and is now returning following a tour flying the Typhoon aircraft on the frontline.

The 37-year-old said: "I'm hugely proud to be leading the nine Red Arrows aircraft as the Service enters RAF100.

"Every member of the Royal Air Force will no doubt acknowledge the significance of being part of the Service in such a momentous year but, in some ways, it will be business as normal for the Red Arrows.



"We always strive to the highest levels of precision and excellence, so however the team assist in marking the anniversary, those watching can be assured it is befitting such a unique event and all that the celebrations honour.

"In increasingly unpredictable times, honouring 100 years of the RAF with our iconic red, white and blue trails will hopefully bring some comforting familiarity to all those celebrating with us."

Born in Scotland but educated at Parmiter's School, Garston, Squadron Leader Pert was commissioned into the Royal Air Force in 2000.

Team Leaders are always former Red Arrows display pilots and are responsible for all aspects of the aerobatic show, running the training programme and creating the routines.

He succeeds Squadron Leader David Montenegro, whose three-year tour with the team officially finishes this month.

Squadron Leader Pert said: "During my previous tour on the team I was proud of seeing the impact the Red Arrows team had on youngsters.

"Whether it is simply taking time to wave at an airport, or engaging at the numerous science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) events the team support, I'm looking forward to engendering more ways to keep young people interested in all things flying.

"Having also seen the effect digital media has had in just the three years since I was last on the team, I will also be keen to embrace novel ways to bring the Red Arrows, and the Royal Air Force, to more people."

Completely new to the Red Arrows, and flying alongside the six other pilots continuing from the 2017 line-up, are Flight Lieutenants Jon Bond and David Stark, who passed a tough team recruitment process.



To apply to join the Red Arrows, Royal Air Force pilots need to have at least 1,500 fast-jet flying hours, to have completed a frontline tour and be

assessed as above average in their flying role.

If they make the shortlist, they then have to attend a week-long selection of tests, interviews and peer review.

Once they have finished their three-year tour with the team, the pilots return to frontline, instructional or staff duties.

Flight Lieutenant Bond, who was born in Epping and attended Chigwell School before going to Loughborough University, joined the Royal Air Force in 2006 and has also flown the Typhoon operationally.

The 33-year-old, who will fly as Red 2 in 2018, said: "My dream was to become a pilot from a very young age and through a series of fortuitous opportunities it eventually became a reality.



"I used to drag my parents around to airshows across the UK when I was a boy and the Red Arrows were probably the main attraction for that.

"We lived next to North Weald airfield and I used to see them from the back garden whenever they were displaying there and can remember saying that's what I wanted to do!"

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, before moving to the UK, Flight Lieutenant Stark was educated at Nottingham High School. He joined the Royal Air Force in 2005.

Flying the Tornado GR4 operationally, the 35-year-old, will be Red 3 for the 2018 season, said: "It will be an incredible challenge but I can't wait to earn the honour of wearing the red flying suit with everything that it represents.

"The Red Arrows reflect the excellence of the UK Armed Forces and the nation as a whole.



"Core values such as determination, professionalism, teamwork and innovation are vital to the delivery of the flying displays and can be found in every member of team, from engineers to aircrew.

"I'm very proud to be in a position to fly for the team and help to highlight such fundamental UK values."

Also joining the team is a new Red 10 – the Squadron's Supervisor – and the first change in this position since 2011.

Squadron Leader Adam Collins takes over this safety role, which also involves commentating on the team's display at shows, from Squadron Leader Mike Ling, who completed a record six consecutive seasons.

Red 10 is the team's Supervisor for all practices and displays, maintaining radio contact with Red 1 from the ground.

He also coordinates the season, takes the spare aircraft between locations and flies the team's photographers.

Squadron Leader Collins attended Solihull School in the West Midlands, where he was a member of the Combined Cadet Force and received an RAF Sixth Form Scholarship.

He went on to study aeronautics and astronautics at Southampton University and was a keen member of the University Air Squadron where he flew the Bulldog at Boscombe Down.

After completing fast-jet flying training, Squadron Leader Collins' first operational tour was flying the Tornado GR4.



The 39-year-old said: "The Red 10 role is certainly unique and its sheer

variety is what really appeals.

"I will have the opportunity to fly regularly with the team, both in the backseat during rehearsals and also as the pilot of the 10th aircraft, transiting between displays and photo-chasing formations.

"I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to give people a greater understanding of what we do, through conversation or display commentary, which will be very rewarding."

A former Red Arrows display pilot has also recently returned to the team to take overall responsibility for the Squadron.

Wing Commander Andrew Keith officially took over as Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team (OC RAFAT), in August – succeeding Wing Commander Martin Higgins.

He is responsible for the Squadron's flying, engineering, administrative and safety matters.

Wing Commander Keith was commissioned into the Royal New Zealand Air Force in 1994 and graduated as a fast-jet pilot.

He transferred to the Royal Air Force in December 2001, completing frontline tours flying the Harrier and was selected to be a Red Arrows pilot from 2007 to 2009.

Wing Commander Keith said: "The Red Arrows approach the next season having completed a highly-successful 2017 campaign, which included a month-long overseas tour supporting UK interests across the Middle East and displaying to millions of people.



"The focus now is on detailed preparation, with careful planning and training taking place across the Squadron – both in the air and on the ground – to produce a display that will be part of the RAF100 events and activities.

"In keeping with other units and colleagues across the RAF, we hope the events planned in 2018 will commemorate, celebrate and inspire people during this special anniversary."

Based at RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire, the Red Arrows showcase the excellence of the Royal Air Force and represent the United Kingdom at home and overseas. The 2018 programme will be the team's 54th season and it is anticipated that millions of people will see the Red Arrows carry out a trademark combination of precision flying and dynamic loops, rolls and close-passes.

However, before the pilots can officially wear the team's famous red flying suits, they will have to complete winter training.

Pilots fly three-times-a-day, five-days-a-week with each sortie filmed and scrutinised in detail.

An assessment is then carried out by senior Royal Air Force officers in the spring and, if successful, public display authority is granted and the pilots can change from green coveralls worn during training to their red suits.

Similarly, the Red Arrows' ground staff can switch to their royal blue coveralls.

The 2018 team will comprise the following pilots:

- **Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team: Wing Commander Andrew Keith**
- **Red 1 and Team Leader: Squadron Leader Martin Pert**
- **Red 2: Flight Lieutenant Jon Bond**
- **Red 3: Flight Lieutenant David Stark**
- **Red 4: Flight Lieutenant Chris Lyndon-Smith**

- **Red 5: Flight Lieutenant Dan Lowes**
- **Red 6 and Synchro Leader: Flight Lieutenant Si Taylor**
- **Red 7 and Synchro Two: Flight Lieutenant Toby Keeley**
- **Red 8 and Executive Officer: Flight Lieutenant Matt Masters**
- **Red 9: Flight Lieutenant Mike Bowden**
- **Red 10 and Supervisor: Squadron Leader Adam Collins**

For more information about the team, follow @rafredarrows on Twitter, see the latest images posted on Instagram by following rafredarrows, like RAF Red Arrows on Facebook or visit www.raf.mod.uk/reds

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