



Red Arrows at RAF Waddington

We had the pleasure of visiting the famous Red Arrows Aerobatic Team (of the RAF) at Waddington. Having seen the team displaying and aweing one and all around the world including at airshows and ofcourse having performed in India many years ago, it was a full circle by us visiting them at their new homebase at RAF Waddington.

Since flying the first time in 1965, the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team has performed more than 4,900 times across the globe. The Red Arrows are lucky to have both a wonderful history and the support and interest of millions of well-wishers. It was in 1964 when the Royal Air Force amalgamated its display teams into one, premier unit – the Red Arrows. The name was taken from the Black Arrows team and the colour scheme as a tribute to the Red Pelicans, while the aircraft chosen to be flown, the Gnat, had been used by the Yellowjacks.

In the first season of 1965, the team – flying seven aircraft in a display and based at RAF Fairford – performed 65 shows. A media event at RAF Little Rissington on 6 May was the team's first official display, with the first public performance in the UK on 15 May at Biggin Hill Air Fair.

The team permanently increased to nine display aircraft in 1968 and the Diamond Nine became the Red Arrows' trademark formation.

The Gnat, which had flown 1,292 displays, was replaced by the BAE Systems Hawk, a modified version of the RAF's fast jet and weapons trainer, for the 1980 season. Also that year, permission was given for the team to have the motto Eclat – meaning excellence. RAF Scampton – the Lincolnshire station famous for its role in the 1943 Dambusters raid – became the team's new home in 1983, moving from RAF Kemble – its base since 1966. The Red Arrows temporarily relocated to RAF

College Cranwell, also in Lincolnshire, between 1995 and 2000.

During the team's world tour of October 1995 to February 1996, the Red Arrows performed to nearly a million people in Sydney on Australia Day. In 2002, the Red Arrows flew with a British Airways Concorde over London to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Golden Jubilee. A decade later, the Red Arrows performed another series of flypasts over the capital, for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony – seen by a global television audience in excess of one billion people – and the Athlete's Parade.

