

**Philip Holt our monthly speaker for February 2020 on  
'The Red Arrows: The Best of British'**

To secure Phil I booked him 15 months in advance and he did not disappoint. His presentation contained plenty of information, a variety of photos from many different angles, video capturing the atmosphere and skill of the Red Arrows, fascinating maps and plans and informative archive material.

Phil employed an interactive approach with plenty of questions for the audience and his humorous approach kept us all entertained. Taking us through the history of air displays we learnt about 'Air Pageants' in early twentieth century Hendon. We were shown the Black Arrows of the 1950s, a forerunner of the Red Arrows and learnt about their amazing 22 'Hunter' Loop formation in 1958 at Farnborough.

Incredible facts were a feature of Phil's talk, keeping us interested and often astounded. Apparently a barrel of red dye costs £1900. With regard to formation Reds 1 to 5 are known as 'Enid' after Enid Blyton, author of the Famous Five books. Whilst Reds 6 to 9 are known as 'Gypo', the nickname of one of the team's pilots back in the 1960s.

We were in no doubt about the need for thorough training, concentration, dedication, skill and bravery. A strong team approach is vital and Phil told us about the 'Circus'; engineering technicians servicing aircraft before and after every display and flying in the passenger seat to and from display airfields.

Throughout, Phil provided us with a variety of enthralling material, well placed throughout the talk to help us understand how the amazing displays come about, so we saw the detailed plans for a number of air displays, including local ones such as Teignmouth. We learnt about the mastery required for the different shapes we marvel at in the skies such as the beautiful 'diamond' and the perfect 'heart' formation.

Despite dreadful weather a record 240 were in the audience and many gathered round the merchandise table to buy gifts and chat to Phil. Phil was thanked for making the two and a half hour journey to Exmouth with rain lashing down, flooded roads and strong winds. We were certainly glad that he persevered with his journey and were relieved to see that the weather had improved for his journey home.

Our heartfelt thanks from Exmouth and District U3A for a wonderful talk.

Review and Photos by Christine Chittock, Speakers' Organiser