

Dazzling programme showed very best of British, past and present



BREATH-taking aerobatics were performed by a mind-boggling array of aircraft from 1940s biplanes to the state-of-the-art RAF Typhoon at Wings and Wheels 2010.

The hugely popular air and road show, staged annually by Dunsfold Park Ltd to raise money for local good causes, was laid on not once but twice this year.

Audiences on Sunday and bank holiday Monday were treated to a four-hour flying display headlined by the Red Arrows and high-speed track displays by aero-engined cars, supercars and superbikes.

Gusty weather and a short, sharp rainstorm injected extra drama to the Red Arrows' display on Sunday.

They were spooling up on the runway, ready to blast off when the shower hit and had to sit it out until the sun came out again.

Flying from Dunsfold airfield was quite a buzz for 'Red 5', ex-Cranleigh School pupil Zane Sennett, who completed four operational

tours in Afghanistan before joining everyone's favourite display team in 2009.

"It's great to be back," he said on Sunday. "I know some of my school friends and one of my old teachers are here today."

"I really need to be concentrating when I'm flying but there are some bits in the display when I can fly more freestyle and I'll have a bit of time to glance down at Cranleigh out of the cockpit."

And as 2010 is the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, there was a special welcome for the Hurricane on Sunday and the Lancaster on Monday.

The two famous aircraft were both from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and celebrated the crucial point in the Second World War when Germany lost air superiority.

To mark the landmark anniversary the Red Arrows formed a 'Spitfire' formation before speeding 150 feet over the runway at 800mph in a slalom manoeuvre.

The Blades Aerobatic Team also included a 'Spitfire Roll' in its daredevil display that featured a high-speed 'tumble-dryer' cascade.

The Red Bull Matadors, featuring two of the world's top formation pilots, demonstrated a world first when they accomplished a heart-stopping 'tail-slide' manoeuvre in which they not only descended in a close-formation continuous inside and outside loop but also kept exchanging positions.

Not to be outdone, the Breitling Wingwalkers threw caution to the winds by actually climbing off the top wings of their colourful biplanes after some energetic high-altitude high-kicking to make their way into the passenger seats.

One of the biggest thrills was a glorious aerial display by the only Avro Vulcan in the world still flying.

Piloted by Surrey-born Martin Withers, who was awarded a DFC for his part in the bombing of Fort Stanley

in the Falklands War, it appeared thanks to the Vulcan to Sky Trust, which raised more than £7 million to launch it again in 2007.

The iconic delta wing subsonic bomber, which wields an 18-wheel undercarriage and a massive bay that took 21 1,000lb bombs to the Falklands, has now been named The Spirit of Britain to inspire young engineers.

Not to be outdone, a thunderous 600mph flypast low over the airfield by the RAF Eurofighter Typhoon set all the car alarms going.

It was incredible to see the only current RAF multi-role capable fast jet, which can fly at twice the speed of sound and reach 36,000ft in less than two minutes, taking time out to perform joyful loops and rolls over Dunsfold.

The Mayor of Waverley, Councillor Carole Cockburn and Dunsfold Park chief executive Jim McAllister launched the air display with a formal welcome for the army's Tigers Parachute Display Team, as it performed a 126mph descent.

The display concluded with a magnificent three-part celebration to mark the 50th anniversary of the first vertical take-off from Dunsfold Aerodrome.

First up was the RAF Hunter Miss Demeanour, celebrating the aircraft that was tested by Neville Duke at Dunsfold in 1952.

The Hunter went through the sound barrier for the first time and set a new world speed record of 727mph.

Then it was the turn of the RAF Hawk, which made its first flight from Dunsfold.

It performed a low pass at 500mph watched by its original test pilot, Guildford resident Duncan Simpson OBE.

The grand finale was an epic performance by the Harrier GR9 with a thrust of 21,700lbs.

The dramatic display by Flight Lieutenant Steve Kenworthy in which it 'bowed' to its enthusiastic audience celebrated the first free hovering test flight of the original prototype at Dunsfold Aerodrome by Bill Bedford in November 1980.

