

RAF 100, The Official Story takes readers through the evolution of the Royal Air Force from primitive biplanes to supersonic jets.

history, as Holland has gone on to write numerous successful books, fiction and non-fiction, and to establish himself as a leading authority on the Second World War.

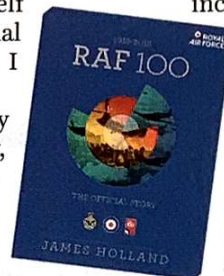
Like most people, Holland views that period as representing the halcyon days of the RAF. Indeed, almost half the book is devoted to how the RAF prepared for and contributed to the war effort. He explains: "The RAF made a truly enormous contribution to the Allied victory, and the rate of growth, both in terms of technology and tactics, was astonishing.

"The sheer number of amazing aircraft and airmen, and the extraordinary array of stories those men, and women, had to tell, is exceptional," he adds.

Taking the best part of a year to put *RAF 100* together, Holland added to his existing research by visiting the RAF Museum, the Imperial War Museums and The National Archives. He also saw many of the aircraft featured in the book and interviewed pilots and former pilots to get a greater understanding of how the RAF has developed over the years. "When you're dealing with a very broad sweep of history, you get a great clarity about the changes and evolution that have occurred in that timeframe," he says. "What really came home to me doing this book was the incredible rate of development, and especially so in the first 50 years, when the RAF went from flimsy biplanes to supersonic jets.

"The RAF rightly has a proud heritage, and it has been an honour to write their history." **C**

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THE COSTCO CONNECTION

You'll find copies of James Holland's *RAF 100, The Official Story* at your local Costco warehouse.

The RAF at 100

James Holland chronicles a military history

BY GORDON CRAIGIE

WITH SOME books, the title can often leave the reader wondering about the subject matter. But never was the idiom "It does what it says on the tin" more applicable than to *RAF 100, The Official Story*, the book commissioned by the Royal Air Force (RAF) to tell the story of its first 100 years. This comprehensive volume runs to more than 200 pages and contains hundreds of photos of the planes and personnel that have helped shape the history of the service.

From humble beginnings in April 1918, just as the First World War was approaching its conclusion, the RAF rapidly developed into the largest air force in the world. Given its fundamental importance in the Second World War, and its strategic importance during and after the Cold War, through to the present day, the RAF has grown in size and importance way beyond what the initial pioneers could have foreseen.

Author, historian and broad-

caster James Holland explains his passion for flying and the RAF by telling a story of how his younger self was distracted by a Spitfire swirling overhead while he was playing cricket. Any thoughts he may have had of pursuing a cricketing career quickly went for a duck, as he was bowled over by the sight of the iconic warplane. He tells *The Connection*, "It was one of the most amazing sights I'd ever seen, and literally the next weekend I took myself off to Duxford for their annual Flying Legends [Airshow]. I was hooked."

After completing a history degree at Durham University, Holland became a self-employed writer and historian. While he was researching his first novel, *The Burning Blue*, an interview with a Battle of Britain pilot sparked an interest that inspired him to write his first factual book, *Fortress Malta: An Island Under Siege 1940-1943*. The rest, so to speak, is

