



# England Fire Service 3-3 RAF

## Squad;

**C Hasler (London)**

**J Oatley (London)**

**A McLurg (GMC)**

**K Brookes (Lincolnshire)**

**R Whelan (GMC)**

**B Wood (London)**

**M Price (West Mids)**

**U Ihiekwe (Merseyside)**

**R Tonks (South Yorkshire)**

**M Harness (Lincolnshire)**

**L Thompson (Merseyside)**

**A Hildred (Lincolnshire)**

**M Swift (Shropshire)**

**G Hickling (Lancashire)**

**C Baker (West Mids)**

**L Oldham (GMC)**

**A McManus (West Yorkshire)**

**J Ogden (GMC)**

**B Sebuliba (London)**

## England Section;

**Dave Gilbert (Lincolnshire)**

**Jake Bristow (Essex)**

**Gary Phillips (GMC)**

**Shaun Pickles (Humberside)**

## Forthcoming Fixtures;

**Navy (Portsmouth) 3/12/15**

**Wales (Cardiff) 4/2/16**

**Scotland (Manchester) 14/4/16**

## England battle hard for a draw

In the shadow of Lincoln City FC and Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Headquarters, England took to the field for their annual match against the RAF on Wednesday 21st October. With a strong squad of 19 players, Rob Tonks only made two forced changes to the team that beat the Marines in September. In bright sunshine, the game kicked off and both teams got to grips with the 3G surface quickly. Georgiou and Harness were looking lively for England up front and on 5 minutes, England created their first chance when Harness headed down for Price whose first time shot went just wide. McManus then gave away a free kick which was met at the far post by an inrushing RAF player. His header was well saved by Hasler in the England goal though. Both teams created good chances to score in the early stages. The excellent McLurg saw his header go wide whilst Ben Wood's first time shot was cleared for a corner which then came to nothing. The RAF team were making England battle for the ball, and were quick to close down players when in possession. The RAF almost took the lead just after the half hour, but the header at the far post went agonisingly wide. Both teams would have been happy with their display so far but neither seemed to be able to find that bit of real quality in the final third. England did find that quality on 34 minutes though. Ben Wood broke play up in the midfield before playing the ball out to Whelan. His strong run and cross was met by GEORGIU whose deflected shot beat the keeper to give England the advantage at the break.

HT 1-0

The RAF started the second half in the same way as the first and just after the restart were rewarded for their play. A



Richard Georgiou sees his deflected shot beat the keeper to give England the lead

looping ball into the box evaded everyone and as Whelan attempted to clear with his head, the ball found the top corner. A fair reward for the RAF who deserved the goal, but not for defender Whelan who had a solid game throughout. England lost a bit of momentum in the second half and the play became a bit scrappy at times. Tonks and his assistant Thompson made several changes and the team took time to get going again. Wood again provided Whelan with a ball which was crossed to the far post. Oldham met the ball, unchallenged, with a header which surely should have found the target, but somehow managed to miss. Several minutes later, a foul on the edge of the box gave England another chance to score. Whelan, looking to make up for his earlier error, hit a great strike which cannoned off the post to safety. The RAF seemed to be stirred by the Red Arrows fly past and took the lead on the hour when their striker coolly slid the ball past Ogden in the England goal. Sebuliba and Georgiou combined well and Sebuliba's cross was met by Baker whose shot again went wide. Hildred then hit a chance over and Hickling also shot wide after some good work by Sebuliba again, and it was looking like England would pay for missed chances. Even more so, with 15 minutes to go, the RAF added a third after a good pass-

ing move gave the striker room in the box to fire into the bottom corner. To England's credit, they stepped up a gear for the last ten minutes. Swift and Hildred enjoyed more possession in midfield and looked to capitalize on some poor goalkeeping and defensive uncertainty which was creeping into the RAF game. HILDRED got England back into it on 82 minutes. Baker played a direct ball through to the midfielder who took a touch before firing across the keeper and into the bottom corner. England continued to press during the closing stages and apart from one good save from Ogden, it was all one way. The team were rewarded in the final seconds when Lee Oldham played a fantastic ball across from the right and Richard GEORGIU was there again to volley home the equalizer. A deserved draw against a solid organised RAF team. England enjoyed a better second half and showed real character to come from behind. Both teams deserved something from the game, which was one of the most entertaining England matches for a while. Not least for the refereeing performance, which had everyone amazed at times! With several new players added this season, Manager Tonks and his assistants seem to have created a real team bond, which has been reflected in the first couple of performances. The future looks bright for the England team!