Westminster Abbey

A Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication on Battle of Britain Sunday

Sunday 15th September 2013
11.00 am
This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the first decisive Battle in history fought entirely in the air. Battle of Britain Sunday commemorates a dramatic turning point both in the Battle itself and in the history of the Second World War.

The German objective in the summer of 1940 was to eliminate the Royal Air Force, both in the air and on the ground, in order to obtain air superiority in preparation for sea- and airborne invasions. Operating principally from airfields in France and Belgium, the Luftwaffe began its first heavy onslaught early in July 1940, directed against British shipping and the Channel ports. The intent behind this first phase of the battle was not only to sink ships, but also to draw the Royal Air Force into combat and wear down its strength. The second phase, from 8th–18th August, consisted of intensive day operations against coastal radar stations and fighter airfields. The third phase began after a five-day lull due to poor weather, with attacks on fighter airfields in the London area and increased night attacks on Britain’s cities.

The first daylight assault on London was made on 7th September and marked the beginning of the fourth phase, lasting most of that month, during which the capital became the Luftwaffe’s primary target. The attacks, although serious in themselves, brought vital relief to the fighter airfields, which until that time had been under considerable pressure. The Battle reached a climax on 15th September, when the Luftwaffe flew more than 1,000 sorties over England during daylight hours. On that occasion, the Luftwaffe lost fifty-six aircraft. It was, in Sir Winston Churchill’s words, “one of the decisive battles of the war”. Churchill went on to say: “The gratitude of every home in our Island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world…goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of world war by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.”

Throughout October, the fifth and final phase of the Battle saw the decline of enemy daylight attacks on London and an increase in the night bombing of Britain’s major ports and industrial centres. At the beginning of the struggle the Luftwaffe had approximately 2,700 aircraft to launch against England. Britain had fewer than sixty fighter
squadrons—around 700 aircraft—and the ground crews sometimes had to work sixteen hours a day to keep aircraft in the air. Between 24th August and 6th September alone, Fighter Command lost 103 pilots, and 128 were seriously wounded; 366 fighters had been destroyed or badly damaged. Fighter Command lost over 1,000 fighter aircraft during the Battle, and the Luftwaffe nearly 1,900. Through the efforts of fewer than 3,000 air crew personnel, and all the men and women who supported them, the Nazi war machine suffered its first significant strategic defeat. In all, 544 aircrew personnel from Fighter Command were killed during the Battle, and a further 791 died before the end of the War.

At the end of the Battle, with the home base now secure, the Royal Air Force could turn to wider tasks, including the long fight for Malta, North Africa, and control of the Mediterranean; the mounting bomber offensive against Germany; the struggle for air supremacy over North-West Europe, without which the Normandy Invasion would have been impossible; and support of the invasion campaign itself. Without these essential contributions, victory in Europe would not have been possible. The Royal Air Force also played a vital role in the Far East, most memorably in the appalling conditions of the Burma campaign. Nor, in this, the year in which we have celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic, should we forget the unstinting efforts of our maritime airmen, who doggedly quartered the hostile seas across the globe for enemy U-boats, shipping and surface raiders. In commemorating the airmen who fought in the Battle of Britain, we pay tribute also to those who, in later years of the war, served in all the Allied Forces at sea, on land, and in the air.

Today we record our continuing sense of gratitude for what was achieved in the darkest moments of war, and we rededicate ourselves to strive untiringly for peace, justice and freedom in the world. We also remember the tireless efforts of RAF servicemen and women who have served in nearly every part of the globe—as far eastwards as Hong Kong, Borneo, and Malaya; westwards to Belize; or southwards to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. We acknowledge and celebrate, too, the achievements and sacrifices of the men and women of the Royal Air Force still serving in troubled regions of the world, some of which would have been familiar to previous generations of their families who served in the early decades of the Service’s existence.
The Service is sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey, conducted by James O’Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers.

The Organ is played by Daniel Cook, Sub-Organist.

The Standard of Number 41 Squadron of the Royal Air Force is paraded at this Service.

Before the Service, a Lining Party is formed at the Great West Door, comprising members of The Queen’s Colour Squadron, Royal Air Force, accompanied by the National Standards of the National Service (RAF) Association, the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, the Bomber Command Association, the Royal Observer Corps Association, and the Royal Air Forces Association, together with twenty Standards from Royal Air Force Association branches.
Before the Service, the Central Band of the Royal Air Force, conducted by Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs RAF, Principal Director of Music, Headquarters Music Services, Royal Air Force, plays:

**Aubade** from *Illyrian Dances*  
Guy Woolfenden (b 1937)

**Lux aurumque**  
Eric Whitacre (b 1970)

**Romance** from Symphony No 5 in D  
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)  
arranged by Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs RAF (b 1961)

**Keep the Faith**  
Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs RAF

**Greensleeves**  
traditional  
arranged by James Curnow (b 1943)

**Elegy on the RAF March**  
Wing Commander (retired) Barrie Hingley (b 1938)

The Lord Mayor of Westminster is received and conducted to her place in Quire. All stand, and then sit.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Johns GCB KCVO CBE, representing His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, is received at the Great West Door. All stand.

Presentations are made.
ORDER OF SERVICE

All stand as the Choir and Clergy move from the West End of the Abbey to places in Quire and the Sacrarium.

All remain standing to sing

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

GOD save our gracious Queen.
Long live our noble Queen.
   God save The Queen.
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
   God save The Queen.

All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, gives

THE BIDDING

ONCE again we come together on Battle of Britain Sunday in this House of Kings and House of Prayer to give thanks for the dedication and heroism of members of the Royal Air Force and the allied air forces in that remarkable struggle for air supremacy over Britain in October 1940. Their courage marked a turning point in the war, for without their bravery it is hard to see how the Second World War could have been won.

As we reflect today on their gallantry and fortitude, we remember all who have served and still serve in the Royal Air Force. We honour all who fight in the service of freedom; we express penitence for the suffering and destruction caused by armed conflicts; and we renew our commitment to work for justice, freedom, and decency.
Today we pray especially for the Royal Air Force and all those who continue to work, often in immense danger, for justice and peace. We ask for God’s guidance that we may hold courageously to the values we profess, that we may indeed do his will, as we say together the prayer that Jesus taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

_The Standard of Number 41 Squadron of the Royal Air Force is borne through the Church, presented, and laid upon the High Altar, as the Band plays:_

- Fanfare to the Royal Air Force _R E C Davies (1920–95)_
- Fanfare on the Royal Air Force Call _R F O’Donnell (1885–1961)_

**Standard Bearer:**

Squadron Leader J Taylor-Head RAF

**Escorts:**

Flight Lieutenant R Wilson RAF  Flight Lieutenant S Durcan RAF

_The Dean says:_

**Almighty God, who makest the clouds thy chariots and walkest upon the wings of the storm, look in mercy, we beseech thee, upon the Royal Air Force. Make us a tower of strength to our Queen and to our country. Help us to do our duty with prudence and with fearlessness, confident that in life or in death the eternal God is our refuge and strength. Grant this for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.**
All sing

THE HYMN

He who would valiant be, 'gainst all disaster,
let him in constancy follow the master.
There’s no discouragement shall make him once relent
his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim.

Whoso beset him round with dismal stories,
do but themselves confound, his strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might, though he with giants fight,
he will make good his right to be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, thou dost defend us with thy spirit;
we know we at the end shall life inherit.
Then, fancies, flee away!
I’ll fear not what men say,
I’ll labour night and day to be a pilgrim.

Monk’s Gate 372 NEH
adapted from a traditional English melody
by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)
All sit. Corporal A Knight RAUXAF, 2624 Squadron, Training JNCO, reads from the Nave Pulpit

DEUTERONOMY 32: 1–12

Moses said, ‘Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew; like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth. For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he; yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him, a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus repay the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is he not your father, who created you, who made you and established you? Remember the days of old; consider the years long past; ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods; the Lord’s own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share. He sustained him in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste; he shielded him, cared for him, guarded him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him; no foreign god was with him.’

All remain seated. The Choir sings

PSALM 46

God is our hope and strength: a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved: and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof rage and swell: and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the most Highest. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved: but God hath shewed his voice, and the earth shall melt away. The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.
O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord: what destruction he hath brought upon the earth.
He maketh wars to cease in all the world: he breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire.
Be still then, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, and I will be exalted in the earth.
The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end.
Amen.

after Martin Luther (1483–1546)

All remain seated. Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford KCB CBE, Chief of the Air Staff, reads from the Great Lectern

ROMANS 5: 1–5

SINCE we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

All stand for

THE ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

The Battle of Britain Roll of Honour is borne from the Grave of the Unknown Warrior to the Sacrament, escorted by veterans of the Battle of Britain, sons and grandsons of the veterans, and serving Royal Air Force pilots, during which the Band plays:

March Theme
from The Battle of Britain
William Walton (1902–83)
arranged by
Wing Commander (retired) Barrie Hingley
Honorary Steward:
Group Captain
J G Eaton MBE

Roll Bearer:
Flight Lieutenant N Critchell RAF

Escorts:

Wing Commander
P Farnes DFM RAF

Flight Lieutenant
W Clark DFM AE RAF

Flying Officer
K Wilkinson AE RAF

Flight Lieutenant
W Green RAF

Wing Commander
T Neil DFC* AFC AE RAF

Squadron Leader
T Pickering RAF

Squadron Leader
I Neil RAF

Mr
M Pickering

Flight Lieutenant
G Hart RAF

Flight Lieutenant
S Taylor RAF

Flying Officer
R Saddler RAF

Flight Lieutenant
O Fuller RAF

Flight Lieutenant
D Walden RAF

Flight Lieutenant
D Mayhew RAF

All remain standing. The Dean says:

ALMIGHTY God, into thy hands we commend the souls of those who laid down their lives for the cause of freedom; praying that thou wouldst grant them the joys of thy eternal kingdom, and to all who mourn them fortitude of spirit and constant faith in the power of thy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
All sing

THE HYMN

Judge eternal, throned in splendour,
Lord of lords and King of kings,
with thy living fire of judgement
purge this realm of bitter things:
solace all its wide dominion
with the healing of thy wings.

Still the weary folk are pining
for the hour that brings release:
and the city’s crowded clangour
cries aloud for sin to cease;
and the homesteads and the woodlands
plead in silence for their peace.

Crown, O God, thine own endeavour;
cleave our darkness with thy sword;
feed the faithless and the hungry
with the richness of thy word:
cleanse the body of this nation
through the glory of the Lord.

Rhuddlan 490 NEH
from Edward Jones, Musical Relicks of Welsh Bards 1800
Henry Scott Holland (1847–1918)

THE SERMON

by

The Venerable Ray Pentland CB QHC
Chaplain-in-Chief, Royal Air Force
All remain seated. The Choir sings

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

W e praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting.
To thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein.
To thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry,
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;
heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.
The glorious company of the apostles praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee.
The noble army of martyrs praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee,
the Father, of an infinite majesty;
thine honourable, true, and only Son,
also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ;
thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the
Virgin’s womb.
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the
kingdom of heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.
We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge.
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed
with thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with thy saints, in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save thy people, and bless thine heritage.
Govern them and lift them up for ever.
Day by day we magnify thee, and we worship thy Name ever world
without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in thee.
O Lord, in thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded.

*Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) in C*
All kneel or remain seated. The Reverend Dr James Hawkey, Minor Canon and Sacrist, leads

THE PRAYERS

Let us thank God for his many gifts; for his creation; for the revelation of his self-giving love in Jesus Christ; and for each opportunity to serve him in serving the needs of our brothers and sisters.
Let us bless the Lord:
Thanks be to God.

Let us thank God for the freedoms we enjoy, recalling with gratitude the courage of those who during the Battle of Britain served the cause of liberty in the Royal Air Force, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, and especially those who gave their lives so that we might have fullness of life.
Let us bless the Lord:
Thanks be to God.

Let us give thanks for the service rendered in peace and in conflict to the peoples of this and of other countries by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force; for peace preserved, for peril averted.
Let us bless the Lord:
Thanks be to God.

Let us give thanks for the hope of peace for all people. We rejoice that in the power and grace of Christ, the Prince of Peace, swords may be beaten into ploughshares and old and bitter enemies might yield up their hatred and find enduring fellowship.
Let us bless the Lord:
Thanks be to God.

Mrs D Burns, wife of Flight Lieutenant O Burns, Battle of Britain veteran, says:

Let us pray for all who suffer today from exploitation, greed, or cruelty; and for those who live where there is warfare, unrest or the threat of violence. Let us pray for the leaders of the nations and for all who influence the course of world events: that they may act with wisdom, discernment, and integrity.
Lord in thy mercy:
Hear our prayer.
Let us pray for all who still bear the wounds of war in body, mind, or spirit; for veterans and for all who assist them, especially the Royal Air Forces Association, the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust, the Royal Air Force Widows’ Association, the War Widows’ Association of Great Britain, and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund; that all who have made sacrifices for the cause of peace may know that peace in their own lives.

Lord in thy mercy:
Hear our prayer.

The Sacrist continues:

Let us pray for those members of the Royal Air Force who, through their vigilance and determination, make it possible for planes to fly and defend these shores: for all mechanics and ground crew personnel; for radar operators and engineers; and for all engaged in logistics; that, inspired by the example of their forebears, they may continue to fulfil this vital service with skill and pride.

Lord in thy mercy:
Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all who serve today in the Royal Air Force and the Forces of the Crown, particularly those currently serving in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and the South Atlantic; we remember especially those whose duty places them in danger and pray that they may be granted spiritual fortitude, with physical and moral courage.

Lord in thy mercy:
Hear our prayer.

The Sacrist concludes:

 Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

St John Chrysostom (c 345–407)
All stand to sing

THE HYMN

during which a collection is taken
for the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
and the Royal Air Forces Association

CHRIST is the world’s true light,
it's captain of salvation,
the daystar shining bright
to every man and nation;
new life, new hope awakes,
where'er men own his sway:
freedom her bondage breaks,
and night is turned to day.

In Christ all races meet,
their ancient feuds forgetting,
the whole round world complete,
from sunrise to its setting:
when Christ is throned as Lord,
men shall forsake their fear,
to ploughshare beat the sword,
to pruning-hook the spear.

One Lord, in one great name
unite us all who own thee;
cast out our pride and shame
that hinder to enthrone thee;
the world has waited long,
has travailed long in pain;
to heal its ancient wrong,
come, Prince of Peace, and reign!

Nun danket 494ii NEH
in Johann Crüger, Praxis Pietatis Melica c 1647

Gilbert Wallace Briggs
(1875–1959)
All remain standing for

THE ACT OF REDEDICATION

The Dean says:

LET us rededicate ourselves to building a world in which there is justice and peace for all, and where women, men, and children live a life of full human dignity.

All say together:

LORD God our Father, we pledge ourselves to serve thee and all thy people in the cause of justice and peace, and for the relief of want and suffering. Guide us by thy Spirit; grant us wisdom, courage, vision, and hope; and keep us faithful to our calling now and always, for the honour of thy holy name. Amen.

All remain standing. The Dean pronounces

THE BLESSING

GOD grant to the living grace; to the departed rest; to the Church, The Queen, the Commonwealth and all mankind, peace and concord, and to us sinners, life everlasting; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

All remain standing for

THE CALL OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

THE LAST POST

REVEILLE
The Standard of Number 41 Squadron of the Royal Air Force is returned to the Standard Party as the Band plays:

Fanfare for the Ensign of the Royal Air Force  
Wing Commander (retired)  
Barrie Hingley

The Royal Air Force March Past  
Henry Walford Davies (1869–1941)  
and George Dyson (1883–1964)

All remain standing. The Choir and Clergy move from Quire and the Sacrarium to the West End of the Church.

Music after the Service:

The Band plays:

Spitfire Prelude  
William Walton

Members of the Congregation are kindly requested to remain in their seats until invited to move by the Stewards.

The bells of the Abbey are rung.

A flypast, by a Spitfire and Hurricane of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, will salute ‘The Few’ at 12.30 pm.

The Royal Air Force Memorial Chapel, at the far eastern end of the Abbey, will be open after the service until 1.00 pm for all who wish to visit.

The Royal Air Force Coastal Command Book of Remembrance 1939–1945 will be open in the Chapel during Battle of Britain week.

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