

Westminster Abbey



A Service of
Thanksgiving and Rededication
to mark the 80th anniversary
of the Battle of Britain



Sunday 20th September 2020
11.00 am

HISTORICAL NOTE

This year marks the 80th 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 in both the Battle itself, and 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 a potential seaborne and airborne invasion. Operating principally from airfields in France and Belgium, the Luftwaffe began their 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 shipping but also to draw the Royal Air Force into combat and wear down its strength. The second phase, from 8th to 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. These 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 56 aircraft. 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 60 fighter squadrons—around 700 aircraft—and the groundcrew had to work sometimes 16 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 1000 aircraft during the Battle and the Luftwaffe nearly 1900. Through the efforts of fewer than 3000 aircrew from Britain, the Commonwealth, and Allied nations, many firmly under Nazi control, along with some from neutral countries, together with the men and women who supported them from the ground, Hitler's Third Reich suffered its first significant strategic defeat. In all 544 aircrew from Fighter Command were killed during the Battle, and a further 791 died before the end of the War. The cost was grievous but the stakes immeasurably high. The campaign was, in Sir Winston Churchill's

words: 'One of the decisive battles of the war.' In a speech that has gone down in history 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 the 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.'

The Battle drew to a close with the onset of winter and the Luftwaffe used the longer nights to mount its night-time Blitz which lasted until May of the following year, when Hitler turned eastwards to attack the Soviet Union. With the home base now reasonably 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 and liberation 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 should we forget the unstinting efforts of our maritime airmen, who doggedly quartered the hostile seas around the globe searching out 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, as the Service moves forward in its second century, 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 also acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and sacrifices of the men and women of the Royal Air Force still serving in the troubled regions of the World, some of which would have been all too familiar to previous generations of their families who served in the early decades of the Service's existence. The RAF continues to guard our skies against aerial intrusion twenty-four hours a day and in recent times has undertaken similar missions on behalf of NATO Allies in the Baltic and Eastern Europe and in 2019 deployed aircraft to Iceland to perform that role.

*Sebastian Cox
Head of Air Historical Branch (RAF)*



*A flight of Hurricane I fighters flown by pilots of 85 Squadron,
RAF Church Fenton, 5th October 1940.
Leading the formation is Squadron Leader Peter Townsend.*



*Members of 29 Squadron based at Coleby Grange, Lincolnshire, October 1940.
Pilot Officer Peter Kells, a Blenheim pilot, climbs aboard his aircraft.
The Squadron was one of six night-fighter squadrons at this time.
Few of their aircraft had radar, and even fewer had any success against enemy bombers.*



Armourers replenish the guns of Hawker Hurricane I of 303 (Polish) Squadron at Leconfield, Yorkshire, 24th October 1940.



A pair of Spitfires of 41 Squadron pictured in flight, October 1940. The nearest aircraft, X4178/EB-K was shot down on 15th October 1940 with the loss of its pilot, Sergeant Philip David Lloyd.

The Standards of those still active RAF flying Squadrons which took part in the Battle of Britain are situated at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Westminster and Deputy High Steward, Councillor Jonathan Glanz, is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Presentations are made. All stand as he is conducted to his seat, and then sit.

All stand. Marshal of the Royal Air Force the Lord Stirrup KG GCB AFC, representing His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, is received by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster at the Great West Door.

ORDER OF SERVICE

All remain standing as the choir and clergy, together with the Representative of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, move to places in the Lantern and the Sacrarium.

The choir alone sings

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.

arranged by Gordon Jacob (1895–1984)

All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle, Dean of Westminster, gives

THE BIDDING

WE meet in this Abbey church, where our nation so often gathers to remember, to celebrate and to grieve. Here, we give thanks for the dedication and daring of members of the Royal Air Force and allied air forces during the Battle of Britain. Their sure courage halted the advance of a terrible tyranny. They held fast in days of greatest danger. For their resilience and their skill we give thanks, for their pain and loss we grieve. Once again we commit ourselves to the duty of an honest remembrance.

Calling to mind those days, and those individuals, we remember too all who have served and still serve in the Royal Air Force. We pray God's blessing upon them and pray too for their safety. Remembering conflict past and present in which they have served, we come before God penitent that we are so often divided and so easily tempted into violence. Now, we renew our commitment to seek out, together, the ways of peace and reconciliation.

As we pray for all those who serve in the Royal Air Force and those who work alongside them, we look for the coming of a Kingdom ruled in righteousness and loving justice, praying as 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 Royal Air Force Ensign is borne through the church, presented, and laid upon the High Altar. 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

Flight Lieutenant Melissa Sharpe RAF

Escorts

Flight Lieutenant
Bryn Jones RAF

Flight Lieutenant
Nic Fenn RAF

The Dean says

Let us pray.

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 sit. From the Great Lectern Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston CBE ADC
RAF, Chief of the Air Staff, reads*

THE FIRST READING

TO whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God'? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40: 25–31

The choir sings

THE PSALM

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)

Psalm 46

From the Great Lectern the Right Honourable Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister, reads

THE SECOND READING

IF there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2: 1–11

All stand for

THE ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

The Battle of Britain Roll of Honour is borne through the church, escorted by the Squadron Standards of the former Battle of Britain Squadrons and a contingent of RAF Cadets.

The band plays

March Theme
from *The Battle of Britain*

William Walton (1902–83)
arranged by Barrie Hingley

Roll Bearer

Flight Lieutenant Alain Branson RAF

Escorts

3 Sqn
Flight Lieutenant
Thomas Mather RAF

41 Sqn
Flight Lieutenant
Oliver Payne RAF

54 Sqn
Squadron Leader
Adele Brown RAF

17 Sqn
Flight Lieutenant
Adam O'Hare RAF

92 Sqn
Squadron Leader
Charles Lynn RAF

1 Sqn
Flight Lieutenant
Declan Monaghan RAF

32 Sqn
Flight Lieutenant
Gavin Drysdale RAF

29 Sqn
Flight Lieutenant
Steven Inch RAF

56 Sqn
Squadron Leader
David Alderman RAF

72 Sqn
Flight Lieutenant
Charlie Butterfield RAF

Air Cadets

The Dean says

Let us pray.

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 sit for

THE ADDRESS

by

*The Venerable (Air Vice-Marshal) John Ellis QHC RAF
Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force*

The choir sings

TE DEUM

WE 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 cherubin, and seraphin : 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.

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) in B flat

The Reverend Mark Birch, Minor Canon and Precentor, leads

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray.

All kneel or sit.

LET us give thanks to God for his many gifts; for our creation and redemption in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and for every opportunity to serve the needs of our brothers and sisters.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Senior Aircraftsman Elloise Messam RAF says

LET us give thanks to God for the freedoms we enjoy; for the courage and inspiration of those who served during the Battle of Britain, 80 years ago; for members of the Royal Air Force, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, and especially those whose lives were lost in the cause of liberty.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Pritpal Bhullar says

LET us give thanks for the service rendered by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, in peacetime and in conflict, to the peoples of this and other lands; for those who fly, and those who support them as mechanics, ground crew, radar operators, engineers, and in logistics; for peace preserved, and for peril averted.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Flight Lieutenant Rebecca Russell RAF says

LET us pray for all who suffer exploitation or oppression, and for those who live amidst warfare, unrest, or the threat of violence. Especially, in a time of pandemic, let us pray for the leaders of the nations and for all who influence opinion, that they may be inspired to act with wisdom, discernment, and integrity.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

The Venerable Ray Pentland, Honorary Chaplain, The Battle of Britain Fighter Association, says

LET us pray for all who bear the scars of war, in body, mind, or spirit; for veterans and all who assist them, especially the Royal Air Force 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 in the cause of peace may know peace in their own lives.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey, Canon in Residence, says

LET us pray for all who serve today in the Royal Air Force and in all the Forces of the Crown; particularly those currently serving in the Middle East, the Gulf, West Africa, the South Atlantic, and other operational environments. 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 your mercy

hear our prayer.

The Precentor concludes

O God, who wouldst fold both heaven and earth in a single peace: Let the design of thy great love lighten upon the waste of our wraths and sorrows; and give peace to thy Church, peace among nations, peace in our dwellings, and peace in our hearts; through thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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 human dignity is honoured.

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

The Dean pronounces

THE BLESSING

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

All remain standing for

THE CALL OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

THE LAST POST

REVEILLE

The Royal Air Force Ensign is retrieved as the band plays

Fanfare for the Ensign of the Royal Air Force *Barrie Hingley*

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

The choir and clergy, together with the Representative of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, move from the Lantern and the Sacrarium to the west end of the church

Music after the service

Spitfire Prelude *William Walton*

Procession of the Nobles *Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908)*
from Mlada *arranged by Erik Leidzen (1894–1962)*

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

This year there will not be a retiring collection, but if you would like to donate to either the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund or the Royal Air Forces Association, please visit the following websites:

www.rafbf.org/ways-to-give

www.rafa.org.uk

