

# Westminster Abbey



## A Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication on Battle of Britain Sunday



Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
11.00 am

## HISTORICAL NOTE

This year marks the 81<sup>st</sup> 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 8 to 18<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 some vital relief to the fighter airfields, which until that time had been under considerable pressure. The Battle reached a climax on 15<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> August and 6<sup>th</sup> 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 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, be it the Middle East or the Sahel region of west Africa. Wherever they serve the men and women of the RAF display the same fortitude and courage as their forebears. 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.

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



*Hurricanes like those used by No 3 Squadron during the Battle of Britain.*



*Hurricanes on patrol in October 1940.*



*A Hurricane fighter being serviced after a recent sortie.*



*Before the Service, a Lining Party is formed at the Great West Door, comprising members of The Queen's Colour Squadron, Royal Air Force.*

*The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Westminster and Deputy High Steward, Councillor Andrew Smith, 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.*

*A fanfare is sounded. All stand.*

*Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall are 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 Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, move to places in Quire and the Sacrarium.*

*All 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.

*arranged by Gordon Jacob (1895–1984)*

*All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle, 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 No 3 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*

*Flight Lieutenant James Coomber RAF*

*Escorts*

*Flight Lieutenant  
Nathan Shawyer RAF*

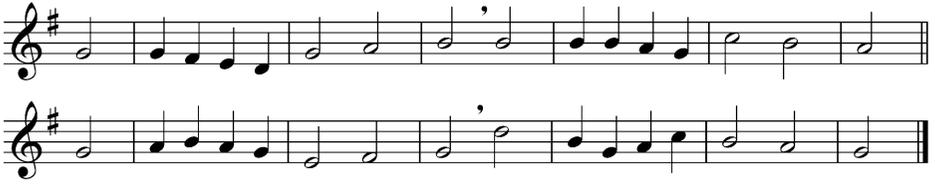
*Flight Lieutenant  
Oliver Harbridge RAF*

*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 sing the Hymn*



All people that on earth do dwell,  
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;  
him serve with fear, his praise forth tell,  
come ye before him, and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;  
without our aid he did us make;  
we are his folk, he doth us feed,  
and for his sheep he doth us take.

*The choir sings* O enter then his gates with praise,  
approach with joy his courts unto;  
praise, laud, and bless his name always,  
for it is seemly so to do.

*All sing* For why? the Lord our God is good;  
his mercy is for ever sure;  
his truth at all times firmly stood,  
and shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
the God whom heaven and earth adore,  
from men and from the angel-host  
be praise and glory evermore. Amen.

*Old 100th 100 AMNS*

*melody in Genevan Psalter 1551*

*arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)*

*Psalm 100*

*paraphrased W Kethe (d 1594)*

*in Anglo-Genevan Psalter 1560*

*All sit. From the Nave Pulpit Senior Aircraftman Jessica Williams reads*  
Jeremiah 30:18-22

Thus says the Lord:

I am going to restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob,  
and have compassion on his dwellings;  
the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound,  
and the citadel set on its rightful site.

Out of them shall come thanksgiving,  
and the sound of merrymakers.

I will make them many, and they shall not be few;

I will make them honoured, and they shall not be disdained.

Their children shall be as of old,  
their congregation shall be established before me;  
and I will punish all who oppress them.

Their prince shall be one of their own,  
their ruler shall come from their midst;

I will bring him near, and he shall approach me,  
for who would otherwise dare to approach me?

Says the Lord.

And you shall be my people,  
and I will be your God.

Thanks be to God.

*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)*

*From the Great Lectern Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston KBE CBE  
ADC, Chief of the Air Staff, reads Hebrews 12:1-3*

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.

Thanks be to God.

*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 serving descendants of Battle of Britain Airmen, serving Royal Air Force Aircrew from former Battle of Britain Squadrons, Service personnel undertaking trade training, and a contingent of Royal Air Force Cadets.*

*The band plays*

March Theme

*from The Battle of Britain*

*William Walton (1902–83)*

*arranged by Barrie Hingley*

*Roll Bearer*

Squadron Leader Stephen Worth RAF

*Escorts*

Flight Lieutenant

Andy Cain RAF

Flight Lieutenant

James Busby RAF

Squadron Leader

Mark Longstaffe RAF

Flight Lieutenant

Liam Roseblade RAF

Aircraftman Stuart Ackerman

Aircraftman Leo Davies

Aircraftman Jack Toby

Cadet Sergeant Oliwia Gaja

Cadet Flight Sergeant

Mariam Moshin

Cadet Sergeant Joshua Blake

Flight Lieutenant

Michael Masters RAF

Flight Lieutenant

Simon Ridley RAF

Squadron Leader

Benjamin Polwin RAF

Flight Lieutenant

Stuart Kynaston RAF

Aircraftman Poppy Smart

Aircraftman Hope Mombera

Aircraftman James Smalley

Cadet Sergeant

Roberto Afrasinei

Cadet Corporal Malaika Harder

Cadet Sergeant William Tano

*All remain standing. 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 sing the Hymn*



O Ruler of the earth and sky  
be with our airmen when they fly;  
and keep them in thy loving care  
amid the perils of the air.

O let our cry come unto thee  
for those who fly o'er land and sea.

Strong Son of Man, save those who fly  
swift-winged across th'uncharted sky;  
each anxious hour and lonely flight,  
serene, unchallenged, day and night.

O'er land and ocean safely bear  
all those in peril in the air.

O Holy Spirit, God's own power  
give peace in sudden danger's hour:  
bring calm of heart, and be thou near  
to those who watch and those who fear.

To thee will rise the grateful prayer  
of those who serve thee in the air.

O Trinity of love and grace,  
true guide of all who fly through space,  
in peace or war, mid friend or foe,  
be with them whereso'er they go.

So shall our praise with heaven's blend  
and joyful hearts to thee ascend.

*Melita 354 NEH*

*John Dykes (1823–76)*

*arranged by James O'Donnell (b 1961)*

The Airmen's Hymn

*All sit. The Venerable (Air Vice-Marshal) John Ellis QHC RAF,  
Chaplain-in-Chief and Archdeacon of the Royal Air Force, gives the  
Address*

*The choir sings the Anthem*

Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty :  
    give unto the Lord glory and strength.  
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name :  
    worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.  
The voice of the Lord is upon the waters :  
    the God of glory thundereth.  
It is the Lord that ruleth the sea;  
the voice of the Lord is mighty in operation :  
    the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.  
The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars :  
    yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.  
Yea, the voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire :  
    yea, the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness,  
    and strippeth the forests bare.  
In his temple doth every one speak of his glory :  
    worship the Lord, in the beauty of holiness.  
The Lord sitteth above the water flood :  
    and the Lord remaineth a King for ever.  
The Lord shall give strength unto his people;  
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

*Edward Elgar (1857–1934)*

*after Psalm 29*

*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.**

*Squadron Leader Joan Ochuodho 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; 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.**

*Squadron Leader Andrew Armstrong RAF 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.**

*The Reverend (Squadron Leader) John Baptiste 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.

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 Reverend Dr (Wing Commander) David Richardson RAF 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 Anthony Ball, 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, 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 art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*All stand to sing the Hymn*



Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty;  
hold me with thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven,  
feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain  
whence the healing stream doth flow;  
let the fiery cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through:  
strong Deliverer,  
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side:  
songs of praises  
I will ever give to thee.

*Cwm Rhondda 368 NEH*  
*John Hughes (1873–1932)*

*Arglwydd, arwain trwy'r anialwch*  
*William Williams (1717–91)*  
*translated by Peter Williams (1727–96) and others*

*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.

**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, and Reveille*

*The Standard of No 3 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 *Barrie Hingley*

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

*The choir and clergy, together with Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, move from Quire and the Sacrarium to the west end of the church*

*Music after the service*

Days of Glory

*Richard Harvey (b 1953)  
arranged by Barrie Hingley  
edited by Wing Commander Piers Morrell*

Spitfire Prelude

*William Walton*

*The bells of the Abbey are rung*

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

*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](http://www.rafbf.org/ways-to-give)*

*[www.rafa.org.uk](http://www.rafa.org.uk)*

