

Westminster Abbey



A Service of
Thanksgiving and Rededication
on
Battle of Britain Sunday



Sunday 17th September 2017
11.00 am

HISTORICAL NOTE

This year marks the 77th 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 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. 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 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 fighter aircraft during the Battle and the Luftwaffe nearly 1900. Through the efforts of fewer than 3000 aircrew from Britain, the Commonwealth, and Allied and even some neutral nations, together with the men and women who supported them, the Nazi war machine 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.

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 should we forget the unstinting efforts of our maritime airmen, who doggedly quartered the hostile seas around 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 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 familiar to previous generations of their families who served in the early decades of the Service's existence.



Above: Supermarine Spitfire IIa of 72 Squadron, 28th April 1941

Below: Pilots and ground crew of 72 Squadron, RAF Acklington, 28th April 1941



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 RAF Regiment Association, the Royal Air Forces Association, the Royal Observer Corps Association, the Royal Air Force Halton Apprentices Association, together with twenty Standards from branches of the Royal Air Forces Association.

A representative of The Lord Mayor of London is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Presentations are made, and he is conducted to his place in Quire.

The Right Honourable Theresa May, Prime Minister, is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Presentations are made, and she is conducted to her seat in Quire.

The Lord Mayor Westminster is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Presentations are made, and he is conducted to his place in Quire. All stand, and then sit.

All stand.

Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall are received at the West Gate. Presentations are made.

ORDER OF SERVICE

All remain standing as the procession, together with Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, moves 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.

Thy choicest gifts in store
on her be pleased to pour,
long may she reign.
May she defend our laws,
and ever give us cause
to sing with heart and voice:
God save The Queen!

arranged by Gordon Jacob (1895–1984)

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 No 72 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 J Pilling RAF

Escorts
Flight Lieutenant A Falkingham RAF Flight Lieutenant J Greer 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



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 sit. Flight Lieutenant Alexandra Nash RAF reads from the Nave Pulpit

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.

*Psalm 46
after Martin Luther (1483–1546)*

*Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier KCB CBE DFC ADC RAF, Chief of the
Air Staff, reads from the Great Lectern*

THE SECOND READING

WHILE Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, ‘Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.’ And they scolded her. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.’ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

St Mark 14: 3–11

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 Sacarium, escorted by veterans of the Battle of Britain, and serving Royal Air Force pilots and aircrew, during which the Band plays:

March Theme *William Walton (1902–83)*
from *The Battle of Britain* *arranged by Wing Commander (retired)*
Barrie Hingley

Honorary Steward
Group Captain J G Eaton MBE

Roll Bearer
Flight Lieutenant R Curran RAF

Escorts
Squadron Leader G Wellum DFC
Wing Commander P Farnes DFM Squadron Leader H Evans MBE

Flight Lieutenant G Hibbert RAF Flight Lieutenant J Munro RAF
Flight Lieutenant A Mallery-Blythe RAF Flight Lieutenant J Peterson RAF
Flight Lieutenant M Hollywood RAF Flight Lieutenant S Hilditch RAF

On arrival at the Sacarium steps, the Roll of Honour will be greeted by the Battle of Britain veterans Wing Commander J Elkington and Wing Commander T Neil DFC AFC AE.*

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
anonymous

THE ADDRESS

by

The Venerable (Air Vice-Marshal) Jonathan Chaffey QHC RAF
Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force

The choir sings

THE ANTHEM

LORD, thou hast been our refuge : from one generation to another.
Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made : thou art God from everlasting, and world without end.

Thou turnest man to destruction : again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men.

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday : seeing that is past as a watch in the night.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

As soon as thou scatterest them they are even as a sleep : and fade away suddenly like the grass.

In the morning it is green, and groweth up : but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered.

For we consume away in thy displeasure : and are afraid at thy wrathful indignation.

For when thou art angry all our days are gone : we bring our years to an end, as a tale that is told.

The years of our age are three score years and ten; and though men be so strong that they come to four score years : yet is their strength but labour and sorrow; so passeth it away, and we are gone.

Turn thee again, O Lord, at the last : be gracious unto thy servants.

O satisfy us with thy mercy, and that soon : so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

Lord, thou hast been our refuge : from one generation to another.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made : thou art God from everlasting, and world without end.

And the glorious majesty of the Lord be upon us : prosper thou the work of our hands, O prosper thou our handy-work.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

*Psalm 90: 1–7, 9–10, 13–14, 17
and from Man frail, and God eternal
Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*

All kneel or sit. The Reverend Mark Birch, Minor Canon and Sacrist, leads

THE PRAYERS

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

Let us bless the Lord:
thanks be to God.

Squadron Leader Hywel Evans MBE says:

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

Let us bless the Lord:
thanks be to God.

Flight Sergeant Sharlene King 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 of 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.

Officer Cadet Alexander Gledhill says:

LET us pray for all who suffer exploitation, oppression, or terrorism; 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 act with wisdom, discernment, and integrity.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

The Reverend (Wing Commander) Ian Brown says:

LET us pray for all who bear the scars 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 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 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*



PRAISE to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation:
come ye who hear,
brothers and sisters draw near,
praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shelters thee under his wings, yea, so gently sustaineth:
hast thou not seen
all that is needful hath been
granted in what he ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work, and defend thee;
surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
ponder anew
all the Almighty can do,
he who with love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who, when tempests their warfare are waging,
who, when the elements madly around thee are raging,
biddeth them cease,
turneth their fury to peace,
whirlwinds and waters assuaging.

Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding,
who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding,
sheddeth his light,
chaseth the horrors of night,
saints with his mercy surrounding.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath come now with praises before him!
Let the Amen
sound from his people again:
gladly for ay we adore him.

*Lobe den Herren 440 NEH
Praxis pietatis melica 1668*

*Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren
Joachim Neander (1650–80)
translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827–78)*

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 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 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 among 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 No 72 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 and George Dyson (1883–1964)*

The choir and clergy move from Quire and the Sacrament to the west end of the church.

Music after the service:

Spitfire Prelude *William Walton*

Battle of Britain Theme *Ron Goodwin (1925–2003)*

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

The bells of the Abbey Church are rung.

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.

Printed by Barnard & Westwood Ltd
23 Pakenham Street, London WC1X 0LB
By Appointment to HM The Queen, Printers and Bookbinders
& HRH The Prince of Wales, Printers
Printers to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster
