

# Westminster Abbey



EVENSONG TO COMMEMORATE  
THE 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN



Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2012  
3.00 pm

## THE SECOND BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

By Autumn 1942, the War was finely balanced with some success and considerable failure for Allied forces fighting in many theatres. In North Africa, the British and Commonwealth forces of Eighth Army under Lieutenant General Bernard Montgomery faced the Italian-German Axis forces commanded by the newly-promoted Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. The Eighth Army was an important part of the Allied forces in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, and Persia defending British interests in the region – especially the Suez Canal and the Iraq oil fields.

The Axis positions were, theoretically, very strong. They possessed sophisticated defences combining barbed wire, dugouts, and large numbers of mines, and they were flanked to the north by the Mediterranean Sea. However, the Axis forces were short of vital supplies and ammunition, and had fewer anti-tank and artillery guns than their opponents. There was fuel for only eleven days' 'normal' consumption, and enough ammunition for nine days' fighting. Rations were in short supply as were vehicle spares and equipment. Royal Air Force and Royal Navy attacks on Axis merchant shipping (especially from bases in Malta) compounded the logistical problems. In September, eighty per cent of supplies loaded in Italy reached North Africa, but only fifty-four per cent in October. Petrol supplies were down by two thirds. The Axis failure to overcome Malta's resistance in mid-1942 now proved extremely costly.

Montgomery was insistent that Eighth Army should have every advantage possible before attacking. Reinforcements of men and new equipment, together with huge stocks of ammunition and supplies, had been sent to him. The Desert Air Force had also received large amounts of vital equipment and was fully prepared to provide essential tactical air support for the land battle as its primary objective. Montgomery's battle plan called for an attack on a moonlit night, straight through the Axis defences which contained strongpoints and mines, and armour could not do this alone without suffering heavy losses.

The Allied attack opened on the night of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942. At 2140, Operation Lightfoot commenced. Allied artillery opened a crushing bombardment, seriously damaging Axis artillery and communications. Wellington bombers, guided by Fleet Air Arm Albacore aircraft, scoured the front bombing Axis gun positions and other targets. At 2200 sappers went forward to begin clearing the minefields. The infantry followed with fixed bayonets. In the south, diversionary attacks met determined

resistance but succeeded in preventing German and Italian armour from moving to defend the northern sector, where attempts to clear two minefield ‘corridors’ for Allied armour had commenced.

However, by 26<sup>th</sup> October it had proved impossible to get 10 Corps’ armour beyond the minefields. The tanks remained stuck in the Axis defences. Attempts to punch through had produced significant losses – particularly amongst the Australian, New Zealand, and South African troops. Montgomery accepted the need to halt and prepare a fresh attack.

Rommel, having been absent on sick leave, returned late on 26<sup>th</sup> October. He quickly realised the difficult position his forces faced and moved tanks north for a concentrated counter-attack. However, his armour met strong anti-tank resistance and heavy air attacks. The counter-attack petered out. Australian and South African forces attacks in turn pushed further into the Axis positions, forcing Rommel to push his last reserves into the line.

Meanwhile, Montgomery made preparations for Operation ‘Supercharge’ which he hoped would provide a decisive breakthrough. Brigades from other divisions were placed under the command of Major-General Bernard Freyberg’s New Zealand Division to provide the spearhead for attacks scheduled to begin on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Allied air formations continued to make telling inroads, harassing Axis forces and supply routes.

Operation Supercharge initially failed to achieve the hoped-for breakthrough. Axis forces defended tenaciously. Large numbers of British tanks were lost to anti-tank fire and at nightfall on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, the Axis defence appeared to be holding. However, this was illusionary. Rommel knew his forces could no longer resist further sustained attacks. He had only thirty-five Panzers remaining. Fuel, ammunition, and supplies were nearly spent. His planned withdrawal on 3<sup>rd</sup> November was prevented by Hitler’s direct order to hold his present positions and fight to the last man. The next day, the Axis forces were finally broken by 10 Corps’ assault, which made a breach fifteen miles wide in the line. Fresh orders arrived from Berlin, permitting a withdrawal. German mechanised units managed to escape to the west but tens of thousands of their Italian allies were left stranded and taken prisoner.

The official history states that the ‘whole battle was an impressive instance of co-operation by Commonwealth and Allied forces, by the three Services – sea, land, and air – and by the several arms and branches of the Eighth Army and G.H.Q’. This is perhaps the most telling reason for the success.

Air power protected Allied forces, whilst degrading the abilities of the Axis in reconnaissance and support. Naval forces cut the supply lines to German and Italian forces ensuring Eighth Army had a sufficient material superiority to aid a decisive breakthrough. Allied infantry carried out a magnificent penetration of a strongly fortified line, allowing the armour the room it needed to manoeuvre.

El Alamein was seen as a turning point for the Allied Forces in the War. Following the battle Churchill famously stated 'This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.'

*Members of the congregation are kindly requested to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are switched off.*

*The church is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.*

*The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.*

*The service is sung by the Westminster Abbey Special Service Choir, conducted by Robert Quinney, Sub-Organist.*

*The organ is played by Peter Holder, Organ Scholar.*

*The trumpeter is Sergeant Martin Hinton.*

*Music before the service:*

*The Band of the Royal Artillery, directed by Captain Craig Hallatt, Director of Music, plays:*

Alamein March *Leo Stanley (1885–1966)*

Epilogue *from* ‘Things to Come’ Suite *Arthur Bliss (1891–1975)*

Irish Tune from County Derry *Percy Grainger (1882–1961)*

Out of Africa *John Barry (1933–2011)*

Chanson de matin *Edward Elgar (1857–1934)*

Nimrod *from* Variations on an Original Theme for Orchestra Op 36 ‘Enigma’ *Edward Elgar*

Nun danket alle Gott from Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild BWV 79	<i>Johann Sebastian Bach</i> (1685–1750)
Elsa's Procession	<i>Josef Wagner (1856–1908)</i>
At Dawn they Slept	<i>Jay Bocook (b 1953)</i>
A Hymn to New England	<i>John Williams (b 1932)</i>
Magic Valley	<i>Scott Watson (b 1962)</i>

*General Sir Peter Wall KCB CBE ADC Gen, Chief of the General Staff, representing Her Majesty's Armed Forces, and The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein CMG CBE are received by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and escorted to their places in Quire. All remain seated.*

*The Lord Mayor of Westminster is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and escorted to her place in Quire. All stand, and then sit.*

*General Sir David Richards GCB CBE DSO ADC Gen, Chief of the Defence Staff, also representing Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall, is received by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and escorted to his place in Quire. All stand, and then sit.*

## ORDER OF SERVICE

*All stand as the Collegiate Procession moves to places in the Quire and Sacrarium. The Choir sings*

### THE INTROIT

**L**ORD, for thy tender mercy's sake, lay not our sins to our charge, but forgive that is past, and give us grace to amend our sinful lives: to decline from sin and incline to virtue, that we may walk in a perfect heart, before thee now and evermore. Amen.

*attributed to Richard Farrant  
(c 1530–80)*

*from Christian Prayers and Holy Meditations 1568*

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

### THE BIDDING

**A** WEEK ago, seventy years after the initial bombardment at El Alamein, veterans of the Eighth Army gathered to remember the battle and to commemorate their comrades in arms. They were joined, in a spirit of peace and friendship, by veterans of the AfrikaKorps.

Now we gather in Westminster Abbey at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior for a national service of remembrance. We recall a hard-fought battle that marked a decisive shift in the balance of power and gave hope to the Allies: in Winston Churchill's words not the beginning of the end but the end of the beginning of the Second World War.

We shall remember those who died in the battle and those who have died since, giving thanks for their courage and determination, and as we celebrate the reconciliation of former enemies we shall pray for lasting peace in the world.

*All remain standing. The Officiant, The Reverend Dr James Hawkey, and Choir sing*

### THE RESPONSES

**O** LORD, open thou our lips;  
and our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

O God, make speed to save us;  
O Lord, make haste to help us.

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.

Praise ye the Lord.  
The Lord's name be praised.

*Thomas Morley (c 1557–1602)*

*All sit. The Choir sings*

### PSALM 85

**L**ORD, thou art become gracious unto thy land: thou hast turned away  
the captivity of Jacob.

Thou hast forgiven the offence of thy people: and covered all their sins.  
Thou hast taken away all thy displeasure: and turned thyself from thy  
wrathful indignation.

Turn us then, O God our Saviour: and let thine anger cease from us.  
Wilt thou be displeased at us for ever: and wilt thou stretch out thy wrath  
from one generation to another?

Wilt thou not turn again, and quicken us: that thy people may rejoice in  
thee?

Shew us thy mercy, O Lord: and grant us thy salvation.

I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me: for he shall  
speak peace unto his people, and to his saints, that they turn not again.  
For his salvation is nigh them that fear him: that glory may dwell in our  
land.

Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed  
each other.

Truth shall flourish out of the earth: and righteousness hath looked down  
from heaven.

Yea, the Lord shall shew loving-kindness: and our land shall give her  
increase.

Righteousness shall go before him: and he shall direct his going in the way.

*All stand.*

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.

*Charles Harford Lloyd (1849–1919)*

*All sit. The Reverend Andrew Tremlett, Canon-in-Residence, reads*

#### ISAIAH 35: 1–10

THE wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.’ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*All stand. The Choir sings*

#### MAGNIFICAT

MY soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his hand-maiden.  
For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations.

He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel: as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, for ever.

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.

*Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) in C*

*All sit. The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein CMG CBE reads*

#### ROMANS 12: 9–18; 13: 11–12

LET love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those whose persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.

*All stand. The Choir sings*

#### NUNC DIMITTIS

LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word.  
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation,  
which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people;  
to be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people  
Israel.

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.

*Charles Villiers Stanford in C*

*All face the High Altar to say together*

#### THE APOSTLES' CREED

**I BELIEVE in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*The Officiant and Choir sing*

#### THE LESSER LITANY, THE LORD'S PRAYER, AND RESPONSES

The Lord be with you.  
And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

*All kneel or sit.*

Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.

**O**UR Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen.

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.  
And grant us thy salvation.

O Lord, save The Queen.  
And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness.  
And make thy chosen people joyful.

O Lord, save thy people.  
And bless thine inheritance.

Give peace in our time, O Lord.  
Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.

O God, make clean our hearts within us.  
And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

*Thomas Morley*

*The Officiant sings*

#### THE COLLECTS

*and says*

#### THE STATE PRAYERS

*All remain seated. The Choir sings*

#### THE ANTHEM

*during which wreaths are borne from the High Altar to the  
Grave of the Unknown Warrior*

**W**IE lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth: meine Seele  
verlanget und sehnet sich nach den Vorhöfen des Herrn; mein Leib  
und Seele freuen sich in dem lebendigen Gott.

Wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen: die loben dich immerdar!

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts: my soul has a desire  
and longing to enter the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh  
rejoice in the living God.*

*Blessed are they who dwell in your house: they will always be praising you.*

*Johannes Brahms (1833–97)  
from Ein Deutsches Requiem*

*Psalm 84: 1, 3*

*All stand for*

## THE ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

*The Dean says:*

**H**ERE at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior let us remember all those who fought and fell at the Battle of El Alamein. As we commemorate their sacrifice with thanksgiving, we commend them to the unfailing love of our heavenly Father.

*General Sir David Richards GCB CBE DSO ADC Gen, Chief of the Defence Staff, lays a wreath on behalf of Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall.*

*General Sir Peter Wall KCB CBE ADC Gen, Chief of the General Staff, lays a wreath on behalf of Her Majesty's Armed Forces past and present.*

## THE LAST POST

*Silence is kept.*

## REVEILLE

*The Dean leads*

## THE PRAYERS

On this day, let us hold before God all who died at the Battle of El Alamein.

**O** MERCIFUL God, whose beloved Son endured the cross and triumphed over the grave, that all people might have life through him: grant eternal rest, we pray, to those who died in the desert of North Africa. Inspired by their memory and encouraged by their heroism, may we work daily for the coming of thy kingdom where memories are healed, and where grief gives way to joy. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

Let us pray for the peace of the world; for an end to cycles of enmity and fear, and for those who seek reconciliation and healing in parts of the world torn apart by warfare and violence.

**O** ETERNAL God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness and no strength known but the strength of love; so guide and inspire, we pray thee, the work of all who seek to establish thy peace, that the nations may find their security not in force of arms but in that perfect love which casteth out fear, and in that fellowship revealed to us in thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*All sing*

THE HYMN



**T**HY kingdom come, O God,  
thy rule, O Christ, begin;  
break with thine iron rod  
the tyrannies of sin.

Where is thy reign of peace  
and purity and love?  
When shall all hatred cease,  
as in the realms above?

When comes the promised time  
that war shall be no more,  
and lust, oppression, crime,  
shall flee thy face before?

We pray thee Lord, arise,  
and come in thy great might;  
revive our longing eyes,  
which languish for thy sight.

O'er lands both near and far  
thick darkness broodeth yet:  
arise, O morning Star,  
arise, and never set.

*St Cecilia 499 NEH  
Leighton George Hayne (1836–83)*

*Lewis Hensley (1824–1905)*

## THE ADDRESS

by

The Reverend Jonathan Woodhouse QHC  
*Chaplain-General*

*All stand to sing*

### THE HYMN



CHRIST is the world's true light,  
its 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's Praxis Pietatis Melica c 1647*

*Gilbert Wallace Briggs (1875–1959)*

*All remain standing. The Dean pronounces*

### THE BLESSING

**G**OD 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 sing*

### THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

**G**OD 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.

*Music after the service:*

Marche héroïque

*Herbert Brewer (1865–1928)*

*All remain standing as the Procession moves to the west end of the Abbey.*

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