

Westminster Abbey



A Service to mark
the Centenary of
the Royal Air Force



Tuesday 10th July 2018
10.30 am

HISTORICAL NOTE

It is entirely appropriate that the Centenary year of the Royal Air Force also falls on the Centenary of the end of the First World War. It was that cataclysmic conflict which not only gave birth to the Royal Air Force, but created the political and geopolitical landscape which defined much of the century that followed, and which therefore profoundly affected where, how, and why the Service operated in the years that followed, up to and including the present day.

The chain of events which led to the creation of the world's first independent Air Force began with the appearance of a formation of German Gotha bombers over London in the summer of 1917. The fact that the enemy could fly over the Capital in broad daylight with apparent impunity caused a political storm in a country hitherto isolated from direct enemy action by the sea and the unassailable strength of the Royal Navy. The Prime Minister appointed Lieutenant General Jan Christian Smuts to investigate and Smuts quickly recommended the amalgamation of the existing Army and Naval air arms to form a separate Air Force with its own staff.

Brought into formal existence on the 1st April 1918, the Royal Air Force began life as the world's first and premier Air Force and it has been at the forefront of military aviation from that day to this. Its official birth came in the middle of a significant German offensive on the Western Front and its first week was marked by ferocious fighting as RAF aircraft played a leading role in stemming the German tide. In the ensuing months aircraft provided crucial support as the Army, in concert with French and American allies, drove the Germans back to the brink of the Rhine, bringing the War to a triumphant close. On the Western Front, in Italy, the Balkans, and the Middle East, and in the war against the U-boats, the RAF proved crucial to victory.

The world was a less stable place post-1918 and it may surprise many to learn of the myriad countries and regions in which the RAF operated in the period between the First and Second World Wars, including Russia, Mesopotamia (Iraq), Palestine (Israel), Afghanistan, India (and modern-day Pakistan) Sudan, and even China. Aircraft conducted reconnaissance, flew bombing missions, moved political officers and if necessary, troops to trouble spots rapidly and efficiently, and evacuated civilians when events turned hostile.

In the 1930s the Service faced a resurgent threat which led to a renewed emphasis on staying at the forefront technologically. The RAF created the world's first air defence system integrating radar, telecommunications, and radio which was applied triumphantly by Fighter Command in the Battle of Britain; a battle fought for the first time entirely in the sky but won not simply by valour in the air, but in part by technology and organisation on the ground. The War was once again global. Europe, Africa, and the Middle and Far East all saw fighting on a scale previously

unimaginable. Whether it was in the defence of Malta, in the deserts and mountains of North and East Africa, or the jungles of Burma, in Italy and the Balkans, the RAF quite literally rose to the challenge. The renewed threat on the sea was met by the constant endeavours of the maritime aircraft quivering the ocean expanse. The struggle was unceasing, nowhere more so than in the skies over Europe. Here the struggle for air superiority was unremitting, whilst reconnaissance pilots photographed much of the continent as a necessary adjunct both to the D-Day invasion, itself heavily reliant on tactical air power, and the combined bomber offensive. The latter saw German industry maimed, the continental rail system crippled, and the Third Reich's oil supplies reduced to a trickle, such that what remained of the Luftwaffe could not fly and the much vaunted panzer divisions could not manoeuvre. The cost was grievous, 55,000 men of Bomber Command perished taking the fight to the enemy.

The post-war world was little more comforting as the threat of communist domination posed a new threat. The RAF played a notable early role in preserving democracy in Western Europe during the Berlin Airlift, maintaining the West's position in the city in concert with the USAF. The threat to Europe continued through the following decades, where the Service played its part through the ceaseless maintenance of the nuclear deterrent, and policing the nation's airspace and waters against Soviet incursions. In Germany too, it helped maintain NATO's position and thus played no small part in the final collapse of communism and the reunification of that nation and the restoration of democracy to Eastern Europe. The Service was also a significant factor in the orderly withdrawal and transfer of power and continuing support to friendly nations in the Middle and Far East.

Not least of the RAF's contributions over the decades has been in humanitarian operations. From airlifting threatened civilians from Kabul in 1928 and 1929, through food drops to the famine hit areas in Burma, Nepal, Ethiopia, and other nations, and relief operations come flood or tempest, hurricane or tsunami, be it the Caribbean or the Indian Ocean, the Philippines or Bangladesh, or indeed in Britain itself, the RAF has always been among the first to respond bringing hope as well as more tangible assistance. In Britain the RAF also ran the Air Sea Rescue service from the Second World War utilising initially marine craft and aircraft and latterly helicopters until the disbandment of the ASR force and its transfer to civilian contractors in 2016.

The last three decades have seen the Royal Air Force returning to operate in some areas of the world which would have been familiar to the airmen of today's grandfathers and great-grandfathers, from Iraq to Afghanistan, and Libya to Syria. The threat may change but the need for courage and a resolute determination to meet and defeat the Nation's enemies head on remains the same as it did throughout the intervening century.

*Seb Cox
Head of Air Historical Branch*



Officers and S.E.5a Scouts of No. 1 Squadron at Clairmarais aerodrome near St. Omer, 3 July 1918



Spitfire IAs of 610 Squadron, Biggin Hill, in flight over southern England in July 1940



A trio of aircraft which formed the RAF nuclear deterrent of V-bombers seen in formation on 9th September 1960. Avro Vulcan B.1, XH497, of 101 Squadron (based at Finningley, Yorkshire) leads Handley Page Victor B.1, XH620, of 57 Squadron, and Vickers Valiant BK.1, XD829 of 90 Squadron (both based at Honington, Suffolk)



RAF Tornado GR.1s pictured at Muharraq, Bahrain, during Operation GRANBY in 1991



Chinooks of 27 Squadron evacuating British Nationals from Beirut during the Lebanon/Israel crisis in July 2006



An F-35B Lightning of the RAF pictured over the coast of Greenland en-route from the United States during the aircraft's first visit to the UK in June 2016

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

Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra, The Honorable Lady Ogilvy, Their Royal Highnesses Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, Their Royal Highnesses The Earl and Countess of Wessex, His Royal Highness The Duke of York, Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, and Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are received by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster at the Great West Door. Presentations are made.

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

A fanfare is sounded. All stand.

Her Majesty The Queen is received by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster at the West Gate. Presentations are made.

ORDER OF SERVICE

All sing

THE HYMN

*during which the procession moves to places in Quire,
the Lantern, and the Sacrarium*



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 PROCESSION OF THE QUEEN

A Beadle

The Choir of Westminster Abbey

The Queen's Almsmen

The Cross of Westminster and Lights

Visiting Clergy

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

The Reverend Dr Isabelle Hamley
Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury

The Reverend Mark Birch
Minor Canon and Sacrist

The Reverend Jennifer Petersen
Minor Canon and Chaplain

The Reverend Christopher Stoltz
Minor Canon and Precentor

The Canons' Verger

The Reverend Anthony Ball
Canon Steward and Almoner

The Reverend Jane Sinclair
*Canon of Westminster
and Rector of St Margaret's Church*

The Venerable David Stanton
*Canon Treasurer
and Archdeacon of Westminster*

The Right Reverend Tim Thornton
Bishop to Her Majesty's Forces

The Reverend Professor Vernon White
*Sub-Dean
and Canon Theologian*

The Most Reverend
and Right Honourable Justin Welby
*Archbishop of Canterbury,
Primate of All England, and Metropolitan*

Sir Roy Strong
High Bailiff

The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury
High Steward

The Dean's Verger

The Very Reverend Dr John Hall
Dean of Westminster

Her Royal Highness
The Duchess of Cornwall

His Royal Highness
The Prince of Wales

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

From the High Altar, The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, gives

THE BIDDING

EASTER Day this year, 1st April, marked one hundred years precisely since the foundation of the Royal Air Force. Celebrations took place at St Clement Danes, the RAF Church. On this day, one hundred days later, our celebration of the centenary continues, where in 1965, at the Battle of Britain service, Her Majesty The Queen unveiled a memorial to Winston Churchill, and where annually we mark the great victory of the Royal Air Force in 1940 and honour those who gave their service and their lives.

The roll call of service and lives given is far greater now but the dedication and commitment no less. We have in mind not only the fighter pilots and crews but those who flew on bombing sorties, on reconnaissance, on life-saving and humanitarian missions, and that vast number of men and women whose active support was indispensable.

So we shall pray today for the RAF in its continuing service and its vital contribution to the defence of the realm and of our allies, to the peace of the world, for its continuing resilience and resourcefulness.

GOD of earth and sea and sky, to whom all creation owes its being, and in whose service our work takes wing; pour down upon the Royal Air Force in this centenary year the riches of your grace, that, striving tirelessly for peace and justice, we may serve with faithfulness and courage, through the Spirit of Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect for the Centenary of the Royal Air Force

All sit. Air Commodore Mark Hunt reads from the Nave Pulpit

THE FIRST READING

From the corridors of the nearby Hotel Cecil on the Strand, and later the Savoy Hotel, the birth of the world's first Air Force was not without problems.

THE task facing Rothermere and the new Air Council was a formidable one. No other fighting power established an independent air force during the war. There was (again) uncertainty about what the force should be called. Most of those involved talked and wrote about an 'Air Service'. The legislation for the first time defined it as an 'Air Force', a term that had been used rarely. But because the Act had specified 'His Majesty's Air Force' there was no possibility of adding 'Royal' without the King's warrant. The Air Council wondered whether, like the Royal Navy, where the 'Royal' had been accepted by usage rather than royal approval, the Air Force could simply add

the extra adjective. Legal advice was sought to see whether or how the King might authorize the use of 'Royal', or to learn if it could be done informally without the King's explicit consent. The title clearly mattered given the atmosphere of insecurity surrounding the new service, but the issues assumed an exaggerated importance. On 19th February the Council was informed that the King had happily consented to the title 'Royal Air Force', the name it has borne ever since. A royal warrant was prepared for the new service, and on 22nd March the King approved an Order in Council uniting the two air services and authorizing the transfer of personnel from the Navy and Army for a period not exceeding four years. After a complex gestation, the Royal Air Force was to be born ten days later, on 1st April 1918.

*from The Birth of the Royal Air Force
Richard Overy (b 1947)*

Wing Commander Nikki Thomas reads from the Great Lectern

THE SECOND READING

O H! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air... .
Up, up the long, delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew —
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

*High Flight
John Gillespie Magee Jr (1922–1941)*

All stand. The RAF Ensign is paraded through the Abbey, received by the Dean and placed on the altar.

The Band of the Royal Air Force College plays:

Fanfare for the Ensign
of the Royal Air Force

Wing Commander Barrie Hingley (b 1938)

Ceremonial March—Lord Trenchard

Wing Commander Barrie Hingley

All sit. Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier KCB CBE DFC ADC, Chief of the Air Staff, reads from the Great Lectern

THE FIRST LESSON

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 ANTHEM

HOLY is the true light, and passing wonderful, lending radiance to them that endured in the heat of the conflict; from Christ they inherit a home of unfading splendour, wherein they rejoice with gladness evermore. Alleluia!

William Harris (1883–1973)

Salisbury Diurnal

The Right Honourable Theresa May MP, Prime Minister, reads from the Great Lectern

THE SECOND LESSON

WHAT more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, without us, be made perfect.

Therefore, 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.

Hebrews 11: 32–12:2

All stand to sing

THE HYMN



I VOW to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love:
the love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
that lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
the love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
the love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;
we may not count her armies, we may not see her King;
her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
and soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
and her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.

Thaxted 295 AMNS
from Jupiter in The Planets
Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

Urbs Dei
Cecil Spring-Rice (1859–1918)

All sit for

THE ADDRESS *from the Great Pulpit* by

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby,
Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England, and Metropolitan

The choir sings

THE ANTHEM

BUT those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will rise, they will soar, they will fly up on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; march on and not feel faint.

Jonathan Dove (b 1959)
commissioned for this service by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster

after Isaiah 40: 31

THE PRAYERS

during which candles are placed by Officer Cadet Mandeep Kaur, Civilian Chaplain to the Military and trainee Reserves Chaplain, Senior Aircraftman Kia Sandvig, and Senior Aircraftman Simon Cunningham

Dr The Honourable Katharine Campbell, daughter of Marshal of The Royal Air Force The Lord Douglas of Kirtleside, says:

Let us pray.

All kneel or remain seated.

HEAVENLY Father, who appears on the wings of the wind, we give our heartfelt thanks for the vision of those who laid the foundations of the Royal Air Force. With grateful hearts, we remember before thee, all who through faithful service, strove for peace and yearned for justice. As we honour their memory, give us we pray the gifts to be worthy successors, that their memories will live on in the commitment and dedication of those who serve today. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Squadron Leader Joan Ochuodho, RAF Benson, says:

O GOD and Father of all, whose wisdom is unsearchable; hear our prayer which we offer for all who serve in the Royal Air Force. Bless, we pray, those who support and uphold them and their families. May thy wisdom and protection rest upon all who lead and all who serve. Especially, we pray for those who, in the name of peace, will this day put themselves in harm's way, and for those who wait anxiously for their safe return. May each be renewed by thy strength. We ask this in the name of him who came not to be served but to serve, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Officer Cadet David Taylor, Royal Air Force College Cranwell, says:

EVERLASTING God, creator of the ends of the earth, in whose will is our peace, we pray for thy blessing upon the Royal Air Force. May this generation, and generations to come, find the humility to wait upon thee, the wisdom to know what is true and the courage to do what is right. Turn our hearts, and the hearts of all, to thyself, that by the power of thy Spirit, the peace which is founded upon righteousness may be established throughout the whole world; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Reverend Professor Vernon White, Canon in Residence, says:

All these, our prayers and praises, let us offer to the Father in the words our Saviour has 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.

All stand to sing

THE HYMN

during which the RAF Ensign is recovered, and paraded to the east end of Quire



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)
arranged by James O'Donnell*

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

All remain standing. The Venerable (Air Vice-Marshal) Jonathan Chaffey CB QHC, Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force, leads

THE ACT OF REDEDICATION

Will you honour and celebrate the memory of those who have served before you?

We will.

Will you serve your Queen and country, and the good of all humankind, with perseverance and diligence?

We will.

Will you work to inspire future generations of the Royal Air Force to serve in their turn?

We will.

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 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)

The Band of the Royal Air Force College plays:

The Royal Air Force March Past
*during which the RAF Ensign
is paraded to the Great West Door*

*Henry Walford Davies (1869–1941)
George Dyson (1883–1964)*

Epic March

*John Ireland (1879–1962)
arranged by Geoffrey Brand*

The organist plays:

Marche Héroïque

Herbert Brewer (1865–1928)

The bells of the Abbey Church are rung

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

**There will be a retiring collection in aid of
the Royal Air Forces Association and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund**

