

Westminster Abbey



A Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication on Battle of Britain Sunday



Sunday 15th September 2019
11.00 am

HISTORICAL NOTE

This year marks the 79th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the first decisive Battle in history fought entirely in the air. Battle of Britain Sunday commemorates a dramatic turning point in both the Battle itself, and the history of the Second World War.

The German objective in the summer of 1940 was to eliminate the Royal Air Force, both in the air and on the ground, in order to obtain air superiority in preparation for a potential seaborne and airborne invasion. Operating principally from airfields in France and Belgium, the Luftwaffe began their first heavy onslaught early in July 1940, directed against British shipping and the Channel ports. The intent behind this first phase of the battle was not only to sink shipping but also to draw the Royal Air Force into combat and wear down its strength. The second phase, from 8th to 18th August, consisted of intensive day operations against coastal radar stations and fighter airfields. The third phase began after a five-day lull due to poor weather, with attacks on fighter airfields in the London area and increased night attacks on Britain's cities.

The first daylight assault on London was made on 7th September and marked the beginning of the fourth phase, lasting most of that month, during which the capital became the Luftwaffe's primary target. These attacks, although serious in themselves, brought vital relief to the fighter airfields, which until that time had been under considerable pressure. The Battle reached a climax on 15th September, when the Luftwaffe flew more than 1,000 sorties over England during daylight hours. On that occasion the Luftwaffe lost 56 aircraft. Throughout October, the fifth and final phase of the Battle saw the decline of enemy daylight attacks on London and an increase in the night bombing of Britain's major ports and industrial centres. At the beginning of the struggle the Luftwaffe had approximately 2,700 aircraft to launch against England. Britain had fewer than 60 fighter squadrons – around 700 aircraft – and the groundcrew had to work sometimes 16 hours a day to keep aircraft in the air. Between 24th August and 6th September alone, Fighter Command lost 103 pilots and 128 were seriously wounded; 366 fighters had been destroyed or badly damaged. Fighter Command lost over 1,000 aircraft during the Battle and the Luftwaffe nearly 1,900. Through the efforts of fewer than 3,000 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 enters its second century, we record our continuing sense of gratitude for what was achieved in the darkest moments of war, and we rededicate ourselves to strive untiringly for peace, justice, and freedom in the world. We also remember the tireless efforts of RAF servicemen and women who have served in nearly every part of the globe as far eastwards as Hong Kong, Borneo, and Malaya; westwards to Belize; or southwards to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. We also acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and sacrifices of the men and women of the Royal Air Force still serving in the troubled regions of the World some of which would have been all too familiar to previous generations of their families who served in the early decades of the Service's existence.

Sebastian Cox
Head of Air Historical Branch (RAF)



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



Formation of Hawker Hurricanes of 1 Squadron in formation with Supermarine Spitfires of 266 Squadron, both based at Wittering, Cambridgeshire, as they put on a display for aircraft factory workers in October 1940.



The first four Polish recipients of the Distinguished Flying Cross wearing their awards. All four were serving with 303 (Polish) Squadron and are, from left to right: Flying Officer Witold Urbanowicz, Pilot Officer Jan Zumbach, Pilot Officer Miroslaw Feric, and Flying Officer Zdzislaw Henneberg.



Pilot Officer A V "Taffy" Clowes of 1 Squadron climbing into his Hawker Hurricane I, P3395/JX-B, in a revetment at Wittering, Cambridgeshire, in October 1940. Note Clowes' personal 'wasp' emblem under the engine exhausts.

Members of the congregation are kindly requested to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile telephones 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 Choir of Westminster Abbey, conducted by James O'Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers.

The organ is played by Peter Holder, Sub-Organist.

The Central Band of the Royal Air Force is directed by Wing Commander Piers Morrell RAF, Principal Director of Music, Royal Air Force.

Before the service, the Central Band of the Royal Air Force, conducted by Wing Commander Piers Morrell RAF, plays

Prelude on Quem Pastores *Geoffrey Nobes (b 1954)*

March *Arthur Bliss (1891–1975)*
from Conquest of the Air *arranged by Wing Commander (retired)*
Barrie Hingley (b 1938)

Intrada *Gerald Finzi (1901–56)*
from Dies Natalis *arranged by Corporal Ellen Driscoll (b 1983)*

Elegy on the RAF March *Barrie Hingley*

Whispers from Beyond *Rossano Galante (b 1967)*

Dawn Patrol *Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)*
from Coastal Command Suite *transcribed by Barrie Hingley*

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 Air Transport Auxiliary Association, the Women's Auxiliary Air Force/Women's Royal Air Force and Royal Air Force (W) the Air Sea Rescue/Marine Craft Section, Polish Air Force Association, together with twenty Standards from branches of the Royal Air Forces Association.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE CStJ, is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Presentations are made, and he is conducted to his seat.

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Westminster and Deputy High Steward, Councillor Ruth Bush, 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.

All stand.

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

ORDER OF SERVICE

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

All sing

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

GOD save our gracious Queen.
GLong 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 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 1 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 D Taudevin RAF

Escorts

Flight Lieutenant C Barker RAF Flight Lieutenant A Bamber 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. From the Nave Pulpit Sergeant Daniel Hardwick RAF reads

THE FIRST READING

THE path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
which shines brighter and brighter until full day.
The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know what they stumble over.
My child, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.
Do not let them escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.
For they are life to those who find them,
and healing to all their flesh.
Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 4: 18–23

The choir sings

THE PSALM

GOD is our hope and strength :
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved :
and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea.
Though the waters thereof rage and swell :
and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.
The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God :
the holy place of the tabernacle of the most Highest.
God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed :
God shall help her, and that right early.
The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved :
but God hath shewed his voice, and the earth shall melt away.
The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge.
O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord :
what destruction he hath brought upon the earth.

He maketh wars to cease in all the world :
he breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder,
and burneth the chariots in the fire.

Be still then, and know that I am God :
I will be exalted among the heathen,
and I will be exalted in the earth.

The Lord of hosts is with us :
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :
world without end. Amen.

after Martin Luther (1483–1546)

Psalm 46

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

THE SECOND READING

JESUS said; ‘As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.’

St John 15: 9–17

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 Sacrarium, escorted by a veteran of the Battle of Britain and serving Royal Air Force pilots and aircrew

The band plays

March Theme
from The Battle of Britain

William Walton (1902–83)
arranged by Barrie Hingley

Honorary Steward

John Wright

Roll Bearer

Flight Lieutenant J McNiff RAF

Escorts

Wing Commander P Farnes DFM

Flight Lieutenant M McLean RAF Flight Lieutenant J Bailey RAF

Flight Lieutenant J Bunting RAF Flying Officer T Stohrer RAF

Flying Officer C Goold RAF Flying Officer P McQuade RAF

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 remain standing for

THE ADDRESS

by

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

The choir sings

THE ANTHEM

WE praise thee, O God : we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee : the Father everlasting.
To thee all angels cry aloud : the heavens, and all the powers therein.
To thee cherubin, and seraphin : continually do cry,
Holy, holy, holy : Lord God of Sabaoth;
heaven and earth are full of the majesty : of thy glory.
The glorious company of the apostles : praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the prophets : praise thee.
The noble army of martyrs : praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world : doth acknowledge thee;
the Father : of an infinite majesty;
thine honourable, true : and only Son;
also the Holy Ghost : the Comforter.
Thou art the King of glory : O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son : of the Father.
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man :
 thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death :
 thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God : in the Glory of the Father.
We believe that thou shalt come : to be our Judge.
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants :
 whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with thy saints : in glory everlasting.
O Lord, save thy people : and bless thine heritage.
Govern them : and lift them up for ever.
Day by day : we magnify thee;
and we worship thy name : ever world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord : to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us : have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us : as our trust is in thee.
O Lord, in thee have I trusted : let me never be confounded.

Te Deum in F
John Ireland (1879–1962)

The Reverend Mark Birch, Minor Canon and Sacrist, 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.

Flying Officer Alexander Barker 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.

Corporal Elizabeth Driver 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.

Squadron Leader Iphie Modu 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 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 Venerable David Stanton, 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

ALMMIGHTY 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



YE holy angels bright,
who wait at God's right hand,
or through the realms of light
fly at your Lord's command,
assist our song,
for else the theme
too high doth seem
for mortal tongue.

Ye blessèd souls at rest,
who ran this earthly race,
and now, from sin released,
behold the Saviour's face,
God's praises sound,
as in his sight
with sweet delight
ye do abound.

Ye saints, who toil below,
adore your heavenly King,
and onward as ye go
some joyful anthem sing;
take what he gives
and praise him still,
through good or ill,
who ever lives!

My soul, bear thou thy part,
triumph in God above:
and with a well-tuned heart
sing thou the songs of love!
Let all thy days
till life shall end,
whate'er he send,
be filled with praise.

Darwall's 148th 475 NEH
John Darwall (1731–89)

Richard Baxter (1615–91)

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 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 1 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 the Representative of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, move from Quire and the Sacrarium to the west end of the church

Music after the service

Spitfire Prelude

William Walton

Procession of the Nobles
from Mlada

*Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908)
arranged by Erik Leidzen (1894–1962)*

The bells of the Abbey Church are rung

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

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

*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*