

WESTMINSTER ABBEY



A Service of
Thanksgiving and Rededication
on
Battle of Britain Sunday



Sunday 20 September 2009
11.00 am

HISTORICAL NOTE

BATTLE OF BRITAIN SUNDAY commemorates a dramatic turning point in the history of the Second World War.

The German objective 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 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 to draw the Royal Air Force into combat and wear down its strength. The second phase, from 8 to 18 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 increased night attacks and attacks on fighter airfields in the London area.

The first daylight assault on London was made on 7 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 15 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 24 August and 6 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 and all 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.

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 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.

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 Robert Quinney, Sub-Organist.

The Ensign of the Royal Air Force paraded at this service is of silk fabric and is known as the Fighter Command Ensign. It is carefully maintained to take its traditional place at this annual service.

Before the service a Lining Party is formed at the Great West Door of members of Individual Force Protection Training, Royal Air Force Halton, with the National Standards of the Air Crew Association, National Service (RAF) Association, Association of Jewish ex-service men and women, Bomber Command Association, Royal Observer Corps Association, the Royal Air Forces Association, and the Royal Air Force Police Association, together with twenty Standards from Royal Air Force Association Branches.

Before the service, the Central Band of the Royal Air Force, conducted by Squadron Leader Duncan Stubbs RAF, Director of Music Headquarters Music Services Royal Air Force, plays:

Chaconne from *Gustav Holst*
First Suite in E Flat for Military Band *(1874-1934)*

Ad astra *Barrie Hingley (b 1938)*

Lord Mayor's Delight *James Curnow (b 1943)*
from Four Old Colonial Songs

Intermezzo *Ralph Vaughan Williams*
from English Folk Song Suite *(1872-1958)*

Solemn Melody *Henry Walford Davies (1869-1941)*
arranged by Denis Wright (1895-1967)

The Lord Mayor of London is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and is conducted to his Stall in the Quire. All stand, and then sit.

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

The Representative of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales is received at the Great West Door. All stand.

Presentations are made.

ORDER OF SERVICE

All remain standing as the Choir and Clergy, together with The Representative of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, move from the West End of the Abbey to places in the Quire and Sacrarium.

The Ensign 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)*

Ensign Bearer:

Flight Lieutenant
C McCann RAF

Escorts:

Flight Lieutenant
J Roberts RAF

Flight Lieutenant
R Bradley RAF

All remain standing to 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.

All remain standing. The Reverend Robert Wright, Sub-Dean of Westminster, says

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. Until we ourselves are faced with an actual challenge we do not know how we shall stand up to tyranny and oppression, but on this Battle of Britain Sunday we honour all who fought in the service of freedom in those dark days; we commit ourselves to work for justice, freedom, and decency; we affirm our determination to put an end to all armed conflicts; we express penitence for those occasions when they become necessary; and we acknowledge with penitence the suffering and destruction they cause.

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 to say:

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 remain standing to sing

THE HYMN

O PRAISE ye the Lord!
praise him in the height;
rejoice in his word,
ye angels of light;
ye heavens adore him
by whom ye were made,
and worship before him,
in brightness arrayed.

O praise ye the Lord!
praise him upon earth,
in tuneful accord,
ye sons of new birth;
praise him who has brought you
his grace from above,
praise him who has taught you
to sing of his love.

O praise ye the Lord!
all things that give sound;
each jubilant chord,
re-echo around;
loud organs, his glory
forth tell in deep tone,
and, sweet harp, the story
of what he has done.

O praise ye the Lord!
thanksgiving and song
to him be outpoured
all ages along:
for love in creation,
for heaven restored,
for grace of salvation,
O praise ye the Lord! Amen, Amen.

Laudate Dominum 427 NEH
Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918)
from Hear my words, ye people

Henry Williams Baker (1821-77)
after Psalm 150

All sit. Flight Lieutenant A Tennant RAF reads from the Nave Pulpit

2 SAMUEL 1: 17-27

DAVID intoned this lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan. (He ordered that The Song of the Bow be taught to the people of Judah; it is written in the Book of Jashar.) He said: Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places! How the mighty have fallen! Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon; or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult. You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor bounteous fields! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, nor the sword of Saul return empty. Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you with crimson, in luxury, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain upon your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

All remain seated. The Choir sings

PSALM 46

GOD is our hope and strength: a very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved: and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea.
Though the waters thereof rage and swell: and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.
The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the most Highest.
God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early.

The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved: but God hath shewed his voice, and the earth shall melt away.

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

O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord: what destruction he hath brought upon the earth.

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

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

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

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

after Martin Luther (1483-1546)

All remain seated. Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton KCB ADC RAF, Chief of the Air Staff, reads from the Great Lectern

EPHESIANS 6: 10-18

BE strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

All stand for

THE ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

The Battle of Britain Roll of Honour is borne from the Chapel of St George to the Sacrarium, escorted by veterans of the Battle of Britain, during which the Band plays:

March Theme
from The Battle of Britain

*William Walton (1902-83)
arranged by Barrie Hingley*

Honorary Steward:
Wing Commander
J G Eaton MBE RAF

Roll Bearer:
Flight Lieutenant
M Pert RAF

Escorts:

Wing Commander P C Farnes DFM	Squadron Leader T G Pickering RAF
Flight Lieutenant K A Lawrence DFC	Flight Lieutenant W J Green RAF
Flying Officer K A Wilkinson AE	Flight Lieutenant O V Burns RAF
Squadron Leader S Berry RAF	Flight Lieutenant A Evans RAF
Flight Lieutenant N Jewsbury RAF	Flight Lieutenant R Stewart RAF
Flight Lieutenant M Child RAF	Flight Lieutenant P McCormick RAF

All remain standing. The Sub-Dean says:

ALMIGHTY God, into your hands we commend the souls of those who laid down their lives for the cause of freedom; praying that you would grant them the joys of your eternal kingdom, and, to all who mourn them, fortitude of spirit and constant faith in the power of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All sit. The Choir sings

TE DEUM

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 Cherubim and Seraphim 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.

John Ireland (1879-1962) in F

All remain seated for

THE SERMON

by

The Reverend (Air Vice-Marshal) Peter Mills QHC
Chaplain-in-Chief

All stand to sing

THE HYMN

FATHER, hear the prayer we offer:
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.

Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.

Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.

Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.

Sussex 357 NEH
traditional English melody

Maria Willis (1824-1908)

All kneel or sit. The Reverend Michael Macey, Minor Canon of Westminster, leads

THE PRAYERS

LET us thank God for all his gifts to us; for his creation; for the revelation of his self-giving love in Jesus Christ; 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.

Let us thank God for the freedoms we enjoy, recalling with gratitude the courage of those who in war served the cause of liberty, especially those who gave their lives so that we might live to the full.

Let us bless the Lord:

Thanks be to God.

Let us give thanks for the service rendered in peace and in conflict to the peoples of this and of other countries by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force; for peace preserved, for peril averted.

Let us bless the Lord:

Thanks be to God.

Flight Sergeant Ann Carter MBE RAF, Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service, continues:

Let us pray for all who suffer today from exploitation, greed, or cruelty; and for those who live where there is open warfare or the threat of violence. Let us pray for the leaders of the nations and for all who can influence the course of world events: that they may act with wisdom, discernment, and integrity.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all who still bear the wounds 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 Widows' Association, the War Widows' Association of Great Britain, and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund; that all who have made sacrifice for the cause of peace may know that peace in their own lives.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all who serve today in the Royal Air Force and the Forces of the Crown, particularly those currently serving in the Middle East and Afghanistan; and let us remember especially those whose duty places them in danger; for their stamina, resilience, and courage; and let us pray in particular for those who have died in Afghanistan, for their families and friends, for their colleagues, and for all who mourn their deaths.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

The Minor Canon concludes:

ALMIGHTY God, who has given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications to you; and has promised that when two or three are gathered together in your Name you will grant their requests: fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of your servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of your 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*

THY hand, O God, has guided
thy flock, from age to age;
the wondrous tale is written,
full clear, on every page;
our fathers owned thy goodness,
and we their deeds record;
and both of this bear witness:
one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

Thy heralds brought glad tidings
to greatest, as to least;
they bade men rise, and hasten
to share the great King's feast;
and this was all their teaching,
in every deed and word,
to all alike proclaiming
one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

Through many a day of darkness,
through many a scene of strife,
the faithful few fought bravely
to guard the nation's life.
Their gospel of redemption,
sin pardoned, man restored,
was all in this enfolded,
one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

And we, shall we be faithless?
Shall hearts fail, hands hang down?
Shall we evade the conflict,
and cast away our crown?
Not so: in God's deep counsels
some better thing is stored;
we will maintain, unflinching,
one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

Thy mercy will not fail us,
nor leave thy work undone;
with thy right hand to help us,
the victory shall be won;
and then, by men and angels,
thy name shall be adored,
and this shall be their anthem,
one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

Thornbury 485 NEH
Basil Harwood (1859-1949)

Edward Plumptre (1821-91)

All remain standing for

THE ACT OF REDEDICATION

The Sub-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.

All remain standing. The Sub-Dean says

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, eternal life; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

All remain standing for

THE CALL OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

THE LAST POST

REVEILLE

The Ensign of the Royal Air Force is returned to the Ensign Party as the Band plays:

Fanfare for the Ensign of the Royal Air Force *Barrie Hingley*

The Royal Air Force March Past *Henry Walford Davies
and George Dyson (1883-1964)*

All remain standing. The Choir and Clergy, together with The Representative of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, move from the Quire and Sacrarium to the west end of the Church.

Music after the service:

The Band plays:

Epic March *John Ireland
arranged by Geoffrey Brand (b 1926)*

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.

A flypast, by a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and a Typhoon from 29(R) Squadron from Royal Air Force Coningsby, will salute "The Few" at 12.45 pm.

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 it.

The Royal Air Force Coastal Command Book of Remembrance 1939-1945 will be open in the Chapel during Battle of Britain week.

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