



**ST GEORGE'S
ROYAL AIR FORCE CHAPEL OF
REMEMBRANCE
BIGGIN HILL**

ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN 1940

A Commemoration and Thanksgiving Service

Sunday 19th September 2021

'St. George's Chapel is a place of Prayer and Remembrance,
we bid you to pray to God whose presence fills it and
gratefully remember the few whose sacrifice inspired it.'

Words on a plaque on the Chapel door 1943



Please wear a mask during this service.

Officiating Chaplain

Reverend Peter Hills BEd DipTh PGDip ACP LTCL(TESOL) CF (Ret'd)
Major (Ret'd) Royal Army Educational Corps
Chaplain to the Forces 1991-2002
Chaplain 2427 (Biggin Hill) Squadron, Air Training Corps 2010-2017
Wing Chaplain Surrey Wing, Air Training Corps

Organist

Mr David Thorne BA, FRCO

Trumpeter

Miss Victoria Mace

Quartet

Claire Jones,
Donna Burrows Mackley
Ben James,
Will Kendal

Flags being paraded

The Royal Naval Association Standard
The Canadian Standard
Banner of 2427 Squadron (Biggin Hill) Air Training Corps
Banner of 1921 Squadron (Lewisham) Air Training Corps
Banner of 173 Squadron (Orpington) Air Training Corps

On this exact date in 1943, Battle of Britain Sunday, a service of Commemoration and Dedication of the original Reredos Memorial took place in the previous Station Chapel of St George.

Cover picture courtesy of Tadeusz (Tad) Dippel.

Please stand on the arrival of the Mayoral Party.

Please stand for the procession of Reverend Peter Hills and the flag bearers. During the presentation of the Standards and Banners, we sing the following hymn.

God is our strength and refuge,
Our present help in trouble;
and we therefore will not fear,
though the earth should change!
Though mountains shake and tremble,
though swirling floods are raging,
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!

There is a flowing river,
Within God's holy city;
God is in the midst of her -
she shall not be moved!
God's help is swiftly given,
thrones vanish at his presence -
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!

Come, see the works of our maker,
learn of His deeds all powerful;
wars will cease across the world
when He shatters the spear!
Be still and know your creator,
uplift Him in the nations -
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!

CALL TO WORSHIP

Chaplain: In the presence of Almighty God, we have gathered to commemorate the Battle of Britain, to give thanks once more for the liberty which that Battle preserved for us and the world. We affirm again our determination to put an end to all armed conflicts; we express our penitence for those occasions when they become necessary; and we acknowledge with sorrow the suffering and destruction they cause.

Please kneel or sit.

Gracious God, we have gathered on this Battle of Britain Sunday to give thanks once more for the liberty which that Battle preserved for us and the world. We remember with gratitude the dedication and heroism of members of the Allied Air Forces. We remember their successors; our colleagues now engaged in many parts of the world and pray that you would watch over them. We pray for the Royal Air Force, that its power and skill may always be used to safeguard justice and peace.

Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and sent into our hearts the Spirit of your Son. Give us the grace to dedicate our freedom to your service; that all people may know the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

All: Amen

All: 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.

Please sit.

The Quartet sings

'Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake'

music by Richard Farrant, words from Lidley's Prayers, 1566

Lord, 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.

1st Reading: Isaiah 40 vv 25-31

read by

The Mayor of Bromley Councillor Russell Mellor

To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?' says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God'? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Please stand.

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 in 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
Serenely challenged, 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 and war, 'mid friend and foe,
Be with them wheresoe'er they go.
So shall our praise with Heaven's blend
And joyful hearts to thee ascend.

Please sit.

**2nd Reading: Philippians 2 vv1-11
read by Corporal James Kennell
2427 Squadron (Biggin Hill) Air Training Corps**

Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

SERMON

Reverend Peter Hills

**The Quartet sings
'So they gave their bodies'**

music by Peter Aston, words from Pericles Funeral Oration.

So they gave their bodies to the commonwealth
And received praise that will never die,
And a home in the minds of men.
Their story lives on without visible symbol,
Wov'n into the stuff of other men's lives.

Please kneel or remain seated.

During the intercessions, sing the response to the Taizé chant.

Chaplain: 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, the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force: for peace preserved, for peril averted.

All: O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.
O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.

Let us pray for the nations of the world and their leaders, praying especially for the Queen and Government of this land. We pray that they may uphold the value of freedom and that they may preserve peace and the dignity of human rights.

All: O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.
O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.

Let us pray for the peoples and communities of the world. We pray for those whose lives are torn apart through warfare, violence and terrorism and we pray for the work of all peacekeepers and reconcilers.

All: O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.
O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.

Let us pray for all those who serve today in the Royal Air Force and the Forces of the Crown, especially for those currently on active military duty. We pray for their safety and well-being as we give thanks for their devotion and courage.

All: O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.
O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.

Please sit.

To The Stars by Mary Skinner

read by Margaret Wilmot

In memory of Leonard Davis

who served in the RAF during the Battle of Britain

The skies once more do echo, on this memorial day,
With sounds which, down the years, within our hearts will stay.
The roar and scream of fighters, the dive, the loop, the zoom,
The rattle of machine-guns, the joyous turning home.

Sleep on, sleep on peacefully, you who fought to die,
Your early home escaped you, yet soaring through the sky
You made the supreme sacrifice, gained the Eternal Home,
You gave your life for Freedom, your task superbly done.

Your battle stemmed the flow of disaster,
The battle which our Lord and Master
Fought on the cross, for all his fellow men -
For mankind to follow, - write their own Amen,
This you did too, to the Glory of God.

Forgive us the tears we do hide thro' the years,
The grief is still with us, our love still endures.
We thank and remember with pride and humility
All who died for us, saving humanity.
We will never forget their superbest of bravery
Each airman who died on his own gallant Calvary.

Please stand.

ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

Air Cdre John Bell OBE

speaks

Sir Winston Churchill's words

The gratitude of every home in our island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearyed in their constant challenge and mortal danger, turned the tide of the 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.

After a brief pause, the Trumpeter will sound

LAST POST

Followed by a period of silence before

REVEILLE

Please sit for the Veterans.

Anne Galley: In 1924 Brigadier General ‘Billy’ Mitchell said “It is probable that future war will be conducted by a special class, the airforce.”

Len Sheppard: On 11th September 1940 Germany Command reported “The enemy air force is by no means defeated, on the contrary it shows increasing activity. The weather situation as a whole does not permit us to expect a period of calm. The Führer has decided to postpone Operation Sea Lion indefinitely.”

Alec Borrie: Biggin Hill was attacked many times and became the most bombed station in Fighter Command. Station Commander, Group Captain Grice justifiably boasted “WE NEVER CLOSED”.

Please stand.

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountain green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark satanic mills.

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Please kneel or sit.

Chaplain: As we give thanks to God for the freedom and peace in which we live we dedicate ourselves to building a world in which there is justice and peace for all, and where men, women, and children love their neighbours as themselves and we all play our part in establishing justice in our community. In the name of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit we pledge ourselves to work for peace: peace in our homes, peace in our communities, and peace in the world.

All: Amen.

Chaplain: On this Battle of Britain Sunday let us praise God for those who planned, prepared and fought to the end, that our country should not be helpless before the challenge of an invader. Let us also offer ourselves anew to the service of God and of our neighbour.

All: Teach us good Lord to serve you as you deserve;
To give and not to count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest,
To labour and not to ask for any reward
Save that of knowing that we do your will. Amen.

Standards and Banners are returned

Please stand.

NATIONAL ANTHEM AND ROYAL SALUTE

God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen
God save the Queen,
Send her victorious
Happy and glorious
Long to reign over us;
God save the Queen.

Thy choicest gifts in store
On her be pleased to pour,
Long may she reign.
May she defend our laws
And ever give us cause
To sing with heart and voice
God save the Queen.

BLESSING

Chaplain: We will remember, in gratitude, in grief, in hope, in love and may the Blessing of God Almighty, The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit remain with you and all those you love, living and departed, now and forever more. Amen

The RAF March Past
Henry Walford Davies and George Dyson

*Please give generously for the
Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and the upkeep of
St George's RAF Chapel.*

There are plates at the exit doors

Services are at 9.30am every Sunday.
All are welcome to attend.

Remembrance Service
Sunday 14th November 10.30am



The Chapel and Museum are open
Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 5pm.
01959 422414

This Service booklet was printed and donated by
THINKPAD of Biggin Hill.
The Friends of St George's Chapel Committee
is very grateful for their generosity.

The Friends of St George's Chapel - www.rafchapelbigginhill.com

The Museum - www.bhmm.org.uk

This peaceful place of worship is free to visit and is open when the Museum is accepting visitors. There is a pleasant welcoming café on site and seating outside.

The roar of a Spitfire's engine can frequently be heard, flying now for pleasure, unlike the days of 80 years ago.

Luna Habitabilis

The time will come, when thou shalt lift thine eyes
To watch a long-drawn battle in the skies,
While aged peasants, too amazed for words,
Stare at the flying fleets of wond'rous birds,
England, so long the mistress of the sea,
Where wind and waves confess her sovereignty,
Her ancient triumphs yet on high shall bear,
And reign the sovereign of the conquered air.

Thomas Gray 1737

ST GEORGE'S RAF CHAPEL OF REMEMBRANCE

Royal Air Force Biggin Hill is no doubt the most famous fighter station in the world. The station crest shows a sword encircled by a chain, Biggin Hill was a link in the chain of RAF stations protecting London in the Second World War. The airfield was heavily bombed but the station did not give up. The Station Commander, Group Captain Grice, blew up the last remaining hangar standing, in the hope that the Luftwaffe would see everything had been destroyed and would stop attacking the airfield.

This Chapel was built in 1951, replacing an earlier station church which was destroyed by fire in 1946. Its simple style and size are similar to the original church.

Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister, who often visited Biggin Hill on his journey to Chartwell, led a public appeal for funds, to build a permanent memorial chapel. He said “for as a nation we have short memories” (How prophetic those words have proved to be) “and it is well that Memorials such as this should bring to our remembrance the cost of our victory in the days when one of our fighter pilots had to be worth ten. They died without seeing the reward of their efforts; we live to hold their reward inviolate and unfading”.

The public responded keenly, and with some government funding St George's RAF Chapel of Remembrance was built 70 years ago. The foundation stone was laid by Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding in 1951 and the Chapel was dedicated by the Bishop of Rochester in the November.

The names of 453 aircrew of the 52 squadrons of the Biggin Hill Sector who made the supreme sacrifice during the Second World War are inscribed in gold lettering on the reredos, which is the actual memorial. Flags of the Commonwealth and Allied countries, whose pilots served in the Biggin Hill Sector are each side of the altar. The altar frontal is embroidered (as it was in 1943) with emblems of the British Isles and Allied countries and bears the quotation from Psalm 63 -"In the Shadow of Thy Wings Will I Rejoice". A beautifully decorated Remembrance Book was created and a page was turned daily by the Orderly Officer, a practice which has continued with Museum staff.

Over time, the plain windows in the Chapel were replaced with twelve beautiful stained-glass windows by Hugh Easton, the designer of the RAF Memorial Window in Westminster Abbey. The theme is a cloud of witnesses and each depicts the winged spirit of a young pilot embracing a badge in his arms.

The badges are of the 7 squadrons operating from Biggin Hill during the Battle of Britain, Fighter Command, No 11 Group, the Station crest with its motto "The Strongest Link" and portraits of the Spitfire and Hurricane. Some were donated by companies and some by individuals with emotional inscriptions on the window.

The Aircrew Association Memorial Window shows the ACA badge of a three-bladed propellor surmounting the RAF roundel with the inscription - "Dedicated to British, Commonwealth and Allied Airmen". -

In St George's Room, (now part of the Museum), is the Battle of Britain Memorial window illustrating the symbolic victory of St George, our patron saint, over the forces of evil. At the top are the badges of the squadrons at Biggin Hill from July to October 1940 and of the army, a reminder of its invaluable support. Four other stained-glass windows depict ground support activities, so vital for the air victory. The scenes are aircraft servicing, parachute packing, rescue services and ground control. You might notice something strange about the descending parachutist!

In the war only six Military Medals were awarded to the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Three of these Military Medals were awarded to WAAFs serving at Biggin Hill in the Battle of Britain. These three medals are depicted in the Ground Control window. Roads in the Married Quarters were named after these WAAFs - Flight Officer Elspeth Henderson, Sergeant Joan Mortimer and Sergeant Helen Turner,

RAF Biggin Hill had and still has two Gate Guardians, a Spitfire and a Hurricane. Their presence shows how important Biggin Hill was considered to be, because a station normally only has one Gate Guardian. In the 1960s, they were real aircraft which had flown into the airfield. When their true value was realised as antique aircraft, they were replaced by two replicas from a film set, which were certainly not made to withstand the UK weather. Following extensive repairs which did not last, the Chapel Council decided to replace them. It took years and many letters to receive permission from the RAF to do so. At one time the engine numbers were requested by an RAF Unit!

A public appeal was launched by the Friends of St George's Chapel and again the public helped enthusiastically with donations. Purpose perfect built replicas of a 92 Sqn Spitfire and a 32 Sqn Hurricane, which flew from Biggin Hill airfield in the Battle of Britain, were installed in 2010 and continue their duty of guarding this Royal Air Force Chapel of Remembrance today.

