



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

**SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE
Sunday 10th November 2024 at 10.30am**

"WE WILL REMEMBER THEM"



**Officiating Chaplain: Reverend George Baisley
Organist: Mr Eric Johnstone
Bugler: Mr Nigel Garrard**

The flag of St George of England is being paraded.



WHAT IS WAR?



War is the profoundest disrespect for the sanctity of human life,
the ultimate in racism, the collapse of morality.

War is the ultimate in criminality, the ultimate obscenity,
the ultimate crime against humanity.

So shall we honour war? and shall we now praise troubled men?

Or shall we remember what war is and

Give true meaning to "Never again"?

David Roberts, 28 September 2004

Reverend George Baisley

Reverend George Baisley was born in Scotland but brought up in Rhodesia. On leaving school he started work with an insurance company. He was called up for National Service and served in the Army with the Royal Rhodesia Regiment. Afterwards he returned to insurance work and in 1970 he came back to Britain. Eight years later he attended theological college in Salisbury. He was ordained a deacon in 1980 and a year later ordained a priest in Gloucester Cathedral. Most of George's ministry was in parishes in the Coventry Diocese where he was also Area Dean. He has served as a hospice and a university chaplain. George has been retired a few years but continues to exercise a ministry helping when clergy are on leave or where there is a vacancy.

The collection will be shared between the Royal British Legion and the Chapel

***The Museum + Chapel winter opening hours are
Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4pm,
closing for Christmas on
Saturday 21 December until Tuesday 7 January 2025.***

***Sunday services continue at 9.30am.
but
Last Service is 22nd December. First service in 2025 is 5th January.***

www.rafchapelbigginhill.com

www.bhmm.org.uk

*Please stand for the procession of the Chaplain
and presentation of St George's flag.*

**Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.**

**Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.**

**I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.**

**I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.**

**Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me**

Chaplain: We are gathered here, to worship Almighty God and to remember with gratitude and affection those who sacrificed their lives while serving in the Armed Forces in the two World Wars, and in all subsequent conflicts. We look back in sorrow for all those who suffered injury and loss; we recall those who are suffering in conflicts in our world today, and we look forward to that day when the kingdoms of this world will be ordered by God's peaceable reign.

In our prayers today, we re-affirm our commitment and dedication to the gospel of justice, peace and reconciliation, and we look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who by his death has destroyed death and having won the victory, now reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **All: Amen.**

Please kneel or sit.

Chaplain: Let us pray. Almighty God, whose power the heavens, the earth and the sea proclaim, whose love toward us is wondrously revealed in Jesus Christ, and whose Spirit produces everything that is good; we acknowledge your infinite majesty, and with heart and voice we glorify your name.

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Chaplain: Let us confess to Almighty God the sins and shortcomings of the world; pride, selfishness, and greed; evil divisions and hatreds. Let us confess our share in what is wrong, and our failure to further that peace which God wills for his children.

Short silence

All: Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. In your mercy forgive us what we have been, amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; that we may act with justice, love with mercy, and walk with humility before you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Chaplain: Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord. **All: Amen.**

Please sit.

Reading from Romans Ch 8 vv 31-39

read by Cadet Corporal Edwards of 2427 (Biggin Hill) Squadron ATC

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Reading from John Ch 15 vv 9-17

read by Joyce Pomfret

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: love each other.

SERMON

Please stand.

ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

Paul Grant: Let us remember before God and commend to His sure keeping those who have given their lives for freedom and justice in two World Wars, in many times of conflict through the years and in times still recent in locations throughout the world, particularly those whom we have known and whose memory we treasure.

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old; age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning; we will remember them.

All: We will remember them.

LAST POST

Two Minute Silence

REVEILLE

Please sit.

Flanders
read by Margaret Wilmot

I dreamed of fields of snowdrops, just as snowdrops grow –
In drifts and wafts of whiteness following melted snow.
As dawn-light grew and brightened each proudly lifted head
Shouted from out the silence, “Yes, we are the millions dead
In two world wars, so urgent, and vital to all free men
We gave our lives so willingly to salvage freedom then.”

As sun rose high, the colours came on that chill cold of death,
Myriad white crosses came alive....and misty breath
Spread in rainbow radiance across the awful scene
Bringing alive each snowdrop head, to what in youth it had been.
The colours grew in crescendo to match the thunder of guns.
Tearing the ears, pounding the heart, to rival all the suns.

Fierce mid-day blaze at zenith height, and then the cold white scene
To blood-red turned! POPPIES! Where each snowdrop had been
The sun as it sank in splendour mirrored the blood red earth,
The whole vast scene was merged in sleep, awaiting life's rebirth
Tear drenched pillow awakened me from that fantastic dream.
Incredulous – that holocaust which had created this scene.

Writer unknown

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

ACT OF COMMITMENT

Please kneel or sit.

Chaplain: Let us commit ourselves anew to the service of God and our neighbour; that we may help, encourage and comfort others and support those working for the relief of the needy and for the peace and welfare of nations.

All: Lord God our Father, we commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace. We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror. We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives, in world wars and conflicts, past and present, have been given and taken away. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Pauline Garlick: Let us pray for all who suffer from conflict and war, remembering especially Ukraine and the Holy Land.

God we pray; that Governments and those who have power, seek an end to fighting, seek justice and peace without more senseless killing.

We pray for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve, in the search for reconciliation and peace. **All: Lord hear our prayer.**

We pray that those suffering, know your presence; those mourning, be comforted; those frightened, find peace; and that you will be at the side of the dying. May we, who watch at a distance, see with eyes of compassion, and pray for peace. **All: Lord hear our prayer.**

For all members of our armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering their family, friends and all who pray for their safe return. **All: Lord hear our prayer.**

For civilian men, women and children whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind the anger and hatreds of humanity. **All: Lord hear our prayer.**

For peace-makers and peace-keepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free. **All: Lord hear our prayer.**

For all who have lost someone dear to them, in a time gone by or in recent months. **All: Lord hear our prayer.**

All: We pray that we will be willing to help others, when called upon to give our time, to serve our communities and those less fortunate than ourselves. Amen

John Callaghan: God of truth and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world; and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm. As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and forever.

Let us pray for God's continued blessing upon this Chapel of St George. Eternal God, we recall the devotion of those who, over the years, have come from many lands to make a pilgrimage to this place. We rejoice that this is a living Church and give thanks for all those who have served you faithfully here.

We pray for your blessing to rest upon the people who continue to gather here week by week in worship and Holy Sacrament. Peace be to this Church and all who worship here.

Peace be to those who come and go through its doors. Peace be to those who love this place and the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. May God give peace. **All: Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 stand.

The collection will be taken during the next 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 questions, 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 her soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase, and her
ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.**

The collection is presented to the Sanctuary.

Flag Bearer approaches the altar.

NATIONAL ANTHEM AND ROYAL SALUTE

God save our gracious King!
Long live our noble King!
God save the King!
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the King.

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

THE BLESSING

Chaplain: God the Father has brought hope to a divided world in raising Christ from the dead. Now may he strengthen you to walk in his ways and to witness to the love that banishes all fear and overcomes all hostility: And 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

Flag bearer departs followed by the Chaplain.

***Please allow veterans and wreath layers to exit first,
then gather outside quickly, spreading out,
so that all can see the laying of wreaths
near the Gate Guardians.***



St George's Royal Air Force 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 very heavily bombed, but the station did not give up. The Station Commander, Group Captain Grice, ordered the complete destruction of the last remaining damaged hangar, 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 destroyed by fire in 1946. Its simple style and size are like the original church. Padre King and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, (who visited Biggin Hill on his journey to Chartwell), led a public appeal for funds, to build a permanent Memorial Chapel. Winston Churchill said, "for as a nation we have short memories, (How true, today in 2024!) 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 well and with government funding, St George's RAF Chapel of Remembrance was built. The foundation stone was laid by Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding in 1951 and the Chapel was later dedicated by the Bishop of Rochester.

The names of 453 aircrew of the 52 squadrons of the Biggin Hill Sector who made the supreme sacrifice in World War II are inscribed in gold lettering on the Reredos, which is the actual memorial. Flags of the Commonwealth and Allied countries whose aircrew served in the Biggin Hill Sector are each side of the altar.

The altar frontal is embroidered (as 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 Remembrance Book was created, with aircrew names as on the Reredos. A page was turned daily by the Orderly Officer, a practice which continues today with Museum staff. A Second Remembrance Book was dedicated on 19 September 2023, at a Drumhead Service commemorating exactly 80 years since the dedication of the original Chapel. In it, will be the names of aircrew, who had they been known at the time, would have been inscribed and remembered, on the Reredos.

Eventually, the plain windows in the Chapel were replaced with twelve 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 seven squadrons operating, from Biggin Hill, in the Battle of Britain from 10 July to 31 October 1940, and Fighter Command, No 11 Group, the Station crest with its motto "The Strongest Link" and portraits of a Spitfire and Hurricane. Some windows were donated by companies and others by individuals with emotional inscriptions.

The Aircrew Association (ACA) Memorial Window, above the entrance, shows their badge of a three-bladed propellor within the Royal Air Force roundel with the inscription "Dedicated to British, Commonwealth and Allied Aircrews".

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 during the Battle of Britain, and an Army badge the army, a reminder of its invaluable support. Four stained-glass windows depict ground support activities, so vital for the air victory. The scenes are ground control, rescue services, aircraft servicing and parachute packing. 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 and are depicted in the Ground Control window. Roads in the Married Quarters were named after the WAAFs: Flight Officer Elspeth Henderson, Sergeant Joan Mortimer and Sergeant Helen Turner.

RAF Biggin Hill still has two Gate Guardians, a Spitfire and a Hurricane. The presence of two is unique and indicates the importance of Biggin Hill as an RAF station. In the 1960s, they were aircraft that had flown to the airfield. When their true historical value was realised, they were replaced by two replicas from a film set, which were certainly not made to withstand the 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 change the Gate Guardians for purpose-built full-scale models. At one time the engine numbers were even requested by an RAF Unit! An appeal was launched by the Friends of St George's Chapel and the public donated enthusiastically. Two aircraft were chosen of pilots who had survived the war and flown from Biggin Hill in the Battle of Britain. The replicas were installed in 2010 - a 92 Sqn Spitfire K9998 QJ-K flown by Pilot Officer Geoffrey Wellam and a Hurricane P2921 GZ-L of 32 Sqn flown by Flight Lieutenant Peter Brothers. The Gate Guardians continue their duty of guarding St George's Royal Air Force Chapel of Remembrance today.

