



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

SUNDAY 25TH JULY 2021 AT 10.30AM



Chaplain: Reverend Diana Coutts-Pauling BA (Hons)

Organist: Mr David Thorne BA, FRCO

The Quartet:

**Claire Jones
Donna Burrows Mackley
Ben James
Will Kendal**



Please stand for Reverend Diana Coutts-Pauling

Welcome and Introduction

**Introit 'Christ is our Cornerstone' (David Thorne)
Sung by the Quartet**

Christ is our Cornerstone, on him alone we build.
Christ is our Cornerstone, on him alone we build.
The stone which the builders rejected has become the
Cornerstone, has become the Cornerstone, Alleluia.

Please kneel or sit

Chaplain: We come to you with joy and praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for your faithfulness in guarding St George's RAF Chapel of Remembrance. We come to rededicate this Chapel to your service.

We come to give thanks to the people who built this place, for its life of 70 years and we come in hope for its life in the years to come.

May this chapel continue to serve as the place where the presence of the loving God touches the lives of all who enter it through the redeeming power of Jesus Christ our Lord.

May this building shine the light of salvation of Christ in Biggin Hill and throughout the area.

May this place continue to be a place of true worship, thanksgiving and praise. May it continue to be a place of hope and healing, a place of joy and peace.

May those who enter be supportive of others in Christian love.

May the love of Christ be at the centre of all that takes place here.

May the glorious presence of God, the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit shine on countless generations who come to worship at St George's.

Please stand

Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ the head and corner-stone
Chosen of the Lord and precious,
Binding all the church in one
Holy Zion's help for ever,
And her confidence alone.

To this temple, where we call thee,
come, O Lord of hosts, today;
with thy wonted loving-kindness
hear they people as they pray;
and thy fullest benediction
shed within its walls for aye.

Here vouchsafe to all thy servants
what they ask of thee to gain,
here to have and hold forever
what they through thy grace obtain;
and hereafter in thy glory
evermore with thee to reign.

Please kneel or sit

Chaplain: The risen Christ is here in the midst of us. We bring our prayers to him as Lord of the Church.

All: Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For this congregation here present today, as we remember your promise that when two or three are gathered in your name you are there in the midst of them,

All: Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For this Royal Air Force Chapel of St George, that we may be still and know that you are God,

All: Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For those benefactors of this place, those who built and cared for this Chapel, long gone to their rest.

All: Lord receive our thanks and prayer.

For the faith of those who have gone before us and for grace to persevere like them,

All: Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For your blessings in the past and for a vision of the future for this Chapel,

All: Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the pardon of our sins when we fall short of your glory,

All: Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For a foretaste of your eternal kingdom in the sacrament of the Eucharist,

All: Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For a sense of our fellowship within this special holy place,

All: Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

Chaplain: God, from living stones you prepare an everlasting dwelling, a place for your majesty. Grant that in the power of the Holy Spirit those who serve you here may always be kept within your presence. This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Please sit

Psalm 84
read by Margaret Wilmot

How lovely is your dwelling-place, Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young – a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God.

Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. Look on our shield, O God; look with favour on your anointed one.

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose way of life is blameless. Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

‘Locus iste’ - The Quartet (Anton Bruckner)

This place was made by God,
a priceless sacrament;
it is without reproach.

Matthew Ch 20 vv 20-28
read by Air Cdre John Bell OBE

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favour of him. 'What is it you want?' he asked. She said, 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.' 'You don't know what you are asking,' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?' 'We can,' they answered. Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.' When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Sermon

Please kneel or remain sitting

ALL: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. 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.
Amen

Chaplain: O God, the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us thy mercy, that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal; O heavenly father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord.

Please stand

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 the unchartered 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.

The Blessing

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

May the blessing of God be upon you, In the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit. Amen.

**There will be a collection.
As you leave, there is a plate by each exit door.
Please give generously to support the Chapel**

RAF March Past (Henry Walford Davies and George Dyson)

**Services are at 9.30am on Sundays.
Everyone is welcome.**

**Do come (even if only now and then), and
support this living Chapel.**

†

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.

The airfield remained operational until the early 1960s when its flying role ceased. The Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre was established and support of that, became the station's main role. In 1992, Royal Air Force Station Biggin Hill closed, leaving St George's Chapel in a small area of land together with No. 2427 Biggin Hill Squadron of the Air Training Corps. The ATC Sqn moved from some huts close to the runway into what was St Rafael's Roman Catholic Station Church next to St George's Chapel.

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 Chaplain, 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.

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 propeller surmounting the RAF 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 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 will see 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 WAAF's serving at Biggin Hill in the Battle of Britain. They are shown on the Ground Control window. Roads in the Married Quarters are named after these WAAF's - 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 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 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.

*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 Merlin engine
can frequently be heard
on a lovely sunny day,
now flying for pleasure unlike the days of 80 years ago.*

The Chapel and the Museum are open

Tuesdays to Sundays 10am to 5pm.

The Café is open 10am to 4pm

www.bhmm.org.uk 01959 422414

Friends of St George's Chapel

www.rafchapelbigginhill.com