

St. Mary's Church, Banbury

Annual Service of Thanksgiving
and Remembrance

Battle of Britain Sunday
13th September 2026



THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN - 1940 - HISTORICAL NOTE

Battle of Britain Sunday commemorates the famous victory in WW2 when the Royal Air Force saved Britain from invasion by German forces.

Hitler's intention was to destroy the Royal Air Force in preparation for invasions by sea and air – but he under-estimated the resolve, courage and tenacity of the RAF's flyers and ground staff.

The Luftwaffe gathered along the French and Belgian coasts and in July 1940 began its first heavy onslaught against British shipping and the channel ports. In August, intensive daylight attacks on coastal radar stations and fighter airfields took place followed by increased night attacks on airfields in the London area. The daylight assault on London, starting on 7 September, saw intense air raids on the docks. On 19 September, over a thousand sorties were fought during the afternoon and night. The Luftwaffe suffered a heavy defeat, losing 56 aircraft.

October saw fewer daylight attacks on London and an increase in night bombing of Britain's ports and industrial centres. But every assault was defended by the RAF – with fewer planes and less men. At the beginning of the battle, the Luftwaffe had 2790 aircraft. The RAF had 60 squadrons and 650 planes. Between 24 August and 6 September, the RAF lost 103 pilots with 128 seriously wounded and 366 fighter planes had been put out of action. On Sunday 15 September came what Sir Winston Churchill called 'one of the decisive battles of the war' and with it the Luftwaffe's greatest defeat.

In Churchill's immortal words, 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.'

Banbury's aluminium factory played an important role in the battle. In the early years of WW2, the factory (The Ally) was the largest producer of aircraft metal in the country and produced aluminium for the manufacture of RAF planes including Spitfires and Lancaster bombers. It has been said that if the Banbury factory hadn't existed the outcome of the Battle of Britain could have been very different.

To deceive German bombers, the real factory was camouflaged and a decoy building was erected north of Banbury. The fake factory was known as the dummy ally. The real factory was never bombed while the decoy was targeted on 3 October 1940. Almost 1,000 factory workers were called up during the war and many did not return. A roll of honour was published in October 1945 and a memorial garden was created in the factory grounds.

Banbury was also at the centre of a number of WW2 airfields including Upper Heyford, Barford St John, Shenington, Hinton-in-the-Hedges, Enstone, Greatworth, Finmere, Turweston, Silverstone, Chipping Warden, Croughton and Gaydon.

Order of Service

Choir Introit

O Taste and See *by R. Vaughan Williams*

*During the Introit there will be a procession and presentation
of standards.*

Opening Hymn – Jerusalem

And did those feet in ancient time
walk upon England's mountains 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

*Music: CHH Parry
Words: William Blake*

Welcome & Bidding
(The Revd. Preb. Jane Haslam)

Please be seated

ONCE again we come together on Battle of Britain Sunday to worship God and to remember and 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, it was pivotal to the outcome of the Second World War.

As we reflect today on their gallantry and fortitude we remember all who have served and still serve in the Royal Air Force. We remember as well the work of The Royal Air Force Association, the Royal Air Force Reserves and of course the Air Training Corps as a sign of the future.

Until we ourselves are faced with an actual challenge we do not know how we would 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, peace, 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.

The Lord's Prayer

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.

First Bible Reading. Isaiah 40.28-31

Read by the Banbury Town Mayor, Cllr. Mark Cherry

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Anthem sung by the choir.

Greater love hath no man by J. Ireland

Second Bible Reading. Matthew 5.1-12

Read by Reverend Lynda Spokes.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Address – The Revd. Preb. Jane Haslam
(Associate Archdeacon of Dorchester)

Battle of Britain Hymn

*(During this hymn a collection will be made - monies
shared between St. Mary's & RBL)*

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EHA04

Creator of the earth and sky,
Look down with love on us who cry.
Remember those who gave their lives,
In Britain's battle for the skies.

These skies so clear above our land,
The air we breathe, the sun so bright.
Our freedom kept by that small band,
Ensured for us by their brave fight.

They came, their useful strength yet fresh
They soared so quickly to the clouds,
They fought- some died- that we might live,
Their sacrifice beyond their shrouds.

Still kindles gratitude again,
For courage deep and duty done,
Beyond the tale on history's page,
We count our blessings for each one.

Their days were full of stress and
Now with God's help, let us remain
As faithful to God's precious cause,
Strive to maintain God's holy laws.

So rest in peace our faithful few,
Your names remembered with our love
God, Father, Son and Comforter
Grant you his blessing from above.

(ANON: Tune Winchester New)

Prayers for the Church and the World

Read by Civic Sea Cadet - Leading Cadet (LC) Zoe Longley

Let us pray for the nations of the world and their leaders, praying especially for our King and Government. We pray that all leaders of the world may uphold the value of freedom and work for peace and the dignity of human rights.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

Read by Civic Army Cadet - Cadet Cdt Cpl Charlie Vanderhyde

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.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

Read by Cdt Sgt Bonnie Travers

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.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

Read by Civic Air Cadet - Cdt Sgt Jot Saran

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:

All Thanks be to God.

Read by **Darren Cappel, Royal British Legion**

Let us give thanks to God for all those whose memory we recall today: for the veterans of civilian and military life who fearlessly gave of their all in the service of their country and neighbour during the Battle of Britain.

Let us bless the Lord:

All Thanks be to God.

Read by **Caroline Owens, Churchwarden**

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.

**All 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,
peace in the world.
Amen.**

Hymn – God is our strength and refuge

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!

Reading of “High Flight” *Read by Flt Lt Karl Kisley, RAFAC*

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air....
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.
Where never lark, or even eagle flew —
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
- Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

*Pilot Officer Gillespie Magee Jnr. Of No 412 Squadron
Royal Canadian Air Force (Died 11 December 1941)*

Act of remembrance and thanksgiving

God of justice, encircle our earth with the need for integrity, openness, fairness and sharing

All And call the nations to live in harmony

Prince of peace, heal your divided world of its warring madness, stilling our fears and calming our stormy confrontations.

All And call the nations to live in harmony

Spirit of reconciliation; breathe your influence on all creation, helping us to find common ground where forgiveness may flourish and new friendships flower.

All And call the nations to live in harmony

Holy Trinity of Hope, Love and Joy, let your desire for justice peace and reconciliation mark every encounter with you and our neighbour.

All That in your presence and to your glory, the nations may live in harmony.

We pray for the Royal Air force; for those who served in the past and those who serve today. We remember those involved in the Battle of Britain; in the factories, on the ground supplying and maintaining aircraft and air bases, for those who flew. We remember the courage, devotion to duty and the self-sacrifice.

Let us remember those who were wounded in the conflict; those who fell in battle

All We remember them

Those we knew

Those we never knew

Those who were brave

Those who were afraid

Those who mourn and grieve

Those who carry the memory of war in their souls

Those whose scars refuse to heal

All We remember them

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord

All Let perpetual light shine upon them

May they rest in peace

All And rise in glory

So we pray:

Bless all members of the armed forces.

Defend them in danger.

Give them the courage to meet all occasions with discipline and loyalty, That they may be called to serve the cause of justice and peace, to the honour of your name. And bless to our young people.

May they never see the flames of war, or know the depths of cruelty to which men and women can sink. Grant that in their generation they may be faithful soldiers and servants of Jesus Christ.

All Amen.

Choir sing - The Lord bless you and keep you *by J. Rutter*

(During this piece of music the standards will be returned)

The National Anthem

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.

Blessing

God grant to the living grace,

to the departed rest,

to the Church, the King, the Commonwealth and all people,

unity, peace and concord,

and to us and all God's servants,

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.**



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