



**A Burial Service for**

**Members of the Crew of Stirling BK 716  
No. 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron Royal Air Force**

**Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 10:30 hours**

**CWGC Jonkerbos War Cemetery, The Netherlands**

**Service conducted by  
Reverend (Squadron Leader) Josephine Critchley RAF  
Station Chaplain RAF Honington**



Stirling BK 716 took off from Downham Market, Norfolk on 29 March 1943 on a raid to Berlin. RAF Bomber Command recorded a loss of 4 Short Stirlings during the night of 29-30 March 1943. The casualty file for BK 716 is incomplete but the aircraft just disappeared.

**Crew of Stirling BK716 No. 218 Sqn RAF crashed  
30 March 1943**

**118128 Flying Officer John Frederick Harris  
(Pilot) Royal Air Force**

**J/11241 Flying Officer Harry Gregory Farrington  
(Navigator) Royal Canadian Air Force**

**122910 Flying Officer John Michael Campbell  
(Wireless Operator/Air Gunner) Royal Air Force**

**1027864 Sergeant Charles Armstrong Bell  
(Air Bomber) Royal Air Force**

**R/105188 Flight Sergeant John Francis James McCaw  
(Air Gunner) Royal Canadian Air Force**

**1487492 Sergeant Ronald Kennedy  
(Air Gunner) Royal Air Force**

**1251519 Sergeant Leonard Richard James Shrubhall  
(Air Gunner) Royal Air Force**

## **Order of Service**

Conducted by  
**Reverend (Squadron Leader) Josephine Critchley RAF**  
**Station Chaplain RAF Honington**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
And the love of God  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with you all.

We are gathered here today in this place of remembrance to honour our fallen in conflicts past.

Today we remember with thanksgiving these brave men whom, alongside so many others, answered the call of their country, served with honour and gave their lives in the service of their nation.

We will shortly commit their bodies to be buried. In so doing let us commit ourselves anew to remember their courage. For by doing so we honour their memory and reflect upon their sacrifice.

### **Prayer of Approach – John Harvey**

Shepherd God,  
creating for us the green pastures  
and the quiet waters of this planet  
for us to walk in and to take our rest:  
we thank and praise you  
for all the blessings of this world  
and of the life you have given to each one of us.

Jesus our companion,  
walking with us all the way,  
leading us into right relationships  
of friendship and love, and staying with us  
even in the midst of sin and death:

We thank and praise you  
for your strong, enduring love,  
a great comfort – and so much more.

Spirit of Life and Love,  
feeding our lives with your very self,  
and assuring us of the truth  
of the mystery of eternal life,  
beginning now:

We thank and praise you  
for your nourishing, anointing presence,  
never far from our side.

Triune God,  
dancing around us,  
among us and within,  
be present to us now, we pray,  
and help us to worship you, and to trust you,  
as we seek again the forgiveness of our sins,  
the certainty of resurrection,  
and the assurance of the victory  
of life and love over the power of death and the grave.

We ask this in the name  
of Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Reading

### High Flight by John Gillespie Magee, Royal Canadian Air Force

Read by Richard McCaw, Nephew of Flight Sergeant John Francis James McCaw RCAF

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 ever 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.

## Reading

### John 14. 1-14 (King James Version)

Read by Colonel Piers Strudwick OBE Defence Attaché, The Netherlands

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

## Address by Padre

### Reading

#### The Soldier by Rupert Brooke

Read by Barbara Bradbury and Joanna Bogle  
Nieces of Flying Officer George Michael Campbell RAF

If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.



## Reading

### Spirits in Flight by Eddy Coward

Read by Fiona Williams and Margot McLeod  
Nieces of Flying Officer Harry Gregory Farrington RCAF

I saw them return, seven spirits in flight,  
Engines fired by the sparks of the night,  
Lumbering, throbbing like a battered ghost,  
So thankful for a friendly coast.

Glowing and gliding, a Stirling without sound,  
The rubber screams as it kisses the ground,  
Perfect touchdown on a deserted plain;  
Now a cornfield, a field with no name.

Night after night, mission after mission;  
Helmets, goggles, masks and ammunition,  
The seven Sky Warriors from long past,  
All knowing tonight could be their last.

I hear the field alive with noise,  
Filled with brave men; some of them just boys,  
I see them walk in their suits of leather,  
Slowly and proudly they walk together.

Where their Stirling rose to meet the foe,  
Now the larks rise, from their nests below,  
Down the runway only peace is heard,  
Save for the wind and the song of a bird.

Time passes, January to December,  
From spring to winter the years drift on,  
Every April, every Easter, I will remember  
John, Charles, Michael, Ron, Harry, Leonard and Captain  
John.

## **Prayers**

### **Prayer for the Royal Air Force**

Read by Flight Lieutenant Liam Williamson RAF

Almighty God, who has promised that they who wait upon thee shall renew their strength and mount with wings, as eagles; we commend to thy fatherly protection all who serve in the Royal Air Force. Uplift and support them in their endeavour, that they may be a safeguard unto our most gracious Sovereign Lord, King Charles, and a sure defence to our homeland, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **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,  
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.**

## **Blessing**

### **God Who Holds all Things Together by James Curry**

God,  
who holds all things together,  
we commit to your loving care the lives of these men  
and all their relationships with those  
they loved in this life.  
Help all who are gathered here to know  
that all love in this life flows from your love,  
a love that is stronger than death  
and can never be quenched by it.  
These lives now return to their source,  
in safety and peace.  
Lives held in love.

**Amen.**

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## **Committal**

Let us commend the crew members of BK716 to God.

Our days are like the grass;  
We flourish like a flower of the field  
When the wind goes over it; it is gone  
And its place will know it no more.  
But the merciful goodness of the Lord endures  
For ever and ever.....

We have entrusted these airmen to God's eternal keeping. We  
now commit their earthly remains to the ground,  
Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust in the sure and  
certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus  
Christ our Lord

**Amen.**

## **The Act of Remembrance**

Let us remember before God and commend to his sure keeping those who have died for their country in conflict; those whom we knew, and whose memory we treasure; and all who have lived and died in the service of humanity.

## **The Exhortation**

Read by Flight Sergeant Cameron Kinvig RAF

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.

**We will remember them.**

## **The Last Post**

Played by Corporal George Bailey, Trumpeter of the Central Band of the Royal Air Force

## **The Silence**

## **The Reveille**

## **Kohima Epitaph**

Read by Gunner Jack Westworth RAF

When you go home tell them of us and say:  
'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

## **Laying of Wreaths**

## Reading

### **We Lay You Down by Ruth Burgess**

Read by Hilde van Garderen, former Alderman Almere

Into the darkness and warmth of the earth,  
we lay you down

Into the sadness and smiles of our memories,  
we lay you down

Into the cycle of living and dying and rising again,  
we lay you down

May you rest in peace, in fulfilment, in loving  
May you run straight home into God's embrace

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## Reading

### **The Bombers by Sarah Churchill**

Read by Joyce Stout, Niece of Sergeant Charles Armstrong  
Bell RAF

Whenever I see them ride on high,  
Gleaming and proud in the morning sky,  
Or lying awake in bed at night,  
I hear them pass on their outward flight.  
I feel the mass of metals and guns.  
Delicate instruments, deadweight tons.  
Awkward, slow, bomb racks full,  
Straining away from downward pull.  
Straining away from home and base,  
And try to see the pilot's face.

I imagine a boy who's just left school,  
On whose quick-learned skill and courage cool  
Depend the lives of the men in his crew  
And success of the job they have to do  
And something happens to me inside  
That is greater than grief, greater than pride  
And though there is nothing I can say  
I always look up as they go their way  
And care and pray for everyone,  
And steel my heart to say,  
"Thy will be done"

## **The Blessing**

### **We Arise and Go Forth by Ian Cowie**

We arise and go forth on the journey before us,  
knowing that where Christ leads,  
life is a journey home.  
Therefore we travel in faith, in hope and in love.

In the name and in the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

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*Nijmegen was a frontline town from 17 September 1944 until February 1945. An initial temporary burial ground was created by No. 3 Casualty Clearing station in a wooded area known as Jonkers Bosch, from which it took its name. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission Jonkerbos War Cemetery was established nearby after the war and contains over 1,640 graves. Members of the crew of Stirling BK 716 are being laid to rest together in the cemetery and will continue to be named individually on CWGC's Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede.*



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars.

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