



BATTLE OF BRITAIN SERVICE 2021 – YORK MINSTER

20 Group have supported the annual Battle of Britain service at York Minster for many years. In the days when we were in uniform, a contingent paraded outside the Minster before the service itself, which used to be held around midday. This year, the service was held on Sunday, 19th September. In changes to previous years, it was supported by RAF Leeming (RAF Linton-on-Ouse being in the process of closure) and was incorporated in a choral evensong. Pleasingly, it was well attended, including the Station Commander, Station Warrant Officer and quite a large uniformed contingent from Leeming, together with members of RAFA's York Branch, members of the Minster congregation and the public.



*Above: The Book of Remembrance is placed on the altar by a serving officer from RAF Leeming.
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20 Group ROCA was represented in the congregation by **Ann and Tony Metcalfe**, Group Secretary and Treasurer respectively. In addition, 20 Group member the **Rev David Simpson** was amongst the officiating clergy.

The Groups Standard was amongst a total of four presented at the altar, the other three being those of RAFA's York Branch (also carried by a ROCA member, **Gordon Murden**), York Branch of the Aircrew Association and 110 (City of York) Squadron RAF Air Cadets. All reported for a rehearsal an hour before the service. Sadly, this was the last occasion on which the York Branch Aircrew Association standard will be paraded, as it is soon to be laid up.



Above: The standards having been collected from the altar await the National Anthem at the end of the service. Photo: MoD © copyright

Proceedings began with the entry of the clergy and the marching of the standards to the altar. During the service lessons were read by **Sqn Ldr Andy Byrne, BA(Hons), MOPD RAF** (Ret'd), Honorary Secretary of RAFA York and **Grp Capt Blythe Crawford OBE**, Station Commander, RAF Leeming. As might be expected, music by the Minster's organist and choir was beautiful. During an organ recital of William Walton's Spitfire Prelude the RAF Book of Remembrance, containing the names of 18,000 personnel who died serving in Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham during World War II, was carried to the altar by an officer from RAF Leeming with his escort and laid upon the altar. There, a page was turned by a representative of the RAF Air Cadets, Leeming's Station Commander and a member of the Aircrew Association. After an anthem sung by the choir and an act of remembrance and re-dedication, the Last Post was sounded followed after a silence, by Reveille. As a hymn was sung by the congregation the standards were collected from the altar, halting in a single rank in front of the altar for a blessing to be given. As the National Anthem was sung, the standards were dipped, before being marched back up the nave to the stirring sound of the Royal Air Force March Past.

RAF Leeming kindly gave permission to use the two photographs included in this article. They were from a selection of eight posted on the station's social media pages; their Facebook page received over 220 likes and their Twitter page over 50.

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