

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE AIR LOADMASTER ASSOCIATION



**Loaded · Rescued · Delivered
in
Peace · Disaster · War**

**Cordially Invites Members of the
RAF Aircrew Association
To join in a Service of
Thanksgiving and Remembrance
On Sunday 08 May 2016 at 1100hrs
St Clement Danes - the Central Church of the RAF**

**When the worst that can happen has happened,
there is little to say but to acknowledge that
the landscape has changed for ever
and the world is a lesser place.**

The Royal Air Force Air Loadmaster Association was formed in 2001 to retain the professional link which all loadmasters share and to foster friendship and mutual support amongst comrades. Air Loadmasters, their predecessors [AQMs] and successors [WSops], hold a long and distinguished history within the RAF aircrew fraternity, which dates back to 31 Squadron operating Dakotas in Burma in 1944. Since then they - men and women - have served in every theatre of operation on fixed wing aircraft and helicopters, and in doing so have often made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

To illustrate the point, on Sunday 11 October 2015 Flt Lt Geraint 'Roly' Roberts - the crewman leader of 230 Squadron, and a loadmaster of long-standing - was killed in a Puma accident in Afghanistan along with the pilot Flt Lt Alan 'Scotty' Scott. By sheer coincidence, the following week on Sunday 18 October, the RAF ALMA was inscribed on the Wall of Honour at the Royal Society of Medicine. This was in recognition of services to battlefield casualty evacuation [Chinook], the saving of life in search and rescue operations [Sea King], and the repatriation of injured and deceased personnel from war zones [C17 Globemaster]. As a gesture of goodwill the President of the RSM mentioned the incident to the assembled audience of 300 guests and commended the work of all the Armed Forces.

On Sunday May 08 2016 there will be a service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance at St Clement Danes, the Central Church of the Royal Air Force. It will be held to celebrate the life and work of all loadmasters who have now departed this life: be that as a consequence of the call to duty or since leaving the Service. It will be a poignant and reflective occasion as loadmasters gather together to commemorate colleagues they have known and worked with over the years: Dave Adams, Wally Knatt, Jim Lucas, Geraint 'Roly' Roberts, Sid Archer, Davy Bullock [GM], Peter Barwell [AFC], Brian Joplin [QGM], Ray Prince, 'Geordie' Dexter, Ivan Burns, Stan Ormiston, John Hardie, Gus Stanger and Mark Gibson to name but a few.

The expectation is that 300 - 400 people, drawn from a variety of backgrounds, will be present at the service. These will include members of the RAF Widows Association, the War Widows Association, the Professional Loadmaster Association of America, the Aircrew Association, and other invited persons such as Mr B. Sethia and Mr P. Summerfield from the Royal Society of Medicine, and Gp Capt D. Manning the Station Commander at RAF Northolt. Air Marshal Sir 'Dusty' Miller - President of the Royal Air Forces Association - has said that he would be delighted to attend as our Guest of Honour and we look forward to extending a warm welcome to him on the day.

Fr David Osborn - Padre at St Clement Danes - will lead the service accompanied by the Service chaplains of other denominations. The choir will direct everyone in song; the wish being to choose music which will encourage one and all to join in this sad yet joyous occasion. In addition, the hope is that we will be joined by the band from RAF Halton, to include a bugler who will herald the **Last Post**. Of equal importance will be the presence of a piper from the Southern Highlanders Pipes & Drums who will play a meditative lament; possibly **Flowers of the Forest**. The **National Anthem** will be sung at the end of the service and there will be a retiring collection for the benefit of the church.

Word has gone out to the Royal British Legion, the Royal Air Force Regiment, and the Royal Air Force Association inviting them to parade Standards alongside that of the RAF Air Loadmaster Association. Plans are also afoot to create a booklet which denotes those personnel who have died in service and those who have died since leaving the RAF. Ostensibly, the booklet will be designed primarily for the RAF ALM community. Nonetheless, it might be possible to add names of members of other organisations - space permitting and subject to agreement from the committee - so that the booklet can become a keepsake for later years.

Dr J Stewart FRSM FRSA
Goodwill Ambassador
RAF Air Loadmaster Association

Sometimes

Sometimes, when the sun goes down,
It seems it will never rise again...
But it will!

Sometimes, when you feel alone,
It seems your heart will break in two...
But it won't.

And sometimes it seems
It's hardly worth carrying on...
But it is.

For sometimes, when the sun goes down,
It seems it will never rise again,
But it does.

Frank Brown

The Church of St Clement Danes is independently located on a tiny island along the Strand as an adjunct to Aldwych. For over 1,000 years a church has stood on this spot and tradition holds that it was originally built by Danes expelled from the City of London by King Alfred in the ninth century. It is mentioned in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book [1086] and for nearly 150 years was in the care of the Knights Templar [1170-1312]. The church escaped damage in the Great Fire of London [1666] but was nonetheless rebuilt in 1682 by Christopher Wren; a steeple was added to the tower by James Gibbs in 1719. On 10 May 1941 incendiary bombs gutted the building leaving only the walls and tower standing.

After WWII the Air Council proposed to the Diocese of London that the Royal Air Force be allowed to restore and rebuild St Clement Danes as its own church, and as a perpetual shrine of remembrance to those killed on RAF service. The proposal was adopted and in 1953 the church was handed into the keeping of the Air Council and a world-wide appeal was launched to rebuild St Clement Danes. Bequests and donations from organizations and individuals poured in so that the necessary £250,000 [£4m in current funds] was raised and within two years restoration work began. Re-consecrated in 1958 to remember those killed on active service with the Royal Air Force, and those of the Allied Air Forces who gave their lives during the Second World War, St Clement Danes once more became a living church: a place where people had worshipped for more than 1,000 years. Nowadays, it is used for daily prayer and visited throughout the year by thousands seeking solace and reflection.

Along both sides of the church are shrines of remembrance, containing the Books in which are inscribed the names of those men and women who have died on active service with the Royal Air Force. Book X located on the right nearest to the altar is from VJ day 1945 to 31st March 2013. Book XI located opposite Book X is from 1st April 2013. The pages are turned daily and twice a year it is brought up to date. Those who die in service are remembered shortly after their death during a celebration of Holy Communion. Each October or November a Memorial Service is held - to which families are invited to attend - for those who have died during the past year.

There is another Book of Remembrance -The Trustees Book - located at the entrance to the Crypt. It contains names of people who have died since leaving the Service. The Book provides a fitting tribute for families to honour and perpetuate the memory of loved ones who have previously served in the Royal Air Force. However, whereas the RAF ensures names are inscribed in Book X and Book XI it is the responsibility of families or their representatives to arrange for inscriptions to be made in this latter Trustees Book.



St Clement Danes ablaze on 10-11 May 1941



St Clement Danes at Night