

## READINGS

### No Spotlight for Coastal

*Squadron Leader Tony Spooner DSO DFC AE*

"Bombers or Fighters?" his friends used to say  
But when he said "Coastal", they half turned away  
Yet Coastal's patrols which traversed the Bay  
Forced the U-boats to dive for most of the day.

With the U-boats submerged for much of the day  
The convoys ploughed on, midst the salt and the spray  
While the men on the ships did silently pray  
That his plane would appear; both to circle and stay.

When his plane did appear; to both circle and stay  
Then the Wolf Packs held back; wholly robbed of their prey  
And the convoys sailed on in their purposeful way  
And the seamen reached port where their loved ones did lay.

"Fighters or Bombers?" his friends used to ask  
"Coastal", he said, his face a tired mask  
"Though not in the spotlight where others may bask,  
We've a tough job to do and I'm proud of the task".

### Showpiece – Lancaster

*Walt Scott, ex-630 Sqn.*

I dream now of another time,  
Of soaring wings, and slipstream whine,  
Of airscrew arcs, and engine drone,  
And cloudy canyons I have known.

Once we were many and we knew,  
The love of thousands, our aircrew,  
So many lovers, passed recall,  
Yet we were faithful to them all.

When towering columns split the night,  
With brilliant beams of searching light,  
There, in just moments, we became  
Small insects round a naked flame.

And with us then, our young men knew,  
An eighth, unwanted, crewman flew,  
He whispered, taunted, often near,  
Unseen, but known, for he was fear.

Time after time, we saw the cost  
To all who fought so well, yet lost,  
For them, a fiery plunge through space  
In another time, another place.

For you old lovers, youth has gone,  
Relentless, time is moving on,  
With arms outstretched, with measured pace,  
To take you all in cold embrace.

Time has not marred my grim old frame,  
To your fading eyes, I am the same,  
Look well, all strangers standing there,  
For I am the mighty Lancaster.

### Lie in the Dark and Listen

*Noël Coward*

Lie in the dark and listen.  
It's clear tonight so they're flying high,  
Hundreds of them, thousands perhaps,  
Riding the icy, moonlit sky.  
Men, machinery, bombs and maps,  
Altimeters, guns and charts,  
Coffee, sandwiches, fleece-lined boots,  
Bones and muscles and minds and hearts,  
English saplings with English roots  
Deep in the earth they've left below.  
Lie in the dark and let them go;  
Lie in the dark and listen.

Lie in the dark and listen.  
They're going over in waves and waves  
High above villages, hills and streams,  
Country churches and little graves  
And little citizens worried dreams;  
Very soon they'll have reached the sea  
And far below them will lie the bays  
And cliffs and sands where they used to be  
Taken for summer holidays.  
Lie in the dark and let them go;  
Theirs is a world we'll never know.  
Lie in the dark and listen.

Lie in the dark and listen.  
City magnates and steel contractors  
Factory workers and politicians  
Soft hysterical little actors,  
Ballet dancers, reserved musicians  
Safe in your warm civilian beds,  
Count your profits and count your sheep  
Life is passing above your heads,  
Just turn over and try to sleep.  
Lie in the dark and let them go  
There's one debt you'll forever owe,  
Lie in the dark and listen.

### High Flight

*John Gillespie Magee, R.C.A.F.*

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 falls of air...  
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue  
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace  
Where never lark, nor eer eagle flew –  
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod  
The high, untrampled sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.



**Royal Air Force  
Benevolent Fund**  
THE HEART OF THE RAF FAMILY

### The Royal Air Force Collect 1

Almighty God, who has promised that they who wait upon thee shall renew their strength and mount up with wings, as eagles, we commend to thy fatherly protection all who serve in the Royal Air Force. Uplift and support us in our endeavour, that we may be a safeguard unto our most gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth and a sure defence to our homeland. Help us to fulfil our several duties with honour, goodwill and integrity, and grant that we may prove to be worthy successors of those who by their valour and sacrifice did nobly save their day and generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### The Royal Air Force Collect 2

Almighty God, who makest the clouds thy chariots and walkest upon the wings of the storm, look in mercy we beseech thee upon the Royal Air Force. Make us a tower of strength to our Queen and to our country. Help us to do our duty with prudence and with fearlessness, confident that in life or in death the eternal God is our refuge and strength. Grant this for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

### The Royal Air Force Collect 3

Holy Spirit, Breath of God, who dost inspire and sustain man's destiny, quicken we beseech Thee, the hearts and minds of all who serve in the Royal Air Force; that those who fly may brave the perils of the air with courage; that those who labour on the ground may be infused with zeal and devotion; and that all who bear the burden and heat of the day may be refreshed with the live-giving power of thy grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### The Royal Air Force Regiment's Collect

Almighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, whose son Jesus Christ showed us the path of duty, we beseech thee to bless all who serve in the Royal Air Force Regiment. Help us to do our duty with courage and dedication. Of thy goodness be our strength in times of danger, watch over our loved ones when we are separated, and make us a sure defence to those we serve. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Prayer for the Foundation of the Royal Air Force

Lord God, we remember the courage and dedication of those, who in past days took to the air, and pioneered the Royal Air Force we know today. Especially we remember the sacrifice of the few for the many in times of war and strife. Grant that, being inspired by their example, we may follow them in their endeavours to work for a world in which peace and justice reign supreme, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### A Prayer for the Royal Air Force

Almighty God,  
You have promised that they who wait on You shall renew their strength,  
they shall rise up on wings as eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.  
We commend to your Fatherly protection all who serve in the Royal Air Force.  
and especially for today's graduating pilots and navigators.  
Encourage and inspire us in all our efforts,  
so that we may be a safeguard to our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth,  
and a sure defence to our nation.  
Help us to fulfil our duties with honour, goodwill and integrity,  
and grant that we may prove worthy successors to those  
who by their valour and sacrifice did nobly save their day and generation.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### A Prayer

Almighty and eternal God,  
Lord of the universe and maker of all that is:  
we praise and thank you for all those  
who denied themselves  
and laid down their lives for their friends.  
Grant to those who are remembered here in our hearts  
that their names may be written in your book of life;  
and to us who remember them  
give grace to walk in the same way of love and faith,  
that we may come at the last with them  
to that eternal kingdom where you live and reign  
in the perfect unity of love, one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

### The Airman's Prayer

Pilot divine, and Lord of all on high  
Thine are the starry squadrons of the sky!  
Lead us whose wings for freedoms sake now soar,  
Into our hearts thy faith and courage pour  
Oh hear our prayer.  
Set Thou our course whose trust is laid in Thee!  
Oh Thou who chartest all eternity!  
Through cloud and sunshine, through darkest night  
Guide Thou our wings who battle for the right  
Oh hear our prayer.  
Father and friend, in whose almighty name  
We dedicate our lives to freedom's flame,  
Bless now our wings as on through space we wend.  
Bless us who to Thy care our souls commend  
Oh hear our prayer.



## HYMNS

### I Vow to Thee My Country

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,  
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;  
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,  
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;  
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,  
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

I heard my country calling, away across the sea,  
Across the waste of waters she calls and calls to me.  
Her sword is girded at her side, her helmet on her head,  
And round her feet are lying the dying and the dead.  
I hear the noise of battle, the thunder of her guns,  
I haste to thee my mother, a son among thy sons.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,  
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;  
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;  
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;  
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,  
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.

### Lord of the Universe and Space

*Sung to the tune of the Naval Hymn, "Eternal Father, strong to save".*

Lord of the Universe and Space  
Creator of the human race,  
Whose stars took place within Your plan  
Before our time on earth began.  
Be with us, Father, as we rise  
To brave the challenge of the skies  
Lord of the Heavens, by Whose might  
Mankind has learned the skill of flight,  
To span the world from land to land  
Released from earth's restraining hand,  
Be with us, Father, as we rise  
To brave the challenge of the skies.

Through sunlit days and darkest night,  
We dare to face the risks of flight.  
In speeding craft we soar to fly  
On hidden highways in the sky.  
Be with us, Father, as we rise  
To brave the challenge of the skies  
We thank You, Father, for the days  
Of golden dawns and sunsets' rays  
Accept our praise, O Lord we pray  
And guide us on Your chosen way.  
Be with us, Father, as we rise  
To brave the challenge of the skies.

### God is Our Strength and Refuge

*Sung to the tune of "The Dambusters".*

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!

### The Airman's Hymn

*Sung to the tune of the Naval Hymn, "Eternal Father, strong to save".*

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.

O Trinity of love and grace,  
True guide of all who fly through space;  
In peace or war, mid friend or foe,  
Be with them whereso'er they go.  
So shall our praise with heaven blend  
And joyful hearts to Thee ascend.

### O Valiant Hearts

*Sung to the tune of "The Supreme Sacrifice" by Rev Dr Charles Harris.*

O valiant hearts who to your glory came  
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame;  
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,  
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.

Proudly you gathered, rank on rank, to war  
As who had heard God's message from afar;  
All you had hoped for, all you had, you gave,  
To save mankind – yourselves you scorned to save.  
Splendid you passed, the great surrender made;

Into the light that nevermore shall fade;  
Deep your contentment in that blest abode,  
Who wait the last clear trumpet call of God.

Long years ago, as earth lay dark and still,  
Rose a loud cry upon a lonely hill,  
While in the frailty of our human clay,  
Christ, our Redeemer, passed the self same way.

Still stands His Cross from that dread hour to this,  
Like some bright star above the dark abyss;  
Still, through the veil, the Victor's pitying eyes  
Look down to bless our lesser Calvaries.

These were His servants, in His steps they trod,  
Following through death the martyred Son of God:  
Victor, He rose; victorious too shall rise  
They who have drunk His cup of sacrifice.

O risen Lord, O Shepherd of our dead,  
Whose cross has bought them and Whose staff has led,  
In glorious hope their proud and sorrowing land  
Commits her children to Thy gracious hand.