



A Rededication Service for
Lieutenant Thomas Michael O'Neill
43 Squadron, Royal Air Force

Wednesday 20 May 2026 at 11:00 hours
Le Grand Beaumont British Cemetery, France

Service conducted by Reverend Helene Grant RAF

Lieutenant Thomas Michael O'Neill



1 May 1882 – 8 May 1918

Thomas was born on 1 May 1882 in Westmeath, Ireland to Patrick O'Neill and Bridget Gaynor. He was the youngest of seven siblings, growing up on a farm in Raymalla, Clontarf. The 1911 census records Thomas as living on Prussia Street, Dublin, working as a Shop Assistant.

Thomas was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant on 28 June 1915 and joined the 9th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. He served the next seven months in the UK before going overseas in December 1915. In July 1916, Thomas returned to the UK to join the Royal Flying Corps at Oxford. He graduated from Central Flying School on 27 December 1916 and went through

a number of Home Defence squadrons. His name appears in at least one report of attacking German night bombers in 1917, flying his Sopwith Camel. In March 1918, Thomas travelled to France to join 43 Squadron, nicknamed the Fighting Cocks.

On 8 May 1918, Thomas was out on Offensive Patrol just after midday when his 43 Squadron patrol was attacked by a group of German Triplanes. He was in Sopwith Camel C8208, and his Casualty Report related that he was last seen going down out of control east of Ballois after being attacked. He was subsequently listed as missing and commemorated on the Arras Flying Services Memorial.

Subsequent research submitted by a member of the public has shown that Thomas was originally buried at Steenwerck German Military Cemetery. After the war, he was one of 112 individuals concentrated from there to Le Grand Saumert Cemetery, France. Although he was initially recorded as being a Lieutenant of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, attached to the Royal Air Force, the final Graves Registration Report only listed him as an Unknown Officer of the RAF. Lieutenant Thomas Michael O'Neill was the only possible candidate for this grave, and the headstone has been changed accordingly.

Order of Service

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.

We remember with thanksgiving Thomas Michael O'Neill who was killed in action on 5 May 1918. He, alongside so many others, answered the call of his country, served with honour and gave his life in the service of his nation, counting service to others greater than service to self.

His sacrifice is summed up in Jesus' words to His disciples:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. *John 15, 12-13.*

Bidding Prayer

Prayer

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we remember with thanksgiving all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for us in time of war. We thank you that the offering of these aviator's lives were not in vain. By your grace, enable us this day to dedicate ourselves anew to the causes of justice, freedom and peace; and give us the wisdom and strength to build a better world, for the honour and glory of your name.

Amen.

Reading

Lecture

A Song of the Air by Captain Gordon Alchin, RFC

This is the song of the Plane –
The creaking, shrieking plane,
The throbbing, rattling plane,
And the moaning, groaning wires –
The engine – missing again!
One cylinder never fixed!
Hey ho! For the Plane!

This is the song of the Man –
The driving, striving man,
The chosen, fittest man –
The pilot, the man-at-the-wheel,
Whose limit is all that he can,
And beyond, if the need is real!
Hey ho! For the Man!

This is the song of the Gun –
The rattling, stuttering gun,
The maddening, gladdening gun –
That chuckles with evil glee
At the last, long dive of the Hun,
With its end in eternity!
Hey ho! For the Gun!

This is the song of the Air –
The lifting, drifting air,
The eddying, steadying air,
The wine of its limitless space,
May it nerve us at last to dare
Even death with undaunted face!
Hey Ho! For the Air.

Reading

Lecture

The Airman's Prayer

Read by Warrant Officer Paul McGuire, RAF Halton

Pilot divine, and Lord of all on high
Thou art the starry squadrons of the sky!
Lead us whose wings for freedom's sake now soar,
Into our hearts the faith and courage pour
Oh hear our prayer.

Set Thou our course whose trust is laid in Thee!
Oh Thou who chariest 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.

Amen.

Address

Allocution

The Reverend Helena Grant RAF

The Act of Dedication

L'acte de Dédication

So, let us now bless and dedicate this grave as the final resting place of the mortal remains of Lieutenant Thomas Michael O'Neill.

O God, whose Son Jesus Christ was laid in a tomb: Bless and dedicate, we pray, this grave as the place where the body of your servant Thomas may rest in peace, in the knowledge that he now abides in your glory through the merits of your Son, who is the resurrection and the life; who died and is alive and reigns with you now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Exhortation

L'Exhortation

Read by Sergeant Joseph Jackson, RAF Halton

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.

Last Post

Sonnerie aux Morts

Trumpeter of the Band of the Royal Air Force College
(The Trumpeter plays by permission of the Air Force Band of the Defence Council)

Silence

Reveille

Katima Epitaph

L'Épithaphe de Katima

Read by Corporal Louis Healey, RCAF Station

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

Laying of Wreaths

Dépôts des Gerbes

Prayer

Prère

Let us pray.

God of peace and compassion,

as we lay these wreaths, we honour those
who gave their lives in service to others.

We remember with gratitude Lieutenant Thomas Michael O'Neill
and all who have fallen in the pursuit of justice and peace.

May their courage never be forgotten,

their sacrifice never in vain,

and their example inspire us to live with integrity,

compassion and hope for a better world.

Grant peace to the departed,

and to us who remain, the strength to uphold the values
for which they gave their lives. *Amen.*

Collect of The Royal Air Force

Requiem du Royal Air Force

Almighty God, who makest the clouds Thy chariots and walkest upon the wings of the storm, look in mercy on beseech thee upon the Royal Air Force.

Make us a tower of strength to our King 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 Lord's Prayer (all)

Prayer du Seigneur

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,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Prayers

Prayer

Eternal God, in your wisdom and grace you have given us joy through the lives of your departed servants. We thank you for the life of our fallen comrade and for those who loved him. We thank you for your goodness and mercy that followed him all the days of his life and his ultimate faithfulness to the tasks to which you had called him.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our Prayer.

We pray for all who have died or suffered as a result of conflict. Those whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, for service men and women, for civilians, for those held captive, each one remembered by and known to God.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our Prayer.

We pray for peace-makers and peace-keepers; those who seek to keep this world secure and free; for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our Prayer.

Finally, we pray for all members of the Armed Forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our Prayer.

The Blessing

Separation de Dernière Bénédiction

Go out into the world in peace; be brave and strong. Hold on to what is good; do not repay evil with evil; encourage those who are discouraged; support those who are weak. Help anyone who is suffering; honour everyone; love and serve the Lord with joy, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit. May God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**



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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