

# THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

A Harry Saltzman Production



"Kodai",  
Carter Lane,  
Flamborough,  
Bridlington,  
Yorks.

21st March 1969.

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your kind remarks on my contribution to "Briefing 5". I did not really write it myself, but got Tom Hutchinson to do it, because that was what Harry Saltzman was paying him for. They were my views, however, except that I had to tear him off a strip for his rather parochial Yorkshire views. I may be Yorkshire, but I'm not as Yorkshire as all that.

As you probably know by now, I have always been a great admirer of Lord Dowding. Even as a sergeant pilot, when he was as remote as God himself, I was acutely aware that he was having to do something which had never been done before, and for which there was no precedent. He was fighting an aerial battle on which the survival of the country depended, and it was apparent even to me at that time. However, at that time, I did not know that Lord Dowding had expressed doubts as to the outcome of the Battle. Even if I had known, I would not have believed it, because with the brashness of youth, and the hereditary superiority of the British the possibility of defeat was completely unacceptable. Ignorance of the supply position with regard to pilots and planes also enabled me to hold this view.

I also held the view, in 1940, that Stuffy was insular and unapproachable. As a sergeant this did not worry me, and I was more than a little thankful that throughout the whole of the Battle we were never afflicted with a visit from the AOC in C. I realise now that any apparent aloofness was probably due to Lord Dowding's shyness combined with the loneliness of his appointment.

The treatment he received after the Battle still baffles me. I cannot understand how the authorities were able to talk about the fate of civilisation hanging on the outcome of the Battle of Britain, and yet

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*discard the victor like a worn-out sock. I hope that with the publicity that he will receive from the film that the self same authorities will see fit to make amends. If Stuffy had lost his battle they would not be in a position to do so.*

*I was both delighted and very honoured to meet Lord Dowding during the making of the film. I had met him previously in 1946 at the first reunion of the Battle Of Britain Aircrew Association, and had seen him on several subsequent occasions, but when he visited Pinewood for the first time I was saddened to see the deterioration in his condition and questioned the wisdom of retaining the pictures taken on that occasion for this year's publicity campaign. To be honest, I thought that by now the pictures would only be of historical interest. I could not be more pleased to have been wrong, and it was a pleasure to watch Lord Dowding improve with each visit, and I'm now laying long odds that he will be the guest of honour at the premiere in September and that he will enjoy the film, sans cataracts, with binocular vision. I am also sure that without his help the film would not have been as historically accurate as it undoubtedly is, as he explained on the various locations and sets the politics behind the various canards and petty arguments which have since developed over the Parke - Mallory "Big Wing" schism.*

*I don't know if this is the kind of thing you wanted, but if there is any thing else or any changes you would like to make, don't hesitate to get in touch with me again.*

*I wish you every success with the book and am looking forward very much to reading it.*

*Best wishes, Bob,*

*Yours aye,*

*Ginger.*  
James H. Lacey

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