

14 Septen bet on

Dear Sandy,

My apologies for taking so long in answering your request for my opinion of Landau's account of his life at 13 Group. I finished reading his book on the day before our departure to visit our Son and Daughter-in-law in Ohermannsburg where we were fortunate in obtaining tickets for the Passion Play. This was a truly wonderful experience which we shall forever remember.

Returning to 13 Group and Landau. It is apparent that he went to the Group much against his will, a) with a large chip on his shoulder and b) fully prepared to find fault with everything and everyone there. I was serving in Essex when he was there so I never met him nor ever heard his name mentioned. I returned to 13 Group in October 1940 not in 1941 as I thought.

The R.A.F. officers, if I remember aright, were regular Royal Air Force, first world war pilots brought from reserve and R.A.F.V.R. of various ranks while the male other ranks appeared to

be regulars. The signals were made up of ex G.P.O. engineers: the W.A.A.F. arrived during my first attachment mostly, I believe, from the Royal Corps of Ballet and Edinburgh Art School! Most of the officers with whom we gurness came in contact were friendly, and in our view, efficient. One or two of the very senior officers of W.W.I vintage were great men who would regale us with tales of their exploits in Bristol fighters and the like.

Landau's description of the operations room is quite accurate but it certainly was not overheated, the atmosphere was reasonable and there was no shortage of air. I do not know how he got the idea that the Royal Navy occupied the room to the left of that of the Controller; personally I never remember ever even seeing anyone in naval uniform anywhere in the HQ the whole time I was there. Perhaps RN personnel were lodged at the Sector ops. rooms?

With regard to the method of plotting the course of aircraft on the table he is correct but forgets that the coloured clock

was used in conjunction with the similar ⁷
coloured arrows e.g. red arrows would be used
when the clock minute hand was in the red
sector. No plot ever had more than two
colours with it at any one time i.e. for 10
minutes. In this way the Table was never
cluttered with out of date information.

The whole atmosphere of the ops room
was always one of calm, quiet and
efficiency: of course one could sense the feeling
of excitement when raids developed and four
fighters were engaging but no one ever over-
reacted. As for a Controller cursing and
swearing over the loud speaker, well
neither I nor anyone else I knew there ever
heard of such a thing. If any Controller had
been so guilty I feel he would have been
finished very smartly!

Landon is also very unfair to all
ranks in his description of them as being dull
and the officers snobbish. There may have
been the odd dullard and the odd ~~snobbish~~
snobbish officer but I found the Staff of 13
group to be no different from any other
staff I encountered during and after the War.

They were mostly highly efficient, got on with the job and never "pulled rank" to my knowledge. I never came across any that I actively disliked. Sandau certainly gives me the opinion that he felt he should have been included in the circle of senior officers in spite of his being only of junior rank and was peeved when, naturally, he was not.

There was, of course, a lot of waiting about in the ops room and this was used by most people reading and, in the early days especially, by exercise runs with the sectors and guns.

Finally his story of the AOC and his conduct in the Controller's room, gossipping with Lighter Command in the midst of a raid; quite frankly I do not believe it and cannot imagine anyone, least of all a man in his position behaving in such an utterly stupid manner, putting his own fighters' lives at risk.

I am afraid that I have been rather

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long-winded in this letter but I have
tried to see how I saw things at 13 Group
and I resented deeply Randau's insolence
regarding those men and women ^{they} doing
an essential task which if ~~they~~ had
not ^{done} their utmost to succeed would have
definitely lost us the Battle of Britain and
subsequently lost the War. I have always
been very proud to have had the
privilege of working with such people.

I did, however, find the book to be
interesting, teaching me much of the
Polish Air Force in Britain and the
development of 14 Group. I shall return
it separately and am grateful to you
for lending it to me. Thank you for it.

Hope joins me in sending you our
best wishes to Wilma and you and
hope that you both are well.

yours ever

Joe

I look forward to visiting the 'Hole'
when it is restored to its former condition.