

FIVE UP

Laddie Lucas

How many lives can a man lead in a lifetime? Laddie Lucas managed to cram in five, all of distinction and fascination.

In the 2nd World War Laddie became famous as a legendary fighter ace and at the age of just 26 led the top-scoring 249 Squadron during the Battle of Malta. He provides a vivid and detailed account of this crucial air battle during which his squadron's aircraft were often outnumbered by ten to one. Later he takes the reader behind the scenes of some of the epic air operations of the war and describes the senior commanders whom he personally knew. For his wartime service, Laddie Lucas received the DFC, DSO and Bar and the Croix de Guerre.

After the war, Laddie entered politics. For nine years from 1950 he was Conservative MP for Brentwood and Chiswick. His accounts of his political exploits during the governments of Churchill, Eden and Macmillan are highly entertaining. After politics came business and possibly the most controversial of Laddie's lives – his period as MD and then Chairman of the Greyhound Racing Association. Greyhound racing had been highly lucrative 20 years earlier but in the 1950s faced major problems due to a gambling tax, the legalisation of betting shops and the growth of television. Laddie led the GRA with distinction through its troubled years and the company's portfolio eventually included White City and Belle Vue stadiums.

A happier pursuit was golf which Laddie had first taken up at the age of six. His victory in the Boys' Championship of 1933 was a prelude to many golfing honours – the captaincy of Cambridge, then England and in 1949, the British Walker Cup Team. In 1975 he retired from the GRA and returned to what

he had always considered his true vocation – writing. He had received early training as a journalist in Fleet street and now combined his literary flair with his own wartime experiences to write numerous best-selling titles on his experiences in the 2nd World War. He wrote two books of memoirs but is best remembered for his books chronicling the achievements of his fellow RAF pilots.

Five Up is now published in paperback format and with a new Foreword by Air Vice-Marshal 'Johnnie' Johnson, personal friend of Laddie's and the highest scoring RAF fighter pilot of the 2nd World War. A wonderfully illuminating book of a lifetime of rich experiences which will appeal to the general reader as well those interested in aviation.

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