

BOOK REVIEW BY AIR COMMODORE M J EVANS

With Lawrence In The Royal Air Force

by Paul Tunbridge



WITH LAWRENCE IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

**PAUL TUNBRIDGE
Buckland Publications Ltd.
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I came to Paul Tunbridge’s book about Lawrence’s time in the Royal Air Force with particular interest as my father, who joined on 4th September 1922 and whose number was 352140, was at Uxbridge at the same time as 352087 A/C J H Ross. When Lawrence’s own book “The Mint’ came out in the 1950’s, my father confirmed that the life was as hard as Lawrence had said and he had particularly

strong words to say about the harsh treatment handed out by the ex-Guards drill instructors. It’s probably 40 years since I read “The Mint’ as a young man so “With Lawrence in the Royal Air Force” revived my interest in those very earlier days of our Service.

Lawrence, his dreams of Arab unity shattered and broken in health and spirit, turned his back on military honours and offers of civil employment. Throughout his Oxford and Army career he had always been the odd man out but in the ranks of the Royal Air Force he found peace and happiness. He excelled in everything that he undertook, from great undertakings to the most menial of tasks, and he insisted in doing the job better than it had ever been done before. Without professed religion, he maintained the highest moral principles while admitting that he had failed to attain that standard of excellence which he felt undoubtedly existed somewhere.

His proposals for improvements in RAF administration are examined for the first time in this book. It is not altogether surprising that he did not favour boy entry into the Service after his taste in 1906 of the old Army’s initial training as a boy in the Royal Artillery, and his experience of recruit training at Uxbridge in 1922. However, his positive but unseen presence undoubtedly played a part in endowing Britain’s small air force with that spirit which permeated all ranks in the Battle of Britain and after.

This slim book is an absolutely fascinating read with a concentration of facts and references almost daunting in their range and detail. With the benefit of my own Service experience, albeit at a level well below that where political matters come into play, and, in the light of the present day obsession of the Press with the doings of celebrities, this book reminds us that things don’t change all that much. His time in the RAF was overshadowed by the hierarchy’s fear that he would get into the news and in some way bring unwelcome publicity to the

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