

Joe Cox, friend of Douglas Bader

The most famous pilot of World War 2 was Douglas Bader, later to become Sir Douglas Bader. The film *Reach for the sky* tells the story of Bader – how he had a terrible accident while showing off in a pre-War fighter plane. He was somehow released from the wreckage, taken to a hospital, given up for dead, heard a nurse saying so and resolved to prove her wrong, succeeding and trying for months to get back to flying duties in the RAF despite having lost part of one leg and even more of the other. He was so persistent in his begging letters that when he came to the notice of Winston Churchill, the great man, who had influential friends, asked the Air Council to test him out and if successful would they return him to flying duties. The Air Council agreed and the man given the task of testing Bader in a plane was a young Wing Commander named Joseph Cox. Cox was brave enough to let Bader have his head and passed him as fit for flying duties. The two became staunch friends.

In 1973 I was asked by the County Commissioner of Scouts in Berkshire if I would take the post of District Commissioner of Scouts for the area of South and South-East Berkshire. I accepted and was confirmed in this post by the County Chairman, one Air Vice Marshal Joseph Cox, none other than the man who had brought Bader back into the newly-developed Spitfire in time to help beat off the threat of the Luftwaffe in 1940. Cox turned out to be one of the nicest men I ever met. He was not pretentious or flamboyant in any way and his wife was equally charming. I remember their coming to Quantocks, our house in Crowthorne, and how pleased he was to be called Joe when I introduced him to my Scouts. I learned also that he was a member of the Air Council – the only one who turned up for meetings of this important body on a moped which he got great pleasure from handing over, with his helmet, to a flabbergasted flunky when he arrived at the Air Ministry.