



Under An English Heaven

Robert Radcliffe

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It is 1943 and sleepy Suffolk village, Bedenham, is jerked into the 20th century and the harsh reality of war by the arrival of an American bomber base and its 3000 inhabitants. For 14-year-old evacuee Billy, the US invasion is heaven sent, but a concealed past threatens this new happiness.

Under An English Heaven Details

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From Reader Review Under An English Heaven for online ebook

David Manns says

I'd had this book lying around for some time and finally decided I'd better read it! I'm glad I did. This is a wonderfully written, moving book about the American crew of a B17 bomber based in Norfolk during World War 2. It starts with carnage as one pilot loses his whole crew while another crew loses their pilot. You can guess that they are teamed up. The damage and post-traumatic stress they all suffer is movingly captured by Radcliffe, as is their growing sense of camaraderie as they rack up mission after mission on their way to that elusive number 25, which means they can go home.

Radcliffe's descriptions of the missions are tense and accurate, conveying some sense of the claustrophobia and sheer terror these men experienced as they flew missions deep into enemy territory. But the book doesn't just focus on the Americans. It also touches on the lives of some of the people from the village near the airbase, especially a young evacuee, Billy Street, who's obsessed with the bomber crews, and Heather, a teacher who's husband is a prisoner of war in a Japanese prison camp and who finds a soulmate in the damaged pilot Hooper.

There's a nice twist at the end too which I won't spoil, but this is a great book which manages to be both exciting and believable, while paying tribute to the brave souls who fought and died in the skies above Europe during those fateful years.

Will says

I thought this was an excellent depiction of life in the second world war, I was impressed to learn a few more things about the second world war and was also impressed by the amount of true events that actually changed the storyline. For anyone who like me is interested in WW2 I strongly suggest this book.

Gary says

A wonderful novel about an American air force unit in Sussex during the Second World War.

Nail biting and descriptive narratives about the air fights which can be graphic.

The relationships and characterizations are amazing.

John Hooper a commander who struggles with the guilt of losing his squadron and the English school teacher Heather Garrett who is his love and soulmate and helps him through his pain. The streetwise young London evacuee Bill Street, the mascot of the base and his sad history and relationship with his foster family. Claire, an English teen and her relationship with a young American pilot,

Characters well developed, heartrending and written in a way that we come to know the characters.

Great insight into the times.

The where-are they now chapter at the end is what earned this book it's fifth star.

Peter says

Based around a Flying Fortress squadron in late-1943, the story focuses on a crew and the inhabitants of the Suffolk village near their airfield. The flying is superbly described, realistic and tense, and the characters are fully believable, particularly the female teacher whose husband is missing in Singapore, a young evacuee who is not what he seems and several members of the crew aiming for twenty-five missions. Not totally convincing historically but a powerful and moving examination of the air war over Europe.

Yellowdreamer says

As war novels go, this marvelous WW2 novel hit ALL the right notes: Romance, heart-stopping action, evocative detail, where-are-they-now epilogue, heroism and self-sacrifice, a stunning twist, the idiocy of bureaucracy, and the desperate camaraderie of wartime.

I absolutely LOVED it!

Thoroughly recommended for fans of WW2 fiction.

Jayne Charles says

I think it would be true to say that halfway through this book I still didn't fully understand what was going on. I think it probably helps to know a bit about aviation, and a bit about the battle for air supremacy in World War II. Maybe. I'm not too well up on either. I stuck with it, though, and the book seemed to miraculously come together, I got my head round the myriad characters (and promptly re-read chapter 1). The story picked up, I really started to care about the characters, and I added to my knowledge of history along the way. The relationship between Eldon and Claire was skilfully written, as was the very emotional ending. I love it when books go into that 'where are they now' routine. All in all a good book that I am sure would be even better the second time around.

Gilda Felt says

The book begins rather slowly, which may have been because of all the characters that needed to be introduced, but it doesn't take long before you find yourself completely enthralled. The book was a joy to read. I came to love all the characters, American and British, whose lives were so changed by the War: Billy, the street-wise evacuee who is befriended by one of the bomber crews; Heather, the wife of a soldier missing in Burma; Hooper, the pilot who is still living down the loss of his first crew; radio operator, Gerry Via, whose first aid course fails him when its most needed, co-pilot Irv Underwood, who sees their first pilot's head practically shot off, and the rest of the crew of the *Misbehavin' Martha*, who must come to trust their new pilot. They, and many others, all come to life in this story of survival, and how those under continual threat deal with, and are changed by, their threatening circumstances. And the surprise at the ending was a sheer delight.

I've already looked into acquiring more of this writer's books, I loved this one so much.

Barbra says

I loved this marvellous, touching, real novel set in Suffolk during WWII. It was enthralling, romantic, with wonderful descriptions of flying a B17 Flying Fortress. Couldn't put this down.

Back Cover Blurb:

The Second World War has England struggling for its survival, but in Suffolk, in the summer of 1943, beautiful weather and bumper harvests almost distract the locals from the build-up to one of the most crucial battles of the war. At dawn, the hosts of bomber bases constructed among East Anglia's quiet hamlets dispatch American airmen for daring daylight assaults against Germany's industrial war engine. At the village of Bedenham, a dusk watch records those few lucky enough to return - and the many who do not. The villagers live in fear and apprehension, but for one inhabitant, things are splendid. 14-year-old Billy Street is a canny London evacuee, and he is happy to take advantage of the opportunities sent to him, thriving in the acceptance he is now receiving. Billy's teacher Heather Garrett is waiting in anguish for news of the husband who has been missing for nearly two years, while US pilot Lt John Hooper is struggling with the trauma that is destroying him; he is trying to come to terms with the death of his entire crew and his own shameful survival. His friendship with Heather brings hostility from the village, and salvation for both seems a distant hope.

Peter Lewis says

I was loaned this book by a very dear elderly friend of mine, so elderly that he had the envious job of servicing Spitfire aeroplanes during the war.

He was also one of the founding members of the magnificent RAF Museum at Cosford.

Under An English Heaven was one of those magnificently written and accurate novels of Wartime England.

When a story is told this well, it's hard to put the book down, it never becomes repetitive or boring, and the story even though it's fictitious has a great sense of realism behind it, you can almost envisage the events in the novel actually happening.

A book one can easily return to in years to come, it's novel writing of the highest order, it's only a shame all novels were not as descriptively brilliant as this one.

Gwynn White says

I loved this charming book. I almost cried when it ended. It was a book I could keep reading and reading. The setting, the atmosphere and the mood of World War II England was superb. I felt as if I was there myself. and the characters ... so real. By the end of the book they felt like friends. I would recommend it to anyone who loves books on this best time in modern England's history.

Huw Rhys says

I enjoyed this book, it was easy enough to read. It was a sort of "Memphis Belle" meets George Elliott meets Thomas Hardy somewhere between the fens and Wessex, mainly in the Second World War but a bit either side of it as well.

If that makes any sense at all.

It's a pretty detailed account of an American Bombing crew during WW2, juxtaposed with the obligatory forlorn love story.

But it has a twist - and I'm not saying any more than that! But I've read a lot worse - though don't really expect this book to change your world view either. A pleasant enough interlude.

Dark-Draco says

A brand new author for me and I wasn't sure what to expect, but I was pleasantly surprised by how much I liked this book. It's not an action packed, thrill a minute war story, nor is it a war-torn, hopeless romance. But what it is falls neatly between the two - a very clever move by the author and a brilliant way to tell the story.

The novel is set around an American air base during World War II and the village nearby. One of the flight crews suffers a horrific mission the first time out and a new pilot is brought in to get them back together, but Hooper has problems and a past of his own. Meanwhile, Mrs Garrett tries to continue as normal, teaching at the school, while her husband is reported missing and a young evacuee tries to hide his past with a new future.

I really liked the characters and the mix of stories. The writing style was entertaining and easy to read, and the plot itself was a nice twist of emotional moments. I liked the 'happy ever after' style ending, plus the surprises involving so many of the characters.

A great read and an author I'll look out for in future.

Amy says

This was such a touching, exciting, poignant story, with so much delicious detail- in the English countryside and way of life during WW2 and the American Air Force and B27's. I learnt so much that I never knew before. There were lots of amiable characters and great twists and a really satisfying ending. One might argue that there was some rather cheesy very American moments that take you back to the movie Pearl Harbour, but it can be forgiven for that because the writing is excellent... and I happen to like a bit of cheese from time to time ;-p

Fi says

As well as having a good storyline running through it, this book gives the best description I've yet to read of what the war in the skies was actually like for those fighting it: at times I really felt that I was there with them & the tension was almost unbearable - I really don't know how they withstood the stresses & forced themselves into those flying coffins day after day.

I always had an admiration for the achievements of all three branches of the armed forces during WWII, but, hats off those brave men of the RAF & the USAF!

Superb book

Deferrers says

Really enjoyed this novel although I would have liked it to have been longer. Such good characterisations that had the potential to develop further. Would love to see this adapted for television. Will have to wait for HBO's 'Mighty Eighth' TV release to get something similar. Recommend it for residents of East Anglia.
