

Born in Egham on 27th November 1895 he joined the Army in 1914 when the 1st World War began and by 1915 was a Gunner on the Somme with the RFA. He transferred to the RFC in late 1917 and was commissioned as an Observer with 104 Squadron flying DH 9's. His aircraft was shot down on a raid on Mannheim in 1918 and he became a prisoner of war, not being repatriated until Christmas of that year.

Reginald Alfred Charles Brie, MBE, FRAeS

He continued in the RAF with a short service commission until 1922 when he left to work for Shell Petroleum but remained on the RAF Reserve list. He gained his Commercial Pilots Licence in 1929 and later that year joined the Cierva Autogyro Company and became the official test pilot after their pilot had been injured in a crash. By 1931 he was Chief Pilot and Flying Manager for the Company remaining with them until the beginning of WW2 when the RAF called him back to assist with the calibration of the Coastal Radar System. Within the year, using C30 & C40 autogyros, he calibrated the whole of the system from the Isle of Wight to Orkney.

In late 1941 he was sent to the USA to try to persuade the Americans to use autogyros on ships for convoy protection. He was the first and only British subject to fly Sikorsky's R-4 Helicopter Prototype. He was demobilised from the RAF in late 1945 with the rank of Wing Commander. He visited the USA in 1947 on behalf of the Ministry of Civil Aviation to report on helicopter progress, on his return joining BEA Helicopters as Officer in Charge of their newly formed Experimental Helicopter Unit at Gatwick, thus beginning his first association with Westland when the unit was moved to Yeovil.

He was the founder member of both the Helicopter Association of Great Britain and the American Helicopter Society. He held both No 1 Helicopter Aviators Certificate and a Commercial Helicopter Pilots Licence. The Royal Aeronautical Society awarded him the British Silver Medal for Aeronautics in 1954

He retired from BEA in 1958 to join Westland Helicopters as Personal Assistant to the then Technical Director. In 1959/60 he was responsible for the planning and commissioning of the Westland Battersea Heliport. He finally retired from Westland in 1969 at the age of 73. He eventually died in 1988 at the age of 92 after a long and busy retirement.

He had always been keenly interested in the training and education of young aviation engineers so in 2005, to commemorate his life in Aviation, his daughter Elizabeth Brie offered the Yeovil Branch Committee a substantial sum of money to set up an Independent Trust Fund to enable the winner of the Branch Annual Young Members Lecture Competition to receive a Trophy and a cash prize. This Trust Fund is administered by a group of trustees separate from and independent of the Branch.



History of the Yeovil Branch