

BRITAIN'S TEST PILOTS



(Top left) Landing across the 30ft-wide platform of the *Fiume* in Spezia harbour and (above) creeping over the end of *Fiume's* platform while the cruiser was under way. The photograph on the left was taken during the deck-landing trials of the Pitcairn P.A.39 on S.S. *Empire Mersey* in Chesapeake Bay in May 1942.



still with the rank of Flying Officer—on the Inspectorate of Recruiting.

Eventually Reggie got his desire and, in August, 1921, he took a pilot's course at Leuchars, going solo after 10 hours dual. One of his instructors was F/O T. M. Williams (now an Air Vice-Marshal and Assistant C.A.S.). After a further year in the Service, he went on the R.A.F. Reserve—and is still on it, 24 years later.

For eight years Brie was with the Shell company as a salesman of petroleum products, but, of course, he still did the necessary 12 hours' flying per annum required by the R.A.F. Reserve. Most of this he did at the de Havilland School of Flying at Stag Lane.

It was on a reserve-flying flight that he was nearly "written off" for the second time. Flying a Jaguar-engined D.H.9a on a flight to Duxford, the weather went back on him, and landing in a panic near Aldenham, he ran into a wood and wrote everything off except himself. He was later found wandering in the dark some way from the crash, and was driven home by Clement Pike who was then one of D.H.'s new instructors, and who now runs the D.H. school at Panshanger.

Still keen on flying, he then took out his B-licence with the idea of doing week-end joy riding. This licence is still current, but

restricted to rotating-wing aircraft. His crash, and another experience on a mono Avro, made him want to solve the problem of flying slowly, and he remembered the Autogiro with its ability to touch-down with practically no forward run.

Reggie went to Heston to see it perform, and got permission from Cierva to have a flight with Baker, who was then demonstrating it. Later "Dizzy" Rawson, another Autogiro pilot, gave Brie 30 minutes dual on a C.19, after which he was allowed to go solo. The outcome of his keenness was an offer by Air Commodore J. G. Weir—who largely financed Cierva—of a job for three months and the immediate task of taking an Autogiro to a meeting at Orly, near Paris. Despite the shortness of the contract, and the fact that he was a married man with two children, Brie resigned his position with Shell and took on Autogiro flying.

For the next five years it was uphill work establishing the Autogiro as a serious flying machine. The school was started at Hanworth, where Cierva's guaranteed to give all the dual flying necessary to qualify, plus one hour solo,



The C.19 Mk. IV after Brie had flown it into 14 electric light cables at the White City.