

Interview

with

MR. EDWARD BRISTER

and

Pupils of Lady Hawkins' School, Kington

On

21st November 2006

Edward (Ted Brister) was a fighter pilot in the Western Desert, Malta, Sicily and Italy. In Palestine he trained gunners. He had intended to enter dentistry, possibly as a dental surgeon, but in September 1940 he visited a cousin in Ilford and saw from a distance the bombing of the London Docks, and this inspired him to become a pilot. He joined up on February 11th 1941, his 19th birthday. He did his basic training in Blackpool, then went to South Cerney, then north of Newcastle and then to Torquay for initial training wing, then on to elementary flying training school. He trained in a Tiger Moth, then went up to Tern Hill in north Shropshire, then finished the course in Molesworth in East Anglia. He then went to an operational training unit and ended up in South Wales, where he began flying Spitfires. He joined a squadron in Scotland for about 4 or 6 weeks and then got a posting for the Middle East, which meant travelling to West Africa and crossing the continent to Egypt. He was in the Desert Airforce in the Western Desert based in Tunis from 1942 to May 1943. There were five squadrons of Spitfires living under canvas, with open air toilets. He then went to Malta, where they lived in proper buildings, defending the island and making sweeps to Sicily which was enemy territory. He then went to Sicily in about July 1943, where he operated from the edge of a landing strip, again under canvas. In September he went to mainland Italy, on the Adriatic coast, and later went to Palestine.

Brister (second interview)

Bombing of the London Docks in 1940; training in Tiger moths; getting lost on a training flight; training in Spitfires; clothing for flying; Alice Marble the tennis player; travelling across Africa; seeing pyramids in Egypt; visiting Palestine; his recent visit to Israel; flying Hurricanes and Boulton Defiants in Palestine.

[Edward Brister Interview 2 Recording 1 – 00:00]

TED BRISTER: **That** picture is probably going to be difficult to ...

Q. Yes; that's very small, yes.

A. But I may be able to supply another one. So we'll assume that there is another picture of me in my mid-teens: keen on soccer and at that time involved in dentistry – as a possible dental surgeon – but the War came along and very soon I then took to uniform in, I think it was, February (on my birthday, February 11th 1940 ... No, I'll get it right) 1941. I joined up, went to Blackpool, kitted out, got a leave, came back and this other picture here may be worth scanning for that purpose. You can see what young sort of guy I was at that time. I suppose it really came about that I joined the air-force because in the previous September I became involved in one of the very early air-raids, which lengthened from the day right through the night, and that was September 7th 1940 when I was in Ilford. I was going down from Liverpool Street to Ilford by train for a wedding of my cousin and staying with his parents and during the day, as I say, they clobbered the London docks and set them alight and they didn't stop burning I suppose for several days because they carried on on that bonfire overnight and it was quite a ... One of the very early nasty nights, and at that time I thought, well, being a white knight, I want to be a night-fighter pilot to stop this sort of business. Well, you know, when you are 17 or 18 the thought of flying a Spitfire or something similar was a bit extraordinary unless you had, you know, a super education and gone to all the usual places to get in the air. There were things like Volunteer Reserve which chaps did instead of Territorial Army; they would do that till about the age of 18, but I wasn't amongst that sort of group. But, anyway, I joined up and you've got the picture there to prove it.

So in the early days I moved about to two or three places like first of all to Blackpool for basic training; then down to South Cerney near Cirencester ----

[03:10]

Q. I know that very well; I stayed there.

A. It was a very good unit. I remember doing my first funeral. Firing. I forget what you call them now, but it was about six people who were the pall-bearers and also you carried the rifles. No, you couldn't have done; you couldn't have had both. Anyway, I wasn't on the rifles; I was carrying the coffin. Several chaps had been killed in training. On another occasion I think we had a visit from the Queen Mum (who we now know as the Queen Mum) and that was all at South Cerney.

Then on to a place north of Newcastle and then eventually back to Torquay for what was your initial training wing where you go through about six weeks of study, which includes navigation and airmanship and aircraft recognition – all the basic things. And then, if you pass out happily there, you move on to elementary flying training school, and I think in **that** picture there's a picture of a Tiger Moth, in which I did my first ... I think it must have been ...

Q. Further on.

Brister (second interview)

A. The sequence would have been **there** I think – maybe.

Q. There was a postcard.

A. Ah, I beg your pardon; that's right. There's the Tiger Moth. I'm pretty certain the instructor sat in front and the pupil sat at the back. And one's first experience is exhilarating ----

Q. Can you remember your first time up solo and what it was like?

A. Yes, I can.

Q. Could you tell us about that?

[5:03]

A. Yes, because normally, having gone through about eight or nine hours, I think I went an average of about eight-and-a-half hours, which really, when you relate that to learning to driving a car, is a relatively short time, but it's all concentrated over probably about two weeks, and if the weather is right you get good flying. And I was flying from a satellite unit called Bray near Maidenhead and the sequence would be the ... First of all you would meet the chief flying instructor and he'd give you a briefing and then pass you over to the instructor who was going to take care of you. And then when the CFI (chief flying instructor) would keep tabs with all the pupils and the instructors and see how people were developing and then, at a given stage, when the instructor thought you were OK, he then would check out with the CFI and he'd then give you a check himself. And then, having landed, he said, "Take it off; bring it back safely." And it really is simply taking off, doing your circuit and coming in to land again. But that is still daunting anyway.

But, yes, I can remember the thrill of it, the scariness of it, because there's nobody there to put you right. And one of the very early things, even with the basic trainer, after you've been flying solo and also with more dual all the time, over 50 hours of flying, when you've made sufficient progress suddenly you find that the throttle is pulled back and the instructor says, "Sorry, your engine has failed. You'd better make a forced landing." And so one's always ... Did I mention this before, that you have to be alert to where you can escape to. So that's part of the drill on a basic aircraft like that because you never know when something might go adrift.

[7:20]

Q. Did you ever have any scares in a Tiger Moth or any other training aircraft?

A. In the Tiger Moth it would have been, yes. On about my third or fourth solo (and I was still supposed to be going round the circuit – familiarity, familiarization was the word I think they would use) and I thought, well, it's only about 50 miles as the crow flies to the place in North Buckinghamshire (and I was in South Bucks) where I could just show the friends back home, or where I was staying, that I was flying. So, of course, the usual thing: you go off and you beat up the place and many a chap has come to grief by doing that, you know, lack of experience (and trying to show off too much is always a bad thing and you learn it too late sometimes). However, I got through that part all right, but on the way back I must have taken the wrong railway line for navigation and so instead of, you know. getting back

to Bray, I found quite suddenly there was a balloon barrage ahead of me and I thought well I must be off track somewhere. And being fairly intelligent, I suppose, I looked down and there was Wembley Stadium, which was a bit too close for comfort, so I thought, well, hello, I'd better go a bit north and go a bit west, which I did. Fortunately in those few months, five or six months, before I joined the RAF, I was living at weekends at a place called Chesham near Amersham and then going through to Buckingham where I was situated during the week and that's where the factory was – always working ... That came later. Anyway, on the road from Chesham to Buckingham you passed a place called Shardeloes Lake. It was a small lake with a very massive building, which turned into a hospital during the wartime. Anyway, seeing the lake, I then got down, hugged the road and took the road back to ... and I'd been up nearly ... just over two hours and I should have been up 45 to 50 minutes. By then it was lunch-time and the Flight Commander was down below waiting for me and he took one look at my face and thought I'd probably learnt my lesson and he said, "What's the West Country looking like, Mister? Get off to lunch." You know, that's the sort of ----

[10:13]

Q. How close to real trouble were you, due to flying time-wise?

A. Well, another ... I suppose the real problem would have been if I'd have been up another ten minutes I would have had to have force landed because, you know, I would have been at the extremity of the petrol consumption, or whatever the fuel was.

Q. That leads on to another question, which might not have happened. Did you ever have to force land at any stage?

A. Not on training, no. Subsequently on ops, yes, but not on training. No, I was fortunate on training. I think I landed at one place not knowing where I was and ... But, no, it was a conventional landing but just, "Where am I?" because when you're up there you can't ask anybody really, in the Tiger Moth particularly, and also really in the training aircraft: there was no real intercom to base; it was just not there for that purpose. So I successfully accomplished the Tiger Moth elementary flying training and then went eventually to a place called Tern Hill, north Shropshire, and on to Miles Masters, going up by train from I suppose it would be from Shrewsbury, going further north to Tern Hill, change trains and you get there chaps who were on the course at the moment, or the next couple of courses, saying, "Where are you going for?" "Tern Hill" "Oh, yes, yes; you'll have problems up there." "What do you mean, problems?" "Well, you know, you have these radial engines or you have an in-line engine". The radial engine is one that depends on the airflow to cool the engine. The in-line, of course, has got a normal system for keeping the temperature right. They said the cowlings come off the top of the in-line engines and whip your head off, all these sort of scare stories that the earlier courses put on you. You know, you'd take it with a pinch of salt but you'd become a bit wary of all these things. Anyway, we ...

[12:34]

But the sort of thing one had to learn very quickly, I suppose, at that stage ... My instructor, I was with him one morning (he was a very good chap indeed, a very experienced pilot, because most of them in fact had been on ops anyway and so they knew what life was about) ... Anyway, in the afternoon, for whatever reason, he spun in and crashed with his pupil and the instructor who then took me over, he said, well, of course, these things are going to happen but they won't ever happen to you. And that is, you know, the stock thing. If you're on ops, it might happen to the next chap but it won't happen to you. I don't think that's just fatalism or destiny, but it's, I think, part of the defence mechanism. Fear is an amazing thing really because you can have a fear but quite suddenly you find that there is a greater fear that subdues the almost inferior smaller fear. I think we touched on this last time.

Q. We did, yes. And is it right to say the fear almost of showing your fear?

A. That's right, yes. I think one's self-respect in that sense is the greater ... Loss of self-respect is the greater fear and that, I think, applies today in whatever circumstance. But then, I think, reading the Bible, for example, fear God and you don't fear anybody else. That's very true. If you have a healthy respect for the deity then there's nothing greater. Sorry, I'm not preaching ...

[14:36]

Q. No; it makes sense. It does make sense, yes.

A. I think that's true and I think it certainly was the case when Francis spun in and this other instructor said that. It's amazing how names like this still stick with you.

Q. It's incredible, isn't it, yes.

A. But I suppose the casualties on training, whether it be at that level or on the Harvard [**check 15:03**] or the ... What do you call it, the service flying training, where you are flying ... You step up ... I mean, this would be about 1200 cc or whatever and you then go up to an in-line or a radial ... Master, Miles Master. That would be stepping up to about 500 or 600, which is about six times as powerful. That needed to be handled and respected. Then when you go up to a Spitfire or a Hurricane you were then going up to about 1100 or 1200. So, you know, it's a gradual progression. It's like ... Do you drive a car?

EMMA: No.

A. Not yet, but the time will come when you will and if you were to be given, shall we say, an Aston Martin or a Jaguar to start off with, you've only got on touch on the throttle and, phut! you're away like the clappers and that's the same. You need to have a progression. In fact, growing in life is a progression because you're taking on board things all the time that are different and more complicated. I find it very complicated to deal with computers; I'm still learning. And yet, you see, youngsters of even ten and nine ...

Q. Masters.

A. It's incredible.

Q. You talked about your training. Where did you finish up your training?

A. I finished up my training ... Because the weather of the back end of '41 was so bad, we went to a satellite unit just north of Shrewsbury called Chetwynd, near Newport. But then we got ... Well, I can show you. **There's** Chetwynd, and then we get on to other pictures. There's Chetwynd, not the Antarctic - look at the snow! So in fact we didn't ... Then we went off to a place called Molesworth, I think it was, which was more towards East Anglia and we then finished the course there.

[17:26]

'Night flying ... Praying George's ...' [check – 17:29] second or third ...' I can't make that out. Now **this** must have been, yes, Molesworth because there's a Hurricane. Because we didn't fly a Spitfire at ... Sorry, having got through service flying training, which was another six weeks' course, you then go on to ... From there you go to what they call an operational training unit and you then begin to start flying the aircraft you are likely to be flying on ops. But the final stage of the, if you were at a ... A twin engine service flying training, like an Oxford or something like that, you would go all along then on to a bomber OTU, but here our last flight on the service flying training was on a Hurricane. Maybe it stepped up subsequently to a Spitfire, but that was the next stage up, but then when I finally ...

Younger brother, who pre-deceased me.

That's right, this is where now we are at, flying, yes, down in South Wales. There we did our flying on Spitfires. I think that's the end of that book.

Where do we go from there? I think in fact ----

Q. Could you say how you managed to take so many photos? Were you always a keen photographer?

A. No, but I just wanted, you know, for family and just a record and I think, you know, personalities as well. But it was interesting to see how in those days you had your fitter and your rigger in fact lying on the tail plane as you revved up which later on we saw in action and instead of lying on it and just, you know, not going anywhere, just warming up the engine, a chap sat on the back deliberately to get out of the mud and what followed from that. But the OTU experience really began to face one up to what you would expect, or at least what you might have thought you expected when you went on to a squadron, on to ops, because things ceased to be just a training in the elementary and the semi-elementary stages: you are really beginning to face up to what you are going to be doing, and all you're doing is to try and make you efficient in the air as a pilot and to control the aircraft rather than be controlled by the aircraft. Because, if you're not careful you can be controlled by the aircraft.

What's **this**? That was 1946 ----

[21:00]

Q. Wedding day!

Brister (second interview)

A. Just came back from the Middle East, because we were engaged ... We thought we were not mature enough: mature enough to join the air-force but not to get married, you know; that isn't the way today, is it?

So **that** book has some picture that might just be relevant there. We in fact had free French; we had some chaps from the Argentine; we had a couple of Chinese chaps, a chap called Dramatakis(?) (he must have been Greek I should think). You would get all sorts of ...

Q. Did these various nationalities stay with your squadron or did they go off to different ...

A. No, this is before I joined a squadron, yes. But then you get, I mean, all sorts of things. That was George's second; there must be a third somewhere. And this is all the gear we had. You'd find you used to get very tired. **This** chap is nodding off by the look of it. Just waiting, yes - late night last night by the look of it.

Q. You mentioned the equipment. Could you tell us something about the equipment that you had to wear, comforts, any problems with cold and things like that?

A. The gear that one received at that time (which, as you can see, there was a sort of flying suit, certainly the nice fur-lined boots which were always a joy for everybody), ... It wasn't until we got to ... I'm not sure whether before the squadron we might have had a leather jacket which was fur-lined, but we never wore ... Well, (a) in the desert it probably wasn't necessary, cold at night, but hot during the day, but, generally speaking, it was too cumbersome. These flying suits were much better in one sense and I'm not sure whether they were in any ways fireproof at that time, but one wore, for example, three pairs of gloves, issue: one was a pair of silk-lined for warmth; one was a pair of woollen to keep the warmth in a bit; and then there was leather on top. But that really was not just for weather conditions. That really was in case of fire, you know, you really wouldn't want to fly without gloves in case, you know, you got burnt up in whatever way, for whatever reason, whatever cause. But these flying boots were the sought-after things; they soon got worn out. Anything else on gear? Well, it wasn't until later on you'd then be issued with flying helmets and goggles, things like that. Once, you know, you were involved in flying on a regular basis then you had all these bits and pieces, which were really pretty effective, very effective.

[24:17]

Q. Shall we move on to the ...

A. Any other questions on that? I think it's fairly well documented there and you can take your choice. The centre of Tern Hill was the Stormy Petrel, which was a pub, which was somewhere there, and of course, a petrel was a particular bird, wasn't it.

Q. Yes, of course.

A. I suppose that's why it was named. Because I think Tern Hill would have been a pre-War station which was always quite pleasant. But you can see ... The other thing that was interesting was that we had chaps who re-mustered from the army and there's one there; he's now in the RAF but he's still

wearing his army uniform and he was a lieutenant in the army, and in fact I think there's a picture of two or three. Yes, seven, six or seven, I think, free French men.

They are more private ones in the sense that they were ... Well, that was 1938; that was 1940. It's interesting here, this chap was a great friend of mine and I think ... And this chap. This was taken in 1940. David at that time was a navigator, or in training to be a navigator. Well, November 1941 he was missing. This is how close things came.

[26:32]

Q. Who was he?

A. That was one, there's me behind. This chap met me up in Sicily; he was in the air-force. But there's another chap (I don't think there's a picture of him here, but) at about the same time he was in the air-force too and he was gone by the same time. **This** chap lasted until D-Day, he was in the Navy, and he never came back. I suppose of the Bible class I was in at that time there must have been six or seven of us who were very close and I think there were two of us came back, which is always a bit saddening really. I'll just look at one particular picture. **That's** it. There are two of the army types who transferred. Several of them who took the course went back to, what are they called, army ... They still retained their rank in the army but they were doing reconnaissance work, actually in the army. That's got quite a few ... This shows how silly ... You wouldn't ever have heard of a person called Alice Marble, would you?

Q. No.

A. Well, she was a cracker of a tennis player and in 1939 (which would have been about the last ... I don't think Wimbledon went on through the war-time, but) Alice Marble was one of the champs, and I remember chasing around ... I said I'd take my mother to Wimbledon and I was living at Leigh-on-Sea, and towards ... I think the previous night my father said, "Do you think I could come?" and I said, "Yes, come along." I thought will my money run to this? So we got to the stage, of course, where he paid for the fares, got to Wimbledon and he paid for everything.

[28:55]

Q. And you got to see Alice Marble?

A. I chased round and in the end I took a picture of the person I thought was Alice Marble and it turned out to be not her.

Q. Oh, dear.

A. That's it, yes, 'Alice Marble,' but I don't think it was.

Q. Now, the next album ...

A. Will be **this** one, I think. This then follows on from ... I joined a squadron for about four or six weeks in Scotland and was just getting the hang of things and I was pretty well the last one joining the squadron at that time, so when a posting came up for the Middle East -- well, we didn't know where it was then, but when it came up -- I was the first one out, so that put me on the line then for going

somewhere but I didn't know where. But we then found ourselves on the way to West Africa to get across mainland Africa to get to the Middle East. Some folk went all the way round the Cape and had a wonderful time in the Cape being entertained, but that wasn't for me. But I enjoyed the way I went. But it is very interesting ... Well, not really, but, strangely enough, it's amazing how one stayed together. I can see two chaps there who came on, if not to the squadron I was on, another squadron in the same wing and it's amazing how sometimes you are grouped together. But these are just basic shots of Yaba, near Lagos, and this is the interior and lagoon at Lagos, 26 August 1942. I always liked to take a bath everywhere [unclear - 31:04]. You can't see anything for blacks, can you, and there they are extracting palm oil. Anyway, it was a fascinating education, it really was. And then we got to Lagos and ...

[31:20]

- Q. How did you ... You knew of certain stops where you could get fuel, did you, presumably on your long journey?
- A. On the journey ... This was whilst we were waiting to get the news when we would be going and how we would be going. Then the news came through we wouldn't be flying ourselves; we'd be flown in a Dakota and, of course, I can still remember the route I think. We went north from Lagos to El Fasher, Medugori(?) and just going east towards the other end, Khartoum, and that took us to the ... I think some of the youngsters ... Well, they're quite ... It's worth having a look anyway. And then aerial shots, last few of Lagos. Lagos to Cairo, 3¹/₆ of 1942. I sight Karnomes(?), Medugori(?) and the names of the clouds.
- Q. Good for geography!
- A. Finally got to Luxor and then, you know, we then got to the Valley of the Kings and had a look around there. If you feel like snake charmers, they're here. They were the ... A Douglas, DC 3, similar thing. And there's Luxor. When you think how old that is! Now, I'd better tell you, Emma, that **that** is the Sphinx, **that**'s me! Just in case you got it the wrong way round. But the fascinating thing is that, looking at these now, and thinking of the Nile and when later on, a couple of years later, I suppose, if not more, I was then up in a place called Baalbek, which is near Beirut, over the mountain into a flat area, and I think those pictures are on another album, the stonework where a man looks about **that** size compared with a column, all that stonework came from the Upper Nile. How did it get from the Upper Nile up the whole length of Israel, up past Beirut, over a mountain range ... ? You know, the mind boggles; you just don't know how they did it. I've probably got those pictures, as we go along. And here's Cairo and Heliopolis and the snake charmers, the shoe-shine boys, the swimming. This chap here was a dear friend of mine; he was on both [34:30 – could be Bow fighters but I can't find such a plane] fighters, Bill Fryer(?). I lost touch with him, but I had his address and (I didn't do it again afterwards because) I went to the address only to find he never came back. It gets very difficult to cope

Brister (second interview)

with with that, not only for me but for the person who was having to give you the information. This was, you know, about 1946 time. I'd been back a good while.

[34:56]

So there we have pyramids, the face at the top. There's a bit of trick photography. You've got a little statue of a little Egyptian ('wog' as they would call them, weary oriental gentleman) and he is holding an ashtray actually and this chap is standing in the ashtray. How do you make that? Trick photography: the camera does lie. And these are some very good friends of mine, yes.

That's right, the top of the pyramid still; there we are at the very top. You can't get up there now. And the stones ... Each stone going up was ...

Q. Was it almost the height of a man, each stone?

A. Well, you would have to scramble up. And **this** is then moving up into the desert, and there was a training flight for the group, four squadrons, and you'd be nurtured, taught. In other words it was really the desert operational training unit, because the desert was a bit different to others. So, yes, that's pretty general, all things up the desert. **He** didn't come back, **he** didn't come back, **he** didn't come back; he got both of those together.

I'm pretty certain **that** was at Malta because there's brickwork about. So that's that one – in your care.

[37:16]

Q. There's plenty more there, good.

A. And **this** one, have we seen it before? No, probably not. Do you remember I told you about the size of the columns? This is the temple of Baalbek, which is the god of wine, there up in ... way north, almost into Syria, Beirut, and you can just see a man there, and that's no deception at all; that's the ----

Q. Incredible.

A. And **these** are blocks probably about the length of two tables and square with them.

Q. An incredible engineering feat.

A. Absolutely. This, yes, I knew that was there.

Q. So where were you stationed here?

A. This was before I actually was stationed in Palestine; I think I was just on leave having come back from Italy and this was a chum of mine. This is a chap in fact who took the chap on the back of the tail plane; he was a friend of mine. We went around Jerusalem and Bethlehem and had a look at that area at that time. Little did I know that within a month or so I would be up there for about fifteen months training others with a bit of hospital treatment in between. There's another one that's an interesting picture here of ... We did get some relaxation at that stage – this is when I moved up to Palestine – between Jerusalem and Jaffa (which is on the coast) and so there was a ...

Q. Was there fighting and much trouble when you were in Palestine?

[39:14]

Brister (second interview)

- A. Quite a bit, yes, on and off. I remember ... I think the King David Hotel went up but I was about 15 miles, I suppose, from Jerusalem, but we were quite close ... We could get to the coast quite easily, so swimming ... We used to start quite early in the morning and finish about one o'clock and then recommence about six or seven o'clock in the evening, training others. But sometimes we weren't flying in the evening; we'd go on to night flying. So we could then get down to the Jaffa club, which was an officers' club, down at the coast. And these were some of the nursing sisters, and also this lady here (there's a picture of her again later), she and her husband ... He was Palestine police; they had a very rough ride. You feel as though he has a big load on his back; you wonder which is the donkey. These are our billets up there. It was quite pleasant, and there was a squash court. We used to be absolutely nuts, playing squash in the afternoon whilst it was pretty hot and then when it cooled off we'd then carry on playing tennis.

[40:43]

I took this album with me when I went to Israel last December - yes, last December. There is a place here that I visited and stayed in this place ... Yes, St. Andrews YMCA, and I stayed there in December, and this was 1944. The lady who was the manageress of the outfit, I showed her these pictures and she said, "Could I borrow it" because her father had been out there and he had taken lots of pictures and she wanted to scan those that he hadn't got and she was overjoyed to get those. But it has altered so much now. For example, there is a place called ... There were two possible sites of the crucifixion. One is what they call Gordon's Calvary, and you can see there how there is, it looks like, the plate of a skull, two eyes, and on top would have been Calvary. But the other is, of course, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. So there is always a bit of vying going on which we will never ... Well, not in this life, anyway. But this was a Christian guesthouse and I visited there, stayed there, with friends. **This** chap ... Well, here is the Palestine police outfit; there's the chap and his wife we saw a picture of, and his mother and father are in the picture, I think, somewhere there anyway, and there's another one there. But they had a really tough job did the Palestine police.

[43:03]

I think some of these I didn't take myself. Some of them look as though I bought them because it was much simpler to get pictures like that which are difficult to get, 'Shepherds' Field,' so called, where the shepherds had their vision and their dream.

I think we've come on to a bit more ... This was an interesting one. This was the ... On every Easter Sunday morning, they had what they called a sunrise service at the Garden Tomb with about four or five hundred people there. This was up in Galilee, those there. Yes. These are when I was there at the airfield training other pilots, gunners.

- Q. What did you fly in at that stage?

Brister (second interview)

A. I was flying two things. I was flying Hurricanes and also a Defiant, Boulton Paul Defiant and I used to have a picture of him somewhere, the chappy who ran out the line with a drogue on it for the air-gunners to shoot at. Paddy, his name was; he was an Irishman.

Q. The Boulton Paul Defiant was an interesting aircraft to fly? Quite a big double ... Two people?

A. Yes; two people, yes. It's the only time I've ever had someone in my ... Being responsible for. Because, you know, on a Spitfire you only had one or on a Hurricane you only had one. But that was only for training purposes anyhow.

And then I had a leave in Cyprus and I think that was ... **This** is Syria, Beirut. Then I had a spell in hospital because I went in for an in-growing toenail and came out with a suspected mastoid, as you can see; they shaved me. I looked like an Indian or a native. And then there was always a bit of romance going on between ... This was an RAF officers' hospital, so we had RAF nursing sisters and this is where some of them got spliced, I think, some of the officers, but I had my one at home waiting for me.

[45:46 – mobile phone interruption]

That's the final one, Galilee, with a typical fisherman. Three chaps on Lake Galilee, sea level. Always, always lots of kids following you around, wanting money or help. **That's** the Damascus Gate. It means, that if you go out of that gate, you're on the road to Damascus and you've got other gates round the city, the usual north, south, east and west. You won't see it like that now. I think this was taken in 1944/45, but it was always a very busy place, but it's changed completely. I doubt whether you'd see any camels there now. **This** is Cyprus. **This** is some of the buildings you see in Jerusalem. The final photograph here: when I was in hospital they encouraged me to do some occupational therapy, so I think I made six of these penguins and they all had names beginning with 'O' and Shakespeare's characters. I don't know why. It was meant to be daft I think.

This was a young shepherd boy with a younger edition of himself. But, you know, he probably wouldn't have been more than 15 and here probably about 10. Typical means of transport for the elderly. So that's that one.

So I think we're coming ... I think I've nearly exhausted my pictures now. How are you getting on?

Q2. OK, I'm just going to check that we haven't run out of time on this.

[Recording 1 ends at 48:30]

[Recording 2]

TED BRISTER: ... One is that – and I think we may have touched on this before – with the youngsters in Italy where I help in the schools there, trying to find things that will bring them out to talk, because they are very shy about talking in English and they don't want to be embarrassed, the usual thing about learning languages – and I know we settled on one discussion at one time of the changes that come about from the time the boy or girl are about 12 until about 18. I mean, you can never predict it, can

Brister (second interview)

you? When you are 12 and you think of the changes when you get to 18, if you could just try and note them down over those years as they pass.

Q2. I've got step children and the girls, there's twins who are 18 now and a boy who is 15 and another boy who is 11 and I was looking at photographs the other day of the 15-year-old boy when he was 9, 10 and 11 before he'd kind of done his growth spurt and everything and he was very affectionate and cuddly and all of that, and it's only a two or three-year difference, but he's now a young man and he is a lot more reserved in his emotions and he doesn't communicate as much and all of those things that you get from being a 15-year-old boy.

[1:29]

A. I think we are very bad, really, in helping people to begin to get astride of that earlier. There's a lot you can't teach and it's got to be by experience but, you know, I think of myself at the age of, well, in those, days, 14 I suppose, yes, I was 14 I suppose, when the Spitfire was beginning to be in the public eye, but to think I'd ever fly one, why, it was ridiculous. I wouldn't have thought of it. And then all the things that happen in that growing up period, and I think although we recognize that it's a much bigger jump in one sense and change for young girls to womanhood, it's still pretty daunting for men, for boys.

Q2. Definitely.

A. I think in this day and age, the whole emphasis now is ... It seems as though the girls take the lead. I think I would dread being a 14-year-old today.

Q. What do you think, Emma?

Q2. Is it bad being 14/15?

A. How old are you?

EMMA: Fifteen.

A. When you think of all that you can do now in a medical way you could never do three years ago. You can become a mother, and some do. When you think ...

Q. Not advisable, don't get any ideas.

Q2. Nick has first-hand experience of babies! Wait for a bit.

Q. Yes, hard work; leave it as long as possible.

A. Yes, but not as long as possible but to the right sort of time. But it's enough to cope with just going through the adolescent stage without coming on to a major change. And also, if a boy is responsible to think that he has fathered a child, I mean ...

Q. It doesn't bear thinking about, does it?

A. It doesn't.

[Recording ends at 3:49]