

# THE SCOTTISH CAMEL ACE

## Captain John Todd MC DFC

by Norman Franks

John Todd was the son of William Todd, born in Falkirk on 12 January 1899, living at 'Ferndene', Blinkbonney Road, Falkirk. His grandfather, another John, had been a transport business manager and then a fishmonger, but William became an analytical chemist. His mother was Annie Millan, born in 1873, daughter of William Millan, coach builder and founder of Millan & Sons. He had two siblings, William born in 1901 and Jean, born in 1907. John Todd junior, after considering an engineering apprenticeship, became a medical student at Edinburgh University between October 1916 and April 1917, where he was also a member of the OTC.

In April 1917 he joined the RFC as a cadet and gazetted second lieutenant on 2 August. Having qualified for his 'wings' at the CFS at Upavon, commanded by Lt.Col. L.A. Strange MC, (his Graduation Certificate No. 8606, dated 3 November) he was sent out to France where he joined No. 70 Squadron later that year. This squadron had gone to France originally as a Sopwith 1½ Strutter unit, but had converted to Sopwith Camels in July 1917, the first RFC squadron to do so.

It took a while for him to settle in but he survived his initial air fights under the guidance of his flight commander, Captain F.G. Quigley MC. On 19 January he and Lieutenant F. Hobson engaged a two-seater, which went down in flames over Warneton, credited to Frank Hobson. On 22 January 1918, he and Francis Quigley shared in the destruction of an Albatros D.V north-east of Houthulst Forest. Quigley scored

*70 Squadron's ground personnel posing for the camera. No caption needed*

*: via author*



three times on this day, bringing his personal score to 15. By the end of March 1918, Quigley had accounted for 33 enemy aircraft and been awarded the DSO and a Bar to his MC. Sadly he died from influenza on returning to England from a break in his native Canada, shortly before the Armistice.

Six days after gaining his first confirmed victory, John Todd sent down a Fokker Dr.I Triplane 'out of control' near Menin, and the next day, in a scrap with some Fokker Triplanes, he and Lieutenant J.W. Aldred, according to Todd, shot down one in flames that was credited to John Aldred, although neither pilot had this noted in their overall claims. Todd claimed another Albatros Scout 'OOC' on 18 February. However, a flight on 24 February was nearly his last. Flying again near Houthulst Forest, he was fired on by German anti-aircraft fire, one shell exploding very close to his Camel. The machine was splattered with shrapnel and some of the fabric on the upper port wing was badly ripped and torn. A report of the incident was sent to 2nd Brigade by Brigadier-General R. Brooke-Popham dated 25 February, compiled by the Engineering Officer of 11 Wing, RFC.

*In accordance with instructions Major Mead proceeded to No. 70 Squadron today to inspect the Sopwith Camel which had been damaged by anti-aircraft gun fire.*

*The fabric parts of this machine were inspected by General Becke (G.O.C. 2nd Bde.) together with Major Grey Edwards*

*A rear view of Todd's Camel B7320 after it was hit by enemy AA fire on 24 February 1918.*

*: via author*

