

as the *Felixstowe Fury*, a huge triplane with a wing span of 127 feet, a total lifting surface of 3,100 square feet, a bottom of three layers of cedar and mahogany half an inch thick, and five engines giving 1,800 horse-power, I flew successfully—it weighed a total of fifteen tons. On this test I carried twenty-four passengers, seven hours' fuel, and five thousand pounds of sand as a make-weight. Some idea of its huge size can be had when it is realised that its tail unit alone is as large as a modern single-seater scout.

At Hendon I had assisted in dragging the first twin-engined Handley-Page, at midnight with the greatest secrecy, through the streets leading from the works at Cricklewood to the aerodrome. The procession was headed by an army of men removing obstructing lamp-posts and cutting off overhanging branches, followed by a motor-lorry with two acetylene flares, and then sixty men hauling the machine along by ropes. At the time I thought she was a very big machine. But in the sheds at Felixstowe I found boats of equal size and horse-power and greater speed, and boats that were even larger.

There was the boat called the *Porte Baby*, a bigger machine than any built and flown in this country until 1918, and this boat was produced in 1915 and flown in 1916. Although it did little useful active service work, it set other designers to thinking, and was the father and mother of all big British aeroplanes and seaplanes. When fully loaded it weighed about eight and a half tons, but no scales big enough to weigh it were obtainable in the service.

It was so large that a Bristol Bullet land scout was fitted on the top plane, which, while the boat was in the air, was successfully launched and flown back to an aerodrome by Flight Lieutenant Day, of the seaplane carrier *Vindex*. This gallant officer, unfortunately, was killed later in France.

Well on in 1917 sundry young pilots took the *Porte Baby* out for a joy-ride, and presently found themselves off the Belgian coast being attacked by a Hun land-machine and two fighter seaplanes. Two out of three engines were shot about, and the big boat had to come down on the water. The Huns circled around firing at it until their ammunition was exhausted, and then returned joyously to Zeebrugge to report the total destruction of a giant flying-boat.

But while the tracer bullets were playing about, the crew were lying down in the bottom of the boat watching the splinters fly. When the Huns departed the crew repaired the engines, started them up, and all night long taxied on the water across the North Sea. The much-chastened pilots beached the boat, in the small hours of the morning, on the coast of England, near Orfordness. A sentry, believing, as he explained later, that at last an invasion of England by Zeppelin was being attempted, fired on them, but was eventually pacified. The crew arrived at the station very tired,