

at anchor in the river, and the outlines of the floating dock in which destroyers, battered by the seas or damaged in contact with the enemy, were lifted out of the water and their hurts attended to. As I stood sniffing in the harbour smells, one of our E-class submarines came slinking in between the guardships at the boom, fresh from patrol in the Bight, and wearing that sinister air of stealth and secrecy which marks even the friendliest of submarines.

Walking down the concrete to my left, I finally came to the pre-war buildings of the Old Station. These buildings were used by Commander Porte for his experimental work. In the early part of 1914 Commander Porte was in America, at the Curtiss Company works at Hammondsport, where he supervised the designing and testing of the American type of flying-boat. This boat was constructed with the intention, if it was satisfactory, of attempting to fly the Atlantic. It was a very big machine for that time, although to a modern pilot, familiar with the luxuriously fitted up six-ton boats with two Rolls-Royce engines giving a total of 720 horse-power, she would seem a funny, old, cranky, under-engined tub.

On the afternoon of the day war was declared, Commander Porte sailed for England, and a little later took over Felixstowe. Sundry copies of the original boat arrived from the United States in 1915. These were comic machines, weighing well under two tons; with two comic engines giving, when they functioned, 180 horse-power; and comic control, being nose heavy with engines on and tail heavy in a glide. And the stout lads who tried impossible feats in them had usually to be towed back by annoyed destroyers.

As the Navy people could not understand anything being made which could not be dropped with safety from a hundred feet, or seaworthy enough to ride out a gale, or as reliable as the coming of the Day of Judgment for the Hun, much criticism and chaff, some good-natured but some not, were worked off by the sailors during this period on both boats and pilots. But improvements went steadily on.

In the fall of 1916 improved and very much bigger flying boats, built in the United States to specifications supplied by Commander Porte, began to arrive.

By this time Commander Porte had got out several experimental flying-boats. He carried out his plans with a scratch collection of daughtsmen, few with any real knowledge of engineering; with boat-builders and carpenters he had trained himself; and he only obtained the necessary materials by masterly wangling. He frequently started a new boat and then asked the authorities for the grudging permission. But in all things connected with the building of flying-boats his insight amounted to genius, and the different types of boats kept getting themselves born. His latest boat, known unofficially as the *Porte Super Baby*, or officially