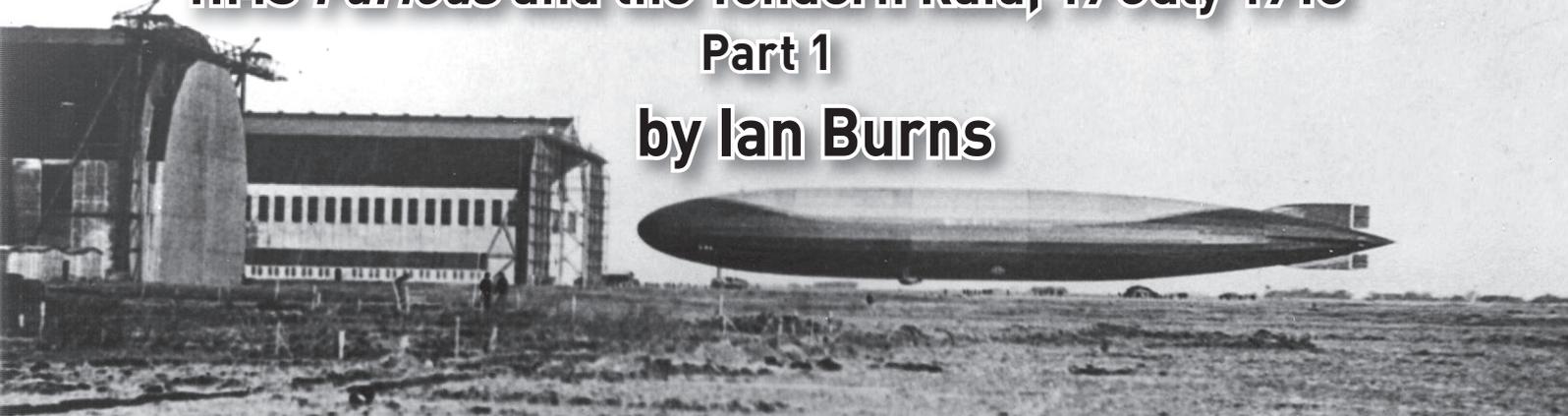


SOME RAID THAT, BY CRIPES!

HMS *Furious* and the Tondern Raid, 19 July 1918

Part 1

by Ian Burns



IN FORWARDING THE REPORTS OF THE TONDERN RAID to the Admiralty on 23 July 1918, Admiral Sir David Beatty, C-in-C Grand Fleet, wrote, ... *that it was a most creditable performance on the part of the Royal Air Force engaged.* A comment with which the Admiralty was pleased to concur. High praise indeed given the notable restraint within the Royal Navy when expressing compliments.

Tondern was the first attack, as opposed to a reconnaissance or interception, by naval landplanes launched from the deck of an aircraft carrier. The achievement did not happen overnight. The Royal Navy, RNAS and RAF spent many years developing the ships, aircraft and techniques to make it possible. Even then it was a partial success as none of the aircraft returned to their aircraft carrier. If they had had the fuel to return to their ship, it is improbable that any of the pilots would have attempted to land back aboard. That is a small part of the story to be told.

To tell the complete story, it is necessary to start with some of the steps taken towards attaining even this limited objective.

THE BRITISH SEARCH FOR TONDERN

For the naval airmen, pilots and observers of the RNAS and RAF their battleground was the sky and weather over the North Sea. On rare occasions would they meet their fellow airmen from the *Marine Fleigerabteilung* or *Marine Luftschiffabteilung*, but the sea was always there. Taking off from the flight decks of seaplane and aircraft carriers, the turrets ramps of the major ships and the tiny platforms of the light cruisers, they knew they could not return. At the end of their mission they had to choose between internment, prison camp, or ditching in the North Sea. Many felt they were not doing their share and wished they were flying against the enemy over the trenches in France. A handful were able to transfer, but their skills were special and the fleet reluctant to let them go.

The North Sea was also the battleground of the warships throughout the First World War. On a map it seems wide open, but natural and man-made hazards restricted access, especially in the southern section. The Dogger Bank and Horns Reef effectively cut the North Sea into two parts,

British and German minefields further reduced operational freedom of action. The North lay within the Grand Fleet's purview, to the south the Harwich Force held sway. The latter operated with the seaplane carriers in the first years of the war but, by 1917, naval aviation operations had come under direct control of the Grand Fleet.

Whilst both sides used aircraft and airships to patrol their coastal waters, only the Zeppelins of the *Marine Luftschiffabteilung* had the ability to operate for extended

