

# World War I

## *'The First Air War at Sea'*

Early in the First World War, flying boats, seaplanes and airships were thrust into battle over the ocean. The airplane was barely 11 years old when it went to war. By the age of 15, it had matured into a formidable weapon. When not delivering death and chaos to the enemy, it was helping other arms, notably artillery, to be more effective. With the exception of moving troops and heavy cargo, aircraft in 1914-18 carried out the same functions they would in the Second World War, including deployment against submarines.

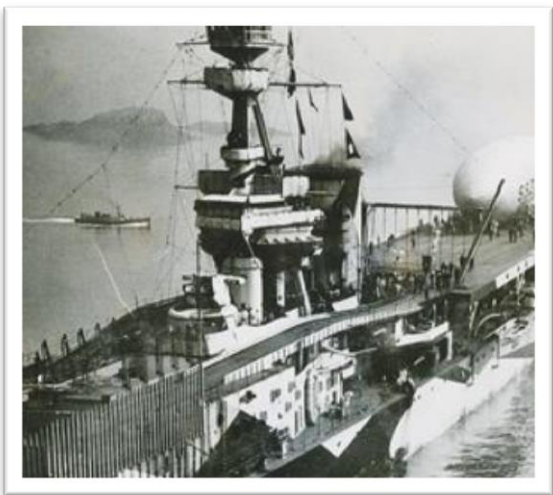
That role had been forecast before the war, but the airplanes first needed considerable improvement. Flying over the sea was inherently hazardous, so engine reliability needed attention if the planes were not to be nursemaid by the ships they were supporting. Next came the matter of improving range, then adding a reliable and effective ordnance load. Not surprisingly, the greater burden of anti-submarine operations fell to float-equipped sea-planes and flying boats. Nevertheless, the technology had to evolve, including strengthening floats and hulls. All major powers tried to develop effective anti-submarine aircraft, none so extensively as Great Britain. The Royal Naval Air Service (merged into the new Royal Air Force on April 1, 1918) was in the forefront of both research and operations, and Canadians were in the thick of it.

The full article is available at

<https://legionmagazine.com/en/2016/02/the-first-air-war-at-sea/>



A signaler in the gondola of British Airship No. 37 uses flags to send a message to a convoy. By November 1918, the Royal Air Force had more than 100 airships.



The British battlecruiser HMS Furious was fitted with flight decks fore and aft. A Sea Scout Zero non-rigid airship, or blimp, is on the stern deck.

The underpowered de Havilland DH.6 was useful as a “scarecrow” to warn away U-boats. Some 44 Canadian pilots and two Canadian observers served with Britain’s DH.6 units. →



The twin-engine Blackburn Kangaroo, introduced in 1918, was the war’s most effective anti-submarine aircraft. Lieutenant Robert R. Richardson of Guelph, Ont., flew the Kangaroo in five U-boat attacks.