

and Liverpool, across to Manchester, Sheffield and Hull, with Burton-on-Trent being hit several times during the night. The disruption to industry was obviously great and the toll of death and injury was heavy, with more than seventy killed and over a hundred injured.

After the raid, L-19 was in a precarious condition, having been in constant difficulties with engine trouble. Around dawn, Loewe coaxed his ship back in the general direction of Germany but at their nearest point to home neutral Dutch coastal gunners opened fire on them and drove them back out to sea. With only one of four engines functioning and with a strong southerly wind blowing, L-19 drifted out of sight of land and finally and very slowly sank into the North Sea. The story of how the water logged hull was discovered the following day by the Grimsby trawler *King Stephen* has been told with minor variations in all the many Zeppelin histories written to date. All relate how the skipper spoke with the crew of L-19 but despite their entreaties left them to drown. When the German authorities later received messages contained in bottles washed up on Scandinavian shores they had sufficient facts to mount a world-wide anti-British campaign.

An historian of a later age, Colin Walker, news editor of the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph*, researched the story of the *King Stephen* and besides interviewing two surviving members of the original crew, the Burret brothers, delved into Admiralty archives. A brief extract from Walker's very comprehensive account in two successive issues of his newspaper in March, 1964, relates how the trawler skipper

“refused to take the survivors on board, on the grounds that they could overpower her crew and take the trawler back to Germany. Instead, skipper ‘Mad Brummie’ Martin steamed off to find a bigger ship capable of accommodating the Germans in safety. Skipper Martin’s report to the guardship at the mouth of the Humber sent patrol vessels racing off into the North Sea to pick up the airmen, but they were never found. In the position given by Skipper Martin, nothing was found to suggest that a Zeppelin had ever been there — no bodies — no wreckage — nothing!

“The question was, what happened in the North Sea on February 2nd, 1916, the day the *King Stephen* sighted the Zeppelin? In Grimsby, the naval authorities pressed their investigation of Skipper Martin’s report and turned up the astonishing fact that he had deliberately given an incorrect position for the Zeppelin.

THE FIRST BATTLE OF BRITAIN?

“The plain truth was that Martin had been fishing in a prohibited zone of the North Sea, the Cleaver Bank. The naval staff monograph states . . . ‘The *King Stephen* steamed off to find a patrol boat, the shouts of the Germans to be saved dying away in the distance, but it was not until she reached the Humber in the morning of February 3rd, 1916, that she found any vessel to receive her report. Even then, her skipper gave the wrong position. He had been fishing in a prohibited area and did not wish to incriminate himself . . .’

“The position he gave was 40 miles short of that of the Zeppelin, the one in which Martin should have been fishing!”

After this, activity by the Naval airships again ceased for several weeks, but in the meantime the Army crews were very much occupied on both the eastern and western fronts. In particular, the Zeppelins were being used to augment the assaults being made on Verdun, with the result that LZ 70 was shot down on 21st January 1916.