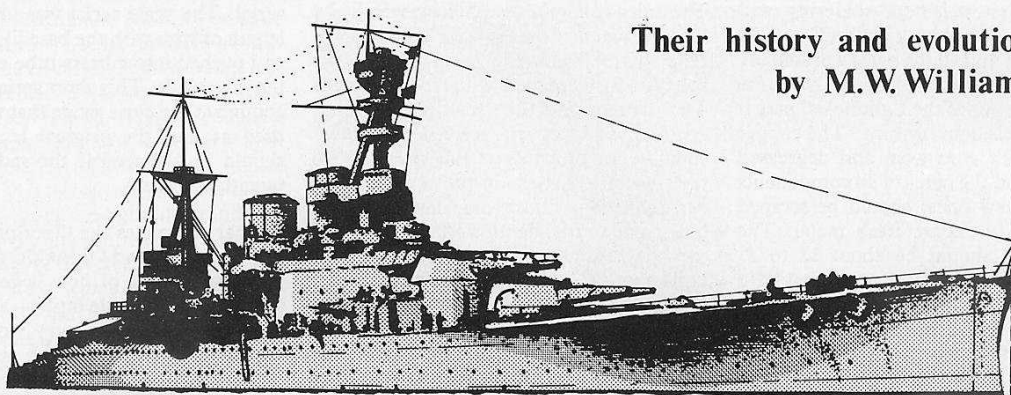


Their history and evolution
by M.W. Williams.



British Battlecruisers Part 4

Furious

This ship was originally planned as a light battlecruiser. It would have had the largest calibre of guns to be carried by any British capital ship. She was to be armed with two 18in pieces in single turrets forward and aft (similar to the 'Courageous' class layout), but shortly before her completion, it was decided to carry out a partial conversion of this large, fast, lightly armoured ship into a hybrid cruiser carrier.

She emerged from her builder in this unique configuration in July 1917, and joined service in the 1st cruiser squadron, with her near sister ships the *Courageous* and *Glorious*. But she did not remain here for long, from November 1917 to March 1918 she was taken in hand for further modification, which involved the removal of the remaining heavy gun, and altering

the aft section of the ship to provide an additional hangar and flight handling deck.

It was in this slightly improved aircraft carrier arrangement that she carried out her first offensive action, when she successfully operated her aircraft against the German Zeppelin base at Tondern on 19 July 1918.

For some years after the War, she still retained her original bridge structure positioned right in the middle of the aircraft handling area, which greatly hindered and endangered flight operations. She was therefore sent to Devonport dockyard for an extensive conversion which lasted from 1922-1925, and emerged as a full aircraft carrier, so much so that she can no longer be considered a British battlecruiser type. However, readers may still be interested to know that she went on in her new role to see a lot of action during the Second World War, of which perhaps her participation in

the air attacks on the *Tirpitz* is the most well known.

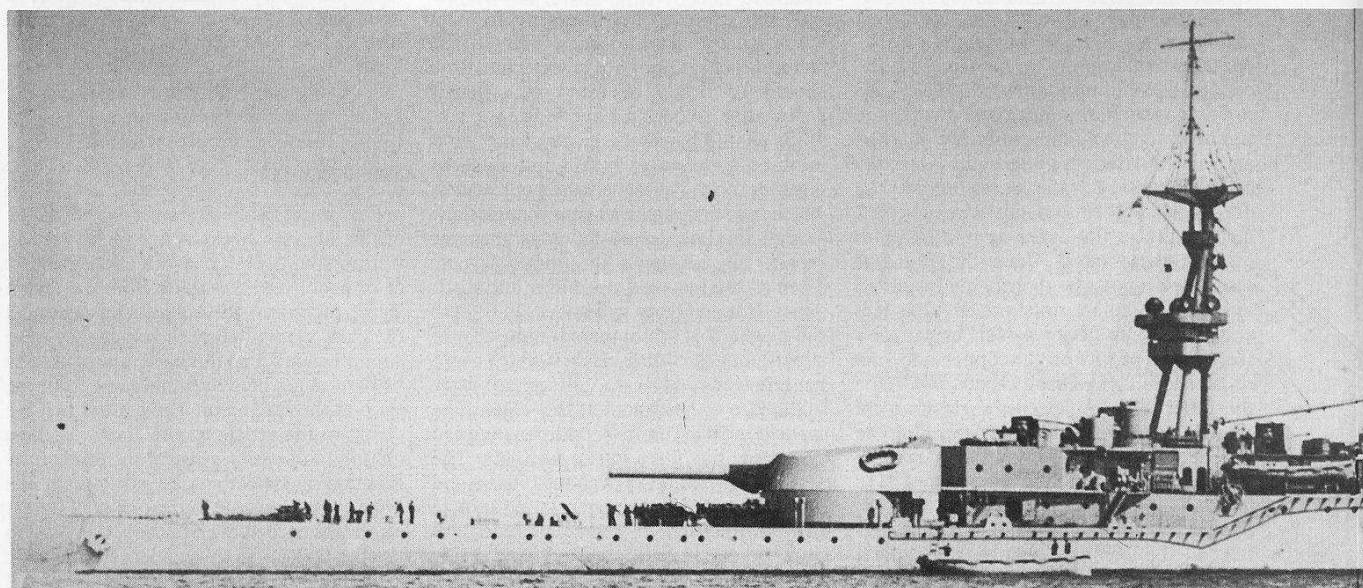
She survived the war, serving as an active unit right up until May 1945, after which she was placed into reserve, and finally scrapped in 1948.

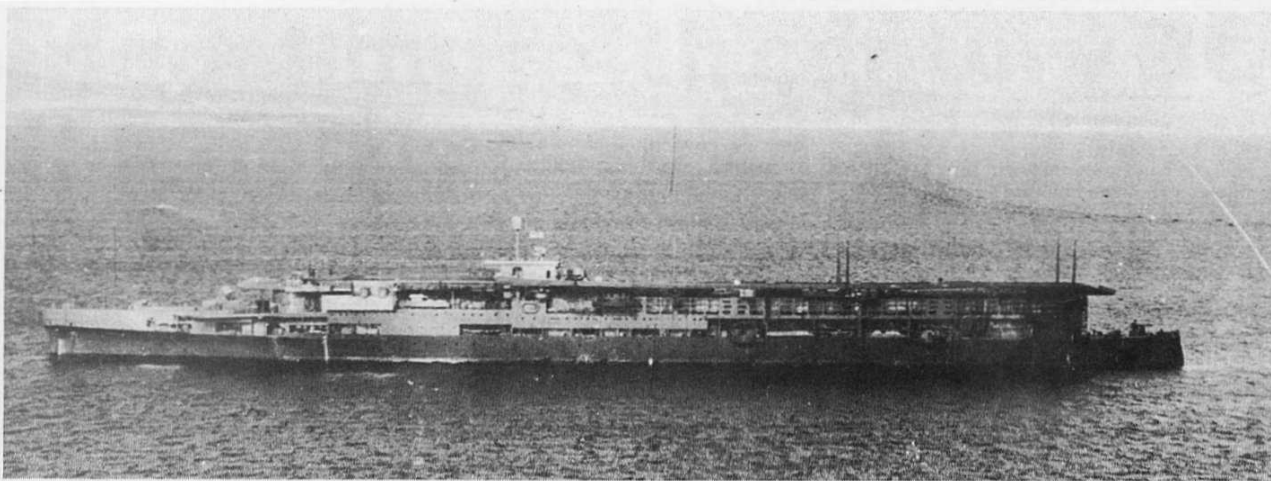
Courageous

On joining the Grand Fleet in January 1917 HMS *Courageous* served first with the 3rd light cruiser squadron and soon afterwards the 1st CS, where she saw action on 27 November 1917 against German light forces in the Heligoland Bight area.

After the War she served as a gunnery training ship at Portsmouth, then as the flagship of the reserve fleet. The *Courageous* and her sister were undoubtedly freak battlecruisers — they had a small number of the heaviest possible guns fitted onto

A splendid starboard view of HMS *Furious* in 1917, with a pinnace alongside about to collect stores. Note the Sopwith 1½ strutters behind the protective barrier (IWM-B3428).





HMS Furious in home waters during World War 2. The original battlecruiser shape can easily be seen in the outline of the lower hull (MoD).

large underprotected hulls which considerably weakened them. It looked at one time as if they would be scrapped but although they were no longer required by the Royal Navy in their existing form, their large hulls capable of high speeds made them perfect for conversions into aircraft carriers.

The *Courageous* was taken in hand for this extensive work at Devonport dockyard from June 1924 until March 1928. Her final shape closely resembled the *Furious* except that both she and her sister the *Glorious* had large island structures on the starboard side of the flight deck, whilst the *Furious* had a very distinct flush flight deck for most of her career, only obtaining a low bridge structure late in her life.

The *Courageous* was torpedoed and sunk by U 29 on 17 September 1939 off the West coast of Ireland.

Glorious

Completed in January 1917, HMS *Glorious* became the flagship of the 3rd light cruiser squadron and later the 1st CS, where she managed to be present at the brief action in

the Heligoland Bight in November 1917.

In 1919 she became a gunnery training ship at Devonport, and along with the *Courageous* it was later decided to convert her into a large fleet carrier. Work started on her at Rosyth dockyard in February 1924, but was completed at the Devonport dockyard in January 1930. Both she and her sisters went on to perfect fleet/aircraft operations during the following years of peace, serving in the Mediterranean fleet for much of their time.

The *Glorious* was sunk by gun fire from the *Schornhorst* and *Gneisenau* off the Norwegian coast on 8 June 1940.

Incomparable

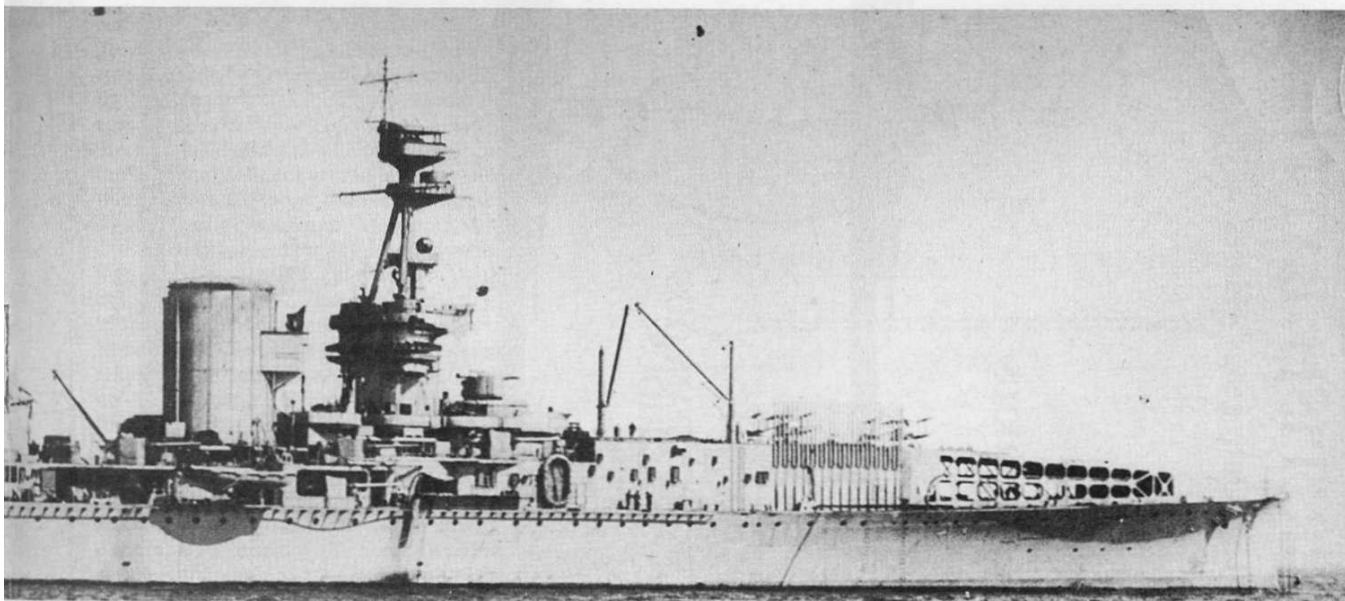
The three ships described above owed their creation to one man, Admiral Fisher, and his singularly daring plan to build a fleet of shallow draught, fast, heavily armed ships to support an attempt to penetrate the Baltic. The idea was to land an army on the Pomeranian coast of Germany and from there launch an attack on Berlin and knock Germany out of the war.

The large units that he completed turned

out to be these three ships detailed above which are sometimes referred to as the 'Outrageous' class. They were not however, the final expression of Admiral Fisher's obsession. Just before he left the Admiralty in 1915, he instigated a project that would have produced a massive battlecruiser, armed with no less than six 20in guns on a large hull protected by a narrow (but substantial for a Fisher ship) 11in belt, which could achieve a maximum speed of 35 knots; a truly uncatchable battlecruiser, the ultimate Fisher design for the Baltic project. But with his removal from office in 1915 the plans he had championed were forgotten and the leviathan HMS *Incomparable* was never built.

Part 1 of British Battlecruisers appeared in May 1982, pages 438-41, Part 2 in June 1982, pages 483-85, and Part 3 in September 1982, pages 23-26.

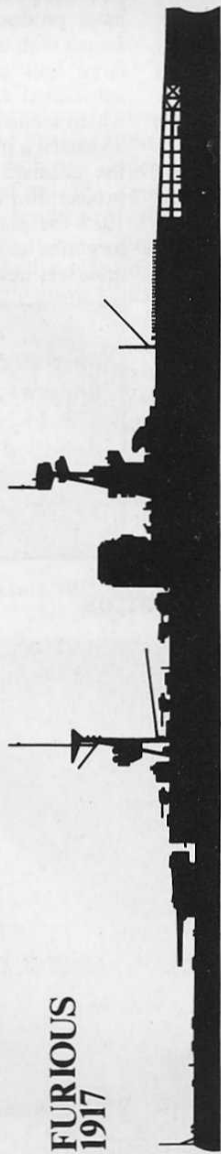
Turn page for battlecruiser silhouettes.



BRITISH BATTLECRUISERS

The 'Outrageous' classes

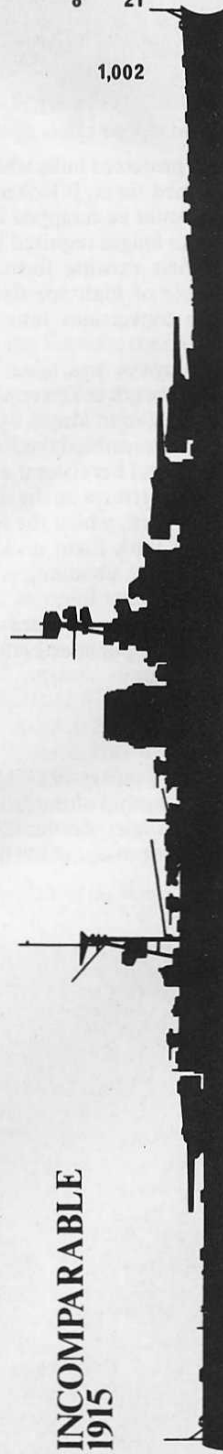
FURIOUS
1917



COURAGEOUS
GLORIOUS
1916



INCOMPARABLE
1915



the projected super battlecruiser.

		Courageous	Glorious	
Laid down	8 6 15	28 3 15	1 5 15	projected 1915
Completed	4 7 17	1 17	1 17	
Fate	scrapped 1948	sunk 17 9 39	sunk 8 6 40	
Deep load, tons	22,890		22,690	51,000
Max knots	30.5		31.6	35.0
Belt, inches	3		3	11
Main guns (No & inches)	1 18	4 15		6 20
Sec, guns	11 5.5	18 4		19 4
Torp, tubes	2 21	2 21		8 21
Aircraft	10			
Feet overall	786.5		786	1,002