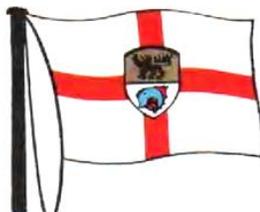


The Association of Dunkirk Little Ships



Hon. Admiral – HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO

Commodore – Mr Richard Basey

Vice Commodore – Mr Ian Gilbert

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dunkirk Veterans on Little Ships For Queen's Jubilee

14 May 2012 - The Association of Dunkirk Little Ships (ADLS) is pleased to announce details of the veterans from Dunkirk who we are privileged to carry during the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant on 3 June.

We are pleased that three Dunkirk veterans will be carried aboard our Little Ships and some of their personal stories are described below.

Vic Viner (embarked on Nyula)

Harold Victor Viner joined the Royal Navy in 1933. In 1940 he was landed from HMS ESK, an E-Class destroyer with other members of the RN to help organise the evacuation of the BEF from the beaches of Dunkirk. After several days Vic suffered a near-miss from a Stuka's bomb and was blown in to the water. He regained consciousness still with his tin hat and trousers on but with his jacket completely gone. Vic cannot remember how he got back to England. Vic cannot think of Dunkirk without recalling his brother who was serving at the same time on G-Class Destroyer GRENADE. Grenade was hit and abandoned off the beaches and Vic's brother was picked up by the paddle steamer Crested Eagle. A short while later Crested Eagle was bombed between the funnel and the engine room. As she sunk her fuel oil ignited and the blaze that followed claimed over 300 lives. Vic's brother was amongst the victims.

Reg Vine (embarked on Janthea)

In May 1940 Reg was a Sea Cadet with T.S. Phoenix (Twickenham Sea Cadets) based at Eel Pie Island, Twickenham. The unit held frequent training 'expeditions' so when on May 30th Reg was asked if he would like to participate in a 'potentially exciting' trip on the unit launch RUMMY II. He quickly had his father sign the necessary permission. Commanded by Sea Cadet Lieutenant Harry Sidmouth-Willing and crewed by three other Cadets and Sub Lieutenant Goodwin RUMMY II took two unpowered life boats in tow and headed down stream. At Richmond they pulled in for supplies as by then it was clear, due to the large number of boats on the river heading down stream, that a major enterprise was underway. Here they had an opportunity to 'jump ship' but of course no one did. From Richmond, RUMMY II followed a Joseph Mears launch (possibly Kingwood or Marchioness) and arrived at Ramsgate late on May 30th. At Ramsgate Reg declared his age to be 16 years and was issued a 'tin hat', a Lee Enfield rifle and pocket full of .303 rounds. He was in the war!

The records show that on June 1st tug SUN IV took RUMMY II and one other launch (which Reg believes was MUTTON JEFF) in tow. They departed at 1515, suffered an air attack by three German bombers at 1730 (10 bombs dropped but no hits) and arrived off Dunkirk at 2130.

Before departing Ramsgate they had been instructed to head for the Mole at Dunkirk. The Mole was a long stone and wooden jetty at the mouth of the harbour. With deep water on both sides, the Mole was ideal for marshalling and boarding large numbers of men quickly on to the larger ships. However the Mole was a perfect target for the Stuka dive bomber of the Luftwaffe and no place for a 30ft wooden Sea Cadet launch, so RUMMY II made for the beaches at Bray Dunes. Still with the two lifeboats in tow, RUMMY II now settled down to what was the primary role of the Little Ships – that of acting as a shuttle between the beach of the larger Royal Navy and civilian ships lying approximately half a mile off shore. The life boats were now rowed by two Sea Cadets in to the shallows where the soaking men waiting evacuation were collected and transferred to RUMMY II.

RUMMY II, when full to the gunnels with about 20 troops, motored out to the waiting ships and troops were transferred off by any means available such as ropes thrown over the side, scrambling nets or – for the lucky ones – ships gangways. Reg clearly remembers the disorder on the beaches; the continual Luftwaffe attacks and dreadful sights no 15 year old should ever see. During that time they transferred several hundred troops to the waiting ships. Crews of the RN Destroyers provided extra ammunition for Reg's Lee Enfield, fuel and supplies. During the night RUMMY II tied on to a waiting ship and some much needed rest was fitfully obtained. Throughout the two days working off the beaches, RUMMY II was under constant attack but miraculously none of the crew was hurt despite RUMMY II receiving several hits of a minor nature.

After two days off the beach RUMMY II and her exhausted crew were ordered to return to Ramsgate.

Harry Kidney (embarked on Thamesia)

Harry was born in Sheffield in 1920 and was with the Royal Signals with the BEF when he was sent to France in Dec 1939 when the 'phoney war' was in full swing. Harry was one of the first in to Brussels after the German push in to Belgium. By June 1st Harry and his contingent of 65 Signallers had retreated to the beaches awaiting rescue. After two day under constant attack Harry was taken to HMS ICARUS by a Little Ship whose name he does not recall.

Ends

For more information about the ADLS contact:

Mr Jason Carley, PRO, 07919 54 7753, PRO@adls.org.uk

For further information or to keep up to date on the ADLS' participation in the pageant please refer to www.adls.org.uk, or follow us on twitter @Dunkirk_Ships or facebook as *DunkirkShips*.

Further information for journalists about the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant, contact:

Michelle Lavipour, Executive, Pagefield, 020 3327 4058, michelle.lavipour@pagefield.co.uk

Stephanie Shepherd, Executive, Pagefield, 020 3327 4065 stephanie.shepherd@pagefield.co.uk

Information and press materials about the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant are available from www.thamesdiamondjubileepageant.org