# Chapter III – SATURDAY 1st JUNE, a.m.

## Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Location/Details</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commander-in-Chief</td>
<td>Off the beaches</td>
<td>from midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Full Monty</td>
<td>East of Dunkirk</td>
<td>from midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water's Tides and Tricks</td>
<td>Strait of Dover</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer's Departure</td>
<td>Ramsgate</td>
<td>from 3.30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Rock the Boat</td>
<td>Dunkirk</td>
<td>early hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Ships in Danger</td>
<td>N. Goodwin Light Ship</td>
<td>4.00 - 5.00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Routes</td>
<td>Dover/Ramsgate/Dunkirk</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Luftwaffe</td>
<td>Over Dunkirk</td>
<td>from 5.30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bader's Dawn Patrol</td>
<td>Above Dunkirk</td>
<td>from 5.00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.M.S. Codrington</td>
<td>Dunkirk, East Mole</td>
<td>from 5.30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gort Returns</td>
<td>Dover</td>
<td>from 6.20 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Passing</td>
<td>Route X</td>
<td>5.00 - 9.00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The P.M. leaves Paris</td>
<td>Villacoublay aerodrome</td>
<td>from 7.00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave Losses</td>
<td>H.M.S. Keith</td>
<td>from 5.30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchill's Flight</td>
<td>Paris-London</td>
<td>8.30 - 11.05 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chivalry and Gallantry</td>
<td>Lille, France</td>
<td>from 9.00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Happy Returns</td>
<td>Route X</td>
<td>morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Support</td>
<td>Buckingham Palace</td>
<td>mid-morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France in Sight</td>
<td>Mid-Channel</td>
<td>late morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Cabinet begins</td>
<td>Downing Street</td>
<td>from 11.30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fighting Frenchman</td>
<td>French H.Q., Montry</td>
<td>morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Rescue</td>
<td>West of Route X</td>
<td>from 10.25 a.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Commander-in-Chief

Off the beaches – from midnight

Friday night, with its total cloud cover and with most navigation lights at sea prohibited, was very dark indeed.

Rear-Admiral Wake-Walker, aboard H.M.S. Keith, was worried. The boat that he had sent to the minesweeper Hebe to collect Lord Gort and his staff, had not returned. He had visions –

'… of the disgrace…if he botched his job and lost the Commander-in-Chief of the B.E.F."

It was not surprising that Gort could not be found on the Hebe, because he (and his Aide-de-Camp General Leese) were aboard the Bounty – a Portsmouth Patrol Yacht.

Eventually Gort did reach H.M.S. Keith, but, being a large man, had found boarding by her vertical scrambling-nets difficult. According to one historian:

'The Admiral's Flag-Lieutenant, Lord Kelburn,… glimpsed a mountain of a man floundering at the rail. Promptly, grasping him around the waist, Kelburn heaved. With a resounding thud two peers of the realm hit the deck as one.'

Once aboard, Gort was reunited with his sodden staff who, unlike himself and Leese, had had to wade through the surf before being ferried out to the Keith.

Rear-Admiral Wake-Walker was a burly, fair-haired descendant of Hereward the Wake, and a man not to be trifled with. Two days earlier, in Wake-Walker's presence, General Leese had commented on the Navy's ineptitude. It was a mistake!

Before first light on Saturday morning, Wake-Walker put Lord Gort aboard the fast M.A/S.B. 6" for Dover, and was perhaps glad to send Leese with him. The rest of Gort's staff stayed on board, probably trying to dry themselves a little, and waited to see what daylight would bring. It was as well that they did not know.

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* Motor Anti-Submarine Boat.

The Full Monty

East of Dunkirk – from midnight

Operation Dynamo was important in two ways. First, it saved the lives of a third of a million troops and deprived Hitler of using them for political purposes. Second, it brought back the military leaders who would play increasingly important roles in the War – for example, Brooke, Montgomery, Alexander and Horrocks.

Lord Gort sent a number of such key men home early to help rebuild Britain's Army.

*

When General Alan Brooke went home on Thursday, he nominated Major General Montgomery to take over II Army Group. 'Monty' was not yet famous, but he had already displayed his exceptional abilities.

When the Belgian Army had collapsed, the Allies' left flank was unprotected. Monty had silently extracted from the Front Line his 13,000 men of 3rd. Division. Unknown to the Germans, he had moved them all overnight, in some 600 vehicles, eighty miles east to plug the gap. They passed under the arcs of Allied and German fire, to form a new left flank by dawn. This manoeuvre restored the Allied Front Line and prevented them being encircled by the Germans.

Monty, with characteristic thoroughness, had foreseen the situation, and had planned it in detail. He had, for instance, had the vehicles' rear axle-boxes painted white and illuminated, to make it easier for the convoy drivers in the dark.

'A Full Monty' is no new phrase. It referred in general terms to Montgomery's meticulous preparations, but specifically to his daily demand for a full breakfast. When campaigning, he also demanded early nights and undisturbed sleep.

Montgomery's sleep, one biographer noted, was like everything else – '...under [his] command and subject to immediate obedience. He ordered himself to sleep and sleep he did.'

The Dunkirk Evacuation played havoc with such personal idiosyncrasies. On Friday night,

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b Later generations would know Horrocks best from Edward Fox's vivid portrayal of him in the film A Bridge Too Far.
Monty had no sleep at all! In the dark of early Saturday, he was on the beach at La Panne. Instead of his II Army Corps being ferried out to ships, he was having to redirect them to Dunkirk.

* 

It occurred like this.

Earlier in the week, the three main Corps of the B.E.F. had been together. III Corps in Dunkirk, and I and II Corps alongside and eastward across the Belgian border to Nieuwport. Between them, they had occupied a coastal strip twenty miles long and six miles deep.

As the Germans had put pressure on the Dunkirk perimeter, and as the Belgians had surrendered, so an increasing number of troops had been evacuated. This diminished the size of the Allied 'pocket'. By Friday night III Corps had evacuated Dunkirk itself, and only I Corps and II Corps were left.

It was planned that I Corps would occupy Dunkirk and be left, literally, 'holding the fort', while Montgomery's II Corps would evacuate under cover of darkness from the beaches to the east.

Monty had, of course, prepared for this. At La Panne and Bray Dunes, his engineers had already driven lorries out into the water, and then parked them side-by-side to create jetties of about forty lorries each. (Historians give different leaders credit for the idea. Given, however, the vast number of deserted vehicles littered everywhere, the idea of using them as improvised jetties probably occurred to a number of them.)

Although lorry-jetties were a good idea, they could only be of use for certain short periods.

Because of the enormous range between High Water and Low Water, Monty's sappers had placed duckboards across the roofs of the lorries to make elevated walkways.

At best, the jetties could be effective. Lord Gort had used a lorry-pier on Friday evening when it was nearly High Water. He had managed to keep dry, and had boarded a small boat to be ferried out to the Hebe.

Unfortunately, Montgomery's troops arrived in the dark, about six hours after Lord Gort had used a lorry-pier. It was, by then, Low Water, and the makeshift jetties were in the wrong place to be useful.

Water's Tides and Tricks

The Strait of Dover

High Waters, Low Waters and 'tidal streams' were of immense importance in Operation Dynamo. However unfamiliar you are with them, they are easy to understand.

* 

The sea's High Water periods and Low Water periods are caused mainly by the varying gravitational pull of the moon. Since the moon's twenty-eight day orbit is completely regular, so High Waters and Low Waters are completely regular. Their times and heights can be accurately predicted, so those at sea are able to use Tide Tables to learn what the water's depth will be at any given time.

High Water and Low Water (for clarity they are, here, not called 'tides') occur just over six hours apart, so nearly everywhere experiences two High Waters and two Low Waters every twenty-four hours.

The distance that the sea rises or falls between High Water and Low Water is called its 'range'.

This range varies.

The 1940 Tide Tables for Dunkirk tell us that on the day that Operation Dynamo started, Sunday 26 May –

High Water (at 3.06 p.m.) was 17.2 feet high, while

The remains of a lorry-jetty after the evacuation

Dunkirk Revisited, Chapter III, Saturday 1st June, a.m. © John Richards, 2008
Low Water (at 9.57 p.m.) was 2.8 feet high.

The difference, or 'range', between them was, therefore, 14.4 feet (4.38m).

At other times, the range between High Water and Low Water could be as little as ten feet or as much as eighteen. The exact range was predictable because, as stressed earlier, the changes of water volume are regular, following the movements of the moon and the sun.

The tidal range varies according to two things: the place and day.

The Place.
Dunkirk is so geographically positioned that there is always a considerable range between its High Water and Low Water.

The Day.
This tidal range differs from day to day because both the moon's and the sun's gravity influence the water level. Whenever the moon is 'new' or 'full' (every fourteen days), the sun and moon are in line, and the combined effect of their gravitational pull is greatest. This increased 'pull' on the water raises the High Waters to their highest, and so drains the Low Waters to their lowest.a

However, midway between these times of 'full' moon and 'new' moon (often called 'half-moon'), the sun and moon's combined effect on the seas is at its weakest. During 'half-moon', therefore, the tidal range between High Water and Low Water is at its smallest.b

Example 2. Imagine a ship comes alongside a jetty at High Water. A ten-foot plank is then laid between the jetty and the boat deck. It is level with the deck, and troops can walk across it easily.

That High Tide situation changes very dramatically as Low Tide approaches. If there was an eleven-foot drop (3.4m) between High Water and Low Water:
- after about three hours the ship would have dropped far enough to make the boarding plank too steep to use.
- in six hours, the troops' formerly-level boarding plank would be hanging straight down from the quay, with the deck it had served a further foot below it.
- it would be about nine hours, i.e. the approach of the next High Water, before the plank could be re-used for boarding.

Example 3. Imagine a ship comes alongside a lorry jetty at High Water. The water is ten feet deep (3m), but as the boat's keel is only six feet deep (1.8m) she is floating in plenty of water. However in less than three hours the ship that was floating with four-foot of water beneath her, would be aground. She wouldn't refloat for a further six or seven hours.

These three examples show a little of the immense practical difficulties created by High Water and Low Water. These difficulties beset all ships, all beach work and all boarding from jetties, beaches or piers in Operation Dynamo.

Such problems are due to the water's vertical movements – up and down. As if that were not enough to cope with, there is another phenomenon – when the water moves horizontally!

Montgomery's lorry-jetties were damaged, but it was not the vertical movements between High Water and Low Water, but the sea's horizontal movement – called a 'tidal stream' –

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*a Tides at this time are called 'Spring Tides' or, simply, 'Springs'.
b These tides are 'Neap Tides', or, simply, 'Neaps'.
c In metres: HW = 4.92, LW = 0.46, Range = 4.46.
d 700m.
that wrecked them.\textsuperscript{a}

'Tidal streams' are the predictable flows of water around the coast associated with the ebb and flow of the tides. As the sea level rises in the hours leading up to High Water, the sea will flow into a bay, through a channel or along a coastline in a particular direction and with a particular strength. Similarly, as the sea level falls again after High Water, these tidal streams tend to be reversed.

Since tidal streams are as predictable as the tides that cause them, their strength and direction for a given location can be determined for various states of tide.

Note that the movement of the sea in a tidal stream bears absolutely no relationship whatever to what the wind might be seen to be doing on the water's surface, because it is the entire body of water that is moving.

Tidal streams may move at several miles per hour. When the North Sea tries to pour itself into the English Channel the whole body of water might be moving through the Strait of Dover at two miles-per-hour, that is to say, a half a mile every fifteen minutes.

This can make handling boats of any size a nightmare.

Suppose, for example, that there is a two miles per hour tidal stream going through the Strait of Dover. A rower points his boat straight out to sea in the direction of a large ship at anchor. It is absolutely calm and there is no wind to push him off course. He sets off. (He rows, of course, with his back to the ship, therefore he cannot see it.)

After a quarter of an hour's steady rowing he pauses, and expects the ship to be looming up just behind him. It isn't! It is \textit{half a mile away} to one side of him!

That is what a tidal stream can do! In the example above, the whole sea poured itself half a mile along the coast during the quarter of an hour that the rower was going along the top of it. He and his boat were carried half a mile along the shore. During this time, the large boat was \textit{not} carried half a mile along the shore, because it was anchored to the seabed. It could \textit{not} be shifted by the tidal stream, but stayed still as the whole body of sea swirled past it.

In a tidal stream, it is very difficult for a boat that is not anchored to 'stand still'. It is like asking a person to stay in the same place when on one of the moving walkways to be found in large airports. Just as a person would have to walk steadily to stay in the same place, so a ship's Captain in a tidal stream has to keep his ship moving in the right direction and at the correct speed just to stand still!

(Sam Palmer found his boat without power and in a tidal stream later on this Saturday.)

\textit{\*}

It was from the four tidal streams a day that Montgomery's lorry-jetties had suffered. (Montgomery originally assumed that their damage was due to German shelling, but in his later \textit{Memoirs} he simply stated that they had broken up. Perhaps, between the two, he had learned about tidal streams!)

To try to counteract the immense \textit{sideways} pressures of the tidal streams, Monty's sappers made heroic efforts to anchor the lorries. They shot the tyres to deflate them. They filled the backs of the lorries with sand, and lashed them together.\textsuperscript{6}

On Saturday morning, Low Water at Dunkirk was when it was still dark, at 2.31 a.m.\textsuperscript{7} Unfortunately, that was when Montgomery's troops needed to use the lorry-jetties.

To make matters worse, the lorry-jetties had not been planned with Low Water in mind, and so did not extend far enough out to sea for use during Low Water.

In short, they were wrecked, about half a mile too short, and were of no help whatever to Monty's II Corps in the dark hours of Saturday morning.

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At 1 a.m., therefore, Monty sent a message (picked up by the minesweeper \textit{Salamander}\textsuperscript{8}) saying that he intended to move his troops westward towards Dunkirk as 'the beach was becoming untenable'.

Thus it was that, in the dark and under fire, Monty was redirecting his men: 'Straight on down the beach towards Dunkirk.'\textsuperscript{9}

The B.E.F. soldiers had been told that they were an Army that would no longer have to march.\textsuperscript{10} Being unable to embark at La Panne

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\textsuperscript{a} It is to help avoid confusion between tides and tidal streams that I have used the terms High Water and Low Water for the former.
increased the march of II Corps from ten to sixteen miles. 'This', Montgomery noted wryly, 'they were loath to do'\textsuperscript{11}. It was understandable. They could see transport vessels anchored and awaiting them offshore and expected ferry-boats to come from them: but no small boats came, and the makeshift piers to reach them were damaged and, at Low Water, in the wrong place!

At the Bray Dunes beach, Montgomery's batman was wounded in the head by a shell splinter from German fire. Although Monty was very fond of him, his style concealed it. 'I cursed him soundly for not wearing his steel helmet, quite forgetting I was not wearing one myself – as he pointed out!'\textsuperscript{12}

After he had redirected his troops, Monty, with his Chief of Staff\textsuperscript{b}, A.D.C. and batman, left Bray Dunes at 3.30 a.m. for Dunkirk. After an hour's marching – hardly a cure for his A.D.C.'s head wound – they turned inland and hitched a lift in a lorry. The sun was beginning to rise. 'The town', Montgomery wrote later of Dunkirk, 'was being shelled and bombed and was in a complete shambles.'\textsuperscript{13}

**Palmer's Departure**

**Ramsgate – from 3.30 a.m.**

While Lord Gort was speeding back to Dover aboard \textit{M.A/S.B.6} and Montgomery was riding in a lorry towards Dunkirk, Able Seaman Sam Palmer in Ramsgate must have been rousing the two others with him aboard the \textit{Naiad Errant}, and ensuring that his mates aboard the \textit{Westerly} were also up and about.

Palmer wrote:

'During… [Friday] I was told that a rendezvous had been made for eight boats outside the breakwater at four o'clock next morning [Saturday]. At the time appointed we were there finding other boats of the same type waiting for the order to move. We moved into "line ahead". The \textit{Naiad Errant} being second.'\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{4} Montgomery seems rarely to have worn a helmet. Later in the War he used a double-badged beret as a means of instant recognition. He defied even King George's express order to conform his headgear!

\textsuperscript{5} Brigadier Neil Ritchie, formerly General Brooke's Chief of Staff.

David Divine, at that time the Defence Correspondent of the \textit{Sunday Times} and the principal historian of the Evacuation, wrote –

'At dawn from Ramsgate a convoy of eight boats, including \textit{Westerly}, \textit{Naiad Errant} and \textit{White Heather} moved off for Dunkirk. The description of Able Seaman Samuel Palmer is perhaps the best individual account by any member of the lower deck\textsuperscript{d} who took part in the beach work through this time. His narrative is simple and graphic with the simplicity of the 'Old Navy'.\textsuperscript{15}

Divine tells us that \textit{White Heather} was in the convoy. He was in a particularly good position to know because he was in Ramsgate on Saturday morning. Divine had volunteered to go to Dunkirk in a civilian capacity, and had 'borrowed' Mr. Turnour's twenty-eight foot (8.6m) William Osborne boat, the \textit{Little Ann}. Divine left Ramsgate Harbour only a few hours after Palmer.

Of the eight boats in the little flotilla, Palmer later named only three: the leading boat, \textit{White Heather}; and the two for which he was responsible – \textit{Naiad Errant} and the \textit{Westerly}. \textit{White Heather}\textsuperscript{e} was a sleek luxury motor-yacht, twenty-five feet (7m) longer than Palmer's boat, which had been specially built for the heiress of a shipping company. \textit{White Heather}'s quality was underlined by her striking resemblance to the luxury yacht \textit{Carin II}, that the German car industry had presented to Field Marshal Göring.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{6} Author: \textit{Dunkirk} (1945), \textit{The Nine Days of Dunkirk} (1959), and screenplay writer of the film \textit{Dunkirk} (1958).

\textsuperscript{7} i.e. not a Commissioned Officer.

\textsuperscript{8} Now named \textit{Riis I}.
tumbler. As the departure time of the eight small boats did not correspond with High Water, they will not have spent the night trapped within the lock-bound Inner Harbour, but will have moored or anchored within the embrace of the Outer Harbour.

* At 4.00 a.m., the little flotilla gathered outside the eastern arm because initially they would be heading east to the North Goodwin Light Ship. They left at first light: sunrise would not be until 4.50 a.m.

No convoy can travel faster than its slowest member, so the eight motor boats would probably cross the Channel at no more than eight miles an hour.

Palmer must have followed the silhouette of White Heather against the lightening sky. Among the six motorboats astern of him were his three Plymouth mates in Westerly. It must have been with a heavy heart that Sam Palmer later reported:

Westerly was with us when we began, but what became of her I do not know, for I never saw her again.

It is no surprise that Palmer lost touch with the boat behind him. A helmsman is fully occupied keeping station in 'line ahead'. Palmer's position as second in line will have been given to him because of his rank. If White Heather had triggered a mine, Palmer would have been well placed to have assumed command of the flotilla.

Would the Westerly, Naiad Errant and White Heather all return safely? The odds were stacked heavily against them.

With the growing daylight, Palmer could see a variety of boats approaching him on their return to the English ports.

The Dutch schuit, the Pacific, with over 400 aboard was approaching Ramsgate as Palmer left, and was soon followed by a second schuit, Amazone, with over 100.

The destroyer H.M.S. Wolsey's wash probably gave the convoy a rough ride, as she swept past on her sixth trip to land over 500 at Dover at sunrise. She was behind schedule, since her 'Degaussing' (anti-magnetic mine) gear had fused and caught fire at Dunkirk, and her Captain, wisely, would not leave before it was repaired. She reached Dover at sunrise.

Various small craft passed that also reached Ramsgate at sunrise – the motor yacht Iolanthe and the Thames launch Mary Spearing II, with fifty troops between them. These were followed by three drifters*, Genius, Three Kings, Ocean Breeze, and then Jackeve. Each was under naval command. Together they rescued 210.

The Gunboat Mosquito passed on her last-ever trip to Dover. She had 600 aboard. She returned to Dunkirk but, as described later, she did not return.

Southern Railways' Sandown had earlier started to cross to France, but in the dark had answered a distress call from Golden Girl aground on the Goodwin Sands. In five trips, her motor boat collected 250, whereupon she returned them to Ramsgate, before setting off again, at mid-morning, for Dunkirk.

* About three-quarters of an hour after the eight Little Ships left Ramsgate, Austen Reed's boat Reda (already mentioned) passed Palmer. She had left Ramsgate on Friday afternoon in the long line of 'Special Tows'. It was her second return trip to Dunkirk. She had spent three hours ferrying troops from shore to ship on Friday evening, and was now, at dawn, bringing back twenty-three French troops. She had anchored overnight near the North Goodwin Light Ship, and had wisely waited for either daylight or space or permission – or all three – before sailing into Ramsgate Harbour.

Lieutenant Nimmo, in the motorboat Forty-Two, also passed Palmer around this time. (It was he who had brought the combined convoys down from Sheerness on Thursday.) Nimmo will have been pleased to see that White Heather was at last leading Little Ships off to Dunkirk after her repair – albeit twenty-four hours behind schedule.

Nimmo's work during the Evacuation is such a typical example of the efforts made by the skippers of small craft, that it is worth outlining.

Thursday: Nimmo leaves Sheerness and, after the breakdown of White Heather, leads two combined convoys to Ramsgate. Arrives midnight.

Friday: No sleep. Departs two hours later

* a fishing boat with an upright drift-net
leading group of fourteen to Dunkirk. Boat suffers engine trouble.

**Saturday:** Coaxes boat back to Ramsgate overnight. Arrives at first light. He gets her repaired and leaves overnight for Dunkirk again.

**Sunday:** Spends day ferrying at Dunkirk, after which his boat is damaged and he is towed back to Ramsgate.

**Monday:** His boat is repaired at Ramsgate, so he sails again to Dunkirk overnight.

**Tuesday:** Nimmo returns to Ramsgate with troops.

Such prolonged efforts were nothing unusual during the Evacuation.

When the rudder of Nimmo's boat was damaged, Nimmo improvised with a bit of handrail, some rope and a cabin door. (This relates interestingly to Palmer's solution when, on Saturday evening, his boat was powerlessly drifting with a tidal stream. See Chapter IV.)

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**Don't Rock the Boat**

Dunkirk – early hours

During the Evacuation, everything kept going overnight. Indeed, as the German artillery drew closer to the shipping lanes and as the Luftwaffe was less hindered by fog, the daylight hours became more dangerous. The hours of darkness then became increasingly vital and even busier.

The Southern Railway's paddle steamer *Whippingham* had begun loading late Friday evening. An hour and a half after midnight, her Captain, Lieutenant Reed, was ready to cast off from the East Mole. *Whippingham* was no great size – only about half that of the *Royal Eagle* that had brought Pownall and Munster to Margate early on Thursday.

*Whippingham*'s skipper reported that she left 'Very much overloaded'. The historian David Divine thought that was 'a classic example of understatement.' Lt. Reed had crammed aboard 1,600 troops over and above her maximum! Her paddle-wheel supports ('sponsons') were only just above water.

Once, when bombs fell on her starboard side, her troops naturally rushed to port and nearly rolled her over. This was only prevented by some very prompt and firm crowd-control by a crewman. *Whippingham* was so slow that she did not pass Palmer in *Naiad Errant* until mid-morning, when he was halfway across the Channel. She did not reach Margate until midday.

Shortly after *Whippingham* left Dunkirk in the early hours, the fireboat *Massey Shaw* (which had been among the 'Special Tows' on Friday afternoon) also left the port. She had spent her time ferrying troops from shore to ship, a task for which her flat bottom made her particularly suitable. When returning to England on Saturday morning with sixty troops aboard, the Luftwaffe singled her out for attack. It is usually thought that the pilots assumed her massive water cannon was a gun. The fireboat travelled so much faster than the overladen paddle steamer *Whippingham*, that she passed Palmer quite early on Saturday morning.

* The paddle steamer H.M.S. *Oriole* left Harwich on Friday evening and arrived off the beach between La Panne and Dunkirk at first light on Saturday (just as Palmer was leaving Ramsgate). For H.M.S. *Oriole* to have arrived in the dark would not have served Mr. Martin's purposes, because he needed daylight. He was a newsreel cameraman.

Once the censorship blackout had been lifted, Mr. Martin was sent across the Channel to record the Evacuation for Pathé newsreels. In 1940, without television, the newsreels were the only way to view almost-current events in motion. The cameramen often used small clockwork cameras with spools of black-and-white film lasting just sixty seconds. Usually there was no synchronized sound recording. The best cameramen knew how to compose and create a one-minute feature. Clips from Mr. Martin's short newsreel film occur nowadays in almost every archive compilation about the Dunkirk Evacuation.

At dawn (off the beaches near Dunkirk) it was four and a half hours before High Water, and there was an acute shortage of small craft

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\(^{a}\) On 12th August, 1940, *Naiad Errant* featured prominently in a Pathé Gazette one-minute newsreel feature 'Our Mosquito Navy', which, like Mr. Martin's film(s), also occurs in many video archive compilations and programs about the Evacuation.
to ferry troops from shore to ship. The Captain of the *Oriole* had his own solution. It neatly coincided with Mr. Martin's need for some good pictures. Sub-Lieutenant John Crosby who was on board the paddle steamer recorded events as follows:

'...everyone went aft to raise the bows as much as possible and we went lickity-spit for the shore and kept her full ahead until we jarred and came to a full stop. As we went in we dropped two seven-hundredweight anchors from the stern, to kedge off with.'

This was in ten foot (3m) of water. Sub-Lieutenant Crosby not only described the event, but also took the most published photograph of Operation Dynamo. It shows, from the decks of *Oriole*, a line of about fifty troops nearly up to their necks in the sea, the nearest being alongside the paddle steamer.

![Image of troops wading in the sea](image)

The photo is as interesting as it is famous. One writer pompously denounced the photo as a fake, since, he said, the boat would have been aground had the troops been that close!

It was not, strictly speaking, a photo, but a 'still' from a piece of movie-film. The *Oriole* had indeed grounded, but even then the troops would *not* have been in water shoulder-height. The riddle is solved by a second photo taken at Low Water. It reveals that the troops were, in fact, standing on the top walkway of a lorry-pier.

Grounding the *Oriole* brought the paddle steamer close enough inshore for troops to board her without the time-consuming shuttling of small craft. *Oriole* would lift off at High Water. The Captain had successfully used this trick on an earlier trip, although it rendered the paddle steamer unmoveable for some hours, and a 'sitting duck' for air attack.

On Friday, Lt. E. L. Davies had signalled the Admiralty:

*Deliberately grounded H.M.S. Oriole...on own initiative, objective speedy evacuation of troops. Refloated dusk same day, [Friday] no apparent damage...*  

...am again proceeding [Saturday morning] Belgian coast and will run aground again if such course seems desirable.

The Admiralty's reply is now a classic:

*Your action fully approved.*

H.M.S. *Oriole* was 200 feet (61m) long, so when she was grounded she could not only be loaded, but she could also act to extend the lorry-pier still further, for troops to reach ships moored to her stern. Some two thousand troops reached their small ferryboats by using *Oriole* as a jetty.

Nevertheless, difficulties still remained, as her Captain complained:

'The men waded and swam out, and many of them had to be hauled on ropes straight up the side of the ship and over the rails. The snag was that when a rope was thrown to a man, about six grabbed it and just hung on, looking up blankly with the water over their shoulders, and it was a hell of a job getting them to let go so that the rest could get pulled aboard. It was the case the whole time of "To Hell with you, Jack! I'm alright." I understand many were drowned although I never actually saw them.'

The *Oriole* was swamped by soldiers. When she finally pulled out, her Captain said that she had had fifty troops clinging to her sides. She was machine-gunned regularly by Bf.110's.

The *Oriole* passed Sam Palmer at about breakfast time, and her 600 troops and the Pathé cameraman reached Margate after lunch.

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*a* A hundredweight (cwt.) = 112 lbs/50.8 kilos.  

*b* To 'kedge' a boat is to move it by hauling a line attached to an anchor. A 'kedge' anchor is one kept in the rear of the boat for that purpose. While the usual anchor is to prevent a ship from moving, the role of a kedge anchor is the opposite – to help it move.

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A somewhat unusual plane to British eyes, a twin-engined plane that was not a light bomber but a fighter. Göring had high hopes for them, but they were heavy and too slow.
Little Ships in Danger
Ramsgate to N. Goodwin Light Ship
– 4.00 - 5.00 a.m.

Word will have got around that in the sea off Ramsgate at 8.30 the previous evening, the crew of a British trawler had shot down an R.A.F. Coastal Command Anson of 48 Squadron. (Such aircraft were used for coastal reconnaissance.) Its crew of four were, fortunately, unhurt and safe. They had been picked up by the destroyer H.M.S. Vega on her way to Sheerness.

* 

The eight Little Ships heading out from Ramsgate at first light were already in the danger area.

On Thursday night, the Germans had begun mine laying in earnest. They mined not only around Dunkirk and the routes to it, but off the Kent coast, including the harbour entrances of Dover and Folkestone. 

Sea-mines could be laid from ships, submarines or planes, and, in May-June 1940, they came in two types: the magnetic mine and the contact mine.

* 

The Magnetic Mine.

The Germans had introduced these the previous November. On eleven occasions, they had succeeded in laying mines undetected in the shipping lanes of the Tyne, Humber, Cromer and Thames. In four operations, they had laid over 500 mines across the Thames estuary between Felixstowe and Margate. The British had known nothing about it until their ships had started sinking! Over forty ships, including two destroyers, were lost in the Thames. As, amazingly, no German ships had been sighted, the British concluded that the mines must have been laid from planes or submarines.

In fact, Germany had used seventeen of her twenty-two destroyers in these daring forays into British home waters. One British Captain complained ‘It is enough to give one a nervous breakdown!’ The estuaries of the Tyne and Thames became veritable graveyards. During the three winter months of 1939-40, a quarter of a million tons of shipping were lost through German magnetic mines. 

A magnetic mine is not itself magnetic. Its name derives from having a magnetic needle as its detonator-switch. When metal comes near a compass, it swings the needle. If a magnetic needle is designed as a switch, then nearby metal can switch it on. The 'magnetic mine', made to lie on the seabed or anchored to float under the surface, is triggered by the proximity of any ship's metal hull passing above it or too near it. The Germans thought that it would be the decisive factor in winning the War.

The countermeasure, Britain discovered, was to neutralise a ship's magnetic field by fitting an electric coil around the hull. This was termed 'degaussing' it.

In his first volume of The Second World War Churchill included a 'Note on the Measures against the Magnetic Mine'. He tells us that the degaussing of ships required 1,500 miles of cable per week – three times more than Britain herself could produce. Cable makers worked day and night to try to meet the demand, and the entire national output of suitable cable was requisitioned. Five and a half thousand ships needed to be degaussed, but by the middle of March 1940, only 650 had been completed, while work was under way on a similar number.

The electricity had, of course, to be generated by the ship herself – which not all ships could manage without additional equipment.

The process was no secret. It was the degaussing of the Cunard liner Queen Elizabeth, just twelve weeks earlier, that had enabled her to enjoy a much-publicised maiden voyage to New York.

At the beginning of Operation Dynamo, the previous Sunday, only the naval vessels were degaussed.

The equipment was vital. In the dark on Saturday morning, at 1.30 a.m., the Fitzroy at Dunkirk recorded: 'The D/G [degaussing] gear caught fire and became useless.' She had to be withdrawn from further use in the Evacuation. (Her crew volunteered to go in other ships.) She was one of the very few boats on Saturday
morning to take the long eastern route home, Route Y. It was because of the intensive mine laying to the west that Fitzroy's Captain dared not risk using Route X without his ship's protective gear working. Ironically, Fitzroy was a naval minesweeper.

Rarely mentioned, but, according to Churchill, 'of particular value during the evacuation of Dunkirk',29 was a temporary measure known as 'wiping'. It took just a few hours, but was not as effective as degaussing for very large ships, and it lasted only a couple of months. A large cable was simply placed alongside a ship's metal hull and a powerful electric current was then passed through it.

Wooden craft, however, like the average small motorboat of 1940 and the Dutch schuuts, could not trigger a magnetic mine, so Palmer and his mates were relatively safe on that score – if on no other. What Palmer had to look out for were contact mines.

* The Contact Mine.

These conform to the popular image of a mine: a floating black ball with spikes. Each soft metal spike contained a thin glass phial of acid that shattered easily when bumped. The spilt acid acted then as a switch by completing an electrical circuit.

The explosive power of contact mines was considerable. The first ever call on British Civil Defence in the War was when a loaded mine-laying German bomber was shot down near Clacton-on-Sea. The mines injured 160 people and killed two.30

Contact mines required the softest landing possible to avoid exploding on impact. So when dropped by air, it was only into the sea that they could be parachuted.

Just three hours before Palmer left Ramsgate, Rear-Admiral Wake-Walker, at sea off Dunkirk, sent an urgent signal: Parachute mines being dropped all over west of Bray, request sweep of Dunkirk Road.31

On one occasion, a mine landed so close to a ship that its splash drenched her decks, but it did not explode!

The reason the seven boats of the flotilla were in single file behind White Heather, was mainly that the 'line astern' formation required only the narrowest path through mined waters. Nevertheless, all skippers and their crews in the flotilla will have had to keep a constant lookout.

One countermeasure against contact mines was to shoot them – but only from afar! Commander Lightoller (See Chap. I) also left Ramsgate on Saturday morning, and wrote:

'Thalfway across we avoided a floating mine by a narrow margin. Having no firearms of any description, not even a tin hat, we had to leave the latter for its destruction by someone better equipped.32

If the staff of the Small Vessels Pool at H.M.S. Fervent had been unable to supply so famous a naval Commander with such basic defensive and protective equipment as a rifle and a tin hat, it is most unlikely that Palmer and his ratings will have fared any better.

(Naiad Errant's duty, two months after the Dunkirk Evacuation, was, interestingly, 'watching for magnetic mines'. She became an Armed Patrol Boat at Felixstowe, and initially sported a Vickers medium machine gun on her foredeck. Unfortunately, she had no such equipment on 1 June, on her way to Dunkirk.)

* About an hour after leaving Ramsgate, the convoy of eight boats will have joined the busy shipping lanes passing around the North Goodwin Light Ship. It was later on Saturday, just south of the North Goodwin Light Ship, that a small trawler hit a mine33 and was blown to smithereens. Minesweepers, of course, cleared the Routes, but it was a risky business.

An hour and a half after Palmer had reached the North Goodwin Light Ship, a hospital ship at Dover, the St. David, 'suffered considerable damage' because a minesweeper's gear accidentally triggered a nearby mine! (The damage did not matter that much since, after her first trip on Wednesday, her crew had refused to sail again unless St. David was either armed or escorted. Since neither demand could be met, she was not involved in any further rescue work. Her Captain had collapsed on his return. It was utter exhaustion. She had worked non-stop since Hitler's offensive had started on 10 May.)

The North Goodwin Light Ship was unlit, for

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"Road", a nautical term for a shipping lane or channel.

b As shown on the cover of C.Brann's – The Little Ships of Dunkirk.

Dunkirk Revisited, Chapter III, Saturday 1st June, a.m. 72 © John Richards, 2008
during the War there was a general blackout at sea as well as on land. Earlier in the week the Irish sea steamer *Lochgarry* had almost collided with it, and in the darkness of this early Saturday morning, the Master of the steam tug *Cervia* (towing barges of provisions and water) was unable even to find the lightship. This is probably why Lt. Seal’s small convoy had been scheduled to wait until first light before leaving Ramsgate.

Only occasionally during Operation Dynamo is there evidence of a light being on. One skipper who switched on his navigation lights was immediately greeted with the very same cry used by the land-based A.R.P. Wardens – *Put those bloody lights out!* There were a few lights. The Kwinte buoy, opposite Ostend, was certainly lit at one period.

The naval authorities at Dover had sent a signal on the 27 May (Monday) to inform ships that 'new light buoys' had been positioned at eight, fifteen, and twenty-four miles south-east of the North Goodwin Light Ship to indicate the new 'Route X'. Their description may only indicate the type of buoy (important when searching them out through binoculars), not that they were actually lit.

The North Goodwin Light Ship marked the northern end of the notorious Goodwin Sands. The tidal flow, back and forth between the North Sea and the English Channel, is turbulent and creates miles of sandbanks and shallows along both British and French coasts, especially in the narrow Strait of Dover.

The Goodwins are a series of shifting sand bars about six miles off the coast of Kent and some eight miles in length. The main benefit of this nautical graveyard is that it offers on its landward side a slightly protected and alternative route for smaller ships going from Dover to Ramsgate.

Near the North Goodwin Light Ship, the massive *Golden Eagle* paddled past on her way to Margate. She had 1,250 aboard. Following after her went the Fleet Minesweeper, *Saltash*, crowded with 400 troops – the first of her two deliveries this Saturday.

### Three Routes

**Dover – Ramsgate – Dunkirk**

By Saturday 1 June, three cross-Channel routes had evolved. The first was no longer in use, but the remaining two both passed the North Goodwin Light Ship.

The Map shows Routes Z, Y and X.

- **Z** was the original Route. It crossed from Dover to Calais, then along the French coast to Dunkirk.
- **Y** was the next Route, devised to avoid the German guns at Calais. It was very long.
- **X** was the final Route. It utilised the *start* of Route Y, and the *end* of Route Z.

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4 Now restored by the East Kent Maritime Museum and on view to the public in Ramsgate Harbour.

5 A.R.P. – Air Raid Precaution.
The **North Goodwin Light Ship** is indicated on the map by a star.

**Allied minefields** are shown as black patches
- the large one to the west was British.
- twelve small ones to the east were French.

**Sandbanks** are shown within pecked lines. The one off Kent is the Goodwin Sands.

**Passes** through the sandbanks are marked **P**
- on Route **X**, **P** = the Ruytingen Pass.
- on Route **Y**, **P** = the Zuydcoote Pass.

**Major German Gun Emplacements**
- three are shown along the French-Belgian coast.

By the second day of the Evacuation, Route **Z** was already within the range of German shore batteries. The Captain of an 870-ton cargo ship, the *Sequacity*, coolly but vividly recorded his experience on Route **Z**.

'All went well until we arrived off Calais… one [shell] came through the port side at the waterline in the main hold and came out of the starboard side. I sent my mate down into the hold with some of the crew to try and patch the hold up. The next shot came through the port side of the engine-room and smashed up the auxiliary engines that drove our dynamo, etc., put our switchboards out of action, and went out the starboard side. This put our pumps out of action for pumping water out of the hold. Another shot came through the wheelhouse, down the forehold and right through the ship's bottom. We then shaped our course away from the shore… In the meantime eleven German planes appeared and bombed [us] …put the Bren gun out of action and wounded the chief engineer.'

The *Sequacity* sank. She had not even reached Dunkirk. Had she survived and returned, she would have had to run the gauntlet again, but with around 500 troops aboard.

Route **Z** became unworkable. Another route had to be found.

* While the Germans had mastery west of

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* The account implies shells with very different trajectories. The earlier shots were nearly horizontal while the later one was almost vertical.

**Dunkirk Revisited, Chapter III, Saturday 1st June, a.m.**

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going inland of the Goodwin Sands, passing Ramsgate, then going eastward to the North Goodwin Light Ship.

From the Light Ship, the new Route X diverged from Route Y. It did not go due east towards Ostend, but cut diagonally south-east across the Channel.

It was not straightforward.

It passed between two sandbanks in mid-Channel, then over another, before turning at the edge of a French minefield and heading nearly south. It then skirted a second minefield, after which it passed over three more sandbanks to join the main Dunkirk shipping lane, seven miles west of Dunkirk.37

The largest vessels in Operation Dynamo occasionally grounded on the sandbanks of Route X.

Lieutenant General Alan Brooke had experienced this aboard H.M.S. Worcester:

'We were brought up short with a crash. I felt certain that we had hit a mine or been torpedoed. But she remained on an even keel and after some shuffling about proceeded on slowly. I heard later from the commander that he had three routes to select from, one was under gun fire from the coast [Route Z], one had had a submarine and mines reported in it [Route Y] and the other was very shallow at low water [Route X]. He chose the latter and hit the bottom damaging the propeller slightly.' 38

* * *

As the original Route Z was no longer being used in daylight – if at all – when Palmer's convoy reached the North Goodwin Light Ship at sunrise on Saturday, it encountered all the traffic both coming from and going to Dunkirk. It must have been quite an experience. During Operation Dynamo, the English Channel was the busiest it had ever been in its long and eventful history.

Palmer will have had little need of the 'Special Route for Small Craft' notice that he had been given. The number of vessels was such that neither the naval Lieutenant leading them in White Heather nor Palmer could easily have gone astray.

The Germans, as yet, were not able to shell ships on Route X from the shore. As the pocket of Allied troops diminished, however, the Germans increasingly occupied the shoreline east of Dunkirk, and since Wednesday had been able to fire on Route Y.

Palmer did not know it, but by the afternoon Route X would also come within the range of German shore artillery.

At the North Goodwin Light Ship, Route X turned south-east.

Airmen described how the shipping appeared to be in slow and fast lanes – with protective patrols along the edges. Some destroyers could get from Dunkirk to Dover in less than two hours; it would take the smaller motorboats eight. There was no confusion, then, between the fast traffic and the slow.

* * *

Saturday morning going to Dunkirk may have been worse for Palmer and his mates than actually being there. Another skipper wrote:

'Of the whole of our operations this six hours' crossing was the worst as we had nothing to do but to contemplate the job ahead of us and had been foolish enough to listen to the idle talk of the naval ratings in Ramsgate before we left, who assured us that very few of the boats that had gone across had come back and that, now Jerry had captured the harbour and had mounted machine-guns covering the beaches, our chances of coming through were very slender indeed. Of course, such was not the position. The whole of Dunkirk was very much in our hands, but we did not know this.' 39

Such rumours were, perhaps, started by the false claim of the Germans to have entered Dunkirk three days earlier.40

The Luftwaffe

Over Dunkirk – from 5.30 a.m.

The German High Command had broadcast that the British Expeditionary Force was doomed. Such propaganda had lulled the Germans into a false sense of security, as Hitler turned his attention towards Paris and the conquest of northern France. Field Marshal Hermann Göring had assured Hitler than his airmen would finish-off the B.E.F.
His arrogance, coupled with faulty military intelligence, led Göring to assess wrongly seven aspects of the situation.

Firstly, his forces were not operating from local airfields, but were still flying in from Germany. Secondly, his aircrews were exhausted from continual fighting, as it was now the third week of Hitler's 'blitz' on the West. Thirdly, Göring had no control over the weather, and fog had grounded his aircraft for much of the previous two days. Fourthly, he did not reckon on the ferocity or strength of the Royal Air Force. Fifthly, he did not realise how the sand of the beaches would absorb and render ineffective much of the bombing. Sixthly, he failed to grasp that although a ship can be an easy target from land or sea, it is not so from the air. Seventhly, his pilots had not trained to bomb anything as small as boats.

By the time of Operation Dynamo, Göring's active leadership of the Luftwaffe had waned. He had spent the first four days of the Evacuation in the Netherlands, hunting antiques. (He raided the Royal Collection and left Holland having 'acquired' twenty-eight masterpieces. His haul included Rembrandt's last self-portrait – which he gave to Hitler.)

Göring was so certain of the Luftwaffe's ability to keep the Allies pinned down that he moved his train, Asia, inland to the Luftwaffe Field Headquarters near Koblenz, some 200 miles (320 km) from Dunkirk.

When, during the 1930's, Hitler had decided to build up the German Air Force in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles (which the victors had drawn up at the end of the Great War), it was Göring who had been responsible. Hitler's policy was that money 'was no object'.

The German manufacturer, Junkers, was only turning out eighteen of its Ju 52's a year, until Göring nationalised the industry whereupon it employed 9,000 men.

Its three-engined all-metal Ju 52 transport plane became the workhorse of the Luftwaffe (much as the Dakota did for the Allies).

In the two months before Dunkirk, Göring had used Ju 52's to tow gliders in the conquest of Holland, and had used 500 Ju 52's in the invasion of Norway for dropping parachutists and supplies.

On the third day of the German offensive in the West (14 May), the Luftwaffe had tried to demolish the bridges over the Rhine at Rotterdam. However bridges – like ships – are small targets. Many bombs inevitably fell on the city.

The event aroused considerable anger. The Dutch had capitulated to the Germans moments before the bombers took off, but everything went wrong. Signal-lights to abort the raid were shrouded in mist. Then, a bombing of a margarine factory caused its rivers of burning fat to fuel a firestorm. Eight hundred people were killed, and 78,000 made homeless. Many wooden homes continued to smoulder until August.

Lying is not peculiar to the Germans. The Dutch (for whatever reasons) reported the 814 deaths in Rotterdam as 30,000 fatalities. It did the Allies no good. It will certainly have strengthened popular belief in the Luftwaffe's invincibility, and some think that it may have caused the Dutch to surrender too readily.

Göring wanted to view the ruins of Rotterdam more than he wanted to oversee the Evacuation of the Allies, so he flew to Holland. As he wanted to take two of his close friends with him, a light aircraft was not suitable, so he used one of the Ju 52 transport planes.

The influence of his two passengers on Operation Dynamo, although not direct, was very considerable.

They had both been fellow-aces with Göring in the Great War, and, because he looked after his friends, by June 1940 they were high-ranking leaders of the Luftwaffe. General Bruno Lörzer was the leader of Air Corps II, and General Ernst Udet was the Luftwaffe's Generalluftzeugmeister – which one scholar has explained means 'responsible for the development and supply of just about everything'.

Bruno Lörzer knew Göring in 1914 when he was nearly crippled with arthritis after service at the Front. Lörzer did a great deal to get him flying again, and he could not have been more successful. Göring went from being a lame subaltern to becoming one of his country's most famous fighter pilots. He was so famous, that when Baron von Richthofen (the famous 'Red Baron') was killed, Göring not only led
the Richthofen Squadron, but also earned himself the coveted Blue Max.a

Göring's other companion for the flight over Rotterdam was Ernst Udet44.

The Stuka dive-bombers (Ju 87's) which were harassing the Evacuation had been Udet's brainchild.

Udet visited America in 1933, and experienced the Curtiss F8C 'Helldiver' biplanes. Realising their potential, he brought two back to Germany.

Udet convinced Göring of the military importance of dive-bombing, and claimed that a good pilot could land bombs within ninety feet (27m) of any target. This, he stressed, was far better than bombing from a great height and hoping for the best.

He was right, but at Dunkirk even a ninety-foot radius was too great to guarantee hitting ships. A 300-foot destroyer can be no more than thirty-five feet (11m) wide. While a thirty-foot (9m) motor-boat, perhaps just six-feet (1.8m) wide, is no target at all.

Udet had flown the prototype 'Diving Attack Aircraft' (STUrzKAmflugzeug, i.e. Stuka), crashed it, and nearly killed himself.

Göring is often credited with the idea that if a Stuka was fitted with air-whistles 'it'll scream like a demon out of hell when it dives down.'45

It is usually thought46 that these whistles were only made of cardboard, and that each of a plane's four whistles was deliberately out-of-tune with the others! They certainly added greatly to the psychological terror experienced by those being attacked.

It was Udet also who, in 1933, introduced the military glider. The German conquest of Belgium was in large measure due to the imaginative use of Udet's gliders on 10 May in capturing the massive fort of Eben Emael, that guarded the city of Liege and the Albert Canal.

Once Göring's shopping in the Netherlands and his sightseeing of Rotterdam with Lörzer and Udet was over, he then flew a light plane, a Storch, to Hitler's Headquarters at Münsteifel in the Black Forest, some forty miles northwest of Koblenz.

Göring's mission was to report to Hitler on the 'mopping up' of the Dunkirk operation. He told him:

'Only fishing boats are coming over for the British, let's hope the Tommies can swim!'47

Like many German leaders, he genuinely thought that the War was nearly over.48 He visited Dunkirk the moment it was in German hands, to strut around among the ruins. German cameramen filmed the devastation in colour.

On Saturday morning, the fog of Thursday and Friday had lifted. The fog, together with the great pall of smoke from Dunkirk's burning oil refinery, had hidden from the Germans the true extent of the Evacuation. In an attempt to make up for lost time, Göring ordered an immediate and all-out air attack on the beaches and the boats.

At 5.30 a.m., the troops experienced this change of tactic when the fighters of the Richthofen 8th Flying Corps (who usually flew high to protect the bombers) roared in just above their heads and machine-gunned everyone and everything in sight.

Bader's Dawn Patrol

Above Dunkirk – from 5.00 a.m.

An hour before even Palmer and the motorboat flotilla had left Ramsgate, Douglas Bader at the R.A.F. Sector Station Hornchurchc had been woken for the dawn patrol.49 The now-famous legless hero had already flown 750 hours, and so was among the most experienced pilots in the R.A.F.

He had not, however, been active in a battle zone. During his last two days' flying over Dunkirk he had, as has been mentioned, never even seen the enemy, so had scored no 'kills'. Would this Saturday be his 'Glorious First of June'?50

Three Spitfire Squadrons, 19, 41 and 222, had taken off from Hornchurch at 4.30 a.m., reached Dunkirk at 5.00 a.m., and had then patrolled inland for half an hour. The patrol saw a squadron of German bombers who, at the sight of thirty-seven Spitfires, turned tail.

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a Explained in Chapter V.
b A Fieseler 'Stork'.
c Only 17 miles due east of Westminster, near Rainham.
and took their bombs with them!

While most of the wing\(^a\) wanted to give chase, Bader's greater experience prompted him to look above and behind for their fighter-escort. They were there!

Four Me.109's hurtled through the formation and Bader dived after them. At 3,000 feet, one was in front of him. At this height, the Spitfire and Messerschmitt were well matched.\(^b\)

The Messerschmitt Bf.109\(^c\) was the principal German single-seat fighter. It was over Dunkirk that the two famous fighter planes – the Spitfire and the Me.109 – first met. Their histories were most curiously intertwined.

* 

Fighter pilots in the 1930's, with their experience in the Great War of low speed biplanes, sought manoeuvrability rather than speed.

The British changed that. The British streamlined, all-metal, single-wing Spitfire, with its retractable undercarriage, enclosed cockpit, and machine guns housed in its wings, was a quantum leap from the canvas-skinned open-cockpit, fixed-wheel biplanes of the Great War.

The Spitfire's designer, Reginald Mitchell, utilised all he had learned in developing the Schneider Trophy winners\(^d\) and opted for speed – and the Merlin engine – rather than manoeuvrability.

This was an entirely new direction for aerial warfare.

In the 1930's the Germans, as they prepared for war, closely watched British developments. In order to match the British like-against-like, the Germans had to change their policy and put speed first.

Of their available designs, only Messerschmitt had opted for speed. The Germans sought out the fastest power plant available. It was, of course, the Rolls-Royce Merlin.

Truth being stranger than fiction, the British Government (being, at that time, hell-bent on appeasement) promptly sold over a hundred Merlins to Germany! 'Trade', they boasted, 'has no boundaries.'\(^50\)

In the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), therefore, Germany's Messerschmitts had Rolls-Royce engines! (Thirty years later, sixteen of them flew in the film Battle of Britain.\(^51\))

Such were some of the unlikely links that Bader's Spitfire had with the Me.109 ahead of him at 3,000 feet over Dunkirk early on Saturday morning.

* 

The Messerschmitt ahead of Bader was firing at a Spitfire of 19 Squadron that was, in its turn, attacking some Bf.110's.

Bader pulled in behind the Me.109, fired twice, saw his tracer hit, and burning petrol stream out from the tank beneath the pilot's seat. It fell. It was Bader's long-awaited first kill.

Triple-Two Squadron made five 'kill' claims during that dawn patrol, but it paid the price.

The Germans downed four planes of Bader's squadron. Their aircraft involved on each occasion were those of the 26th. Fighter Unit (JG26) and 1st. Long-range Fighter Group (ZGI).

Sgt. White was killed and his Spitfire was a write-off.

Pilot Officer Falkust's plane was damaged, so he force-landed at Le Touquet and was captured.

Another Pilot Officer, Massey-Sharpe, was killed when, it is thought, he collided head-on. He crashed near Calais.

These first three casualties all occurred within ten minutes.

* 

A fourth victim was Pilot Officer Roy Morant. At 5.30 a.m., he force-landed his Spitfire on the beach east of Bray Dunes.

\(^a\) Wing – name given when squadron units combine.
\(^b\) The Me.109 out-performed the Spitfire Mk I if above 20,000 feet. (Mark II Spifires were not yet available.)
\(^c\) Bf = Bayerische Flugzeugwerks (Bavarian Aero Works) which began as Udet's firm.
\(^d\) Seaplanes.
\(^50\) Correctly termed 'Hispano MA 1112 MIL Buchons'.
\(^51\) 'Tracer – Regularly spaced among the bullets to be fired were 'tracers' which made a visible light/smoke trail which enabled the trajectory of the bullets to be seen – and therefore to be corrected as necessary.
Morant was shot at by British troops – who missed! He then landed in the water to avoid the crowded beaches.

When he left the cockpit, they again opened fire. Two reasons, or excuses, were given.

The first was that when the gunners saw the glycol coolant streaming from the fighter they thought that he was spraying them with gas!

The second was the fighter's markings.

Until the beginning of May, R.A.F. roundels were concentric, ever-increasing rings of just red, white and blue. Four weeks earlier, however, to make them more visible, the R.A.F. had added a further, even larger, outer ring of yellow. This meant that there was over twenty times more yellow than red! Some troops told Morant that it was this 'unfamiliar yellow' that had misled them.52 (Morant's story continues in Sunday's record of events.)

Bader had just completed his first month of flying legless, and was elated by his victory. During the Evacuation he put in over twenty-eight hours' combat flying in all.53 Saturday morning's 'kill' (the first of twenty-one) was well-timed for Bader, because the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, would be visiting Hornchurch later this Saturday to get a first-hand account of the situation over Dunkirk and to congratulate the squadrons.

By 6.30 on Saturday morning, the Hornchurch Squadrons were back at base. The ground crews refuelled and rearmed the fighters. The pilots were given breakfast and then were off again to Dunkirk by 8.25 a.m.54 In their absence from Dunkirk, a very great deal had happened.

**H.M.S. Codrington**

Dunkirk, East Mole – from 5.30 a.m.

Montgomery, with his Chief of Staff and his wounded A.D.C., reached Dunkirk, went to the Command Post at the base of the East Mole, and was told to board H.M.S. Codrington moored at its far end. By this stage in the Operation there were two large gaps in the East Mole, so Montgomery, like everyone else, will have had to negotiate the planks that the Army had laid across them. The secret was not to look down at the shattered bodies of the unsuccessful among the broken concrete supports in the dark waters below.

* In the New Year, H.M.S. Codrington had taken Churchill across to France. In a packed schedule, Churchill had conferred with French Navy leaders about sowing mines, had seen the great defensive Maginot Line for himself, had visited many elements of the (British) Air Striking Force, had lunched with Lord Gort, and had visited units of the B.E.F.

In February, Codrington had taken the P.M. and Churchill across the Channel for the Supreme War Council in Paris. According to Churchill's bodyguard, it provided the original occasion for a widespread Churchillian anecdote. Apparently, a mine was seen which Churchill thought ought to be blown up. In due course, to please him, it was. A lavatory door floated to the surface. Seeing 'W.C.' on it, Churchill quipped 'It must have been meant for me – it has my initials on it!'

Shortly before Operation Dynamo Codrington had taken part in the Norway operations and then, on the fall of Holland, had carried Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhardt of the Netherlands, and their young Princesses, from Ijmuiden safely to Harwich.55

* On this Saturday, Montgomery's little group boarded Codrington just after dawn. They then had to wait for three long hours during which the destroyer was under heavy bombardment. It will have seemed a long time but it was much quicker than taking troops off the beaches, which, Commander Pollard recorded56, took eight hours.

The Captain had previously heard nothing of Monty, but he told the historian Richard Collier that the Major General seemed in his seventh heaven. With every new wave of planes his interest grew keener. Above the tumult of battle, he kept up a running commentary: 'Ah, another lot coming in now…what do you think their tactics are going to be? I wouldn't come in all at once if I were them . . . if they came in one at a time I think they'd have a first class chance of hitting us.' The Captain thought Montgomery a very cool customer.57

A few minutes before her departure, Codrington and the destroyer Harvester opened fire on a bomber that was being
attacked by Spitfires. It burst into flames and fell into the sea. *Codrington* initially signalled that it was an R.A.F. Blenheim — but fortunately it was not.58 It was a Heinkel. (Perhaps the gunners themselves had not actually seen that it was 'being attacked by Spitfires' — which should have told them whose side it was on.)

* 

We know how Monty behaved under bombardment, but not how he felt. His Corps Commander Alan Brooke described in his diary what it was like to be bombed while waiting at the East Mole.

'The five long hours at anchor with repeated visits from German bombers, the crash of bombs on the sea, the continuous firing of A.A. [anti-aircraft] guns, and the horrible sight of a destroyer59 being blown up by a bomb which we had witnessed the previous afternoon continually before our eyes.

'I am not very partial to being bombed whilst on land, but I have no wish ever to be bombed again whilst at sea. I have the greatest admiration for all sailors who so frequently were subjected to this form of torture during the war.60

Montgomery was too disciplined ever to show his fear, and too inhibited ever to admit it. However, he probably felt as Brooke had done. The unspoken code of military leaders is to appear fearless. (On one occasion Monty was reading on a plane that crashed on take-off; eyewitnesses said that he never even glanced up!)

Why was Montgomery's destroyer delayed for three hours?

The delay may have been due to the time taken to embark over 700 troops. Although Masefield quotes a soldier who, at the same place twenty-four hours earlier, had thought 'It was apparently impossible to embark till the tide arose'.60

High Water was at 8.30 a.m. *Codrington* had sixty tons of soldiery which she was not designed to carry and which will have increased her usual twelve-foot (3.8m) draft.

* 

On this Saturday morning, the destroyer H.M.S. *Havant* was mooring-up alongside the East Mole as Montgomery in *Codrington* was leaving. Aboard the *Havant* was Lieutenant-Colonel Brian Horrocks (commanding the 2nd. Battalion Middlesex Regiment).

Earlier he had witnessed 'an astonishing scene' between Montgomery and his own Corps Commander, Brooke.

Brooke had wept.

Monty explained to Horrocks, 'General Brooke has just received orders to hand over II Corps to me and go back to England.'61

Like Montgomery, Horrocks also had had no sleep. Horrocks had devised a system to stop the troops rushing the boats and overturning them. He had stood chest-high in the water directing the troops with a torch in the darkness to come out in batches of twenty, and for small boats to collect them as he signalled them. He was eventually overcome by cramp. After that, like Montgomery, he had followed the last of his men to Dunkirk, and arrived just as the first big attacks were developing. He boarded the destroyer H.M.S. *Havant*62 She left, and promptly took on board the troops from H.M.S. *Ivanhoe*, which had been bombed amidships, bringing her own total to 500.

As Horrocks was having a rum and milk in the wardroom, *Havant* was also dive-bombed, and her engine room hit twice. A third bomb dropped fifty yards ahead and exploded as *Havant* passed over it.63 Seven were killed, and the rest were saved — although many were wounded. Horrocks scrambled down the sloping deck and jumped into the sea before the *Havant* rolled over.64 Horrocks was picked up by a small Dutch schuit, the *Aegar*, (already full of men) that was heading for Margate, but manoeuvred alongside.65

Horrocks volunteered to man its aged anti-aircraft Lewis gun6 — and fired away at the hoards of aircraft — but, he confessed, without visible results!66

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4 The *Grenade* had been moored at the East Mole. She had been hit, had caught fire, had gone adrift and had been in danger of blocking the harbour entrance. With heroic seamanship a tug had moved her away, whereupon *Grenade* had exploded and sunk.

6 A Great War quick-firing gun but with poor range that made it 'tragically limited against German dive-bombers' (Carse).
Gort Returns
Dover – from 6.20 a.m.

Lord Gort had left Dunkirk at 3.04 a.m. while it was still dark.

It was not the job of M.A/S.B.'s to rescue troops, only three of the seven used did so, but Gort's M.A/S.B.6 rescued twenty-six. This lends weight to the following day's report, in the *Sunday Pictorial*, that at Dunkirk Gort had said, 'There is room for more men, Go and collect them quickly.'

During the crossing, Leading Telegraphist William Coom had obtained Gort's autograph. He later recalled that the lone sentry on the quayside at Dover almost dropped his rifle when he realised that he was presenting arms to the B.E.F.'s Commander-in-Chief.

Gort went to a little shed nearby and had a cuppa with a few naval ratings. (His luggage followed him rather more slowly in a small motorboat the *Ahola*, which did not reach Dover until lunchtime.)

Lord Munster, Gort's Aide-de-Camp, (who, as related, had arrived in London on Thursday) was back at Dover with a Whitehall official to greet Gort. They were mightily relieved that he was safe. When they expressed their delight, Gort, knowing that 39,000 British Troops remained, retorted, 'It isn't the arrival of myself that matters, it is the arrival of my Army.' This remark was widely quoted and seemingly said more than once.

Lord Gort was driven to Vice-Admiral Ramsay, who was in charge of Operation Dynamo and whose Headquarters were only half a mile away, to thank him for all that the Navy had done for his troops. The *Sunday Pictorial* reported Gort's comment, 'We will meet ... [the Germans] again, and the next time the victory will be with us.' He was certainly expecting to command a reformed B.E.F. and to return to France shortly. Churchill was planning the return of the B.E.F. in the hope that France would continue fighting. After leaving Vice-Admiral Ramsay, Lord Gort and Lord Munster caught a train from Dover to London, and arrived at Victoria Station at 9.20 a.m.

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Just Passing
North Goodwin Light Ship – from 5.00 a.m.

A rough record of the laden ships that passed Able Seaman Sam Palmer on just the first half of his journey across the Channel, from 5.00 to 9.00 a.m., gives a clear impression of Operation Dynamo. (Note, only the larger vessels are mentioned below.)

Two paddle steamers, the massive *Royal Eagle* and the *Westward Ho*, passed Palmer. The first had brought General Pownell and Lord Munster to Margate on Thursday morning and was repeating her routine with over 1,200 troops aboard.

The *Westward Ho* was the oldest paddle steamer used in Operation Dynamo. She had been built in 1894, and had served in the Great War. On 1 June 1940, she was carrying no less than 900 French troops to Margate. The paddle steamers arrived at Margate just after 6.00 a.m.

Half an hour later, the *Royal Sovereign* followed them to Margate. She became famous for three reasons – the regularity of her crossings, her speed of embarking and disembarking, and the honour of being the last personnel vessel to leave Dunkirk on 3 June.

H.M.S. *Scimitar* crawled by Palmer and his flotilla in the fifth of her six round trips to Dunkirk. On the outward voyage, she had collided with the destroyer *Icarus*, and had suffered a crumpled bow. Her Captain decided to go on, although she was limited to eight knots (9 mph). She had spent a frustrating seven hours from Friday lunchtime unable to embark troops for 'choppy water' and the lack of Little Ships. She whiled away the time shooting at German aircraft – and claimed to have hit one. *Scimitar* loaded up and left just before Friday midnight, but her slow return was delayed even more by a slight altercation with a trawler. She arrived at Dover at 6.30 a.m.

Two drifters passed Able Seaman Palmer. These were also under naval command, and were the *Rewga* and *Gula*. Between them, they brought another 200 troops to Ramsgate at around 7.00 a.m. They formed part of a thirteen-strong fleet from Yarmouth, but the fleet did not stay together.

*Tilly* was the third of the Dutch *schuits* to pass. Aboard were 200 troops. (On Wednesday,
on the Thames, she had had the unhappy misfortune to run down the grandly-named Thames pleasure boat *Queen of England*!

The Hospital Carrier *St. Andrew* passed on her way to Newhaven. She was absurdly conspicuous in her 'high visibility' hospital livery, but on her three previous visits to Dunkirk it had afforded her no protection whatever from air bombardment. The *St. Andrew* was managed by the Great Western Railway, so had only G.W.R. staff aboard – no extra medical staff or stretcher bearers were allocated to her. She had a very difficult time at Dunkirk trying to get within practical reach of the wounded. She eventually succeeded, and when she passed the Dunkirk-bound traffic along Route X on Saturday morning, she had managed to take on board 130 wounded.

The G.W.R. also owned the *St. Helier*. She was used on their Weymouth-Channel Islands route. She had been one of the first ships to try mooring against the East Mole jetty at Dunkirk. On this Saturday, she was on her fourth trip, and was bound for Dover, which she reached at 7.20 a.m. She had 1,250 troops aboard (although on two occasions she had carried up to 2,000). She caught up with Palmer in *Naiad Errant*, at about 2.30 p.m. back at Dunkirk.

H.M.S. *Malcolm* passed on her sixth return to Dover. She had done two round trips both on Thursday and on Friday. Her grand total of troops rescued would reach 5,991. (These included, on her last trip four days later, Admiral Abrial. Near the North Goodwin Light Ship, she rescued him from a French motor-torpedo boat that was sinking, due to having earlier hit a wreck.)

Two more Yarmouth drifters passed Palmer, the *Lord Barham* and then the *Dorienta*. The latter was going slowly owing to having her engine hit by German shore guns. She had sixty-five soldiers aboard.

*Ships appear to keep similar company, and to travel in clusters when appropriate. A gathering of French vessels, three of them trawlers, then passed Palmer, – the *Gaston Rivera, Patrie, Monique Camille*, and the *Andre Louis*. Between them, they were carrying 900 of their compatriots\(^\text{74}\) to Dover, which they would reach before 8.30 a.m. A British trawler, *Alcmaria*, with thirty-two aboard arrived at Ramsgate at the same time.*

The 90-foot *Christabelle II* passed on her way back to the naval base at Sheerness. She was a 'Harbour Defence Patrol Craft' armed with a Lewis gun. She had rescued thirty-three. The *Strathelliot*, a naval trawler, with fifty troops, accompanied her to Sheerness.

*Sun IV*, one of the Alexander Towing Company's tugs, skippered by Mr. Alexander himself, passed Palmer. On Friday, she had left Ramsgate in the vast procession of 'Special Tows', towing nine boats.

At Dunkirk, she had collected eighty-eight troops, and had left an hour before first light. Shortly after leaving, she had 'one boat swamped by a destroyer manoeuvring in an air attack.'\(^\text{75}\) It was cut adrift and abandoned.

Three hours later, *Sun IV* had another of her boats in tow swamped.

Steaming slowly past Palmer – because she could do nothing else – was the Steam Hopper barge named *Lady Southborough*, owned by the Tilbury Dredging Co. At Dunkirk, her skipper had driven her onto the beach by Dunkirk for the troops to use as a jetty. She refloated on the rising tide on Saturday morning, and delivered the 478 aboard safely to Margate at 8.30 a.m.

*Nephrite* was unusual in that she was used as a coal store ship during Operation Dynamo. She only went to Dunkirk once, and on Saturday 1 June returned with over 500 troops. She was one of the few ships to pass Palmer on route to Folkestone, which, presumably, was more suited to load her particular cargo.

The *Hebe* – the Fleet Minesweeper which Lord Gort had initially boarded on Friday evening – left Dunkirk at sunrise and reached Dover at 8.30 a.m. She restricted her load to 420 because she was low on fuel.

H.M.S. *Worcester* swept past on her fifth round trip. After disembarking over 660 troops at Dover at 8.45 a.m., she did a quick turn-around, and would overtake Palmer mid-morning. They would be at Dunkirk together.

The French Minesweeping Trawler, *Denis Papi*, reached Ramsgate at the same time that the *Worcester* reached Dover, and disembarked 228 troops. (The stories of *Worcester* and *Denis Papi* are continued later, among the accounts of Saturday afternoon.)
The P.M. leaves Paris

Villacoublay aerodrome— from 7.00 a.m. While Gort was arriving at Dover, and before H.M.S. Codrington had left with Montgomery, Churchill had breakfasted at the British Embassy in Paris after a night broken by minor air raids. By seven o'clock, the British contingent of Friday's Supreme War Council had left for Villacoublay aerodrome on the outskirts of Paris.

General Spears left his Paris home to meet them there. He was very upset at seeing hundreds of workmen regularly engaged in road-widening within Paris while there were no field fortifications whatsoever outside the city because of the supposed 'lack of labour'!

In the Great War, the French had stopped the Germans fifteen miles from the capital. History looked unlikely to repeat itself so positively.

When Churchill arrived with Ismay, Dill and Attlee, the Flamingos were out of their hangars, and the fighters of 601 Squadron, with their 'UF' coding, were arranged on either side. At the same time, at Dunkirk, the Luftwaffe fighters were going up and down the long straight beaches machine-gunning the troops, and mowing them down. Planes arranged in neat peacetime lines could all be rendered useless or destroyed if they were dealt the same treatment.

Not long after Churchill arrived at Villacoublay, 19, 41, 222 and 616 Squadrons at Dunkirk attacked the Luftwaffe who were creating such hell for the troops and the ships. Pilot Officer E.M. Stapleton described his return:

'I saw an airfield below me absolutely packed with Heinkel 111's; they were not even dispersed around the airfield, they were tightly packed together. I just prayed I had some ammunition left and went into a strafing attack. I hadn't any ammunition left, but it wouldn't have taken more than a hundred rounds to set the lot alight.'

It was noticed that, at Villacoublay, Churchill's Flamingos and the escorting Hurricanes were arranged well apart and in a very large semicircle. This was to prevent any German pilot doing what P/O Stapleton had hoped to do.

As the Luftwaffe was still active north of Paris, Churchill's Saturday morning flight would retrace the western detour of Friday's route over the Channel Islands.

Churchill thrived on danger and he looked buoyant. He insisted on pacing round the aerodrome to review the planes and speak to the pilots. Churchill waved his stick in the air and said a word or two of thanks to each pilot, whose faces were seen to 'light up' in response. Some of them needed all the lighting-up they could get! Most were grey and unshaven after their night out in Paris. One, Willie Rhodes Moorhouse, was being what might be called 'actively unwell' behind his Hurricane when Churchill arrived.

* 

Max Aitkin, the Commander-to-be, was one of the pilots of the escort. Churchill had summoned Aitkin to his flat at the Admiralty just a few days before. Aitkin, knowing that Churchill had only been Prime Minister for sixteen days, had been amazed that he intended to share his lunchtime with a mere Flight Lieutenant – albeit the son of Lord Beaverbrook, his Minister for Aircraft Production. Churchill had cross-questioned Aitkin in detail since he was never satisfied merely with the 'official' picture of things that the various ministries presented to him, without it being backed-up by the testimony of those more closely involved.

How were things going with the fighter squadrons?

Well.

Are the German fighter planes better than ours?

No.

Aitkin had then suggested that Churchill make a statement in the House of Commons about the R.A.F. Churchill took the suggestion seriously.

At 8.30 a.m., they took off from Villacoublay. Friday's flight had lasted two hours and thirty-five minutes, so Churchill and his party would certainly miss the start of the War Cabinet at 11.30 a.m. (It was probably because Churchill did not ask his escort pilots to return until 8.00 a.m. that his schedule was

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4 Most fighters carried their two-letter squadron code — e.g. 'UF' — in large letters one side of their fuselage roundels, while the letter that designated the plane (A, B, C, D, etc.) was painted on the other side.
The pilots of 601 Squadron were sensitive to Churchill's feelings, so they abandoned the correct escort formation, and 'tucked in very close on either side of the Flamingo so that the passengers could see the fighters and wave to them.'

Grave Losses

H.M.S. Keith – from 5.30 a.m.

It was as well for Gort that he had left the destroyer H.M.S. Keith in the early hours. She had shelled the inland German artillery on Friday, and, from sunrise on Saturday, the Luftwaffe were out for revenge.

The fast and tragic events are most vividly relayed through the experience of Ian Nethercott, one of the anti-aircraft gunners on the Keith.

The destroyer had left Chatham the previous Tuesday, where she had been repaired following her earlier battle with the German forces at Boulogne. At Sheerness, her new Captain had addressed the crew:

'As you know we're going to Dunkirk'.

Until then, none did!

As they left, the sailors were astonished; 'everywhere you could see were trawlers and long lines of motorboats...from the Thames being towed across with an unhappy-looking sailor stuck in each.'

Nethercott's gun had been updated, which pleased him, and Keith's anti-aircraft capabilities had been improved in the hope that she could keep the Luftwaffe away from the lesser-armed troop carriers. Nethercott had spotted the German inland observation balloon on Friday, which he described as 'two men sitting up there in a basket', and added, 'What's the bloody R.A.F. doing...surely they should have shot it down by now.'

On Saturday morning, Nethercott observed:

'It was the German fighters that were the trouble, not so much the bombers. They flew level with the beach and went up and down, up and down.'

Through binoculars he could see the troops, when the planes appeared, scatter and dive into the holes they had dug. They reappeared when the danger was over. When the Keith suddenly gained speed, Nethercott knew what it meant. He leapt to his seat at his anti-aircraft gun, and trained the two-pounder a up towards the sun. The noise of its fire drowned the scream of the Stukas. Four fighters appeared on his left.

The skipper was flinging the ship around at full speed, about 35 knots [40 m.p.h.] and of course I had to swing my gun right round to follow the bastard down, because you've got to hit them right on the nose when they are coming towards you. And before I knew it I'd shot all our bloody wireless aerials away. Leaving poor old Commander Wake-Walker out of contact with Dover. I got a bollocking from the First Lieutenant but I said, 'Well, you know, sir, it's a choice of whether you want the wireless aerials restrung or a thousand pound bomb on the bridge.'

(A little earlier, the destroyer H.M.S. Vanquisher had also had her aerials shot away, but by the guns of the destroyer H.M.S. Icarus that was moored alongside.)

Rear-Admiral Wake-Walker also described the period covered by Nethercott –

'...many aircraft appeared on the scene and fighters constantly came low over us. More often than not they were Spitfires, but our ships were not taking any chances and nearly always opened fire indiscriminately on them. As this kept happening I hoisted 6 flag – "cease fire"- and blew the siren to draw attention and try and stop the firing. In spite of this I remember our own machine gun aft in the Keith firing away regardless of the

a Standard term for an anti-aircraft gun that used 3.7 inch (94mm) shells which weighed that amount (nearly a kilo). It was most likely a Bofors gun.
"cease fire" gong. Once they started firing, they could hear nothing.\textsuperscript{84}

Later, towards breakfast time, the Luftwaffe returned in even greater force. Nethercott and the rest of the gunners (probably a team of six for each of the two anti-aircraft guns) watched as about sixty dive-bombers peeled off towards the rescue vessels. Four lines of Stukas attacked from different directions. Nethercott fired off at one line of them when –

'I just suddenly saw this Stuka appearing over the bridge – it seemed to be almost touching it – and this great big bloody yellow bomb fell from its clamps. It was a thousand-pounder...We were moving to starboard [to the right] and he dropped it down the port [left] side. It didn't land on us but it blew a part of the port side in…'

It took considerable judgement on the part of a dive-bomber pilot to pull-out so low. Once the Stuka pilot had put out the dive-brakes (to save going too fast), this operated a safety pilot control. The pull-out required a 1,500 foot height margin, and when the aircraft had plummeted to that height, a light came on and the pilot usually switched to automatic pilot until it was over. Any pilot who came any lower had virtually no means of pulling-out more sharply if he misjudged it.\textsuperscript{85}

Luftwaffe pilots sometimes left it as late as possible. Two days earlier, the motor yacht\textsuperscript{86} Advance was attacked, and one Stuka was so low that its undercarriage demolished her mast!

H.M.S. Keith slowed, started to ship water, and while Nethercott was firing away, another Stuka dropped a bomb below her stern. This damaged her steering gear, so Keith began circling. Nethercott did not realise that another bomb had gone straight down the second funnel.

The first boat on the scene was the now-famous M.T.B. 102. At eight o’clock, she took aboard Rear-Admiral Wake-Walker and some of his staff.

In switching his flag to M.T.B. 102, Wake-Walker made her probably 'the smallest warship to wear an admiral's flag in action'.\textsuperscript{87} The flag itself – like so much during the Evacuation – was improvised. Dawkins, 102’s torpedoman, grabbed an ex-Southern Railway tea towel, and painted on it a scarlet St. George Cross with its two-ball 'Rear-Admiral' designation, and hoisted it.\textsuperscript{a} The M.T.B. took them first to Dunkirk and then to Dover.

The Captain ensured that Keith's depth charges were set to 'safe' – to prevent them exploding when she sank – and, at about 8.30 a.m., he gave orders to abandon ship.

St. Abbs, a massive Admiralty tug, had been summoned, and arrived just in time. She took aboard the wounded. Scores jumped over the side – including most of Lord Gort's Staff.\textsuperscript{88} Other boats joined in the rescue work, and ten of Gort's Staff Officers were picked up out of the water and taken aboard the steam tug Vincia. She collected 108 of the Keith's officers

\textsuperscript{a} It still survives as a treasured memento. A coloured photo of it, framed and mounted, appeared in Motor Boat & Yachting in August 2000.
and ratings together with a number of Staff Officers from the French Headquarters.

Thirty-three ratings and three naval officers lost their lives.

Nethercott and his crews kept firing while the Keith really began to 'settle' and then to go well over onto her side.

* The Luftwaffe had certainly picked out the Keith for special attention, but she was not the only one, as Nethercott witnessed:

'Then I saw the Basilisk sinking over on our starboard side, then the Skipjack went…'

The destroyer H.M.S. Basilisk was attacked four times. In the first attack, a bomb exploded in the No.3 boiler room, which put all her machinery out of action. In the second attack, six bombs exploded underneath her, causing her to 'buckle'.

* While this was going on, Sergeant Potter of 19 Squadron had his Spitfire hit, and, at 4,000 feet, his engine seized. He decided to stay in the plane as he thought his chances of survival would be greater than if he parachuted.

He aligned his Spitfire to pancake near a small boat. He blew some air into his life-jacket, and undid his harness in case the plane sank. The Spitfire hit the water and bounced twice before momentarily floating. Potter tried to get out of his cockpit, but became tangled in his parachute. He sank with his Spitfire through the green water into the black. He managed to break free, and struck out for the surface. The ship was just fifty yards away.

* In the third of the four attacks on H.M.S. Basilisk, the French trawler Jolie Mascotte was trying to tow her, but the enemy scored no hits.

In the final attack, Basilisk was dive-bombed, rolled over, and sank in three minutes. Over 130 seamen were rescued, including six officers and seventy-one ratings saved by the Jolie Mascotte.

* The minesweeper Skipjack was dive-bombed by ten aircraft and hit five times. Twenty-six were killed and thirty wounded. W T. Emslie, serving aboard H.M.S. Dundalk, witnessed her fate – 'She was lying at anchor still taking on troops, when she took the full delivery from a dive-bomber and went up in a terrific explosion. When the smoke cleared she had vanished; there was simply nothing there any more.'

At 8.49 a.m. she turned turtle, and sank twenty minutes later, trapping 275 troops below decks. Those in the water were machine-gunned by the Luftwaffe.

From aboard the Keith, Nethercott recalled – 'Ships were sinking all around us, everywhere you could see destroyers going down with this terrific attack. And as she [the Keith] started to really lurch, I couldn't get the gun elevated properly, but we hung on because when the bombers had gone these fighter planes came down and started strafing everyone in the water or on the decks.'

'And while I am watching I see the [Admiralty steam tug] St. Abbs with all the survivors including our Captain. She hadn't got very far and they got a bomb right down her funnel. The whole bloody lot went sky high. At 9.30 a.m. she sank in forty-five seconds. They were all in the water again, well those that got blown over the side (i.e. 30 of the 135. 105 were drowned). And already in the water you'd got survivors from five or six ships. Some were soldiers. And great big pools of black oil. They were all floundering around in the oil screaming and yelling.'

Nethercott and the rest of the gunners climbed down from the gun positions and started to throw overboard any spare timber they could find. They cut free the Carley-float, lowered it into the sea (which was already up to deck level on one side), and lowered two badly wounded crewmen into it.

* Nethercott leapt into the sea, feeling certain that his hefty life-jacket would keep him afloat, and slowly paddled the raft away from the sinking Keith. Within minutes, Messerschmitt 109's strafed those in the water, and killed the two wounded soldiers in the raft.

Nethercott tried to dive, but his life-jacket prevented it. He thought he must look like a duck with his head underwater and his legs waving around in mid-air! Then a bullet zipped...
through his knee and stopped such thoughts.

Trembling with shock and the cold, and sliding in and out of consciousness, he found himself drifting towards a merchant ship that had been bombed, and was aground. Soon the massive Clan MacAlister reared above him. Captain Berthon – his Captain on the Keith – was aboard with his face black with fuel oil! 'How the hell did he make it?' Nethercott thought to himself.

A sailor came down a rope ladder to Nethercott, and tied a line around his waist, whereupon he was dragged up the side of Clan MacAlister, with its limpets cutting into him as he scraped against her.

The Clan MacAlister was the largest ship in Operation Dynamo. On Wednesday she had been partially gutted, but had sunk in shallow water and had kept, literally, on an 'even keel'. She thus became a decoy for the Luftwaffe who tried to sink her nearly thirty times! The Admiralty calculated that, as a decoy, she saved a million pounds' worth of shipping.

Captain Berthon asked Nethercott where he was wounded. He replied, 'I've got a bullet in my leg I think.' In spite of the amount of blood there, the Captain said, 'Oh, that's just a scratch. It's gone right through.' They dressed it.

Nethercott's account concludes:'...there was an old cement barge from Tilbury Docks that came alongside with soldiers in it but no sailors. So the skipper said 'Come alongside', and we all got aboard her and Captain Berthon took over because they were heading the wrong way...towards Holland I think.'

Churchill's Flight

Paris – London – from 8.30 - 11.05 a.m.

The Flamingos of Churchill's party were over the Atlantic heading north from St. Malo, and flew back over the Channel Islands at about 9.30 on Saturday morning.

In the first plane, Ismay and Churchill worked together, sitting in its wickerwork seats. They will have had to use the time to finalise the report that Churchill would present the moment they reached Downing Street. (Churchill's bodyguard, Walter Thompson, claims that Churchill wanted the pilot to fly him over the beaches of Dunkirk. Given the tight schedule, it seems quite improbable.)

*  

The Channel Islands, below, were a problem for Churchill and the British Government. They were a hundred miles from Britain, but only fifteen from France. Britain was unable to defend them, but the Germans were coming ever closer. Churchill knew that he would shortly have to make public the decision to 'demilitarise' the Channel Islands by removing all military personnel and machines. It was a distasteful policy. It would give the wrong message to both sides. It would seem irresolute, when Churchill's constant theme both to the British and to the Germans was Britain's unshakable resolution to fight on.

Sadly for the inhabitants of the Channel Islands, events, as they say, 'took a turn'.

Since the Germans did not know British intentions, they sent reconnaissance fighters low over St. Peter Port to find out. An alert sailor on a Southern Railway ferry used his Great War Lewis gun and fired on them! The message was unambiguous – but it was the wrong message!

The Germans deduced that Britain intended to defend the Islands, so they promptly dropped 180 bombs on their two principal towns, St. Peter Port and St. Helier. They wounded many, and killed ten.  

Churchill will have foreseen and dreaded the enemy-occupation of British territory.

(The Germans captured the Channel Islands by the end of June. It had a considerable psychological impact, but was of no military benefit whatever to anyone. Hitler subsequently poured resources into them, and created the then-strongest fortifications in the world! Against whom? Still, it was better for the Allies that the Nazis did not put such resources into their War effort, but wasted them instead on useless symbols of Nazi military might.)

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Churchill's flight home on Saturday morning was uneventful. It might not have been.

On a later visit, Churchill returned without armed escort, since the French could not, or would not, supply the necessary fuel. He flew
protected by cloud cover – but it ended abruptly over Le Havre. Visible below the Flamingos was a Heinkel 111 attacking British ships.92

Wing Commander Goode lived up to his name. To prevent the unarmored Flamingos being silhouetted against the sky, he dived his plane right down to sea level. The tactic paid off. Goode radioed for an escort, as he raced Churchill over the waves towards England. If the German aviators had spotted the Flamingos, Ismay later wrote, ‘...the course of history might have been changed.’93

On the Saturday morning of 1 June, the V.I.P. in danger was not Churchill, but Sir Samuel Hoare, who was flying south to Lisbon. The Head of the Foreign Office knew the score, ‘...there’s a good chance of S H being murdered,’94 he warned.

Churchill and Hoare were dissimilar but closely linked. Hoare, as Home Secretary, had sought appeasement with Hitler, which Churchill could never countenance.

Hoare was known as 'Slippery Sam' because of his natural bent for intrigue. In March 1940, he was moved to become Minister for Air where, it was hoped, his non-stick characteristics would be less obvious.

During Operation Dynamo, Italy was planning to enter the War on the German side. Mussolini wanted to reap the spoils for which he had not fought. On this Saturday, Mussolini persuaded the Italian King to agree to join the Germans, and led him to believe that it would express the wishes of his people.95

Gracie Field's husband was Italian. Friday's papers reported her departure to America.96 It was widely assumed that she was fleeing Britain because of the likelihood of German invasion. In fact, her trip was simply to finalise her husband's American citizenship, to prevent him being interned as an enemy alien.

Churchill was very worried about Spain. He feared that General Franco would follow Mussolini's example. His fears were well grounded.

Franco assumed that, with the imminent collapse of France and the invasion of Britain, his Spain could leap into a new prominence, by acquiring both French Morocco and Britain's Gibraltar.

The following day, Sunday 2 May, Franco wrote this fawning letter to Hitler:

'Dear Führer:

'At the moment when the German armies, under your leadership, are bringing the greatest battle in history to a victorious close, I would like to express to you my admiration and enthusiasm, and that of my people, who are watching with deep emotion the glorious struggle which they regard as their own…

'...I do not need to assure you how great is my desire not to remain aloof from your cares and how great is my satisfaction in rendering to you at all times services which you regard as most valuable.'97

Oh dear!

Churchill knew that it was crucial to prevent neutral Spain joining forces with Hitler and Mussolini. The effects on Britain would be catastrophic: the loss of Spain's Atlantic ports, the loss of Gibraltar, the loss of access to the Mediterranean, and its shorter route to East Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand.

The Germans would reach the Spanish border within the month. Would they meet a neutral or an allied country?

When Churchill realised that France was collapsing, he cannily appointed Sir Samuel Hoare as the British Ambassador in Madrid. He hoped that Hoare would use all his scheming skills to Britain's advantage. He was not disappointed.

The Foreign Office's ominous prediction of Hoare's demise was prompted by the increasing number of Italians and Germans in Spain. The Germans were rushing planes and people there. On Friday, 20,000 Nazis had arrived to increase their number to 80,000.

When Hoare arrived in Madrid on this Saturday, he found – '...high prices, food shortages, German domination of communications, the press and aviation, and his Embassy virtually besieged.'

Next day, the Sunday Pictorial (opposite a

Dunkirk Revisited, Chapter III, Saturday 1st June, a.m. 88 © John Richards, 2008
reported that on Saturday, students in Madrid had paraded, chanting – 'Gibraltar is Spanish!' More serious was the news that a special Spanish Military Mission had arrived in Italy – probably on route to Berlin.98

The Spaniards assumed that Hoare had come to keep them out of the War by offering her Gibraltar.99 Hoare's task was certainly the stick of the former, but it lacked the carrot of the latter.

Hoare had to persuade Franco that, in the long term, the defeat of Germany was inevitable. This was no easy task for a political appeaser, and it was not helped by Franco knowing that the British Army was being driven off the continent at Dunkirk!

Hoare, however, used all his skills, both formally and subversively, with finesse, unstinting energy, and total success. Spain did not join the Axis powers, but retained her neutrality. Had Hoare failed, things would have turned out very differently indeed for everyone – then, and now.

* 

As the Flamingos approached the south coast of England near Portland Bill, the Hurricanes of 'A Flight' peeled off to port, to fly inland to their new base at R.A.F. Middle Wallop on Salisbury Plain. The pilots were in for a shock.

The site had been under construction for eighteen months, but due to the appalling winter, it was not ready. It had been planned as a bomber station, but, because of the German conquests on the continent in recent weeks, its future role was switched to the defensive. When finished, it would be a fighter base.

Meanwhile, mud, wet chalk and building rubble were everywhere. There were no latrines. Drinking water was scarce. Field kitchens provided the food. The 'Millionaires' would sleep in tents! 100

From Weymouth, Churchill and his V.I.P.'s flew unescorted to Hendon, and touched down at 11.05 a.m. The War Cabinet meeting, at Downing Street, would start in just twenty-five minutes.

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**Chivalry and Gallantry**

Lille, France – 9.00 a.m.

In the heading above, 'Chivalry' refers to the Germans, and 'Gallantry' to the French.

Lille is 40 miles (65 km) inland of Dunkirk, and is located in the 'upturned boot' area that had been occupied by the Allies. (See MAPS V to VII).

Although more than half the French Army escaped down the corridor to the coast, when the German pincer movement broke through the leg of the 'boot', the rest of the French Ist. Army was encircled at Lille.

Churchill describes what happened: 'On the 28th [Tuesday] they attempted to break out westwards, but in vain; the enemy closed in upon them from all sides. All through the next three days the French at Lille fought on gradually contracting fronts against increasing pressure, until on the evening of the 31st [Friday], short of food and with their ammunition exhausted, they were forced to surrender. About fifty thousand men thus fell into German hands. These Frenchmen, under the gallant leadership of General Molinié, had for four critical days contained no less than seven German divisions which otherwise could have joined in the assaults on the Dunkirk perimeter. This was a splendid contribution to the escape of their more fortunate comrades and of the B.E.F.' 101

With the French surrender, the German dive-bombers, that had been heavily occupied in the siege of Lille, had been free to fly north at dawn this Saturday morning, to add to the Luftwaffe's molestation of the evacuating troops at Dunkirk.

* 

At 9.00 a.m. this Saturday, there took place at Lille a notable, but rarely mentioned, event.102

General Alfred Wäger103, the Commander-in-Chief of the German XXVII Army Corps, had assembled his officers and men in the main square of Lille. He took the salute of French soldiers, representing all the units of the French First Army who had fought so bravely for the last three days to hold the town. Led by a German military band, they marched by, with their bayonetged rifles at the slope. François de Lannoy writes:104
Une manière chevaleresque de rendre hommage au courage et à la ténacité des soldats français...

(It can be translated – 'Wäger's chivalrous approach was intended to honour the courage and tenacity of the French soldiers.')

One witness, politically motivated, reported that they were a 'piteous spectacle, as gaunt and tattered as scarecrows'. Published photographs, however, give a very much smarter impression.105

General Wäger's chivalry was harshly criticised by the Nazis. His honourable behaviour illustrates an important point.

Although the German Army swore obedience to Hitler as its Commander-in-Chief, and was, therefore, sometimes an instrument of Nazism, it was not itself a Nazi movement. Its senior members were rarely Nazis, and there was often considerable friction between them and such Nazi instruments as the Gestapo.

* *

Saturday 1 June 1940 was one of the rare days when Churchill and Hitler were both in the same country – France.

Hitler began Saturday by flying from his Headquarters in the Black Forest 100 miles west to Brussels. Field Marshal von Bock, the Head of Army Group B, greeted him and later recalled:

'I summarised the situation, development and present state of play at Dunkirk. The Führer thanked us, and developed his ideas about the overall war situation and the new operation [against Paris]. He announced the imminent entry of Italy into the war. He is concerned about Paris from where he is expecting French counter-attacks.

'Afterwards the Führer drives through the city with me….He knows more about Brussels than I do. Presumably this is from the Great War.'

Hitler's cavalcade consisted of five cars carrying leaders, an armoured reconnaissance car, a motorcycle platoon, a communications team, a press car and a field kitchen.

From Brussels the convoy went north-west on Saturday morning towards Dunkirk to confer with General von Kuchler, commanding the XVIII Army Corps, in Gent. Hitler had his lunch from his field-kitchen.

Many Happy Returns

Route X – morning

While the Luftwaffe were pounding shore and ships at Dunkirk, Churchill flying back to London, Hoare flying into Lisbon, the Germans being chivalrous in Lille, and Hitler driving towards Dunkirk, Able Seaman Sam Palmer, in Naiad Errant, was chugging his way slowly across the Channel.

Passing Palmer continually were all the ships that had embarked soldiers under cover of darkness, and were taking them home. Some account of those that passed before 9.00 a.m. has already been given. At least 200 of the larger vesselsb are recorded as having passed Palmer before he reached the French coast at lunchtime.

* *

On the first half of Palmer's journey along Route X, some thirty ships bound for Dover passed him. Nearly half of them were destroyers. Forty boats went by bound for Ramsgate, eleven more to Margate, four to Folkestone, three to Sheerness, and a hospital carrier to Newhaven.

Nine of the boats that passed Palmer were French trawlers and eight were Dutch schuits. All the schuits were under naval command, and most of them berthed at Ramsgate.

The slowest to pass Palmer was probably the destroyer H.M.S. Ivanhoe. She was being towed.

In the early morning near Dunkirk, she had become grounded by the falling tide. She had then run her engines at full speed in an attempt to move. Sadly, some troops rowed a ship's lifeboat towards her, but ignored the order to stay clear. Ivanhoe's propellers were creating an underwater 'tornado', which sucked them and their boat underwater to disappear forever.

* Together with the Commanders of Armies 6 and 18, and the Commander of the 2nd. Luftflotte (Kesselring).

b Excluding many small craft whose detailed times are not recorded.
Next, the Luftwaffe bombed and damaged *Ivanhoe*, but the minesweeper *Speedwell* took off 100 of her troops.

The tug *Persia* then got a line to the stricken destroyer, but it was broken by the underwater concussion of further bombs.

To discourage the Luftwaffe from further attacks, *Ivanhoe*’s Captain waited until the bombs fell then ‘lit smoke floats inside various hatches to simulate hits’. 108

Escorted by the Army launch *Haig, Persia* then attached a second line, and took *Ivanhoe* in tow. She was holed at the waterline near her bow. Initially, sailors kept a watertight tarpaulin across it. Then everyone was moved aft to raise the hole. It worked.

It was evening before *Ivanhoe* reached the Thames Estuary, and it was 10.00 p.m. before she was moored-up safely at Sheerness.

In sharp contrast to *Ivanhoe* was the H.M.S. *Codrington*, that sped past Palmer to maintain an average of 36 m.p.h. (31 kts) between Dunkirk and Dover. She did the return in less than two hours. (At such speeds a destroyer's bow wave could be twenty feet high (6m), and her wash will have imperilled smaller craft.)

Aboard *Codrington*, Montgomery thought that she endured 'heavy bombing attacks on the journey to Dover'. Commander Polland, also on board, thought that Monty was mistaken. Two miles away, another destroyer was certainly attacked. What probably misled Monty was that when bombs explode on land their shock and sounds become muffled, but at sea there is no such cushioning, so everything sounds very much nearer.

Altogether, *Codrington* would make eight round trips to Dunkirk and rescue 5,500. (Her career came to an abrupt end two months later, when she was bombed and sunk in Dover harbour.)

The British destroyers that passed Palmer and his convoy this Saturday morning must have appeared like a Naval Review. Before breakfast-time *Scimitar, Malcolm, Worcester* and *Windsor* passed, carrying between them 4,486 troops. Later, the *Icarus, Sabre, Codrington, Vanquisher, Harvester, Winchelsea, Vivacious, Shikari* and *Scimitar* went by, carrying about 5,500 troops between them. The heaviest laden was the old H.M.S. *Winchelsea* with 1,150 aboard.

*Classes of British Destroyers are designated by letter and, usually, named accordingly. S, W, and V Classes had been used in the Great War, while Classes G, H, I and J were newer. Three days earlier, on Wednesday, *Grafton, Grenade and Wakeful* were sunk, while the *Gallant, Greyhound, Intrepid, Jaguar, Mackay, Montrose and Saladin* had all been put out of action. As such losses were quite unsustainable, the newer, larger and more costly classes – H, I and J – were withdrawn from Operation Dynamo. This reduced the number of British destroyers in Operation Dynamo from thirty-nine to a mere fifteen! It was a tragedy, because the destroyers brought off more troops than any other type of vessels. They were not ideal troop carriers, but what they lacked in size they made up for in speed. Not all was lost, however.

Vice-Admiral Ramsay, in charge of Operation Dynamo, kicked up such a fuss that two H-Class and four I-Class destroyers (the *Harvester, Havant, Ivanhoe, Impulsive, Icarus* and *Intrepid*) were immediately ordered back again to Dunkirk.

Both the fears and the demands were justified. The renewed involvement of these destroyers was very costly.

Only *Harvester* and *Intrepid* of the six destroyers went unscathed.

On Friday, *Ivanhoe* (described above) was extensively damaged. *Impulsive* damaged her propellers on uncharted wreckage, and was withdrawn. On this Saturday morning, *Havant*, less than a year old, was bombed and sunk at Dunkirk. While in the evening, *Icarus* collided in the dark with a trawler and could not be used again in Operation Dynamo.

Of the fifteen British destroyers that passed Palmer on Saturday morning, most were on their sixth trip. They coupled their speed of travel with rapid turnarounds – often not stopping even to re-arm. Here is just one example:

It was shortly after dawn near the North Goodwin Light Ship when the fully-laden H.M.S. *Scimitar* first sped past Palmer on her way from Dunkirk to Dover. Around breakfast

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*Destroyers took off 96,000; Personnel carriers 87,000.*
time, having disembarked 584 troops at Dover, she set off again. Scimitar then overtook Palmer on her way back to Dunkirk. She loaded 376 more troops at Dunkirk, turned for home once more and passed Palmer for the third time, as he was approaching the French coast.

Such a performance rightly undermines the popular – but quite impractical – conviction that the only, or main, role of the Little Ships was to ferry troops across the Channel!

*  

After about two and a half hours at sea, and in the sharpest possible contrast to the fast grey destroyers, Palmer and his mates will have seen the red cotton sails of the Resolute and Defender returning to Ramsgate. They bore the names of the famous J-Class racing yachts, because their crews used to crew them for extra income. It was only their names that they had in common.

They were small, broad-beamed, shallow-drafted, flat-bottomed, open fishing boats. They were around thirty feet (9.1m) long. Their drafts could be as little as two foot (0.6m), as they were designed to rest on the mud at low tide, while their crews collected cockles in summer and shrimps in winter. They were called 'Cockle Bawleys' and they used sail to supplement their motor-power.

The Navy had asked the Leigh-on-Sea's little fleet of them – the Defender, Endeavour, Letitia, Reliance, Renown and Resolute – if they would assemble off Southend pier on Friday morning complete with volunteer crews. That had been no difficulty. Seventeen-year-old Ken Horner was considered too young to go, but he cycled off and got his Mum's permission.

The Navy provided rations and pocket money for the crews, fuel and an extra deck hand for each boat. The boats had left in time to join up with Friday's long procession of 'Special Tows'.

Some time after the Cockle Bawleys Resolute and Defender had passed Palmer, there came a naval drifter with a tow of five, one of which was Letitia, another of the Cockle Bawley fleet.

*  

In the night, Letitia's skipper was hailed by his colleague in Renown. He reported what happened in the darkness. The crew of Renown '...yelling that they had engine trouble they made fast to our stern, and we towed them, about 3½ fathoms\(^a\) of rope being the distance behind us. That was at 1.15 a.m., and tired out, the engineer and seaman and signaller went to turn in as our work was nearly done. We were congratulating ourselves – when at about 1.50 a terrible explosion took place, and a hail of wood splinters came down on our deck. In the pitch dark you could see nothing, and after the explosion we could hear nothing. And we could do nothing, except pull on the tow-rope, which was just as we had passed it to Renown about three-quarters of an hour before, but not a sign of Renown.\(^b\)

The five aboard Renown included three from the same family. Against such personal loss, it was inappropriate of the B.B.C., in their 2003 production Dunkirk, to use these fishermen 'to imply\(^b\) that the usual motive of such skippers and crews during Operation Dynamo was financial gain.

A more appropriate response was that of the Vice-Admiral in charge of Operation Dynamo: 'The conduct of the crews of these cockle boats was exemplary. They were all volunteers who were rushed over to Dunkirk in one day. Probably none of them had been under gunfire before and certainly none of them under naval discipline....only one of their crews had been further than Ramsgate. Yet they maintained perfect formation throughout....all orders were obeyed with great diligence even under shellfire and aircraft attack.'\(^{111}\)

David Divine, the principal historian of Operation Dynamo, credited the Leigh-on-Sea Cockle Bawleys with ferrying from shore to ship as many as one thousand men between them.

At 9.30 on this Saturday morning, the Defender, the Reliance, and the Resolute altogether disembarked 180 men at Ramsgate.

(There is a memorial at Leigh-on-Sea to the brave fishermen, and to the four who lost their lives. In a less formal way, another memorial is the happy survival of Letitia, Defender, Endeavour and Resolute.)

There were ships that passed Palmer who

\(^{a}\) A 'fathom' was originally the arms' span, and it became standardised as six feet (1.8m). Letitia's rope was 21'.

\(^{b}\) Wording of Daily Mail headline, 5/12/03.
were not ferrying troops. The Navy had not only to transport troops, but also to ensure their safety. This was done by protective patrolling.

Three-quarters of an hour before Palmer had left Ramsgate, the Anti-Aircraft cruiser H.M.S. Calcutta left Margate to patrol the central section of Route X. As she was a cruiser, she was two to three times heavier than a destroyer and about 120 foot longer. Functioning as an 'Anti-Aircraft' cruiser, she had eight (rather than the usual two) A.A. guns, which had multiple barrels, and fired shells three times larger than most destroyers used.\(^{112}\) She was chosen to keep the Luftwaffe at bay, and was properly equipped to do so.

Patrolling with H.M.S. Calcutta along Route X on Saturday morning were also the corvettes\(^a\) H.M.S. Mallard and H.M.S. Shearwater.

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**Royal Support**

Buckingham Palace – mid-morning

During Churchill's flight, and while Palmer was making his way along Route X, Lord Gort trained to London and was met at Victoria Station by the Secretary of State for War, Anthony Eden. A message reached Gort from the Palace that King George wanted to see him. Fortunately, Gort was not in the same sodden state as his Staff.

* The King had always had close connections with the B.E.F. It had originally been called the 'British Field Force', but he had insisted that it be renamed the 'British Expeditionary Force' to maintain the historical link with the B.E.F. of the Great War of 1914-18.

Two of King George's brothers were Major Generals, and both were linked with the B.E.F.\(^b\)

Henry, the Duke of Gloucester\(^b\), was Lord Gort's Chief Liaison Officer.\(^{113}\) King George had ordered Henry home just before Operation Dynamo, for much the same reason that Churchill had ordered Gort home. It would have given a needless psychological advantage to the Germans had they captured him. (Henry gave up his Army career in order to help his brother King George.\(^{114}\))

George's elder brother, the Duke of Windsor\(^c\), had served at Gort's Headquarters at the start of the War.

In the Great War (when he was the Prince of Wales) he had served as a Guardsman with the B.E.F. His experience of Ypres and the Somme, however, where 57,000 British fell in one day, drove him politically to believe in appeasement-at-any-cost. Since that promising time, the Duke had come under the spell of Mrs. Wallis Simpson, and had become a changed man.

The couple, characteristically ignoring everyone's advice, had paid Hitler a warm visit in 1937, and the Duke had greeted Hitler with a fully-fledged Nazi salute!\(^{115}\) (This was cut out of British newsreels.) The Germans hoped to use him once they had conquered Britain.

Because his wife Wallis was in such close touch with the Germans (and therefore under surveillance by the British security forces), the Duke was regarded as a security risk. The then Chief of Imperial General Staff, General Ironside, called him his 'errant Major General'.

* Because of this, Gort devised a way of removing the Duke from his Headquarters. He sent him off to report on French military installations. These were out-of-bounds to the British, but as the French have a soft spot for royalty, they extended an open invitation to him. They did not realise that – not to put too fine a point on it – he had been sent to spy on them.\(^{116}\)

To his credit, the Duke wrote a 'pungent memorandum' of considerable insight and military relevance. He reckoned that the French generals were 'more hostile to each other than to the Germans'.\(^{117}\) Alas, the widespread British distrust of the Duke led the Army authorities – to their discredit – virtually to ignore his findings.

At the start of Operation Dynamo, the Duke was serving as a Major General on the staff of the British Military Mission in Paris. On the third day of Dynamo, Churchill held a secret meeting with the Duke and Gort. Churchill informed him that Gort had been sent home and that his Headquarters had been sacked by the Army authorities. The Duke was later relieved of his post.\(^{118}\)

\(^a\) Small warship designed for escort duties.

\(^b\) The four boys (who reached adulthood) born to George V & Queen Mary were 1) Edward VIII/Duke of Windsor, 2) King George VI, 3) Duke of Gloucester, 4) Duke of Kent.

\(^c\) He had reigned as Edward VIII, but had abdicated in 1936 in order to marry Mrs. Wallis Simpson.
meeting in Downing Street, where it was decided that the Duke and Wallis should be brought to Britain for interrogation about their possible Nazi collaboration. Their high-powered inquisitors would be the Chief Diplomatic Advisor to the Foreign Office, Sir Robert Vansittart, and the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Alexander Cadogan.

By a truly unremarkable coincidence, at 6.30 the very next morning (Wednesday 29 May) the Duke had crept out of the British Military Mission in Paris and had fled! He did not even inform his Aide-de-Camp of his departure. As one biographer puts it, 'The Duke had evidently decided that he had had enough of the war and had retired from his military post!'

He went south to join Wallis in Biarritz, and they then went on to their villa near Nice. Historians are virtually unanimous in saying that the Duke deserted his post.

The Duke's erratic and selfish behaviour was not appreciated by British leaders.

King George's Equerry drafted a letter saying that unless the Duke behaved like his younger brother the Duke of Gloucester, he ought to resign his commission.

Churchill threatened the Duke with a court martial. An early draft of one of Churchill's letters referred to the 'great deal of doubt as to the circumstances in which Your Royal Highness left Paris'. Later in June, Churchill sent a letter to all the Commonwealth Prime Ministers:

'The activities of the Duke of Windsor on the continent in recent months have been causing HM [His Majesty] and myself grave uneasiness as his inclinations are well known to be pro-Nazi…'

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor were on sufficiently good terms with the Germans for the Duke, later, to ask them to guarantee the safety of his possessions in Paris. With astonishing arrogance, the Duke then asked Churchill to send a destroyer to collect them!

At Buckingham Palace, on Saturday morning, King George will have asked Gort about his elder brother. In earlier years, George had always looked up to his brother. He remained very fond of him, but he did once complain that while earlier monarchs had the good fortune to ascend the throne upon the death of their predecessor, his was still alive!

Gort had regularly kept in touch with the King.

In December 1939, the King had spent a bitterly cold, spartan and hectic week at Gort's Headquarters near Arras. There, according to General Brooke, His Majesty had shown a – '

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The French had then taken King George off to show him their pride and joy – the Maginot Line.

The French had poured a then-massive £58 million into building a defensive wall along their border with Germany. Where neutral Belgium came between France and Germany for the last 180 miles (290 km) to the coast, however, the Maginot Line simply stopped.

The Germans did not bash themselves to pieces against the Maginot Line – as it was, perhaps, assumed that they would – but promptly went around the end of it.

On the Maginot Line, at one of its forts, King George had seen a garrison of over 1,000 men. It had over four miles of passages, a cinema, an electric railway, hospital, and electric kitchens. Its guns were automatic. It was an astonishing engineering feat, and the King likened it to an underground battleship.

General Brooke's assessment of it bears on the defeat of the B.E.F. and the Dunkirk Evacuation – '

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It is indicative of the false security that the French felt behind the Maginot Line that it had, in the brilliant phrase of one military historian, 'a disconcerting ring of peacetime'. Unbelievably, officers were instructed not to
work more than a forty-hour week, nor were they to order that any work be done at night, on Saturdays, or on Sundays!

The Line's string of fortresses required an astonishing 1,800,000 soldiers to man it, while some 200,000 of them had to live underground permanently.

The guns of the Maginot Line were automatic, and all faced Germany. As the Duke of Windsor rightly noted, they could not be turned around, so they could do nothing whatever to protect France once the Germans were behind them.

King George's cousin was Leopold III, King of Belgium. King George knew – to his fury – that Leopold was being made a scapegoat for the defeat of the British Army at Dunkirk. The best military leaders, however, fully understood Leopold's surrender. Belgian artillery was horse-drawn, its infantry supplied with rifles of Great War vintage, and they fought without the support of tanks. In ten days, Belgium had lost three-quarters of its territory, and food supplies for all were nearly exhausted.

King George quizzed every leader about his cousin's actions, including Gort. It was widely reported, and vigorously peddled by the *Daily Mirror*, that Leopold had capitulated to the Germans without giving the Allies any warning. George knew that this was untrue, because Leopold had formally written to him on the 25 May explaining his intentions, and he did not capitulate until three days later.

The French took a similar view to the *Daily Mirror*, and on this same Saturday struck Leopold off their Order of the Legion of Honour.

Lord Gort, as Commander-in-Chief, was likely to be the next scapegoat for the failure of the B.E.F. (Many of the B.E.F.'s weaknesses were due to the appeasement policies of pre-war governments, the reluctance of the voting public to spend money on defence, and the lack of proper preparation for the new style of warfare that the Germans had developed.)

On Saturday morning, King George was determined that Lord Gort should not become a scapegoat as his cousin had done, so he promptly invested him with one of the highest possible honours: a Knight's Grand Cross of the Bath. Shortly after, the King made Lord Gort an Aide-de-Camp General.

They would be the first – and last – honours that Gort would receive relating to his leadership and rescue of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk. Churchill would later tell Parliament of the reconstitution of the B.E.F. under 'the gallant... Lord Gort'.

Opinion swung against Gort. As Len Deighton put it, 'Gort was a man with many enemies, and not all of them were German'. Misfortune struck Gort also – he suffered the statistical improbability of having his London home bombed two days in succession.

Two months after Dunkirk, Gort spoke at the broadcast Sunday service commemorating the outbreak of the Great War.

Prior to the service, the Foreign Secretary asked his adviser to suggest a hymn.

He could not resist the quip – 'O Gort, our help in ages past!' Lord Halifax shrewdly quipped that Churchill might not like the second line: 'Our hope for years to come'!

In his talk, Gort castigated Nazism as a religion of Führer-worship. It was ruthless in conception and put no value on human life. Were the Nazi creed to flourish, he claimed, it would destroy the four characteristics of the British soul: faith, freedom, tolerance and respect.

Although Gort became Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Gibraltar in 1941 and Malta in 1942, he never held a military post after Dunkirk.

The Germans found royalty useful. They tried to capture monarchs, to use as hostages to paralyse their country's resistance. King George was already sheltering in Buckingham Palace Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, and he would shortly offer sanctuary to his relative King Haakon of Norway.

The Germans had parachuted Kommandos onto the Dutch Palace to capture Queen Wilhelmina. She had only escaped them by thirty minutes, and had fled clutching her gas-mask and handbag. George ordered the Navy

*Married to his aunt Maud, a younger sister of his father George V."
to rescue her from Rotterdam. H.M.S. Harvester delivered her to Harwich on 13 May. She arrived at Liverpool Street Station where King George met her personally.

At Hendon airport (into which Churchill had flown mid-morning) there was a third Flamingo aircraft, The Lady of Hendon. It was kept in constant readiness should it be deemed necessary for King George and his family to be evacuated, if – as is unlikely – they had ever consented!

France in sight
Mid-Channel – late morning

During the last part of Palmer's journey he was passed by fewer ships, and mainly the slower ones. The majority had aimed to embark troops under cover of darkness and then leave Dunkirk by dawn – which was quite early.

As the morning wore on, Palmer had another fifty ships pass him (excluding small craft). Unlike the earlier hours when he was passed by fifteen destroyers, during the second half of the morning he was only passed by three.

Two of the destroyers were French: La Flore on her first trip and L'Incomprise on her second. The third was the British destroyer Scimitar that, as mentioned above, did two trips to Dunkirk and had managed to pass Palmer in the early hours as well.

Because it was generally the slower, and therefore smaller, vessels that passed Palmer late morning, so it was to Ramsgate that most of them were returning, not to Dover. Ramsgate welcomed over twenty of them. Dover sheltered fifteen. Nine vessels went to Margate pier, and a few to Sheerness and Folkestone.

The minesweeper Hebe (from which Lord Gort had watched the aerial battle on Friday evening) passed with 365 troops. All was not well aboard her. For the last five days, hardly any of Hebe's crew had slept, as she had acted as a command ship off Bray-Dunes. On Friday evening, one of her Sub-Lieutenants had collapsed into fits and convulsions. On this Saturday morning, twenty-seven members of the crew were similarly afflicted. Hebe's surgeon collapsed when the ship reached Dover, and was heard to mumble that he could not face another trip to Dunkirk. Rest was the answer, but it was a luxury that none could afford. The Navy combed its lists to get a steady stream of new vessels and fresh hands.

The grossly overlaid Whippingham, described earlier, paddled very slowly past Palmer's Naiad Errant with 2,500 troops aboard. Her overloading greatly lowered her paddle wheels, which made them less effective.

As Palmer neared Dunkirk, he was passed by a bevy of French fishing boats – Ciel de France, Rose Effeuillee, St. Pierre IV, Antoinette Michel, La Colombe, Ave Maria Gratia Plena, and the Jolie Mascotte.

They had been busy at Dunkirk in the early hours, and were all bringing troops to Britain for the first time. They each carried about sixty troops, and all but one would make a second trip. When the British destroyer H.M.S. Basilisk was sunk, the Jolie Mascotte, as has been related, lived up to her name.

The skill and heroism of the French Navy and merchant seamen were no less than the British, it was just that their numbers were so much lower. There were reasons for this.

By agreement with Britain, France based her Navy mainly in the South of France, knowing that the Royal Navy could cope with anything that might arise in the English Channel. France's sea-enemy was Italy. Germany was her land-enemy.

In addition, delays and indecision in the French Command helped make the naval contribution of the French so little and so late. To British eyes, the French did not fully use the resources of their western ports – Dieppe, Le Havre, Cherbourg and Brest – in the Dunkirk operation.

The availability of the French destroyers in the account so far, was due largely to their being transferred from the Norwegian campaign. The French committed twenty-three warships to the Evacuation. Nine were destroyers, of which six survived.

The 'destroyer' type of warship was created to overcome the menace of torpedo-boats. They were so successful that they became a class of their own. They were light,
manoeuvrable and fast.

They were, strictly speaking, 'torpedo-boat destroyers', but that is such a mouthful that neither the British nor the French ever used it in full. Both nations shortened it. The British stressed the 'destroyer' element, while the French stressed the 'torpedo' element.

A French destroyer is, therefore, called a contre-torpillier (i.e. against-torpedo-boats). French destroyers evolved in two sizes: the larger of 2,400 tons and the smaller of 1,500 tons.

The larger ships retained the full name contre-torpillier, while the smaller ones were simply called a torpillier. That was very odd, because it meant that they were named after the type of boat they were designed to destroy!134

War Cabinet Begins

Downing Street – from 11.30 a.m.

The War Cabinet meeting at Downing Street began at 11.30 a.m. with the former Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, in the Chair. Its members are listed in the footnotea below. There were three items on the Agenda. The third was the Prime Minister's Report of the Supreme War Council Meeting in Paris.

They finished the second item at 11.50 a.m. whereupon Churchill, Attlee, Dill and Ismayb walked in. Sir Alexander Cadogan wrote in his diary:

'Evacuation marvellous. We have got off 224,000, including about 34,000 'Allies'. But a fearful strain on R.A.F. and Fleet – particularly in destroyers. Decided cannot go on after tonight, W.S.C. [Churchill] and Attlee returned from France. They had had – superficially – satisfactory talks with the French. But unless we pour in troops south of the Somme and give our whole Air Force, I foresee they'll do nothing...'135

The meeting would reconvene after lunch when Gort was due to report on Dunkirk.

The Fighting Frenchman

French Headquarters, Montry, near Paris

General Weygand, the Supreme Commander of all the French Forces, was at the Chateau de Montry. As visitors to the Paris Euro Disney will know, Montry is twenty-five miles (40km) east of Paris. In 1940, Montry housed four 'bureaux' of the French Head Quarters:
1. Personnel and Organization
2. Intelligence
3. Operations

There were no teletype services between the Head Quarters and any army in the field. The telephone service was inadequate. A message from H.Q. to the front could take two days to arrive. Despatch riders were used, but their accident rate made their system unreliable. It was probably a despatch rider that had managed to reach Lieutenant Colonel Charles de Gaulle to summon him from Abbeville (on the River Somme) to see his Supreme Commander this Saturday morning.

When Reynaud had become Prime Minister, just eight days earlier, he had immediately sent for de Gaulle who had stayed with him for a few days. He personally wanted De Gaulle to become the Secretary of his newly created War Committee, but it was politically impractical. During his time with Reynaud, de Gaulle learned of the widespread number of groups in favour of stopping the War. He was told that Marshal Pétain (who was then still the French Ambassador in Madrid) would force the High Command to accept an Armistice. Many of the French felt that Russia was a greater enemy than Germany.

A fortnight earlier, de Gaulle had led his incomplete Fourth Armoured Division against the Germans. He was the right person to do this. He had some of Churchill's strengths and some of Montgomery's. Like Churchill, he had used his pen in the nineteen-thirties to try to awaken the government to the need to create a mobile army.
Then, in January 1940, he had sent a memorandum to eighty French military and political leaders. (This was four months before Hitler's campaign in the west.) It was a remarkably prophetic warning that described what would later take place.

De Gaulle wrote that his aim in writing it was –

'...to convince them that the enemy would take the offensive with a very powerful mechanised force, on the ground and in the air; that our front might therefore be broken through at any moment; that if we had not ourselves the equivalent units of riposte, we were in great danger of being annihilated; that the creation of the required instrument ought to be decided on at once; that, besides pushing on with the necessary manufacture, it was urgent to gather into one recognised reserve those of the units already existing or in course of formation, which could, if need be, form part of it.'

'I concluded: "The French people should not at any price, fall into the illusion that the present military immobility might be in harmony with the nature of the present war. The opposite is the truth. The internal combustion engine endows modern means of destruction with such force, speed and range that the present conflict will be marked, sooner or later, by movement, surprises, break-throughs and pursuits the scale and rapidity of which will infinitely exceed those of the most lightning events of the past....Let us make no mistake about it! The conflict that has begun might well be the most extended, the most complex, the most violent of all that have ravaged the earth. The political, economic, social and moral crisis from which it has issued is so profound and so ubiquitous that it is bound to end in a complete upheaval of both the condition of the people and the structure of states....It is high time for the French to draw this conclusion.'

'This memorandum,' he recorded sadly, in his outstanding memoirs, 'produced no shock.'

De Gaulle predicated what would overtake France, and make the Evacuation from Dunkirk a necessity. Had he been heeded, world history might have taken a different course.

* General de Gaulle could wield the sword as mightily as the pen.

On the first day of Operation Dynamo, he had led his Fourth Armoured Division against the German bridgehead at Abbeville – the place on the western coast to which the Germans raced to divide the Allied Forces and to cut off their supplies to the north (See Map I).

The French had not brought their armoured strength together, so de Gaulle made do with what he had. He immediately attacked the Germans, and roused enthusiasm in so doing.

His anger had been fired, he explained later, by the insolence of the Germans who, in their rush to take Abbeville, had told French soldiers to throw away their arms, get out of the way and go south, as they had no time to take them prisoner!

For three whole days de Gaulle's armour had hammered the Germans. Although the German troops were reinforced daily, no further support reached de Gaulle's forces.

His achievement, although at considerable cost, was absolutely outstanding. He regained three-quarters of the area occupied by the Germans, a nine-mile (14 km) strip of land. It was – 'the only...land to be won in the Battle of France'137. De Gaulle took 500 prisoners, and a large quantity of German arms and matériel.

It is no surprise that it was de Gaulle whom the Supreme Commander of All French Forces asked to see on Saturday morning.

De Gaulle had known by Thursday (30 May) that the Battle of France would be lost, and had grieved that his country's leaders had ignored so many earlier warnings and prompting to produce mobile forces.

In his biography, de Gaulle mentions the things on his mind, as he went to see General Weygand at Montry this Saturday morning.

Hope need not be lost. If the situation could not be restored at the homeland, it could and must be established within the French Empire, i.e. Africa. Would the French government have the sense to remove the State out of range of the Germans to preserve its independence and safeguard the future? Or would it surrender everything in the panic of the collapse?

Would the High Command refuse to lower the flag until (according to the military regulations) 'all the means commanded by duty
and honour have been exhausted? Or would it urge an unstable government to surrender?

At Montry, General Weygand welcomed de Gaulle and heartily commended him for his magnificent fighting around Abbeville. Weygand asked de Gaulle what he should now do with the remaining French tanks.

De Gaulle outlined to Weygand a possible military policy that might yet contain the Germans.

Weygand listened, but then predicted what would happen. Weygand's slender hope of success depended on five 'ifs'…

De Gaulle wrote that by the end of the list –

'I knew now. I left General Weygand with heavy heart.'

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**The Great Rescue**

**West of Route X – from 10.25 a.m.**

Before the War, the *Prague* had been a ferry of the London & North Eastern Railway, and had operated between Harwich and Holland. She now acted as a troopship. She was 350 feet long, and could carry 3,000 troops. Her size, however, could be a bane as well as a blessing.

On the previous Tuesday, she had made her first trip to Dunkirk along Route Y. *Prague* had the hospital carrier *Paris* and the Isle of Man steamer *Manxman* in company. The trio had been given only small-scale sea-charts, with insufficient detail to negotiate the Zuydcoote Pass. *Prague's* draft was over sixteen feet.

All three ran aground – the *Manxman* for several hours. When *Prague* became free, she anchored, was given local advice and a better chart, and waited for the necessary High Water before proceeding to Dunkirk. She brought off 2,000 troops and returned to Folkestone along Route X.

Because of fog, *Prague's* off-loading schedule at Folkestone was delayed, and it no longer synchronised with High Water. She went 'hard aground'.

The massive steam tug *Lady Brassey* (362 tons), helped by a smaller one, *Foremost 87*, used all their power – assisted by *Prague's* own engines – to get her off and on her way.

On Saturday 1 June, having already transported over 3,000 troops, Captain Baxter ran the gauntlet of the bombing, and managed to enter Dunkirk harbour. Because of the policy that French troops should be lifted off in equal numbers, he had been told to berth *Prague* on the *western* side of the outer harbour. About 3,000 French troops embarked

*Prague* left the harbour at 9.00 a.m. and headed into the western section of the Dunkirk Road. Captain Baxter turned at the notorious 5W buoy without mishap, and went out to sea over the Dyke Bank to the F.G. buoy that marked the Ruytingen Pass. He then turned north-west for the straight run of Route X across the centre of the Channel (marked by W, V and U buoys) towards the North Goodwin Light Ship.

Just after W buoy, at 10.25 a.m., *Prague* was attacked by dive-bombers. She was too large to escape their attention – and she was virtually unarmed. She only had one Lewis gun and one Bren gun to defend herself.

She suffered three near misses astern. Her Captain reported that 'the ship seemed almost to be lifted out of the water.'

The concussion from the bombs put the starboard engine out of action and caused considerable damage. Although *Prague's* water-tight doors were closed (a regular precaution in a battle zone), they had been buckled. Her massive load of French troops added more than two hundred tons to her weight and increased her draft by eighteen inches. Water poured in. Moving everyone forward eased the situation but could not solve it. The pumps were unable to cope. Her stern lowered as it became water-logged, and, according to her Captain's report, the 'water rose to the level of the main deck'.

The Captain made two – seemingly contradictory – decisions.

1. To keep going. If *Prague* sank in deep water she would be lost forever.
2. To transfer all 3,000 of her troops to other ships.

The implication was clear: the transfer of troops would have to be done with all ships under way.

The Captain turned off Route X and headed
the *Prague* due west.

There then took place a nautical rescue which, had it occurred in peacetime, would have hit the world's headlines.

First, the destroyer H.M.S. *Scimitar*, from near the North Goodwin Light Ship, raced to her aid. The *Scimitar* took off five hundred French and French Colonial troops, while she manoeuvred and held her position alongside the crippled giant.

Next, the minesweeper *Halcyon* did the same, and later landed 243 in Dover.

Finally, the paddle-minesweeper *Queen of Thanet* skilfully took off troops, and landed 1,500 in Margate at teatime.

The Captain of the *Prague* hoped to get her to the shallow waters of the Kent coast before she sank. As the sun reached mid-day, it was clearly going to be a race against time. It was a race that the *Prague* – if unaided – would lose.

*End of Saturday a.m.*
ENDNOTES, Chapter III

1. Lord, Miracle of Dunkirk, p.185.
3. Carse, Dunkirk 1940, gives a succinct account of the operation. See pp. 15-17.
7. Taken from Tide Tables for 1 June, 1940. Courtesy of the U.K. Hydrographic Office.
14. Palmer, S. M.V. Naiad Errant at Dunkirk, 1940, p.2. All Palmer's account, in bold type, comes from the same source.
17. It is now an East lit cardinal mark called the N.E. Goodwin.
20. Published in After the Battle, issue no. 3, p.19.
24. Fleming, Operation Sea Lion, p.46, footnote.
27. ibid, p.564.
28. Calder, People's War, p.112.
31. 'Sun IV', in Orde's Dunkirk List.
32. Carse, R., op.cit., p.84.
33. Gardner, op.cit., p.173. Actually 7.8 miles, 15 and 22.3 miles, and the precise bearing was 115 degrees. These were coded 'U', 'V' and 'W'.
34. Divine, op.cit., p.98.
35. More specifically – the sandbanks are the Sandettie in mid-Channel, then the Ruytingen Bank, then turning to pass over the Le Dyke, Breedt Bank and Snouw Banks.
36. Bryant, Turn of the Tide, p.154.
38. 'BEF Fight Down Narrow Corridor to Dunkirk', Daily Express, 30/5/40, p.1.
39. The portrait, in the Hague, was thought then to be the last self-portrait. In recent years the one in the National Gallery, London, has also revealed the date: 1669.
40. At Poleh.
41. Read, Devil's Disciples, p.534.
42. Deighton, Fighter, has a good section on Udet, see pp.39-43.
43. ibid., p.415.
44. But P. Nash argues (unconvincingly to my mind) in The Flying M, in 'Stuka Sirens: Fact or Fiction?' that they never existed.
47. These and subsequent details mainly from Burns, Bader: The Man and His Men, pp.42-3.
50. Data from Franks, Air Battle Dunkirk, pp.180ff.
51. Burns, op.cit., p.43.
54. ibid p.13.
56. 'Harvester' in Orde's Dunkirk List. NMM.
ENDNOTES, Chapter III

59 Bryant, *Turn of the Tide*, p.154.
61 To be consistent for the reader, I have throughout used Roman numerals to designate the Corps. Original has '2nd.'
62 The limited data suggests the *Havant* but it is not actually documented.
63 Shaw & Shaw, p.37.
64 His biography does not mention going into the sea, but his contribution to Shaw's book does. Compare *A Full Life*, p.91 and Shaw p.37. As the letter focused wholly on Dunkirk, it is probably the more accurate for Dunkirk detail.
65 In his biography he thought it was Ramsgate, but the *Aegir* went to Margate.
67 Gardner, p.136.
70 Butler & Bradford, *Keep the Memory Green*, p.160.
72 Bond, *Chief of Staff*, p.358.
73 *Daily Telegraph*, 25/7/03.
74 *Lord*, *op. cit.*, p.217.
75 'Gracie Goes to America', *Daily Express*, 31/5/40.
79 *Sunday Pictorial*, 2/6/40, 'Is Paris Next?', p.3.
80 Data from Brooks' *Hampshire Airfields in the Second World War*, p.95.
81 Blaxland, in *Destination Dunkirk*, calls him Wagner, but the spelling in the text comes from the French book *Dunkirk 1940* by Lannoy.
82 *Lord*, *op. cit.*, p.156.
83 This incident is often quoted. Here from Divine, *op.cit.*, p.173.
84 Brann, *Little Ships*, p.22.
85 The data is that of HMS *Carlisle*. *Calcutta* (with *Cairo* and *Curacao*) are listed as 'similar' in *Spot them at Sea*, p.21.
86 Blaxland, *Destination Dunkirk*, p.77.
87 The ships are those recorded as having landed troops. Those who landed them by mid-day I have treated as passing Palmer on the *first* part of his journey. Those who landed their troops later (but not too late to pass him) I have treated as passing him on the *second* part of his journey.
ENDNOTES, Chapter III

120 *ibid.*, p.154.
121 Greg King in *Duchess of Windsor* assures us in chapter 31 (p.336) that the Duke was directed to leave by his superior officer. I rushed to endnote 43 which promised to reveal the source of this new revelation: but the endnotes stopped two earlier – at number 41!
There was, therefore, no source given for revising the widely held view expressed in my text.
123 *ibid.*, p.213.
124 Quoted, Wheeler Bennett, *George VI*, p.428.
127 Carse, R., *op.cit.*, p.17. I have omitted Carse's phrase 'without an Air Force'. Since the Belgian Air Force suffered the loss of ten planes in the first three days of Operation Dynamo.
134 The American author Robert Carse translates them too literally as 'torpedo boats' in his *Dunkirk 1940*.
135 Cadogan, *Diaries*..., p.293.
136 De Gaulle, *The Call the Honour*, p.35.
137 *ibid.*, p.54.
138 *ibid.*, p.56.