

DUNKIRK 1940 - 1950

Ten years ago Margate spelt home and safety to more than 46,000 tired, battle-worn men from the beaches of Dunkirk. Today, Private Head and hundreds of his comrades are going back on one of the little ships that saved them - the ROYAL DAFFODIL.

Today's Captain Paterson was Chief Officer then under Captain Johnson. As the ship nears Dunkirk, memories sharpen. Together now as they were then are Privates, Pattenden, Costin and Bleasdale.

Across these shallow waters the smallest vessels plied - boats like SHAMROCK, which Allan Barrell shuttled back and forth, snatching 80 at a time from the hell on shore.

When the armies reached Dunkirk it was the end. There was no way out except perhaps for a few thousand. And then came the miracle of the little ships to bring a crazy, incredible, way of escape. Go and fetch them, said Churchill, and they went and did. And in their going and coming 335,000 were saved, and freedom lived.

And so today, for the first time since those days, ROYAL DAFFODIL returns to Dunkirk for a simple ceremony of remembrance.

Representing the people of Margate are the Mayor (Councillor Hosking) and the Mayoress. Two caskets are exchanged - the sand of Dunkirk beaches for the sand of Margate.

The simple ceremony over, ROYAL DAFFODIL turned for home. Let us make no mistake. Dunkirk was no victory. But in the upward growth of Man it was greater; it was the triumph of man's spirit over disaster. Dunkirk left us naked, unarmed, but in spirit it left us stripped for battle. From then on there were no illusions.