

AIR MINISTRY NEWS SERVICE

AIR BATTLE AT SEA LEVEL

THREE AVRO ANSONS OF THE COASTAL COMMAND- LIGHTLY ARMED AIRCRAFT USED FOR RECONNAISSANCE - ENGAGED NINE MESSERSCHMITT FIGHTERS TODAY BETWEEN CALAIS AND OSTEND.

TWO OF THE ENEMY WERE SHOT DOWN, TWO WERE DISABLED AND THE REST FLEW AWAY.

THE ANSONS, WHICH FOUGHT 50 FEET ABOVE THE SEA, ALL RETURNED SAFELY WITH TWO MEMBERS OF THEIR CREWS WOUNDED. ONE ANSON ACCOUNTED FOR TWO OF THE ENEMY FIGHTERS.

"I FLEW ONLY A FEW FEET ABOVE THE WATER," THE PILOT SAID, "AND THREW THE ANSON ABOUT ALL OVER THE PLACE. AT TIMES, I COULD SEE FOUR STREAMS OF TRACER BULLETS COMING IN MY DIRECTION. I TURNED AND GAVE THE MESSERSCHMITTS A VOLLEY WHEN THEY CAME IN FOR THEIR THIRD ATTACK. THEY DISPERSED, BUT ONE DID NOT GET VERY FAR. IT WAS HIT BY MY REAR GUNNER AND CRASHED IN THE SEA. THE TWO OTHERS RESUMED THE ATTACK, BUT ONE CAME TOO NEAR. A SINGLE BURST SENT HIM INTO THE SEA. THE SURVIVOR WITHDREW AFTER I HAD DAMAGED HIM SEVERELY."

THERE WERE ONLY FOUR BULLET HOLES IN THE ANSON.

AIR MINISTRY NEWS SERVICE

Advancing Germans Bombed.

Many direct hits on enemy troop concentrations and motorised columns on the Nieuport road - on the Belgian coast - were made by aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm Operating with the Coastal Command yesterday (Friday) afternoon.

The aircraft were out to attack roads on which the Germans were bringing up troops and ammunition trucks. They found the roads crowded, approached at 9,000 feet, and then split into two formations. Diving to 2,000 feet they made simultaneous attacks on two roads. Scores of heavy bombs were dropped. As the smoke of the explosions cleared, the pilots saw craters in one road at an important junction. Nearby houses were demolished.

One pilot saw his bombs make a direct hit on a large, open touring car escorted by two motorcycle out-riders.

Other bombs fell directly on lorries and bodies of troops.

The second flight saw similar results from their bombs. They watched a large red building at a road junction crumble into ruins, and a particularly fierce explosion followed their last salvo. Other bombs struck on the roads and on houses in a German-occupied village.

The whole attack was made in face of heavy anti-aircraft fire, but none of our aircraft was harmed.

AIR AFFAIRS

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AIR MINISTRY NEWS SERVICE

WATER AND AMMUNITION FROM THE SKIES

R.A.F. AD. FOR B.E.F. IN CALAIS.

Squadrons of the R.A.F. Component, flying with great daring, have added to the epics of the defence of Calais by dropping water, ammunition and hand grenades to the heroic garrison of Allied troops and marines.

Details of the feat, which recalls the dropping of flour into the beleaguered garrison of Kut.El.Amara by the Royal Flying Corps in 1916, were revealed last night.

They form another page in the tale of gallantry and brilliant achievement that have won for the R.A.F. the admiration of the world.

It was late at night when the orders were received at an air field in the south of England that the water and ammunition should be taken to the garrison of the citadel by air.

Water was taken first. Each aircraft was loaded with two containers which were fitted into the bomb rack. The containers, cylindrical in shape, each carries ten gallons and are fitted with parachutes that open automatically as soon as they are released from the aircraft.

Just as dawn was breaking, two sorties, each of ten aircraft, left with the water, in 20 minutes they were approaching Calais. It could be seen that the town was in flames, and the smoke palls to some extent obscured the target of the aircraft.

The leading planes met with only light anti-aircraft fire, but those that followed encountered heavy fire. One was lost, and most of those behind the leaders were hit several times.

As they passed over the citadel, the pilots came down to as low as 50 feet to make sure of their aim.

One officer, who led one of the parties of aircraft, said that he could see the smoke from the burning town for 20 miles "As far as I could judge, we passed ^{right} over the target" he said, "and dropped the water in the citadel. We immediately turned at 180 degrees and came back over the Channel, flying very low. One of our aircraft was seen to dive into the ground after the pilot had dropped the water. I got off lightly in having only two tracer bullets through my tail, and the chap following me had a far worse time. As I looked back when flying over the sea I could see tracers flying in every direction.

"I was leading the ten aircraft that dropped the containers on the western part of the fort, and I could see the other ten aircraft dropping their loads on the eastern part. As far as I could see we were all right over the target."

Later on, in mid-morning, more aircraft, accompanied this time by dive bombers who bombed the Germans while the other planes were carrying out their mission, dropped the small arm ammunition and hand grenades into the citadel.

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Another officer who led one of these sorties said there were clouds at 1000ft, near Calais, and the pilots had to go down to this height before releasing their loads.

The men holding the citadel could not be seen, but this would naturally be the case, as they would be under cover with so many aircraft in the air. When the ammunition was dropped no fewer than 39 aircraft were concerned in the operation.

Such is the story of another brilliant feat by the R.A.F.

AIR AFFAIRS

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1/6/40 - No.4.

PRESS COMMUNIQUE.

The Supreme War Council met in Paris on the 31st May, 1940.

Great Britain was represented by Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Attlee, accompanied by Sir Ronald Campbell, General Sir John Dill, General Ismay, and General Spears.

The French representatives were M. Paul Reynaud and Maréchal Petain, accompanied by General Weygand, Admiral Darlan and M. Paul Baudoin.

The Supreme War Council carried out a general survey of the situation and reached full agreement regarding all the measures which that situation called for.

The Meeting of the Supreme War Council gave full proof that the Allied Governments and peoples are more than ever implacably resolved to pursue, in the closest possible concord, their present struggle until complete victory is achieved.

10, Downing Street.

EVACUATION AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH.

Mr. Chuter Ede, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, speaking today (Saturday) at a Luncheon in London organised by the National Conference on Commercial Education said that the primary duty of teachers at the moment was to maintain the morale of the nation by ensuring the happiness, comfort, safety and health of their pupils.

To secure these blessings the Government had prepared and developed schemes of evacuation and reception. If a child lived in an evacuation area the Government were unshakably convinced, in the light of the fullest investigation, that the odds in favour of the child's physical and nervous health being preserved were overwhelmingly increased by inclusion in an evacuation party.

Teachers must use all their persuasive powers on parents to send their children. The teachers and children in the reception areas welcomed the evacuated child as a guest.

The receiving Local Education Authorities had taken steps to ensure that there should be no break in the child's education. Heavy indeed would be the responsibility of any parent in an evacuation area who neglected the further opportunity for evacuation offered to the children by the Government.

R.A.F. CONTINUE TO SCREEN EVACUATION.

The Air Ministry announces:

Royal Air Force fighters continue to screen the evacuation of Allied troops from the North East coast of France. Further reports show that during yesterday 56 enemy aircraft were destroyed or seriously damaged. Sixteen of our fighters are reported missing.

At dawn this morning, our fighter patrols over Dunkirk shot down 10 enemy fighters with the loss of one of our aircraft. Naval aircraft later bombed and sank an enemy torpedo boat off the Belgian coast.

Bombing operations against the enemy in Flanders were continued yesterday evening and during the night by medium and heavy bombers. Hits were obtained on enemy troops on the march, motor transport columns and heavy artillery. Lock gates and bridges were destroyed. Two of our bombers and one reconnaissance aircraft were lost in these operations.

1.6.40 No 10

AIR MINISTRY BULLETIN NO 809

NAZI SEA PROWLER SUNK

Three Nazi motor torpedo boats, prowling off the Belgian coast in the hope of attacking B.E.F. transports, were attacked by aircraft this morning.

One of them was sunk.

The aircraft, belonging to a Fleet Air Arm unit, co-operating with the coastal command, spotted the motor torpedo boats cruising in line astern. They opened fire on the aeroplane, which dropped a line of six bombs. A minute after the bursts, the pilot saw that two of the motor boats were stationary and silent. There was no sign of the third.

AIR AFFAIRS

LOOKING AFTER THOSE WHO HAVE COME BACK.

The Army paid a generous and deserved tribute to the Navy in a South of England reception camp today. Men who, a comparatively few hours before, were battling against the murderous German onslaught, gave hearty cheers for those of the senior service whose skill and courage had made possible a safe return to England.

They were being spoken to in a comradely way by a general who had just returned from the scene of hostilities. His quietly-asked question "Who brought you home"? was answered with a unanimous yell "The Navy".

Then the khaki-clad audience applauded the sailormen with a spontaneity and enthusiasm that showed the true measure of their appreciation.

A brief rest has brought about a remarkable transformation in the returned warriors. The stirring times through which they have passed are not sufficiently distant for complete gaiety, but in the majority of cases the strained appearance has already given place to an air of contentment.

Everything possible is being done by a band of sympathetic people to brighten this brief period of relaxation from the front line activities. Entertainments are staged in a huge marquee, there is a plentiful supply of nourishing and appetising food, while books and games are readily available.

Two things which make the greatest appeal are letter writing and lying on the grass at full length in the sun. The former has led to the establishing of a semi-official branch of the G.P.O. in an unusual way.

Realising that at the earliest possible moment after arriving in camp the men would wish to communicate with relatives and friends, a young Army Chaplain improvised a writing bureau in a tent.

Now it is possible to write and post letters, purchase stamps and postal orders and send telegrams, thanks to the initiative of the Padre and the hearty co-operation of the postmaster of the nearest town.

The soldiers are extraordinarily cheerful, and are full of confidence as to the ultimate outcome of the war. Already they are looking forward to a return match with their German adversaries.

PRESS NOTICE

The Minister of Information yesterday signed the Control of Communications Order (No.3) 1940. The effect of this Order is to make it illegal for anyone to send or convey, or have in his possession for the purpose of sending or conveying, to any destination outside the United Kingdom otherwise than by post the following newspapers:

"The Week",
"Russia Today"
"Russia Today Newsletter",
"Challenge"
"World News and Views",
"Inside the Empire",
"The New Propellor"
"Action News Service",
"Peoples Post",
"Headline",
"Free Press",
"Angles"
"The British Union Quarterly",
"Moscow News"
"Die Welt",

The Order also makes it illegal to distribute these newspapers by post to destinations outside the United Kingdom otherwise than under a permit granted by the Deputy Chief Censor (Permits).

It has been decided that no permit under this Order shall be at present granted in respect of these newspapers.

The effect of this Order is to extend to the newspapers mentioned above the prohibition on the export of the "Daily Worker" and "Action" which was brought into force by the Control of Communications Order (No. 2) 1940, signed by the Minister of Information on the 10th instant.

1/6/40 - No. 14.

Air Ministry Bulletin No. 810.

DAWN PATROL SHOOT DOWN 14 NAZI FIGHTERS.

The air battle over Dunkerque beaches began again at dawn today (Saturday). Soon R.A.F. fighter patrols had shot down 14 Nazi fighters and had seriously damaged 5 more.

All yesterday this battle in the skies raged unceasingly, while on the sands below the withdrawal of Allied troops continued.

Hour after hour the German bombers, protected by swarms of fighters, came over in an attempt to harass the evacuating army. And hour after hour the R.A.F. fighters waged a relentless war against them. At dusk the British fighter pilots had shot down 56 bombers and fighters, of which 42 were seen to crash into the sea.

Although the British fighters were heavily outnumbered, sometimes more than five to one, the squadron of Spitfires during a single patrol yesterday shot down a mixed bag of 2 Messerschmitt¹¹⁰/ twin-engined fighters, 2 Junker 88 dive bombers, a Messerschmitt 109 fighter and a Dornier 215 bomber.

On the dawn patrol this morning another Spitfire squadron in a few minutes accounted for six Messerschmitts 110, three Messerschmitts 109 and probably three more Messerschmitts 110.

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AIR AFFAIRS.

1.6.40 No 15

GERMAN INTERNEES IN DUTCH EAST INDIES

In answer to German propoganda it is learned in authoritative quarters in Batavia that the treatment of German internees in the Dutch East Indies can be summarised as follows:

About 3,000 internees are quartered in different camps, institutions and other buildings in the Archipelago. The building of a great new camp has been taken in hand. For loding and boarding of the internees, the same minimum standard has been adopted as is in force for the European troops in the Dutch East Indies.

The internees have good mattresses and blankets if required. They receive one hot meal a day with adequate quantities of meat, vegetables and rice, and two cold meals a day consisting of bread and a varrying additional dish of ham, meat fish, cheese or jam. There is adequate medical care, which is partly trusted to internees doctors. The state of health is very good.

German seamen, after three weeks of internment, had already a much healthier appearance than when they arrived.

Internees who have no private means receive 10 cigarettes and some pocket money every week. The authorities allow regular correspondence of the internees with their families and all may receive parcels. An organisation is being formed to care for Divine Services, reading material, lectures, music and stage performances

The new camp that is being built will be equipped with sportsgrounds and an opportunity for handicrafts. It has been decided in principle that in the future Dutch civil authorities, will as far as possible, take over the care of the internees, because they are considered to be in a better position to look after the welfare, sport, recreation, and amusement of the internees

All the internees are absolutely free to communicate their wishes to the authorities. The only more general complaint so far has been a delay in postal traffic, owing to the newly instituted censorship.

FOREIGN OFFICE NEWS DEPARTMENT ON BEHALF OF DUTCH LEGATION

PRESS NOTICE

1/6/40 - NO. 17

WAR OFFICE NOT TO BE QUOTED

HOSPITAL CLOTHING AND COMFORTS

The Red Cross and St. John War Organisation desire to draw the attention of Commandants and Matrons of all Hospitals which have been unexpectedly called upon to receive sick and wounded from the B.E.F. that supplies of hospital clothing and comforts can be obtained for these patients from the Joint County Committee. Contact with this Committee can be made through the nearest Red Cross or St. John Office.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Evening No. 20.

IT IS REQUESTED THAT NONE OF THESE ITEMS
SHOULD BE PUBLISHED BEFORE THE EVENING
NEWSPAPERS OF WEDNESDAY 5TH JUNE, 1940.

AIR MINISTRY WEEKLY NEWS LETTER.

Note: The information contained in this News Letter may be
used by the Press without acknowledgement. If it
is desired to refer to the Air Ministry as the source
of the information, the expression "The Air Ministry
announces -" is NOT to be used.

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DECORATED DOG.

AIR FORCE NEWS IN BRIEF.

Press and Publicity Branch,
Air Ministry,
King Charles Street,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

June 5th, 1940.

KENT, NOT KÖLN.

While flying on patrol duty in France at a height of well over 20,000 feet, a young fighter pilot suddenly felt queer. He noticed that something had gone wrong with his oxygen supply and, by radio, informed his section leader. Back came instructions; "Get down to 2,000 feet".

What happened afterwards is best told in the pilot's own words:

"When the order came through, I was feeling on the verge of collapse, so I pushed the nose down. Certain periods, perhaps they were just moments, are a complete blank. I had certainly dropped a good bit when my faculties appeared to be functioning more normally. But I was still feeling very much out of sorts and not a bit like flying on. Suddenly I spotted a coast line.

"I flew down to a low height, wondering whether I should be greeted by 'Archie' (anti-aircraft fire) and perhaps forced down in a land full of swastikas. Nothing of the sort happened. All seemed friendly and peaceful. Then it occurred to me that I was flying over a part of the French coast, so I decided to land, get my bearings and fly back to the station.

"Soon after landing, I spotted some workmen, and shouted: 'Where am I'.

"'You're in Kent. Where do you think you are?' one of them retorted.

"Well, it was nice to be in England, if only for a short while, but it shows you what a shortage of oxygen can do".

PARTING GIFTS.

A British Air Force squadron which changed its station recently, turned up at its new quarters with a strange assortment of gifts. The villagers, almost broken-hearted to see the departure of their R.A.F. friends, showered souvenirs of all sorts upon them. Some of the villagers, having nothing else in kind to show their esteem, gave the airmen chickens, rabbits and other live-stock.

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The most unwieldy gift, but perhaps the most valuable, was a cow which one of the villagers pressed upon a flight-sergeant. He had it taken in a lorry to the new station, and it now supplies the milk for the Sergeants' Mess.

BALLOONS ABOVE: POTATOES BELOW.

The officers and men of an R.A.F. Balloon centre in the Midlands have been digging for victory in real earnest.

They have brought seven acres of land near the centre under intensified cultivation; all kinds of vegetables are grown there and it is expected to harvest 50 tons of potatoes.

Seeds and tools were provided partly by the R.A.F. Comforts Fund and partly by contributions from the centre itself. The labour is voluntarily undertaken by the airmen and staff, who have developed into keen and enthusiastic gardeners.

Two sows have just been bought by the centre, and it is hoped to raise litters with the aid of scraps and waste from the Messes.

In addition to the seven acres, the men of each balloon site attached to the centre tend an average of half-an-acre as a kitchen garden on their own.

DECORATED DOG.

One of the R.A.F. Squadrons of Fairey Battles has adopted a novel manner of showing its aerial victories. A little toy terrier occupies a prominent place on the mantelpiece of the mess. Its tongue sticks out cheekily. Every time the squadron gets a German plane, the dog is decorated with another paper medal, bearing the date, the type of machine shot down, and the name of the victorious pilot.

The first medal was for a Me.109 shot down as long ago as last September by a Sergeant Pilot. The most recent medal is only a few days old, and was for a Me.110.

AIR FORCE NEWS IN BRIEF.

Men up to 50 can now serve in the Royal Air Force provided they have experience in radio work.

A new class of entry has just been created to provide personnel for the maintenance of Air Force wireless equipment of various types. The age limits for radio trade entrants are from 18 to 50.

Large numbers of pilots, air observers and wireless operator/air gunners are required for the R.A.F. at the moment. Young men of good education, with dash and initiative - especially those in age groups which have not yet been registered - are asked to volunteer now.

"Skilled" cooks are also asked for. (Age 18 to 38).

Application can be made at any Combined Recruiting Office; or to any local Labour Exchange.

A new W.A.A.F. Recruiting Centre has been opened at Newcastle-on-Tyne. This is the sixth centre to be opened in the provinces and Scotland, in addition to the central one at Victory House, Kingsway, London.

Especially needed just now are cooks and kitchen staff, machinists and seamstresses as fabric workers and clerks and typists for special work.

1/6/40 - NO. 20

WAR OFFICE COMMUNIQUE

LORD GORT RETURNS

The War Office issues the following communique:-

"As a result of the good progress made in the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force and the consequent reduction in the size of the Force now remaining in Northern France, General Lord Gort has, on the order of H.M. Government, handed over command of the remaining troops to a less senior officer.

"General Lord Gort arrived in England this morning."

WAR OFFICE

1/6/40 - NO. 20

WAR OFFICE COMMUNIQUE

LORD GORT RETURNS

The War Office issues the following communique:-

"As a result of the good progress made in the evacuation

1/6/40 - No. 21

PRESS NOTICE

In consequence of action taken by the American Ambassador in co-operation with the British authorities, TYLER KENT, a Clerk who has been dismissed from the employment of the American Government, has been under observation and has been detained by an order of the Home Secretary.

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HOME OFFICE

1.6.40 No 22

RELEASE OF V.A.D.'s for CIVIL NURSING RESERVE

The Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland announce that in view of the need for nursing staff in the Emergency Hospitals prepared for Service casualties from abroad and air raid casualties at home, the Secretary of State for War has consented to the release of a large number of mobile V.A.Ds hitherto under obligations to the Army, in order that they may be free to join the Civil Nursing Reserve as nursing auxiliaries, prepared to serve whole-time in any Emergency Hospital in Great Britain to which they may be sent by the Regional Nursing Officers of the Health Departments.

The V.A.D. Council have willingly agreed to this course and are making arrangements to notify the individual members concerned of their release from Army obligations, and the detailed arrangements necessary to secure their being added to the roll of the Civil Nursing Reserve.

V.A.Ds who enrol in the Reserve at once will be eligible for twelve month's continuous employment on being called up for service in a casualty hospital.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOR SCOTLAND
1st June, 1940

LORD GORT'S RETURN.

BY AN EYE-WITNESS

An officer recently on the Staff of G.H.Q. who was present at the arrival of Lord Gort, describes how the Commander in Chief of the B.E.F. came home:-

The rumour that Lord Gort had been ordered to embark was spread in whispers among the privileged on the pier of a South East Coast town where men who knew disaster but not defeat had been arriving in tens of thousands in a medley of Crafts that made a circus of the Sea.

When would he come? How would he come, this man whose inspiring leadership had played so great a part in the working of a military miracle?

When I interviewed the Commander of the vessel in which he was expected he said with a slow smile: "I'm afraid that General of yours prefers the land to the sea. He shows no inclination to leave", a sentiment that fitted perfectly my own personal impression of Lord Gort. He is not the sort of man to leave a job until he is satisfied that it is finished, and he is not the sort of man to be satisfied with any part of fighting except the heart.

But the first duty of a soldier is to obey, and the first of the Country's Soldiers had to obey the order of His Majesty's Government. His job was to lead the many, not to remain with the few. We who know Lord Gort know that if the decision had been left to him the last ship from devastated Dunkirk would have left without him.

How would he arrive? Again we who know Gort knew that he would come home quietly and if possible, secretly: for he is a man who does not court publicity. He shuns the crowds and the cheers even as he seeks the company of his soldier comrades. So it was he came home at 6.30 a.m. in the morning in a small boat attended only by two Officers. Almost unnoticed he walked to a small shed occupied by a few naval ratings and there drank the Nation's Nectar - a cup of tea.

He came in a small vessel because he was a big man. A larger ship was available and he was invited aboard. "No" said Gort "There is room for more men, go and collect them quickly".

He himself stood on the beach reluctant to leave, but forced to go. Often his head turned backwards to where men, his men, were fighting. Deaf to the call of the sea, his ears heard the the din of battle. His duty lay this side the water but his heart was behind where the enemy was creeping onward in an attempt to destroy the remains of an Army they could not defeat.

A great and glorious Army had been saved to fight again. Gort's job of work had been done. As a general he had shown the gift of leadership, of courage undaunted, of effort reared. But standing there on the beach watching the crowded ships sail he was just a soldier thinking of his comrades fighting the good fight - aching to be with them to the last.

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"It was hard to get him away." That is what they said of Gort - those who stood with him on the beach. But he had to go. A soldier must obey. So when a tiny craft bobbed shorewards almost apologetically in its modest lines, Lord Gort stepped aboard and said "Au revoir" to Flanders fields.

Diffidently I approached the Commander in Chief as he drank his cup of tea, and warmly I told him how glad everybody would be to hear of his safe arrival.

His face was lined, and a weariness was upon him, but in his keen, searching eyes there was the same invincible challenge we knew so well. His reply savoured of a rebuke. "It isn't the arrival of myself that matters" he said "but the arrival of my Army."

"My Army." Those two words said everything. My Army, my men, my Comrades. They matter above all. He seemed to be looking backward, back there where his men are still fighting, and first actions showed where his thoughts and his care were centred.

Immediately he gave instructions for the embarkation of those of the heroic band who could still be saved from the hell that is Dunkirk. Not until he was content that his orders were understood did he call on the Senior Naval Officer to express his high appreciation of the superb service which the Navy had given in the saving of the Army in these past fateful days. Calm, courteous, outwardly unperturbed, he had the air of a man who was seeing something others could not see, hearing something others could not hear.

He walked to the train with that some suggestion of detachment. Without fuss, or ceremony he walked to his place, this leader of an Army still in being, an Army that by all the rules of warfare and the verdict of battle should have been destroyed.

Gort had come home, home to duty and the grave matters of State. In London he was greeted by Mr. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War, and members of the Army Council, then on to the War Office. Only a few members of the public who habitually haunt Whitehall saw his arrival.

Gort was back home, home in the place he knew so well. Marching along those long corridors he could hold his head high, for he had returned as a Commander who had not failed in his task. He had taken out a Great Army and a Great Army had returned after performing deeds of heroism that will be blazoned in the colours of many proud regiments throughout the years to come.

The Army has returned on leave, leave to fight again and to win. Lord Gort too is on leave, a short leave, for he cannot long be spared from the battlefield.

As he said in the train coming to London "We will meet them again and next time the victory will be with us."

There spoke the soldier, the comrade, the man who is a man among men, the leader who is also a fighter.

WAR OFFICE

1/6/40 - No. 24

NOT TO BE QUOTED AS A WAR OFFICE ANNOUNCEMENT

When he arrived in London early to-day, Lord Gort was met at the station by Mr. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War.

He was subsequently in conference at the War Office.

Later Lord Gort was received by H.M. The King at Buckingham Palace.

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MILITARY AFFAIRS

1/6/40 - NO. 25

COSTLY GERMAN ATTACK ON FRENCH CASEMATE

The losses inflicted upon the enemy have been enormous, whether in attack or defence. So great indeed have these been in some cases that what would seem to be a local German success has been won at such an appalling cost in men, material and munitions that the real victory has certainly been on the side of the defenders. A shining example of this is afforded by the story of the heroic defence by a handful of Frenchmen of an isolated casemate whose capture was broadcast by the Germans as the fall of an important part of the Maginot Line.

For several days Second-Lieutenant Bourguignon and the men under him maintained the defence of their position "up to the supreme sacrifice" in the words of the army report.

The German attack was at its height, heavy artillery was brought to bear on the isolated casemate, shells came down against the cement, but in spite of repeated hits which might have shaken the nerves of the strongest, each man remained at his post. Shelling having no effect an aeroplane was brought into play and began dive bombing with its heaviest bombs, but steel and concrete resisted. A wave of German infantry then attacked with machine gun and light cannon aiming at the openings. The defenders gave back shot for shot, but were so busy with their guns and half-blinded by the smoke that they did not see a party of the enemy who found a blind spot and laid a charge. There followed a terrific explosion which rocked the ground like an earthquake. The casemate still held but one of its mechanisms was put out of action. The Germans rushed forward believing the defenders to be stunned by the shock of the explosion. But they were met by a burst of fire and in an instant great heaps in field-grey were piled up in the wire entanglements riddled with machine-gun bullets. Recourse was had once more to the aeroplane, eight to sixteen bombs at a time were dropped again, with a further barrage from the heavy artillery. But the attack had been going on for some days, the French fire began to slow down as one after the other cannon and machine-gun ran out of ammunition. S/Lieutenant Bourguignon and his men were still at their posts, but their weapons were useless. The air in the casemate was becoming unbreathable. Against a last wild rush the little force gathered its remaining strength and launched its last grenades. When the Germans entered at last, they found that for days they had spent hundreds of lives, shells, bombs and munitions to overcome an enlarged pillbox and its half dozen defenders.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

The following is issued by Naval Affairs for such use as the Press may wish to make of it.

1/6/40 - No. 26

THINGS OF SPLENDOUR

BY NAVAL EYE-WITNESS

Yesterday was the anniversary of the Battle of Jutland. I was on the bridge of one of our destroyers packed from end to end with men of the British Expeditionary Force, heading for a South Coast port. And it passed through my mind that in war there are successes which dissolve into nothingness, and retreats and reverses that are things of splendour - which time reveals as the turning point that leads to victory.

At the time Jutland looked like anything but a victory. Yet we know now that it sealed the doom of the German Fleet in the last war. And it may well be that this triumphant extrication of the B.E.F. from Belgium may prove just such another turning point in this war. After what I have seen I believe it to be so.

All day Thursday I spent at the South Coast base where the ships that brought the army off came and went. For days and nights there had been a continuous stream to and fro of transports and destroyers, sloops and trawlers, coming back crammed to their utmost capacity with men. They had been shelled by coastal batteries and bombed almost ceaselessly from the air. They embarked thousands from beaches, men wading out to their armpits to reach the boats. They embarked tens of thousands from piers and jetties, beating off the German bombers with their guns while the troops climbed on board, and they told me of men of a Scottish regiment who scrambled onto a destroyer fore-castle in the last stages of exhaustion and joined in the fusillade with their rifles, trying to shoot down the low-diving bombers.

I was on board a destroyer in the afternoon that had just come back from the beaches. She had had 52 bombs dropped over her and she had lost her captain, but she came back crammed to capacity. They had only one boat, a whaler, to bring them off. The other boats were splintered and out of action. What seemed to worry them most was the behaviour of a German bomb that burst in shallow water on the bottom of the sea and deluged the whole ship and everybody on board with grey mud. The gunner's mate was the happiest man on board. He had found a Bren gun abandoned on the beach. It was full of sand and he spent a blissful afternoon taking it to bits and oiling it and putting it together again, "We'll have some fun with this tomorrow", he said, "I've never owned a Bren gun before!"

I remember while I was watching his fingers fiddling with the complicated mechanism, a little sloop came past us, having just landed her troops, on her way to take in fuel. Her funnel and upperworks were so riddled with bomb splinters that she looked like a colander. Her Captain's face was covered with bandages, leaving a hole for one eye, and he was conning his ship with that. But they were all laughing at our baptism of grey mud, so my hosts laughed back at their splinter holes - because that grey mud rankled rather - and wished them luck next trip.

I sailed in another destroyer about midnight. Calm and clear and starlit, and the sea like a mill pond. As we approached the French coast we could see the German searchlights wheeling nervously to and fro and suddenly a battery opened fire. Our guns swung round and everybody crammed on his "tin hat" a bit tighter, but they weren't firing at us. We could see the tracer shells soaring up towards the stars, presumably aimed at our coastal bombers. There was a dull glow of fires along the horizon, and "flaming onions" bursting into red flares.

We wriggled our way through the minefields until we were nearing Dunkirk. The oil tanks were still blazing furiously and there was an occasional sound of distant gunfire. Once a shell landed in one of these blazing tanks and a huge red glare blazed up almost to the zenith. It died down again and the moon came out from behind a cloud, giving the sea and sky a queer semblance of peace in contrast to the blazing inferno ashore.

Just then, about 3 o'clock in the morning, in the middle of the swept channel, we bumped some wreckage and fouled one of our propellers. So there we were with one engine out of action. The Captain tried to clear the mess by going ahead with both engines, but the ship protested by making a series of strange jumps like a wallaby, so we desisted, and crept ahead on one engine till we reached the entrance to Dunkirk harbour.

There we lay-to, and explained by flashing lamp to the British Admiral in Dunkirk what had happened. To enter a harbour and manoeuvre alongside a wharf with only one engine under shell-fire is a tricky business. The Captain wasn't sure if he was justified in taking the risk without authority.

While we were waiting for the reply a German bomber appeared. It was getting light and he hovered on the edge of the dark clouds, having a look at us. Our shell fire drove him back into the cover of the clouds, and every time he poked his nose out a desperately accurate barrage drove him away again. Then from the inside of the harbour came the flicker of a signal lamp. "Enter harbour forthwith" it said.

"Right," said the Captain rather grimly. "I suppose it is better to enter Heaven maimed and with one propeller than to stop outside." So he rang down half speed on both engines, and after one protesting buck jump, the obstruction, whatever it was, cleared itself, and we proceeded smoothly through the entrance.

It was light enough to see the outlines of the town buildings still standing, black against the glare of fires, and the vast clouds of smoke billowing away to the eastward. And it was light enough to see assembled the whole length of the mole thousands of men of the British Expeditionary Force, waiting patiently for embarkation.

There was a French destroyer already alongside filling up with men. There was a trawler alongside also, but she had been sunk by bombs and only her masts and funnel were above water. The white ensign was still flying bravely at her masthead. We went alongside between them, watched by those thousands of patient eyes under the shrapnel helmets. It was nearly low water and the top of the mole was level with our bridge.

Scaling ladders were lowered and down they came as fast as fully equipped, fully armed men could climb. This was no army in defeat. They looked in magnificent fettle, ruddy and burly, and wearing full equipment. Dog tired after fighting a rear-guard action day and night for a week, as well they might be, but for the matter of that, the Navy that was bringing them off could have done with a bit of sleep themselves. Every man as he got on board grinned and said "Thank God" and settled down quietly in a bit of deck space like a well behaved school-treat packing into a motor-coach for an outing.

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Then a bomber reappeared overhead, and we opened fire. A French destroyer came in through the entrance, firing as she came, followed by a British destroyer. The embarkation continued as calmly as if nothing out of the ordinary was happening. German shells began bursting at the end of the mole with methodical regularity, hitting nobody; about one a minute.

A few stretcher cases arrived, carried by men too tired to avoid stumbling. As each was lowered on to the gun platform between burst of fire, the surgeon bent over each case with the mercy of the morphia syringe in his hand.

We were full up at last. Every inch of space on deck and below crammed with men. Already many of them were asleep where they lay, and many of those who slept had smiles on their faces, as if they were congratulating themselves even in sleep on a good job well done.

As we went out we met another of our destroyers coming in, and the tired men raised a croaky cheer as she went past.

I talked to a good many of them, and I talked to many of our sailors who had talked to them. They were not just undaunted - they talked like victors. But for the German superiority in aerial bombers they knew themselves the masters of the enemy. They weren't braggarts. They knew, that was all.

They were just a haphazard collection of men from any number of regiments, but in physique and bearing they might have been the pick of the crack regiment of an army. We all felt happier that morning than we had felt since the war started. "Give us a chance for a wash and brush up and a bit of sleep, and let's get back. We've got Jerry beat." That is in effect what they all said.

The English Channel was an extraordinary sight as the sun rose. It looked something like Henley regatta; as if every craft on the south coast that could float was heading for Dunkirk and the beaches to finish off the job. There were barges and wherries, yachts and launches, little boats in tow of bigger boats, and presently up through the middle of them came an overseas convoy from the other side of the world. There was somehow about them - their bright red ensigns and their guns cocked up on the sterns - an indescribable jauntiness. Overhead, swooping to and fro above this incredible scene, was a squadron of spitfires.

When eventually I landed at our base, the quay was thronged with thousands of men being fed and sorted out and entrained. It was a vast sea of khaki, and slung rifles. And as I threaded my way through them something bright caught my eye.

One of the soldiers had a child's spade and bucket dangling from the muzzle of his rifle. They were painted bright orange. Perhaps he was the regimental jester. Perhaps he kept them in good heart on those terrible beaches with those absurd baubles. Perhaps he had found them in an abandoned kiosk and was bringing them back for his children - strong in his faith in the Navy to bring him back to his children.

I don't know. I didn't ask him because in that moment I knew something more important. It was an assurance as strong as my certitude that the sun will rise tomorrow. It was the certitude that unless these men of the B.E.F. are exterminated and the men who brought them off from the piers and beaches are exterminated, and all memory of them is blotted out, we cannot lose this war.

1/6/40. No.27.

The Ministry of Home Security Calling all Housewives:-

The Ministry has frequently urged householders to take all possible steps to protect the glass of their windows against shattering by the near or distant explosion of bombs. Several methods have been recommended, including the use of transparent films in sheets or strips, and liquid coatings, also the use of opaque screens of plywood, fibre board and similar materials.

In some districts the demand for such materials may exceed supplies readily available, and attention is therefore directed to certain alternatives which have also been mentioned and which in many cases have the merit of being available in most households. These particularly include various textile materials, such as cotton, linen or other light cloth, either in strips, or stuck all over the window. Old bed sheets or dust sheets may be cut up for this purpose, provided the material is sound. Old muslin or net curtains will also be of great use. In many households, rag-bags and linen cupboards can provide a large amount of emergency material of this kind.

Suitable adhesives are gum, flour paste, or paper hangers' paste, with a little glycerine, treacle or molasses added; or a little calcium chloride, about two parts in a hundred, added to ordinary office gum or one part in a hundred to office paste. Calcium chloride is easily obtainable for a few pence from any chemist.

It is quite certain that large numbers of casualties can be avoided in air raids if suitable precautions are taken to protect windows, and if the occupants of houses keep away from windows at such times. The public are again urgently recommended to give this matter **immediate attention.** "Keeping away from windows means taking up a position where you cannot see out of the window; then you are out of the line of fire of possible splinters. Do not of course sit underneath a window."

MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY.

1/6/40 - No. 28

TRAVEL BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND EIRE
AND BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

In view of the present emergency, His Majesty's Government have reached the conclusion that every effort must be made to reduce all forms of unnecessary travel from this country, and in particular they have decided that it is necessary to impose further severe restrictions on travel between Great Britain and Eire and between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

In future exit permits for travel from Great Britain to Northern Ireland or to Eire will be granted only to persons who can satisfy the permit authorities that it is necessary for them to travel on business of national importance. No application for an exit permit to travel to Northern Ireland or Eire will be entertained if the object of the journey is for private reasons only.

The restrictions will not apply to those classes of persons who are at present exempted from the regulations requiring travellers to be in possession of exit permits.

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HOME OFFICE,
WHITEHALL.

WIDESPREAD ACTIVITIES OF THE R. A. F.

The Air Ministry announces:

Aircraft of the Royal Air Force Coastal Command carried out another successful attack on the oil storage depots at Rotterdam yesterday. Further explosions and fires were caused.

To-day, three Ansons of Coastal Command were engaged by nine Messerschmitt fighters off the Belgian coast. In a running fight 50 feet above the sea, two of the enemy were shot down, two were disabled and the rest flew away. Our aircraft returned safely.

Last night aircraft of Bomber Command carried out heavy bombing attacks on targets around Nieuport and on port facilities at Ostend. Many hits were made, followed by fires and explosions.

Medium bombers of the Royal Air Force and Fleet Air Arm have continued to support the withdrawal operations of the B. E. F. throughout the day. Canal bridges, motor transport, railway junctions and troops have been repeatedly attacked.

In the Dunkirk area today the number of enemy aircraft confirmed as having been destroyed by aircraft of Fighter Command has already reached forty. A further thirty-three are reported as having been destroyed or severely damaged. Thirteen of our aircraft are reported missing.

In the Narvik area, on May 29th, our fighters destroyed two enemy aircraft and severely damaged two others.

THE END OF THE LINE 000

1/6/40-NO. 30

AIR MINISTRY BULLETIN 812
AIR MINISTRY NEWS SERVICE

BOMBERS DEFEAT FIGHTERS

"Intense enemy air activity and numerous encounters with German fighters were reported by the crews of R.A.F. medium bombers which throughout yesterday assisted the withdrawal of the Allied armies from Dunkirk by a constant series of attacks on bridges, tanks, motorised columns and troops on the Flanders battle area.

"Enemy fighters which sought to divert them from their mission encountered vigorous retaliation. One Messerschmitt cruising to within 40 yards of a bomber was forced to drop back by burst from the British rear gunner. The fighter was last seen enveloped in smoke and losing height with such rapidity that a crash seemed inevitable. Meanwhile, the bomber's front gunner, repulsing another Messerschmitt 109, caused the enemy to dive out of sight.

Off Ostend, another section of bombers engaged two Junkers 88 twin-engined bombers. Both jettisoned their bombs into the sea and made off hurriedly, one having had its rear gun put out of action.

The last air engagement of the day was directed against a silver painted German observation balloon, bearing a large black cross, which was seen flying at 1,500 feet off Nieuport. A section of bombers took a crack at it on the way home. It is believed to have been destroyed.

NOTE: The above is a follow-up of Air Ministry Bulletin No. 808. (issue No. 9 of to-day).

AIR MINISTRY

AIR MINISTRY NEWS SERVICE.

ROTTERDAM OIL STORES DESTROYED

Petrol and oil stores at Rotterdam were again bombed by Coastal Command aircraft early today. Flares were dropped to identify the targets and the first salvo of bombs caused a big explosion which lit up the adjoining docks and waterways. Flames rose several hundred feet, and the wreckage was later reported to be still smouldering.

Aircraft crews who have carried out bombing raids on these oil plants believe they are now totally destroyed.

In this morning's raid our aircraft again machine-gunned enemy searchlight positions with good results.

Coastal Command aircraft made other successful bombing attacks on the enemy occupied harbours of Willemsoord and Marsdiep in Holland and on the Island of Terschelling. Direct hits were made on the quays, harbour equipment and on an enemy merchant vessel.

Squadrons of Coastal Command and naval aircraft working with them have this week maintained ceaseless patrols to assist the evacuation of the B.E.F. They have kept watch over the lines of ships transporting the army back to England, and a number of the enemy aircraft have been shot down, damaged or forced to jettison their bombs to escape.

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