

AIRMEN SAFE AFTER TWO DAYS IN RUBBER DINGHY

The crew of one of the naval aircraft lost in the attack on German shipping in the harbours of Kirkenes and Petsamo, Northern Scandinavia, on July 30 reached safety after two days and nights in a rubber dinghy.

They are Lieutenant (A) L.H. Lee, R.N.V.R., Sub-Lieutenant (A) G. Gorrie, R.N.V.R., and leading Airman N.F. Train.

It is now possible to give an account of their experience.

After attacking their assigned objective at Petsamo they machine-gunned ground defences in the vicinity. Soon afterwards they were attacked by an Me. 109.

Lieutenant Lee, the pilot, was wounded in the leg and the aircraft was crippled by cannon fire from the Messerschmitt.

Lieutenant Lee managed to make a pancake landing on the sea but, in doing so, was thrown through the windscreen and suffered further injury. He and his two companions managed to climb from the aircraft into the rubber dinghy. They tried to paddle to land, which was only about half a mile away, but the wind and tide were too strong and they drifted farther out to sea.

With the change of tide they again approached land, only to be set off again when the tide turned.

Lieutenant Lee became very exhausted from loss of blood, but was buoyed up by the other two. They were all half dazed and lying under a parachute when the tide finally carried them ashore. They landed on the beach 49 hours after being shot down.

Lieutenant Lee was unable to move after landing, but Sub-Lieutenant Gorrie, and Leading Airman Train walked 4 miles across difficult country to a Russian signal station to bring help.

Russian soldiers rescued Lieutenant Lee, and he and his two companions were sent to hospital in a motor boat.