



# Medway Queen's War

## Research Notes

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### Overview

HMS Medway Queen looked very different from the ship we know today and was armed with a 12pdr gun forward and machine guns on each paddle box. At Dunkirk this armament was supplemented by Bren Guns “obtained” as you can imagine from evacuated soldiers and the beach itself plus a detachment that came on board in England to increase the ship’s defensive armament.



*HMS Medway Queen in Ramsgate 1940, John Graves, PSPS collection*

We also now have a transcript of the ship’s movements during Operation Dynamo, copied from a document featured on the Antiques Roadshow Detectives programme and believed to be held by the National Archives at Kew. Numbers of men rescued from Dunkirk will always be a subject of debate. The society generally subscribes to the crew’s estimate of 7000. The official record, according to the operation report (available on line as a London Gazette supplement), is considerably less (3,064) but these figures are acknowledged by Admiral Ramsay to be an underestimate. Discrepancies in the log transcript emphasize the unreliability of these the “official” figures. I have left out the totals in the transcribed log because they do not tally when comparing men embarked and men disembarked and in one case include men landed when the ship had not even left England on that night.

The ship served in the Royal Navy for the whole of the Second World War although we naturally tend to focus on Dunkirk. The period is covered in detail in the Medway Queen book but this document attempts to give an overview in tabular form for quick reference. Some information such as the part played by Lt. Horrex and the “log” of the ship’s movements have come to hand since publication of the book. We have copies of some of Lt. Horrex’s certificates giving date detail that would not otherwise be available.

Enquiries early in 2017 unearthed more detail through TNTUK (Pan Gov Contract - Navy Search) which indicates that the ship was transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla at Granton in January 1943 and was later used as an accommodation vessel from late 1943 to April 1944. Then she was re-activated and allocated to a training flotilla, also based in Granton. This still leaves some uncertainties which consultation of more admiralty records might clear up. It is also extremely frustrating that Charles McAra published his part in the story with an absolute dearth of firm dates or the names of the commanding officers when he served on board.

## Dunkirk Log

Extract from Lt. Cook's log transcript (as shown on Antiques Roadshow Detectives 2015)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Actions</b>
May 27		Recalled from Downs, proceeded to La Panne with PM/S Sandown, Gracie Fields and Brighton Belle
		<b>TRIP 1</b>
	2300	Arrived La Panne
May 28		Sailed for Ramsgate
	0400ca	Off N Goodwin LV air attack, shot down 1 plane BB hit wreck, MQ took off crew and evacuees. Arrived Ramsgate
		<b>TRIP 2</b>
	2045	Proceeded independently for Dunkirk
May 29	0020	Arrived Dunkirk Arrived Ramsgate
		<b>TRIP 3</b>
	1800	sailed for Bray beach
	2200	Arrived off Bray.
May 30		Proceeded to Margate
	1640	Arrived Margate
		<b>TRIP 4</b>
	1900	Left Margate for Bray
	2330ca	Arrived Bray
May 31		Proceeded to Ramsgate
	1155	Arrived Ramsgate
		Sailing orders cancelled – 1 hour's notice (Note: Dover report gives 700 landed on 1 <sup>st</sup> June. This would imply an eighth trip. Ramsgate/Margate have no record of this)
		<b>TRIP 5</b>
June 1	1100	Sailed for Malo Beach
	1300	Picked up open boat with 10 survivors
	1600ca	Arrived off Malo, Air attack – shot down 1 plane
June 2	0245	Proceeded with 700 troops and crews of M/S ??? and Teonta (?) (Note: Minesweeper name illegible on original) Landed troops at Ramsgate Sailed to Dover, CO and volunteers from Sandown joined MQ
		<b>TRIP 6</b>
	1800	Left Dover
	2300ca	Arrived Dunkirk berthed alongside East Pier
June 3	00.30	Proceeded to Ramsgate
	05.30	Arrived Ramsgate
		<b>TRIP 7</b>
	2000	Proceeded to Dunkirk
June 4	0100	Arrived Dunkirk
	0245	(Note: Possible time of sailing)
	0630	Arrived Ramsgate

## Summary of Medway Queen's activities in WWII

YEAR	Date	Details	Source(s)
1939	1,2 Sept	Took evacuees from Dagenham to East Anglia	2, 11
	3, Sept	Took evacuees from Gravesend to Lowestoft	2, 11
		Requisitioned Converted for minesweeping at Deptford	1
	Nov 16 Dec	Commissioned as HMS Medway Queen Ordered to Chatham <b>Sub Lt R. D. C. Cooke RNVR in command</b>	1, 3
	18 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Gravesend Sheerness for Gun Trials	1
1940		Adjustments Chatham	1, 12
	8 Jan	Independent ship Harwich 9 <sup>th</sup> MSF Harwich	1 14
	29 Feb	Degaussing equipment fitted and repairs, Chatham	1, 12
	8 March	Joined 10 <sup>th</sup> flotilla at Dover	1
	??	<b>Ty Lt A. T. Cook DSC RNR in command</b>	
	17 April To 2 May	Refit, Dover	1
	May/June	Operation Dynamo commenced on 26 <sup>th</sup> May. MQ first trip 27/28 (night). Picked up from beach, rescued soldiers and crew from Brighton Belle. HMS Gracie Fields and Queen of the Channel were sunk on night of 28/29 and Crested Eagle on 29/30. BEF evacuation completed 01/02 June, French rear-guard picked up 03/04. Crew estimate 7000 rescued and 3 aircraft destroyed.	3, 5
1940	5 <sup>th</sup> June	Portsmouth for repairs	1
	19 <sup>th</sup> June	Re-joined flotilla at Dover	1
	10 July 20 July	10 <sup>th</sup> flotilla moved to Yarmouth MQ follows, delayed by defective dynamo	1
	22 July	Harwich	1
	25 July	Lowestoft	
	28 July	Harwich	1
	12 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Joined 8 <sup>th</sup> Flotilla, Tyne	1
1941	16 Feb	HMS Southsea lost to mine off Tyne, beached.	4
	5 March	Stornoway	1
	?	Tyne	1
	12 March	Harwich	1
	31 March	Tyne	
	5 <sup>th</sup> July	HMS Snaefell lost in air attack	4
1942		Tyne	
	January	North Shields	4
	17 Jan	Jack Stanley Horrex joins Medway Queen	9
	3 March	<b>Jack Stanley Horrex appointed in command</b>	
	10 March	Methill	
	10 March	Leith	1
	10 Sept To 20 Oct	Refit by A & R Hepburn, Leith. HQ of company in Leith, work done at Granton.	1, 6

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Source(s)</b>
1942 contd	Nov	Rosyth	1
	19 Nov	Leith	1
	21 Nov	Harwich	1
1943	28 Jan	Great Yarmouth	1
	29 Jan	Transferred 7 <sup>th</sup> MSF Granton	1, 14
	8 Oct	Jack Stanley Horrex transfers to HMS Rodney Appointed in charge of "A" turret	9
		Accommodation Ship, Granton (Rosyth Command) "Stood down"	14 15
1944	15 April 13 Sept	Recommissioned <b>Ty Lt. Robert Pakenham RNR in command</b> <b>Ty Lt Colin T Wilson RNVR (Still there on 06 June 1945)</b>	15
	8 April	DENNETT, Harold, Engineman, RNPS, LT/KX 115423, Medway Queen, illness, died	4
1945	8 <sup>th</sup> May	End of war in Europe	
	June	<b>Charles McAra in command</b>	10
	15 <sup>th</sup> Aug	End of WWII	
1946?		Decommissioned <b>Lt. J. James RNVR in command (journey south for refit)</b>	10
1946/7		Rebuilt by Thorneycrofts, Northam, Southampton	
1947	May	Re-entered civilian service	7, 8, 13

### Sources

- 1) Wartime naval movement log
- 2) Publication extracts: "Danger over Dagenham"
- 3) John Graves and Thomas Russell accounts (PSPS 1974)
- 4) Naval-history.net website
- 5) Admiral Ramsay's report on Dynamo
- 6) Albert Turnbull account
- 7) Documents in National Archive, Kew
- 8) Advertisement flier
- 9) Account and documents supplied by David LeSueur
- 10) "Mainly in Minesweepers" Charles McAra
- 11) Paul Spence account  
Linda Rhodes, Local Studies Librarian, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and  
<http://www.discovergravesham.co.uk/gravesend-chronology/1938-1941.html>
- 12) Chatham Dockyard, lock movements log extracts
- 13) Research by George Painter

The following references await final verification through The National Archives

- 14) Richard Osborne - from Admiralty pink lists
- 15) TNTUK Pan Gov Contract - Navy Search