



Return from Dunkirk on H.M.S. "Worcester."

AFTER waiting in the sea, almost up to our necks, for about half-an-hour, we were picked up by a motor boat from a destroyer standing off the beach. About forty of us were hoisted aboard the motor boat by the sailors, and it was hard work for them too, as we could give them little help ourselves.

When the boat was fully loaded, her engine was started we headed for the destroyer, and in a very short time we were aboard her.

It was approximately 7.0 a.m. on the 31st May, 1940, when we set foot on the destroyer deck, and when a sailor came to help us with *H.M.S. Worcester* on his cap, I felt quite at home (my home town is Worcester).

Of course we were all crowded together on board, and soon after we got "settled," German planes came over and started dropping bombs around us. The anti-aircraft guns on board opened up on them, and kept up a lively fire, which successfully kept them off.

We got under way shortly after, with the cook working away quite unconcerned in his galley, making buckets of steaming hot cocoa, which, of course, we all appreciated very much!

As many as possible made their way to the engine room to try and get their clothes aired, but of course there wasn't room for many, so most of us had to stay as we were.

After we had been going for about half-an-hour, the destroyer put on speed, and started zig-zagging; we could feel her heeling over on each turn. Then we could hear explosions, but as we were down below, we didn't know whether it was the anti-aircraft guns, or depth charges going up.

After that the journey was fairly uneventful, and we arrived in an hour or two off Dover. The sight of the cliffs of Dover made the lads on board give vent to a mighty cheer, and even the wounded joined in.

We soon entered harbour, and docked alongside another destroyer. We all scrambled off as soon as we could, feeling very grateful to the Captain and crew for getting us across the Channel so quickly.

G. F. PETHORD, Lance-Corporal.

R. BESTWICK, Corporal,

8th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment.

4913188 LANCE-SERJEANT H. HART WRITES:—

Whilst on the pier at Dunkirk, waiting to be evacuated, I noticed a plane circling over the town, and along the beach. After watching it for a few minutes it came down very low, and to our relief, saw that it was one of our own planes, the first seen for some time. After he

flew away, I was amazed at the way the town had been bombed. The smoke that was coming from the opposite side of the pier, made it impossible to see anything within fifty feet.

In the meantime, I helped to carry a wounded man who was on a stretcher towards the Hospital boat, which was alongside the pier. Suddenly out of the smoke clouds came a large number of enemy bombers, and before I knew what to say, I looked up and several bombs began to drop on the beach, and also the pier.

I laid the stretcher along near the wall on the pier and laid myself flat, and all that I and several more did, was to pray that he did not hit us, although some of the bombs struck a portion of the pier, and did some damage to a building near to it.

I cannot say how long it lasted, but as soon as I thought it was best, I picked up the stretcher, and got it on to the boat.

Our boat was tied alongside the pier, and after I had been on board a few minutes it pulled away and commenced to head for the shores of England.

After about half-an-hour, I heard the distant drone of a plane, and shortly afterwards, saw that it was a lone enemy plane, making straight for the boat. I saw it begin to circle round, when the ships crew, who were manning the A.A. gun, fired at it, and drove it away. This incident occurred whilst I was on board *H.M.S. Worcester*.

Soon after that, I saw that we came near to a trawler, which was mine-sweeping, and on the way I also saw three ships, going towards Dunkirk, and when they came nearer I found that they were all Frenchmen, who were aboard them.

Shortly before reaching Dover, I saw several ships that had been destroyed by the enemy, and at last I saw the harbour come into view, and we disembarked for the train. There were some pitiful sights amongst us, but we were cheerful to be back in England again.

I arrived at the depot next day, and on my arrival was asked by an officer what had become of Lord Coventry, and to my sorrow had to tell him that he had been killed. He was a very good officer, but more of a gentleman. He put his heart and soul into his work, and I will always remember him.

This was on the morning of June 1st, and the evening of June 2nd, 1940.

(Signed) H. HART, Lance-Serjeant.