

A soldier asked me where we were going and where we had come from and how far it was, and pointed with pride to his regimental badge of the 28th Regiment. I told him Coates and Haworth were Anglairs, and that Noble and I were Ecosais.

We landed the 23 Frenchmen at some steps on the NE wall at Ramsgate. A young officer asked where we had got them from and when I replied, "The other side", he replied, "That's not bad!" We returned to the South Wall and I went ashore to get my ankle bandaged ~ as I had bruised, or sprained it, in the boat.

The organisation at Ramsgate for supplying petrol and batteries was I think run by the Shell Company and was very good. The civilian crews were in a variety of individualistic 'dog robbing' rigs. I saw a blue and white striped flag flying, and asked a midshipmen if it was the 'Preparative'? He was obviously security conscious and ignored me, presumably because I looked a suspicious character.

I think the operation of lifting men off the beaches was finished when we got back to Ramsgate the second time, and that for some reason, (*see: The Nine Days Wonder*), the Navy was no longer making use of small boats. It became obvious that if we wanted to get across, we would have to do it on our own : but we did not want to get in the way, and perhaps, mess up some organised operation.

Michael Graham came on board while we were lying alongside. He had brought a flotilla of Cromer crab-boats and got most of them safely to Ramsgate. Not a bad effort considering that none of them had ever been more than a few miles to sea off Cromer and were unused to working in convoy. These boats were I believe afterwards used in the abortive attempt to rescue the 51st Division from St Valery ~ Graham was rather thrilled that one of the four boats had got across and told me he had sent a telegram to Lowestoft. There is an account written by him in the Lowestoft Journal for June 1950.

We arrived in Ramsgate about 10 am on 3rd June, and spent most of the afternoon sleeping ~ the next day we hung about hoping for another job. I wandered around the town and met the Commander coming up the opposite side of the street with two Sub-Lieutenants. They all saluted, so I took it that we were forgiven for our insubordination!

I made inquiries, and found a CPO who was an expert on Ford engines, he came on board and told me all our big-ends were gone and advised me to run back on petrol ~ the oil in the sump was mainly paraffin ~ so we took on board, about 50 gallons, all in 2 gallon cans.

Early on the 5th June, Noble came on board and told us to shove off quickly. As soon as we passed the North Foreland and set course for Lowestoft, he told us that all small boats had been ordered up the Thames, but he didn't suppose we wanted to do that!

Just before dawn, somewhere off Kessingland we came under rifle fire from the shore. Rather foolishly, although we had darkened ship, I had left one port scuttle undarkened, thinking that a dark shape seen off-shore might be taken to be an enemy but that a white light would not. We could hear the bullets hitting the water quite close, not bad shooting, considering we were half a mile off-shore. We darkened ship and turned out to seaward.

We tied up alongside Craske's Wharf at Lowestoft at 4.30 am and then went on to Leo Robinson's Yard at 8 am where we left the *Elwin*. I told one of Robinson's men that the port stern gland had been running very hot but that we had managed to keep it reasonably cool by tying a wet sock round it.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Reconstructed Log Entries.

29th May	9 pm	Evening radio appeal
30th		Signed on as engineer
	Late evening	Joined <i>Elvin</i>
31st		First run to Ramsgate
	4 pm	Arrived Ramsgate
		Turned back for Lowestoft
1st June	3 pm	Sailed for Ramsgate
	dark	Anchored off West Rocks
2nd	10 am	Arrived Ramsgate
	pm	Found Coates and a job
	9 pm	Sailed for Dunkirk
3rd	First light	Entered Dunkirk harbour
	10 am	Returned to Ramsgate
	pm	Slept
4th		No more work
		Noble orders, "Cast-off".
5th	Pre-dawn	Shot at, off Kessingland
	4.30 am	Arrived Craske's Wharf
	8 am	Leo Robinson's Yard
		Signed off.

COURSES SAILED

I have no idea of the course sailed on their first trip to Ramsgate ~ but I suspect from hints Father left, that it was approximately the same as the second course. I have a Stanford chart of the Thames Estuary dated and correct up to October 1931 ~ it has dates and times of courses laid in A.G.B.'s hand consistent with the second trip. The course then:-

SW Whiting buoy north of Harwich SW by S to the NE Gunfleet buoy passing the West Rocks where they anchored for the night, about 8 miles off Harwich. Thence S by E to Sunk Head, then SW by W, passing the Mid Barrow Light to make course through the South Edinburgh Channel to the NE Spit and thence to Broadstairs Knoll and Ramsgate.

An experienced yachtsman commented on the trip without charts ~ "I would not dream of doing that! ~ it is downright foolhardy. The Thames Estuary is never easy, especially if the weather clamps down on one ~ but some of those old trawlermen did have a special knack of getting about. I always insist on having a chart right up to date, not one 9 years old, when I am sailing in those waters."

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Lloyds Register of Yachts

1949

ELVIN Wood, twin-screw motor yacht. 35ft x 9ft by 3ft draught. 2 x 4 cyl. Highland paraffin motors. Built Barton-on-Humber in 1937. Owned by B Searle, 3 King Street, Sudbury, Suffolk.

1965

ELVIN same basic details but re-engined with twin Ford motors in 1956. Then owned by Fernando O'Neill, Rua Presidente Arriaga, 84 Lisbon, Portugal.

18th February, 1972 ~ Letter from the Marquez de Pombal acknowledging ownership.

~ 0 ~

Trail lost ~ as there was violent unrest against the aristocracy in Portugal at that time.



ELVIN
as in "The Little Ships of Dunkirk"
1940 ~ 1989

ELVIN's write-up on page 207 of the above book is substantially this account, published in the Eastern Daily Press at the time of his death in January 1972.