

LIFE-BOAT WAR BULLETIN No. 2.

DECEMBER, 1940.

FIFTEEN MONTHS OF WAR.

In the first fifteen months of war life-boats rescued 2754 lives. They rescued more lives in these fifteen months of war than in the last seven years of peace. They have rescued on an average 42 lives a week. In the war of 1914-1918 the weekly average was 21.

D.S.M. FOR TWO COXSWAINS.

The King has awarded the Distinguished Service Medal to Coxswain Howard Primrose Cooper Knight, of the Ramsgate life-boat, and Coxswain Edward Drake Parker, of the Margate life-boat "for gallantry and determination when ferrying troops from the beaches at Dunkirk".

Coxswain Knight and his crew took the Ramsgate life-boat across to Dunkirk on the afternoon of Thursday, 30th. May, towing eight wherries manned by naval ratings and loaded with cans of fresh water for the troops. They were at work all the Thursday night, the Friday, and the Friday night, and continued until all the wherries had been destroyed. They helped to bring off about 2,800 men, and when they reached Ramsgate again on the Saturday morning they had been on service 40 hours.

Coxswain Parker and the Margate crew also set out on the Thursday afternoon and arrived at the beaches at midnight. They rescued first a party of French soldiers who waded out to the life-boat in the darkness, and by 8.30 the next morning had brought off between 500 and 600 men. The commander of a destroyer wrote to the Institution: "The manner in which the Margate life-boat crew brought off load after load of soldiers under continuous shelling, bombing and aerial machine gun fire will be an inspiration to us all as long as we live."

"GUIDE OF DUNKIRK."

The Girl Guides of the Empire have given the Institution £5,000 to build a motor life-boat. This is part of £50,000 which they contributed among themselves in Empire Week for national causes. It will provide a life-boat which was ready at the building yard at the end of last May, and was sent to Dunkirk to help in the evacuation of the B.E.F. The Girl Guides have asked that she shall be named "Guide of Dunkirk."

THREE MEDALS FOR FRASERBURGH.

In the early morning of 23rd. September the Fraserburgh life-boat was called out. Only the day before the coxswain had been called to the Navy, and Captain Andrew Stephen, honorary secretary of the station took command. A gale was blowing. The Life-boat found the Grimsby trawler "Northwood" stranded on a reef. Heavy seas were breaking her whole length. The life-boat made three attempts to get alongside the wreck, but the water was too shallow, so she waited for daylight and the rising tide. Then she dropped down on her cable until she was bumping on the bottom. She was still fifty feet from the trawler. She fired her line-throwing gun; rigged a breeches buoy, and hauled the ten men one by one through the surf. One was rescued unconscious but was quickly revived. Another fell out of the buoy, but clung to the line and was hauled in. The Institution has awarded the silver medal to Captain Stephen, who had won its bronze medal eight months before, and two bronze medals and five vellums to the seven members of his crew.

A LIFE-BOAT CREW BOMBED.

On 24th. August, the Ramsgate station had to be closed. Ramsgate was bombed from the air that day, and the whole life-boat crew of nine took shelter in a cellar near the harbour. A bomb burst just outside, and six of the nine were wounded. Up to that time the Ramsgate life-boat had rescued 168 lives since the outbreak of war. The station was re-opened on 11th October, although the coxswain, assistant motor mechanic and one of the crew were still unfit for duty.

D.S.O.

Captain R. L. Hamer, R.N., the deputy chief inspector of life-boats, who was called up to the Navy at the outbreak of war, has won the D.S.O., "for courage and resource in successful attacks on enemy submarines"

LIFE-BOATMEN IN THE NAVY.

Coxswain Angus Mackintosh of Thurso, Caithness-shire, who is serving in the Navy as a petty officer, has been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his work in the Norwegian campaign.

Two members of the life-boat crew at New Brighton on the Mersey, have lost their lives, George Cross in H.M. Aircraft Carrier "Courageous" and William Towers in H.M. Minesweeper "Fleming"

LIFE-BOAT DAYS.

Of 507 Life-boat flag days of which the results have been received, 350 have raised larger sums than ever before. In Greater London half a million more people contributed than in 1939, and the sum raised was £12,528. That is £3,860 more than the highest sum ever raised before.

CARRYING ON.

In November the Institution sent its usual letter to all Mayors asking for their help in holding life-boat days in 1941. Mayor after Mayor, from places which have been heavily bombed - the London boroughs, Coventry and Birmingham among them - wrote at once promising their support, without comment or qualification.

COXSWAIN CROSS'S BROADCAST.

Coxswain Robert Cross, of the Humber station made a wireless appeal for the life-boat service in the "Weeks Good Cause" in the Home Service of the B.B.C. on 21st. April. There were over 11,000 replies. The gifts ranged from 3d. to £100 and the total was £5,693. 10. 5.

WOOLLEN COMFORTS.

The Institution has received, as voluntary gifts, a great number of knitted woollen comforts of all kinds for its crews. It was thus possible to accumulate a large reserve of such comforts at Headquarters, and supplies have been sent to the coast during the autumn months. While further supplies will be gratefully accepted, it is not anticipated that there will be much demand from life-boat crews for further comforts during the winter.

TEA MONEY FROM THE HOME GUARD.

Major P. S. Watkins, D.S.O., vice-president of the Southborough and District Branch, in Kent, makes tea in the early mornings, for members of the Home Guard who sleep at his house. In return they contribute to the Life-boat Service. He has already sent in 11/2d. and hopes to contribute 5/- a month in this tea-money.

LIFE-BOAT CALENDAR FOR 1941.

There will be no life-boat Christmas card this year, but the life-boat calendar for 1941 is now ready. It has a reproduction in colours of a painting of a war service. The cost is 1/-, including the envelope, or 12 for 10/-, and it can be sent through the post, open, for 1½d.