

Little Ships Mission

During WW2 many British and allied soldiers fought against Germany in France. France had been partially invaded by the German army and the British soldiers landed in France to try and make sure that France was not completed invaded by Germany. The British and Allied forces fought hard in France but the German army managed to push them back to a beach known as Dunkirk. The British and Allied soldiers were trapped. They had the sea (English Channel) behind them and the German army advancing on to the beach. If the soldiers had been killed it would have been a terrible disaster for Winston Churchill. Most of the force were trapped which meant that it left the rest of the country vulnerable to attack by the German army. Thousands of soldiers would lose their lives unless something was done quickly. On 27th May 1940 a message went out to all boat owners of small vessels. They were asked to help retrieve the soldiers trapped. The large military ships could not get to the Dunkirk beach due to the shallow water and enemy attacks from Germany but it was thought that the small vessels would be able to get through more easily. Many of the owners of these small boats insisted they would sail them and help rescue the soldiers. The boats were taken to Ramsgate (South of England) ready to set sail for Dunkirk.

When they reached France, some of the boats acted as shuttles between the beaches and the destroyers (large warships), ferrying soldiers to the warships. Others carried hundreds of soldiers each back to Ramsgate, protected by the [Royal Air Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Air_Force) from the attacks of the [Luftwaffe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftwaffe).

About 850 private boats sailed from Ramsgate to Dunkirk between 26th May and 4th June 1940 as part of operation Dynamo, helping to rescue more than 336,000 British, French and other Allied soldiers who were trapped.