



During May and June of 1940 German forces moved rapidly through Belgium and France. This forced the British and French troops back around Dunkirk. The soldiers were left cornered on the beaches of Dunkirk.

A brief halt by the Germans allowed evacuation of troops to begin under "Operation Dynamo".



Evacuation of British troops started on 26 May. Passenger ferries sailed from Southampton and Dover. Shelling by German troops forced the ships to take a longer route, to the beaches east of Dunkirk.



Shallow water at Dunkirk stopped the big ships getting close to shore.

The Prime Minister knew that little boats could sail into the shallow waters, so he called for British sailors (mainly fishermen) to sail to Dunkirk.

On the 29th May they sailed from the UK to help the soldiers get from the beaches to the larger ferries. Low cloud and burning oil provided cover for troops to escape.



The last British troops were brought out on 2nd June.

With German forces closing in, only one more night-time evacuation was possible.



More than 26,000 French rear-guard troops were rescued that night, bringing the total saved to 338,226.

This is part of the speech spoken by Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Britain, after the evacuation of Dunkirk.

“We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender”

Winston Churchill

We Shall Fight on the Beaches speech June 4, 1940