

St Katherine Dock ~ The Dunkirk Little Ships

A nice day out today visiting St Katharine Dock by the Tower of London where some of the remaining Dunkirk Little Ships were gathered for the bank holiday weekend on the 84th anniversary of Operation Dynamo, the Dunkirk evacuation.

Several dozen veteran boats were lined up and could be visited. There are a few below.

The [Iorana](#) with Tower bridge in the background



Some of the boats such as the [Wanda](#) (centre) were built as pleasure yachts. After Dunkirk the Wanda was fitted with a bofors gun and served as a patrol boat in Portland Harbour in Dorset.

The Mary Irene which is only just in view far left was a fishing boat built in Poole in 1936. She carried on fishing and sometimes towing military equipment until 2016. She is still a working boat but I don't know in what trade.



My favourite is the green boat second left. She is the Endeavour and she was one of 6 cockle boats who went from Leigh on Sea in Essex. Cockle boats are shallow drafted and could get close to the beaches of Dunkirk to get men off and ferried to the larger ships waiting in deeper water. The cockle fishermen, good sailors but who had never worked outside the Thames estuary before, were drafted as 'Naval Auxiliary Personnel' and allocated a Royal Navy rating, hence they were under military command ready to enter a combat zone. Most of the cockle fishermen were related. Men with families were not permitted to sail. One of the 6 boats, the Renown, was blown up by a mine killing the crew. The three men from Leigh were all cousins from the Noakes and Osbourne family. Osbournes still run a sea food restaurant and sales sheds in the [cockle shed row](#). The rest returned to Leigh safely. Not having direct orders where to report after they had picked up their last load of soldiers, Reliance, Resolute and Defender went straight to their home port and disembarked 180 men onto Southend Pier. How they squeezed so many into such small boats was a minor miracle.



This is a better picture of the Endeavour taken last weekend at Leigh. She worked fishing for different catches, shrimp, sprats, mackerel, until the 1970s. She is now kept by the Leigh-on-Sea Endeavour Trust for community and educational purposes having been restored in 2001 to original 1926 specification as a cockle boat. Sadly the Resolute was too dilapidated to restore.