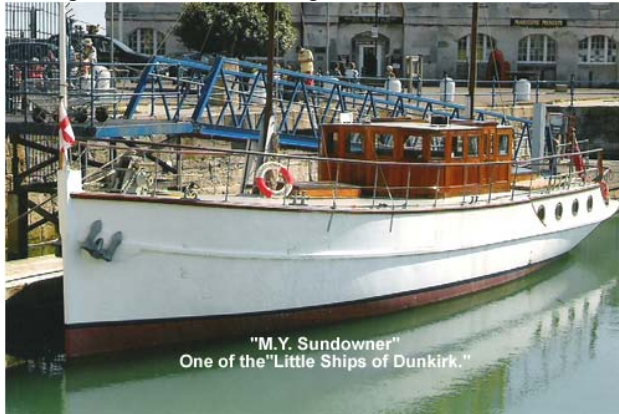


A Brief History of The Motor Yacht "Sundowner".

The Motor Yacht "Sundowner" is a converted harbour Admiralty launch, originally built around 1912 and converted in 1929 at Richardson's Wharf at Conyer in Kent by a former barge builder, Charlie Cooper. He bought her in a sale at Sheerness for Commander Charles Herbert Lightoller, the senior surviving officer of the "Titanic" disaster in 1912, (coincidentally around the time of "Sundowner" being built). Originally 52 feet long she was extended to 58 feet, fitted with two masts, with a single screw run by a centrally placed 60 HP Parsons Petrol-Paraffin 4-Stroke engine which gave her a top speed of 8 knots. Lightoller bought the hull for £40.00p, the engine for £100.00p and reverse gear for £35.00p. His wife named her "Sundowner" which is an Australian word for a wanderer or tramp. "Sundowner" has a registered tonnage of 26 tons, draws approximately 5 feet and can turn 180degrees in her own length.



During the 1930's up until the war, Lightoller used her mainly for family trips visiting such ports as Dunkirk, Ostend, Flushing, Boulogne, St. Valery and The Hague regularly. She was a regular participant in the Pavillon D'Or and rarely came away without some prize, several of which were for the best handled boat. In 1936 Lightoller changed the engine for a more powerful 72 HP Gleniffer Diesel giving her an extra 2 knots. After giving it a run in the Paris International Cruise, the family embarked on a trip to and around the Baltic in the summer of 1937. During the season Lightoller reckoned

that "Sundowner" had covered over 3,000 miles without any trouble from the engine.

However, as was drew closer Lightoller, due to his experience and background, was asked by the Admiralty to carry out a secret survey of the German coastline in 1939. He agreed and with his wife along he compiled a detailed survey using photographs, maps and soundings. For two weeks they cruised around and returned shortly after a close encounter with a German Patrol boat. A year later on June 1st, 1940, "Sundowner" took part in her most famous voyage, the evacuation of Dunkirk. With his son and a Sea Scout, Lightoller, now aged 66, set out from Ramsgate after stripping all movable furniture and fittings sailed for Dunkirk. They constantly dodged the Luftwaffe but she handled well. On arrival at Dunkirk he realised that the piers were too high and drew alongside the destroyer "Worchester" and started to take on soldiers. They were packed below and reached 75 before all equipment and boots were thrown overboard and Lightoller started to load the deck. He finally stopped at 130 and set off for Ramsgate. They finally reached Ramsgate 12 hours later and almost capsized as the soldiers moved and the officials were amazed at the number aboard. In 1965 a plaque commemorating the event was placed on board "Sundowner" by the Mayor of Dunkirk.

This was not the end of her war service as she worked for the Government patrolling the river Blackwater in Essex. She then moved to the Clyde for the Army under orders of 647 Transport Coy; R.A.S.C. manned by civilians. She was released in 1945 and after a refit was returned to Lightoller and once again used as a family boat. After passing through several more owners "Sundowner" finally returned to Ramsgate where the East Kent Maritime Trust bought her to be restored for the 1990 50th anniversary of Dunkirk.

