

LIFEBOAT

TEACHER RESOURCE PACK



AN INTRODUCTION: GILL ROBERTSON (DIRECTOR)

The play *Lifeboat* is nearly 20 years old. It was first performed as a stage play but in 2014 we created the school's version you see today. As a director I have made many shows for young people but this one is special because it is a true story and because myself and the writer Nicola McCartney were lucky enough to meet the heroines of the story, Bess and Beth.

Creating *Lifeboat* was wonderful but also terrifying. We were responsible for bringing Bess and Beth to life on stage and doing justice to their amazing story, fortunately both women loved the show. Since it was first performed in 2002 the show has travelled the world and over that time we have met other survivors and relatives of the children and adults who sailed on the City of Benares. Sharing this story has been a privilege and I believe Bess and Beth's story will always be relevant.

Bess and Beth are dead now but this play is a tribute to their courage and to the courage of children everywhere who are never the ones who start wars but are often one of the biggest casualties.



STORY OUTLINE:

Lifeboat tells the story of 2 girls; Bess Walder (15) and Beth Cummings (14) who board the evacuee ship the City of Benares in September 1940. Both girls are being sent abroad through CORB (Children's Oversea Reception Board) and leave their home cities of London and Liverpool to escape the bombings by the Germans during the 2nd WW.

Bess and Beth are different characters. Bess is a Londoner and longs for adventure. She is excited at the prospect of travelling to Canada, with her brother Louis, and dreams of being a movie star. Beth wants to stay at home and is apprehensive and scared about leaving her mum and family.

The play begins with both girls in the water wondering what has happened. Over the course of the story (which moves back and forward in time) we learn that their evacuee ship was torpedoed and that they survived by hanging onto an upturned lifeboat in the middle of the Atlantic for over 19 hours.

STORY OUTLINE (CONT'D):

As the play develops we learn about life on board the ship, the other children and adults, and what happened to the girls the night of the attack. We learn how the girls survived, their determination to “Hang on” and the terror of that night.

The play ends returning to the girls as old ladies remembering the ship and the other evacuees; the ones that survived and the others that didn't. The final lines help to explain their determination to live.

Beth *We didn't let go, why didn't we let go?*

Bess *Well we couldn't give up could we?*

Beth *That's right we weren't in the business of giving up*

Both *We hung on.*



FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

In order to write this play, the director and writer met Bess Walder and talked to Beth Cummings on the phone. Catherine Wheels Theatre Company have gathered pictures and documents about the people and the event. If you would like to see them have a look at the archive material at the end of this pack.

IF you want to do your own detective work try searching online for:
'Bess Cummings, City of Benares'

Other links include

[Bess Cummings obituary in The Telegraph](#)

[Mersey Maritime Museum blog](#)

ACTIVITY 1:

RETELLING THE STORY

There are many ways to retell a story.

Create your own TV news report or newspaper article from the day the survivors returned to Glasgow.

ACTIVITY 2:

THE SMALL SUITCASE

In the play Bess takes her green dressing gown as luxury item.

What do you think Beth took?
What would you take – and why?

ACTIVITY 3:

BEING A THEATRE CRITIC

Our friends at Imagineate have developed several resources to help children explore an experience of theatre. The link 'Talking About Theatre' guides your class through a series of exercises to think about what they have seen and records and tells us their opinions, true theatre critics!

[CLICK HERE](#)

ACTIVITY 3:

THEATRE AS A CAREER

Some of the people involved with this production are listed below, along with their jobs. Why not ask them more about what they do? Email your questions to tiss@imagine.org.uk:

Writer: Nicola McCartney

Director: Gill Robertson

Composer: Dave Trouton

Designer & Costume Designer: Karen Tennent

Performers: Lois Mackie and Amy MacGregor

Stage Manager: Lauren Desjardins

Tour booking and Schools Liaison: Anna Derricourt

Producer: Louise Gilmour Wills

LIFEBOAT

ARCHIVE MATERIAL




CATHERINE WHEELS THEATRE
COMPANY

Theatre In Schools
Scotland
Bringing world-class theatre to Scotland's schools

LIFE IN WORLD WAR II





Underground stations were often used as air raid shelters.
Why do you think this was?





Evacuee children boarding a train. How do you think they might have felt?

**SOME OF THE
CHARACTERS YOU MET
IN THE PLAY**

Louis, Bess and their Dad





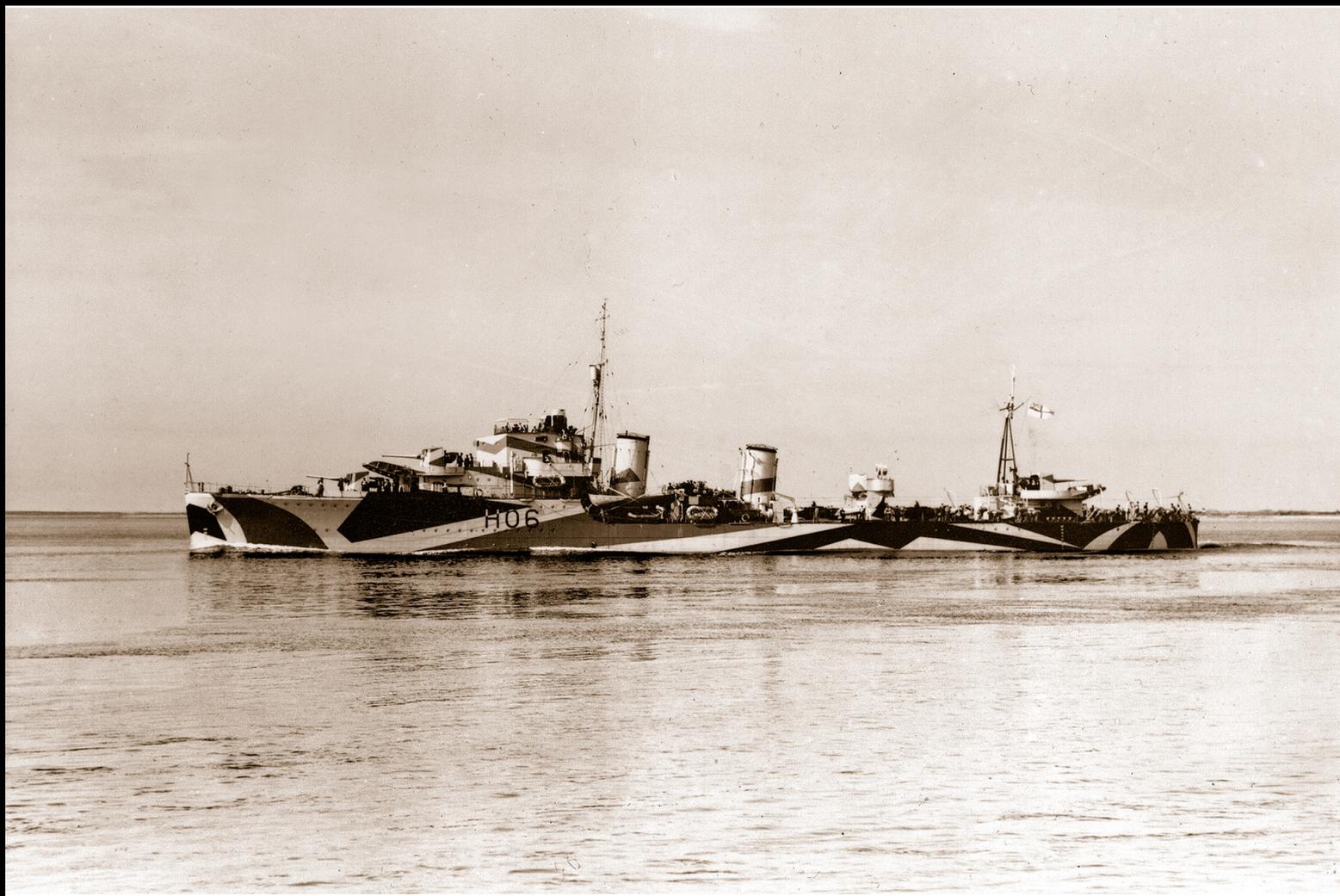
Bess, Louis and
Beth (L-R) with
their mums



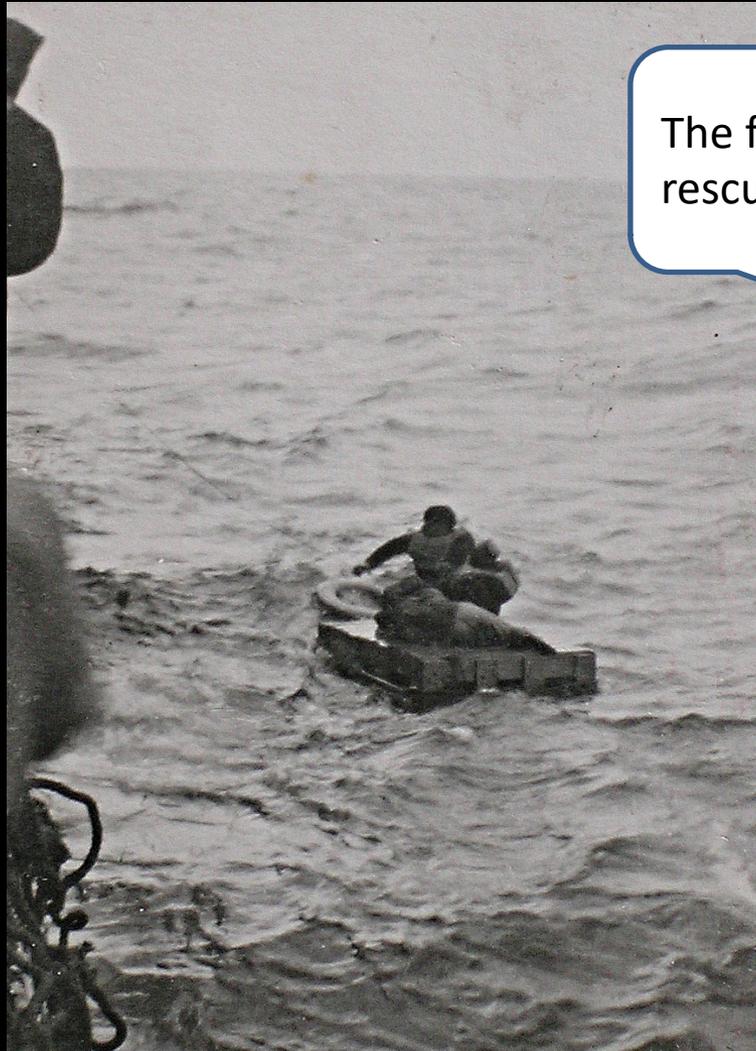
Beth on board
the H.M.S.
Hurricane

A painting of the S.S.
City of Benares leaving
Bombay in 1936





THE RESCUE



The first survivors to be rescued by H.M.S. Hurricane

Louis (middle) aboard the rescue ship, H.M.S. Hurricane. How do you think he would have felt?



Black-Out 7.25 p.m. to 6.20 a.m.
Sun rises 6.49 a.m.
sets 6.55 p.m.
Moon rises 10.57 p.m.
sets 2.19 p.m.

DAILY SKETCH, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1940

'CARRY ON' CALL BY BEAVERBROOK: PAGE THREE

The name
CADBURY
means
QUALITY

Daily Sketch

BUY
BRITISH
balito
STOCKINGS

No. 9,791 (57) MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1940 ONE PENNY

U-Boat Leaves 83 British Evacuees to Drown in Storm

NAZIS TORPEDO MERCY SHIP, KILL CHILDREN

M.P. and Nurses Among Missing

SEVEN British children, landed at a West Coast port from a destroyer, will for the rest of their lives have tragic memories of the ruthless Nazi methods of sea warfare.

Eighty-three of their comrades, making the journey from the bombed areas of Britain to the safety of Canada, lost their lives when their liner was torpedoed without warning 700 miles from the coast of Ireland—in darkness and at the height of a hurricane.

Of ten escorts who, with doctors and nurses, were taking the children to homes in the New World only two were saved. Many died during the night and the next day from shock and exposure.

The ship started to sink almost immediately after the torpedo had struck.

Children Cheer

Survivors then endured a 20-hour nightmare in water-logged lifeboats, or clinging to rafts, swept by heavy seas and slashed by hailstorms.

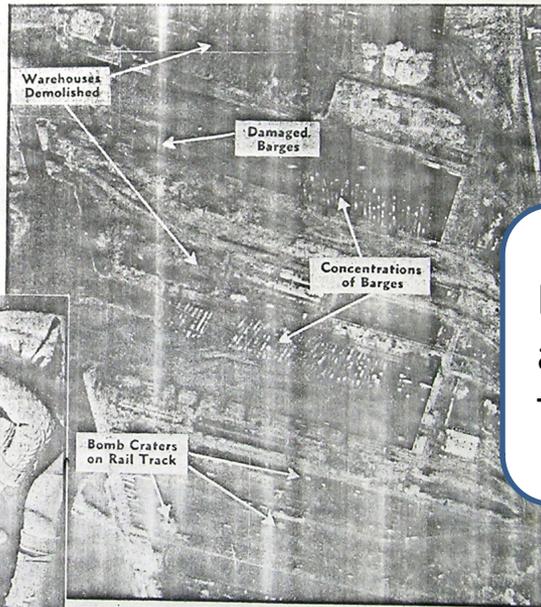
Among the 294 missing is Colonel J. Baldwin Webb, M.P. for the Wrekin Division of Shropshire. Six children, not evacuees, were saved.

The courage of the children as they took to the boats was exemplary. They obeyed every order and even tried to cheer the adults.

The captain, who went down, *Continued on Back Page.*

EVACUEE SHIP SURVIVORS

Two of the survivors of the ship which the Nazis torpedoed and sank while she was taking children over-seas from vulnerable areas in Britain are Edward C. R. Richardson and Derrick Bech, of Egnor Regis. They were landed at a West Coast port, where the picture was taken.



R.A.F. Smash Invasion Barges

THIS picture shows some of the damage inflicted on Hitler's invasion barges concentrated at Dunkirk by the R.A.F. Dock buildings round the upper of the two docks have been completely destroyed. Un-

loading cranes and haulage gear are demolished. Warehouses, wharves, roads and railway sidings have all received their quota of high explosive. Damaged barges near the upper dock cover those already sunk.

Daily Sketch
announcement of
The Benares sinking

More Of A Pal Than Ever
SHERLEY'S
TONIC AND CONDITION POWDERS

BLACKOUT
ZERO HOUR
TO-NIGHT
UNTIL 6.20 A.M.
MOON RISES AT 6.20

Daily Express

THOUGHT FOR FOOD
HP SAUCE
One Penny

Sent to escape the bombers, 89 English children are murdered by a U-boat

CHILDREN'S LINER SUNK WITHOUT WARNING IN GALE

Lord Beaverbrook calls to aircraft workers 'WORK AFTER SIREN HAS SOUNDED'

Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production, last night issued this message:— I HAVE seen the statements in the Press about some workers in several aircraft factories taking shelter throughout the period of air-raid warnings. I declare that aircraft factories must be prepared to work after the siren has sounded. It is imperative that there should be a considerable increase in output in the coming week. For the testing time may come upon us very shortly. It is the duty of aircraft factories to supply the men on the fighting front with all the aircraft they require. The men and women of the aircraft industry up and down the country promised that they would fulfil the needs of the Royal Air Force. That pledge has been made good in the past. We will not fail the pilots in the days to come.

Outrage in Atlantic

BOATS SWAMPED BY TERRIFIC SEAS 600 MILES FROM LAND

WITHOUT WARNING A U-BOAT FIRED A TORPEDO AT A LINER STRUGGLING THROUGH A STORM IN THE ATLANTIC LAST TUESDAY NIGHT—AND KILLED EIGHTY-NINE ENGLISH CHILDREN. Their ship sank in twenty minutes. It was 600 miles from land.

One hundred and two children were in the ship. Ninety of them travelled under the Government evacuation scheme; twelve were sent privately.

All came from bombed areas in London and bombed towns in England; all were on their way to safety in Canada.

Of the total only thirteen are alive, six of them private seavacuees. They were brought back to this country by a British warship which saw their waterlogged and battered lifeboats.

A number of the children were killed by the explosion when the torpedo hit the ship. Many others were drowned. The terrific seas swamped rafts and overturned lifeboats.

Seven out of the nine adult escorts with the children lost their lives in heroic attempts to save them. All who survived tell of the amazing courage of the children. Some of them were only five years old, yet they stood quietly without whimpering until they were told what to do.

But in the darkness, with huge seas thrown against the ship's sides by the fury of the wind, the children had little chance.

Altogether 224 lives are forfeit in this new Nazi outrage. There were 406 people in the ship: a crew of 215 and 191 passengers, including the seavacuees. These last included Colonel J. Baldwin-Webb, M.P., for the Wrexham Division of Shropshire. The saved include eighteen women and thirty-six Lascar seamen.

Mr. Geoffrey Shakespeare, Under-Secretary for the Dominions, said last night:— "I am full of horror and indignation that any German submarine captain could be found to do this."

"This deed will shock the world. It is another example of the Nazis' barbarous methods of warfare, and it is only comparable with their present brutal and indiscriminate bombing of women and children in London."



THREE WHO WERE SAVED: Sonia Beck, barefooted Colin Richardson, and Derrick Beck.

But 3,000 have gone away safely

IT was emphasised last night that despite the seavacuee ship disaster and the menace of the U-boats many thousands of children are being carried overseas safely.

An official of the Children's Overseas Reception Board said: We have transported about 3,000 children in safety to Canada and South Africa since we began. That is quite apart from the many hundreds who have gone to America and other places by private arrangement, outside the Government scheme.

As with the seavacuee ship which was torpedoed late in August on a similar voyage when the whole company of 320 children was saved unhurt, the rescuers told by the board were on a scale which made it possible to transport the 3,000 children without a single casualty.

But every fifteen children there was a fully equipped medical centre, in addition to a doctor and nurse. There were five nurses on the ship. The complement of the ship was so calculated that every child had at least one adult passenger on board. The submarine were warned that the

GALE SEASON

TODAY is Autumn Equinox, when day nearly equals darkness. Strong equatorial gales are due to start whipping round the world, giving the best chance of bringing his lot of rain to some more and more remote.

Japanese attack Indo-China

JAPANESE troops crossed the border from China into French Indo-China last night. They attacked a French block-house, and, according to messages from Indo-China, we met with full resistance from the French.

The Japanese marched in before the seventy-two-hour ultimatum which their generals presented to Admiral Denjoy, French Governor-General, expired at midnight.

The fighting stopped at midnight, but the invasion to begin in full force today. The Japanese, under General Nishimura, chief of the Japanese mission in Indo-China, has given definite orders for the invasion today.

Admiral Denjoy, it is stated, has evoked mobilisation, and is determined to resist any threat from land or sea.

DEMAND FOR BASES

The Daily Express correspondent in Hongkong called last night: "I fear that Admiral Denjoy is working in the closest co-operation with Chungking, China's capital, and in the event of a Japanese attack on the Government General Headquarters in Indo-China, the Japanese will be able to use the bases in Indo-China as a springboard for their attack on the Malay Peninsula."

The fact that the Japanese ultimatum was issued at Hanoi and Saigon is of special interest. Japanese military bases and bases were recently blown up by the Chinese in Indo-China. Indo-China tariff rates to be revised in favour of Japan.

The number of Japanese troops allowed through Indo-China to be unlimited. The last demand is significant because hitherto the Indo-China authorities served in principle to permit Japanese troops to land, but insisted that the total be not more than 50,000 and never more than 1,000 at any one place.

Latest figures indicate that the Japanese have some 15,000 troops in Indo-China, if necessary, at one point.

The King on radio tonight

Whote world to hear The King is to make a broadcast speech—his fourth since war began—on the radio and over the airwaves at six o'clock this evening. All B.B.C. transmitters and on an extra short-wave length will be sent to attract the listeners in this country.

FLATS, CINEMA, CHURCH BOMBED

EARLY today, during London's sixteenth Blitznight, it was reported that a block of flats had been hit by a bomb.

High explosive and incendiary bombs dropped on the eastern outskirts badly damaged an old parish church, a cinema, a dance-hall and shops.

After a Sunday confined to snarl-bombing by single planes, London's third alert of the day was followed by the most intense night attack the German raiders have made since last Wednesday.

For more than an hour the guns kept the raiders out. Then one, by the high, dropped a salvo of explosives in the south-west.

As one after another raider sought a way through searchlights and gasless from the barrage guns, the almost incessant din of the guns was punctuated by the sound of bombs.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the sky.

STOP PRESS

HOUR'S BREAK IN LONDON RAID

There was a break in the London raid early this morning, but the alert again sounded after about an hour.

BERLIN RAIDED AGAIN

Berlin has also been raided last night. It is the first time since the beginning of the Berlin campaign that the city has been bombed.

Three waves of British bombers penetrated over the city, and destroyed many buildings.

INDO-CHINA: FRENCH GIVE IN

SHANGHAI—Following French news that the Japanese ultimatum had been accepted, the French Government has announced that it has given up Indo-China.

R.A.F. BEGIN POLICE PATROL

WHEN in future you hear the deep roar of a low-flying plane at night, remember that it is probably a British fighter. Our fighters are being used in increasing numbers at night to patrol and annihilate Goering's civilian-killing bombers.

They are also to patrol the sky over the London area, and to intercept night-flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to the ordinary night bombing pilot.

The type of planes they use are not often seen in the air, besides that it is not during the day. These night fighters are able to patrol the sky over the London area, and to intercept night-flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to the ordinary night bombing pilot.

The type of planes they use are not often seen in the air, besides that it is not during the day. These night fighters are able to patrol the sky over the London area, and to intercept night-flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to the ordinary night bombing pilot.

The type of planes they use are not often seen in the air, besides that it is not during the day. These night fighters are able to patrol the sky over the London area, and to intercept night-flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to the ordinary night bombing pilot.

The type of planes they use are not often seen in the air, besides that it is not during the day. These night fighters are able to patrol the sky over the London area, and to intercept night-flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to the ordinary night bombing pilot.

The type of planes they use are not often seen in the air, besides that it is not during the day. These night fighters are able to patrol the sky over the London area, and to intercept night-flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to the ordinary night bombing pilot.

The type of planes they use are not often seen in the air, besides that it is not during the day. These night fighters are able to patrol the sky over the London area, and to intercept night-flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to the ordinary night bombing pilot.

The type of planes they use are not often seen in the air, besides that it is not during the day. These night fighters are able to patrol the sky over the London area, and to intercept night-flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to the ordinary night bombing pilot.

Daily Express announcement of The Benares sinking

Vichy admits trouble "all over Africa"



CHILDREN'S OVERSEAS RECEPTION BOARD
(SCOTTISH BRANCH),

29 ST. ANDREW SQUARE,

EDINBURGH, 2.

9th October, 1940.

I am desired by the Board to convey to you, and through you to the officers and men under your command, their gratitude for the care and kindness shown to the rescued escorts and children.

Yours faithfully,

C. A. Finlay

A. B. Valentine

Secretary.

The Commander,
H.M.S. "Hurricane",
c/o G.P.O.,
LONDON. E.C.

Children's Overseas
Reception Board's
thank you letter



Benares survivors on arrival in Glasgow



THE CITY LINE, LTD.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS
AMICUS, GLASGOW.

ELLERMAN LINE
TO
MEDITERRANEAN AND LEVANT PORTS.

ELLERMAN LINE
HARRISON LINE
JOINT SERVICE
TO SOUTH AFRICAN PORTS,
MAURITIUS,
RED SEA AND EAST AFRICA.

ELLERMAN'S

CITY LINE

Regular Service of Steamers from GLASGOW, LIVERPOOL & SOUTH WALES
to CALCUTTA, VIZAGAPATAM, BOMBAY, KARACHI, PORT OKHA AND BEDI BUNDER.

75, Bothwell Street.

Glasgow, 23rd September, 1940
c.2.

Temporary Address

Valuable Metal
BALLOCH

OUR REF. GAN.

YOUR REF.

Lt. Commander H.C. Sims, R.N.,
H.M.S. "HURRICANE"
c/o Admiralty,
LONDON.

Dear Sir,

On behalf of myself and my Co-Directors, I wish to express our very great appreciation of the services rendered by yourself, Officers and ship's Company of H.M.S. "HURRICANE" on the occasion of the loss by enemy action of our steamer, "CITY OF BENARES". Apart from the bravery and seamanship displayed in the rescue, which were in keeping with the traditions of the Royal Navy, the care and kindness extended to survivors whilst on board your vessel is beyond all praise. Will you please accept and convey to your Officers and ship's Company our very sincere thanks.

Yours faithfully,

Charles May

Ellerman Line's
thank you letter
from the owners
of the City of
Benares

Daily Express announce ment of Benares sinking

More Of A Pal Than Ever
SHERLEY'S
TONIC AND CONDITION POWDERS

BLACKOUT ZERO HOUR TONIGHT UNTIL 6.20 A.M.
MOON RISES AT MOON SETS

THOUGHT FOR FOOD
H.P. SAUCE

Sent to escape the bombers, 89 English children are murdered by a U-boat

CHILDREN'S LINER SUNK WITHOUT WARNING IN GALE

Lord Beaverbrook calls to aircraft workers 'WORK AFTER SIREN HAS SOUNDED'

Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production, last night issued this message:—
I HAVE seen the statements in the Press about some workers in several aircraft factories taking shelter throughout the period of air-raid warnings. I declare that aircraft factories must be prepared to work after the siren has sounded.
It is imperative that there should be a considerable increase in output in the coming week.
For the testing time may come upon us very shortly.
It is the duty of aircraft factories to supply the men on the fighting front with all the aircraft they require.
The men and women of the aircraft industry up and down the country promised that they would fulfil the needs of the Royal Air Force.
That pledge has been made good in the past. We will not fail the pilots in the days to come.

Outrage in Atlantic BOATS SWAMPED BY TERRIFIC SEAS 600 MILES FROM LAND

WITHOUT WARNING A U-BOAT FIRED A TORPEDO AT A LINER STRUGGLING THROUGH A STORM IN THE ATLANTIC LAST TUESDAY NIGHT—AND KILLED EIGHTY-NINE ENGLISH CHILDREN.
Their ship sank in twenty minutes. It was 600 miles from land.
One hundred and two children were in the ship. Ninety of them travelled under the Government evacuation scheme; twelve were sent privately.
All came from bombed areas in London and bombed towns in England; all were on their way to Canada.
Of the total only thirteen are alive, six of them private seavacuees. They were brought back to this country by a British warship which saw their waterlogged and battered lifeboats.

GALE SEASON Japanese attack Indo-China

JAPANESE troops crossed the border from China into French Indo-China last night. They attacked a French block-house, and, according to messages from Indo-China, were met with full resistance from the French.
The Japanese marched in before the twenty-two-hour ultimatum which their generals presented to Admiral Decoux, the French Governor-General, expired at midnight.
The fighting stopped at midnight, but French officials expect the invasion to begin in full force today.
Reports received in New York and other parts of the world, based on the Japanese mission in Indo-China, had given definite orders for the invasion today.
Admiral Decoux, it is stated, has ordered mobilisation, and is determined to resist any threat from land or sea.

FLATS, CINEMA, CHURCH BOMBED

Daily Express Raid Reporters
EARLY today, during London's sixteenth Blitznight, it was reported that a block of flats had been hit by a bomb.
High explosive and incendiary bombs dropped on the eastern outskirts badly damaged an old parish church, a cinema, a dance-hall, and shops.
After a Sunday confined to sneak-bombing by single planes, London's third alert of the day was followed by the most intense night attack the German raiders have made since last Wednesday.
For more than an hour the guns kept the raiders out. Then one, flying high, dropped a salvo of explosives in the south-west.
As one after another raiders sought a way through searchlights and the flak from the barrage guns, salvoes of the darkness, and the almost incessant din of the guns was punctuated by the sound of bombs.
Oil bombs and incendiaries were dropped in many districts, particularly in the east and south-east. Their orange light could be seen in the air.

STOP PRESS

HOUR'S BREAK IN LONDON RAID
There was a break in the London raid, said nearly this morning, but it did not again sound the alarm for an hour.
BERLIN RAIDED AGAIN
Berlin had air raid alarm from 1.45 last night until 2.15 this morning, according to Berlin communication cables Daily Express New York staff reporter.
Three waves of British bombers penetrated the city from Germany through Holland.
INDO-CHINA: FRENCH GIVE IN
SHANGHAI—(See Page Four)
Shanghai's telephone message wires, fighting ceased after agreement between Japanese and French had been signed—Reuter.

R.A.F. BEGIN POLICE PATROL

Daily Express Air Reporter
WHEN in future you hear the deep roar of a low-flying plane at night, remember that it is probably a British fighter. Our fighters are being used in increasing numbers at night to trail and annihilate Goering's civilian-killing bombers.
Picked men with intensive night flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to that of ordinary night bombing pilots.
The type of planes they use are not often seen in the air battles that take place during the day. These night planes, well armed, carry a crew of six, as well as pilot and navigator.
They are able to patrol the whole night through without coming down to refuel, so extensive is their range.
The difficulty was to conceal the take-off and landing of these night fighters, for six or eight had to be in the air to guard the pilots for each other.
Picked men with intensive night flying training have been put on the job. They are exceptional in that they have additional training to that of ordinary night bombing pilots.
The type of planes they use are not

But 3,000 have gone away safely

IT was emphasized last night that despite the seavacuee ship disaster and the menace of the U-boats many thousands of children are being carried overseas safely.
An official of the Children's Overseas Reception Board said: We have transported about 3,000 children in safety to Canada and South Africa since war began. That is quite apart from the many hundreds who have gone to America and other places by private arrangement, outside the Government scheme.
As with the seavacuee ship which was torpedoed late in August on a similar voyage, when the whole company of 300 children was saved unhurt, the precautions taken by the board were on a scale which has made it possible to transport the 3,000 children without a single casualty.
For every fifteen children there was a skilled and experienced escort, in addition to a doctor and nurse. There were frequent boat drills.
The complement of the ship was so calculated that for every child there was one adult passenger on board. The authorities were satisfied that the possibility of a U-boat was more than compensated for by the presence of the escorts.



THREE WHO WERE SAVED: Sonia Beck, barefooted Colin Richardson, and Derrick Beck.

LIFE AFTER THE WAR

Heroic Deeds of the War



MISS MARY CORNISH

The Liner "City of Benares" was crossing the Atlantic to America with 90 little children aboard, evacuees to a land of safety. MISS MARY CORNISH was acting as one of the escort to the children. The Liner was torpedoed. MISS CORNISH took charge of six of the children in a lifeboat, and they were in that open boat for *eight days* before a Flying Boat sighted them 600 miles from land.—Crouched in a corner of the little boat, she told stories to the children, massaged their frozen limbs, and encouraged them to exercises to counteract the bitter cold.—For her inspiring courage, she was honoured with the Medal of the Order of the British Empire (Civil Division).

Postcard of 'Historic deeds of the War' celebrating Miss Mary Cornish



Beth and Bess, London, 1985

Bess, Louis and Beth





The original cast of *Lifeboat* with Beth, who came to see the show in 2005.

What do you think her reaction would have been to seeing the play?



City of Benares children survivors' reunion, 1988

BACK: Antony Quinton (L), John Baker, Beth Williams (Cummings), Colin Ryer-Richardson, Jack Keeley (R)

FRONT: Bess Cummings (Walder) (L), Derek Beck, Sonia Williams (Beck), Barbara Partridge (Beck) (R)