



Food & Drink Festival

Press release

May 2017

Dunkirk spirit sails to Chatham Maritime Food and Drink Festival

When Chatham Maritime Food and Drink Festival returns for the fourth time on 27-29 May, it'll welcome some extra special guests who've earned their place in history.

Joining in the fun will be 15 of the original Dunkirk Little Ships, part of the fleet of boats that responded to the government's plea to set sail and rescue Allied troops stranded on the beaches of Dunkirk during World War Two.

Around 700 private boats set off from Kent to take part in the mass evacuation in 1940, with working vessels like tugs and fishing boats sailing side by side pleasure boats, paddle steamers and yachts.

Now nearly 80 years on, only a third of the Dunkirk Little Ships are still operating which makes those visiting Kent even more special.

From the largest (MTB 102 Motor Torpedo Boat at 68ft), to the smallest (the 29ft 6in motor yacht L'Orage), each boat making her way to Chatham Maritime to be moored close to the festival site in Old Royal Dockyard Basin 1 is a member of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships.

"There's a real connection with the area, as local boats took part in the mission and it's close to Dover and Ramsgate where the ships left from," says Jason Carley from the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships. "Plus, Chatham's a centre for shipping with a important maritime heritage so it makes sense to combine our annual commemorative cruise with this festival."

Each Dunkirk Little Ship has her own story to tell. Jason's own Dunkirk Little Ship is Lady Gay, one of the 15 ships coming to Chatham. She's a river pleasure boat that was built for fun, but ended up carrying out a serious role in the evacuation. Jason's wife's father was

rescued from Dunkirk himself, which is how his family ended up taking on the privilege and obligation of owning a vessel.

“Our boats are maintained by their owners as working and living museums which keep the memory of Dunkirk alive,” continues Jason. “They’re the most visible reminder of what happened in 1940, particularly as we have so few veterans still with us.”

“People recognise the history that accompanies the Dunkirk Little Ships, and we always get a warm and kind reception when we gather.”

Remembering the troops lost during the evacuation - as well as those who were saved - there’ll be a memorial service by the Ship and Trades pub on Sunday 28 May at 11am which members of the public are welcome to attend.

The Dunkirk Little Ship owners will also be on hand to talk to festival visitors about their very special boats.

Dutch barges

As well as these heroic little ships, adding to the spectacle will be 19 Dutch barges of all shapes, ages and sizes from The Barge Association.

“We’re delighted to have been invited to join Chatham Maritime Food and Drink Festival to celebrate the 25th anniversary of The Barge Association,” says Andy Soper, Chairman of The Barge Association. “There’ll be members on shore at the festival, so do come down for a chat and we’ll do our best to answer any questions about barges and this fabulous way of life”,

To make Basin No 1 even more atmospheric, members of Rochester Symphony Orchestra have agreed to play as a string quartet on one of the Dutch barges moored in Old Royal Dockyard Basin 1. There’ll be three free mini concerts lasting 45 minutes on Saturday 27 May.

“The purpose of Chatham Maritime Food and Drink Festival is to celebrate the maritime heritage unique to the River Medway, so it’s fantastic that so many historic and beautiful boats are making their way to join us”, says Vic Hazell from The Event Umbrella, the event organisers.

“We already have two impressive historic tugs moored alongside the festival, including MT Kent, built in 1948 and the first diesel tug on the River Medway.

“Plus, summer 2017 is a special time for local maritime heritage - it’s the 350th anniversary of the Battle of Medway, when the Dutch fleet sailed into the River Medway, set alight much of the British fleet and captured the flagship ‘Royal Charles’. Our extra visitors are the icing on the cake to what already promises to be a busy and fun three-day food and drink festival over the bank holiday weekend.”

“We’d like to thank the local businesses and organisations that make our festival possible: Our Sponsors Chatham Rotary Club, The University of Kent, Countryside Properties, Red Alert and Xambor Watersports. Plus our Festival Friends the Dutch Barge Association, Turfsoil and Thomas Snell Partnership (as well as our official gin and vodka partner, Copper Rivet). We’re also happy to welcome Shepherd Neame as our official beer partner, bringing their Spitfire Lager which was first brewed to mark the Battle of Britain fought in the skies of Kent.”

[ENDS]

MORE INFORMATION

Logos and images of Dunkirk Little Ships are here:

Chatham Maritime Food and Drink Festival

Chatham Maritime Food and Drink Festival is a free-entry event from 10am-6pm each day, 27-29 May.

Chatham Maritime, Chatham, Medway ME4 4QZ.

For more information, email Vic Hazell on vic@theeventumbrella.com

See <http://www.cmtrust.co.uk/content/chatham-maritime-festival.rhtm>

Association of Dunkirk Little Ships

You can find out more about the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships at

<http://www.adls.org.uk/t1/>

Most of the Dunkirk Little Ships will be arriving on Friday 26 May and leaving on Monday 29 May.

Dutch Barge Association

You can find out more about the Dutch Barge Association at <http://www.barges.org/>