

MASSEY SHAW

The Massey Shaw was built by J Samuel Whites of Cowes, Isle of Wight in 1935.

She was built to a design of the London County Council, who wished her to be able to go under all the bridges of the Thames and her tributaries at any state of the tide. The vessel cost the sum of £18,000 to complete and she had an impressive specification. She was named after the first Superintendent of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Captain Eyre Massey Shaw

She was based at Blackfriars pier and was heralded as a great addition to the fire fighting capabilities of the London Fire Brigades River Service, and soon proved her worth.



Within a few months the Massey Shaw demonstrated her full capabilities whilst fighting a large warehouse fire at Colonial Wharf, Wapping. The fire had gained hold of an eight storey warehouse complex and the fire fighting operations were hampered by difficult access. Massey was able to supply a vast jet of water that made a firebreak and allowed the land based crews to regroup and stop the fire spreading. Newspapers at the time credited the Massey Shaw with saving over a million pounds worth of stock, by preventing the fire spreading along the bank to other adjoining warehouses.

The Massey Shaw's finest hour came in May 1940 when she answered a call from the Home Office asking her to take part in Operation Dynamo. The Massey Shaw made three trips to the beaches with her volunteer crew of LFB, AFS and NFS Firemen, rescuing some 500 troops from the beaches and bringing back a further 110 to Ramsgate. (Read more) In addition to this noble work, on her return to London the Massey rescued thirty French merchant seamen when their vessel, the "Emil de Champ", had hit a mine.

On her return to her home port, the Massey Shaw was heavily involved in fire fighting operations during the Blitz. Her fire pumps provided vast amounts of water to quell the large number of fires in the Docks and surrounding areas.



The River Section of the LFB played an important part during the Blitz as the Germans dropped an increasing number of high-explosive and incendiary bombs on the riverside warehouses. The Massey Shaw and her sister ships were involved in supplying water to the hundreds of land based pumps fighting the major fires up and down both sides of the Thames.

To read more visit the Massey Shaw website.

(Photographs courtesy of Yve Benwell)