

*Below is the first chapter of Roy Martin's latest book*

## **The Suffolk Golding Mission, A Considerable Service.**

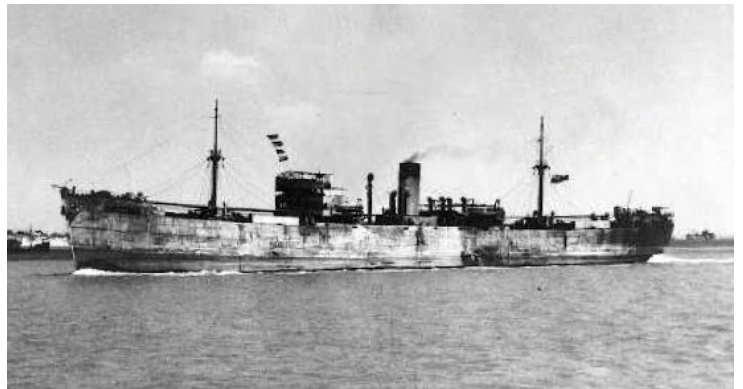
Denholm's tramp steamer *Broompark* arrived in Bordeaux on 13 June with a cargo of Tyne coal. Paris was occupied on the next day. The *Earlspark*, another Denholm ship, had also loaded coal in the Tyne; but was torpedoed and sunk while in convoy with the *Broompark*.

After discharging her cargo the *Broompark's* master was asked if he was willing to embark five hundred refugees. He agreed, even though his ship had only the most basic of amenities. As it was the *Broompark* was only called upon to load just over one hundred passengers, but some brought with them cargo of immeasurable value to British in their forthcoming isolation. The ship sailed from Bordeaux at 0600 19 June 1940, making the trip down the Gironde without a pilot or tugs.

As he took his ship out into the estuary Captain Olaf Paulsen could have been forgiven for reflecting on how the war had changed his fortunes. In 1938 Denholm had made him redundant for grounding one of their ships, though they said that he had decided to retire. Unlikely, as the Merchant Navy pension scheme had only been going from 1 January of that year. He was now in command of their newest ship, with probably the most valuable cargo that they had ever carried. In addition he carried passengers who would have normally only be seen on the first class promenade deck of an ocean liner.

Paulsen had been born in Christiania, now Oslo, in 1878. He had made his home in Scotland and became a British citizen in 1904. His Master's Certificate qualified him to command a British merchant ship; with it he joined the Denholm Line of Glasgow. There he gained a reputation for being exceeding careful with the company's money; it was not easy to stand out in this way in a tramp ship company and a Scots one at that.

In the only photograph the ship already appears to be shabby, with her hull painted with hastily mixed grey paint. She proudly declares her identity by flying her signal letters and the biggest Red Ensign she has. The ensign flies where the gaff would have been on a grander ship, probably because the ensign staff had been taken down as it interfered with the scope of the, newly fitted, stern gun.



The Gironde estuary runs north-west from Bordeaux and Paulsen and his officers would have been well aware that the invading Germans would be likely to arrive first on the northern shore.

Looking down on the decks Paulsen could see that many of the men were already about. They had had to sleep, as best they could, either on the hatches, or in the tween deck, while the women and children slept in cabins vacated by the ship's officers. Most of the men already looked like coal miners emerging after a shift, but in collars and ties.

An almost piratical figure with several days' growth of beard seemed to be the centre of attention. This was 'Wild Jack' Howard or to give him his full title: Charles Henry George Howard, 20th Earl of Suffolk and 13th Earl of Berkshire, BSc (Hons.), F.R.S.E. He was dressed in a grubby greatcoat and walked with the help of a stick. The coat would be taken off as the day warmed up, to reveal a pair of pistols in shoulder holsters and tattoos that only sailors acquired in those days. At seventeen Jack had served for over a year as an apprentice on one of the last of the square rigged sailing ships, only leaving when the windjammer was sold for scrap. Then, after a short spell as an Army officer, Jack signed on a steam ship and migrated to Australia, where he farmed for some years.

The man with him, Major Ardale Vautier Golding, wore the uniform of an officer in the Royal Tank Regiment. Though he had made the same perilous journey across France; Major Golding was shaven and smart. At thirty seven he was three years older than the Earl; he had gained his BSc, in Mechanical Engineering, at the University of London. After graduating he had joined the Army, where his record shows that he was frequently 'specially employed'. Major Golding was in fact a member of Military Intelligence.

With their secretaries, Eileen Beryl Morden and Marguerite Nicolle, they had formed a mission to Paris, only leaving when it became an 'open city' on the 10 June. Now they were supervising the safe stowage of the valuable records they had saved. They had also organised the evacuation of most of the French scientists, many with their families, who were on the *Broompark*.

In declaring Paris to be an 'open city' the French abandoned all efforts to defend it. By doing this they expected the Germans not to attack, but simply march in, which they did. The French excused this as an attempt to protect the historic city and its population.

Two others on the deck were the bulky Lew Kowarski and Hans van Halban. They had brought with them the 187 kilos of heavy water (deuterium oxide) that agents of the French Secret Service had smuggled out of Norway. It had first been sent to the Collège de France laboratory of the French physicist Jean Frédéric Joliot-Curie. When the Germans invaded Joliot-Curie had instructed his

colleagues to get the heavy water to Britain, where they were to continue their work. This consignment of the nuclear moderator was all that existed in the world.

Lew Kowarski was born in St. Petersburg in 1907; his father was the Polish -Jewish businessman Nicholas Kowarski and his mother the Ukrainian singer Olga Vlassenko. When he was 12 years old the Kowarski family fled west and settled in Vilnius (then in Poland). Young Lew was a talented musician, but his fingers grew too large for the piano keyboard. In 1934 he joined Joliot-Curie's group after gaining a degree in Chemical Engineering and a PhD.

Hans von Halban was born in Leipzig in 1908. His father was also of Polish-Jewish descent and his mother's family came from Bohemia. His grandfather, Heinrich Blumenstock, who had been a senior official in the Habsburg Empire, moved from Kraków to Vienna in the 1850s. Hans Halban was educated in Leipzig and Zurich. He joined Joliot-Curie's group in 1937, coming from the Copenhagen laboratory of the nuclear physicist Niels Bohr. Halban and Kowarski both became French citizens.

Also on the deck was a Belgian banker, Paul Timbal. Timbal was the Managing Director of the Banque Diamantaire Anversoise, the Antwerp Diamond Bank. He, and a representative of the Belgian government, had saved two crates of gem diamonds which they had transported first to Brussels and then across France. The diamonds had been deposited with the bank, each merchant having placed them in sealed envelopes. Timbal believed the total value to be between one and three million pounds sterling.

After depositing the diamonds at a bank in the town of Cognac, Timbal had flown to the UK to meet Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, the Chairman of De Beers. There it had been agreed that Timbal would make every effort to bring the diamonds to Britain. The diamonds were stored in a small cabin next to the Master's accommodation, with the deuterium oxide, a sentry guarded the door.

In addition there were thirty three scientists and technicians on board, many with their families.

The ship reached Le Verdon just before noon. There they loaded ammunition for the guns. They also hoped that some of the diamantaires from Royan could be embarked.

As the anchored ships turned with the changing tide the French passenger ship *Mexique* exploded and sank nearby. *Mexique* was there to embark French parliamentarians and take them to the French dependencies in North Africa. The shocked passengers now realised the hazards of the voyage. It was decided that the ship should delay no longer. Timbal said he watched the receding coast with a heavy heart, as he had also promised Oppenheimer that he would bring these diamond cutters to the UK.

The voyage home was relatively uneventful. The Master was as economical with words as he was with everything else; he does not record loading the cargo, or the passengers, but does say in an Official Log entry that with 101 souls on board he decided not to respond to a distress call from a ship with the signal letters ONVJ. This was probably the Belgian *Ville de Namur* ninety miles away. The U-boat commander had suspected that this vessel was a Q-ship, because she had wooden structures on deck. These were stables for some of the nine hundred horses that the vessel had brought from Canada. All drowned, as did a number of the crew, in what must have been a terrible scene.

Morse light signals were seen astern, these were presumed to be from two U-boats who were following a nearby convoy, though they could have been from the convoy escorts. The seas were full of British and Allied merchant ships, who, during the three weeks that followed Dunkirk, evacuated almost a quarter of a million troops and civilians from France. Many of the ships were overloaded. Another open shelter deck tramp ship, the *Alderpool*, carried 3,526 Polish troops and civilians to safety. This ship ran out of food and drinking water. Her Master was one of a number who were awarded the Polish Cross of Valour and an OBE.

On the *Broompark* a raft was built to house both the diamonds and the heavy water; the idea of this 'ark' was that it would float if the ship sank. Timbal says how handy the Earl was, squarely hammering in the longest nails to make the raft. Suffolk and Golding dictated a document to Marguerite Nicolle setting out the precautions that had been taken to ensure the survival of the most precious items. Only a French version is at the National Archives; this may be because French was the common language. Kowarski and, maybe others, could not speak English. The paper was signed by those in charge of the heavy water and the diamonds.

Some have suggested that the wooden structure on the port side deck of the *Broompark*, just forward of the bridge, was the raft. This is unlikely as the photograph was said to have been taken while the ship was in the Gironde, before the raft was built. There is a similar structure on the after deck, which gives rise to a more prosaic explanation – these were temporary lavatories erected ready for the five hundred who had been expected!

The *Broompark* went to action stations after aircraft had attacked the convoy, which was now about thirty miles away (see Chorzow in the chapter Other Rescues). The passengers were herded below into the tween deck. It was safer among the coal dust than on the exposed upper deck, but had the ship been torpedoed most would have drowned. Paul Timbal describes this raid, saying, among many other things:

We were going full steam, straight at the enemy (?), the British flag flying proudly. I will never forget the Captain, a Scotchman, who stood bareheaded on his bridge, quietly smoking a pipe. ... The Captain, leaning against the bridge, continued to smoke his pipe calmly, his bronzed face of an old seaman was lit by the setting sun, towards which we were heading in a straight line.

Kowarski said the Earl was limping around the ship providing the seasick with champagne, which he said was the best treatment for the condition. Though the passengers only had enamel mugs to drink it out of. This intrigued Kowarski who felt that this

action was in keeping with a P. G. Woodhouse character; but Jack Howard was no Bertie Wooster, in need of a Jeeves to keep him on track.

They arrived at Falmouth at 0630 on 21 June. Timbal recalled:

We were in the middle of a bay and in front of us, in the bright sunlight, were green meadows and friendly houses. I couldn't restrain my emotion and almost shouted to my family. "We have arrived in England; our journey is ended!"

I hurried on deck. Everyone was still asleep. Only a few passengers realized that we had arrived safely at our destination. Those who had been in charge of our lives, and had slept very little, were now sleeping, their duty accomplished. We were in a large bay, about half a mile from the coast which spread around us. ....All around us were merchant boats and yachts at anchor. Here, too, I noticed Dutch flags. A few warships, but of light tonnage. The chimneys of two sunken ships reached out of the water. Were these the results of a bombardment? ... I did not know.



**"Bordeaux Refugees at Falmouth" by Charles Ernest Cundall**

The harbour was crowded with ships, on one day there were ninety seven ships in the river Fal. There were liners, like the *Madura*, cargo ships and even Breton fishing vessels. The little boats from Brittany were retracing voyage made by their forebears more than one thousand five hundred years before.

The Suffolk Golding Mission  
A Considerable Service

Roy V Martin

A red rectangular graphic with a white border. At the top, the text "The Suffolk Golding Mission" and "A Considerable Service" is written in white. Below the text is a collage of four images: a black and white portrait of a man with a mustache, a color portrait of a man in a military uniform, a color image of a large ship at sea, and a small black and white portrait of a man. At the bottom of the graphic, the name "Roy V Martin" is written in white.

The above extract appears as a 'Look Inside' preview on the Amazon website where Roy's latest book is available as both a paperback and in Kindle version.

Roy also has a small stock of the paperbacks which he will sell to Cachalots at a fiver per copy. Now there's an incentive to turn up on a Friday lunchtime. You might even get a signed one.

Roy Martin joined the Merchant Navy in 1953, serving his four year apprenticeship on tramp ships, or worldwide traders as the owners preferred to call them. He then spent five years on the Baltic trade, gaining his Masters Certificate in 1962. From 1964 he was Chief Officer/Navigator of Risdon Beazley's recovery vessel Droxford, while there he developed his interest in research.

After gaining further experience he joined the Risdon Beazley management team, where his first job was to get salvage equipment to Brunel's Great Britain in the Falklands. By 1975 he was General Manager of the company, now a subsidiary of the Smit group; who transferred him to manage their Asian company in 1979.

Having built that company into a World class salvor, he left Singapore in 1986 to resume recovery work, with Lyle Craigie-Halkett. They found a Southern Sung wreck (Nan Hai No1) off the Chinese coast and undertook and environmental clean-up of the whaling stations in South Georgia. Again with Lyle Craigie-Halkett he wrote and self-published *Risdon Beazley, Marine Salvor*. He then wrote *Ebb and Flow, Evacuations and Landings by Merchant Ships in World War Two*. This was modified and republished as *Merchantmen in Action, Evacuations and Landings by Merchant Ships in the Second World War*. After finishing *The Suffolk Golding Mission, A Considerable Service*, he intends to resume work on a book about Merchant Ships at D-Day.

Roy's previous contributions to *The Cachalot* include 'Risdon Beazley' in *Cachalot 9*, and 'Voyage of the British Tanker *Hopemount* in 1942' which appeared in *Cachalot 44*.