

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 52

June 2014

Captain's Log

It gave me great pleasure to be invested as Club Captain at the Sea-Pie Supper on the 7th. February. I felt it was an excellent evening much enjoyed by just about everyone in attendance. We had been asked to organise a raffle by the Southampton Ship Owners Association. This proved to be highly successful with over £3000 being raised for the Missions to Seafarers. It was a shame that the heavens opened at the end of the proceedings and some of us got a good soaking especially those amongst us who did not order taxis in advance!

My first duty as Captain was to Chair our first Management Committee meeting. This committee replaces the old Executive and Finance plus the General Committee. The object being to have a leaner, but more efficient, committee in place to run the Club. This first meeting was well attended and a lot of items were discussed.

On the 12th. March I attended the excellent Court Lunch as a guest of the Honourable Company on board HQS Wellington. As a Freeman of the Company it was something of a novelty to attend this function as a guest. Captain John Hughes, the Master, welcomed me on board for this well attended lunch. The guest speaker was Mr Simon Sherrard, the Chairman of Bibby's, and also a former Chairman of the Port of London Authority. We enjoyed an excellent meal with fine wines. It was a pleasure to see fellow Cachalots Doug Gates and Gerry Cartwright there as well.

I was unable to attend the Skittles evening on the 28th. March. Lesley was just out of hospital and was not up to an evening standing around let alone playing skittles! I understand the event was well attended and a good time had by all. Lesley was determined not to miss the Southampton Royal Naval Association dinner on the following evening which we duly attended. We were welcomed by the Chairman Lieutenant Chris Fairgrieve RN. The guest speaker was Captain Robert Bradley RN. I was seated next to Councillor Susan Blatchford, the Sheriff of Southampton. She will be the City's next Mayor and Lesley and I will attend the Mayor Making ceremony in June. An excellent meal was provided by John Davis who is very much our Clubs preferred caterer as well. Again it was good to see some fellow Cachalots at the Dinner. Peter Tambling was actually sat next to one RNAS member, John Gollidge, who is one of my former Scout Masters!

It was a pleasure to be invited to attend the Commodores Cocktail Party at the Royal Air Force Yacht Club on the Hamble on 11th. April. David Le Mare, the current Commodore, welcomed Lesley and I upon our arrival and introduced us to our hosts for the evening, Commander John Evans and his wife Jill. We were well looked after for the whole evening including the Supper afterwards. John is the River Hamble Harbour Master. It was also good to see Gerry and Anne Cartwright at the Party.

On Friday the 4th. April, the gentlemen enjoyed a peaceful lunch time without our ladies! Our dear wives enjoyed a very good meal at the Medbar just around the corner from the Club. This was the first such lunch that they had arranged which went down very well and I understand another is planned for later in the year.

The Clubs first two Curry Lunches have been very well attended at Kuti's. As usual we enjoyed a very good meal at a reasonable price. Southampton playing an early kick off match at home on the 25th. April gave some of us a frustrating, later than planned, arrival at the restaurant.

Ian Odd
Captain, Southampton Master Mariners

And from the Captain's Lady

Ladies Lunch.

On 4th April sixteen ladies from the club enjoyed a very pleasant lunch at the Medbar in Oxford Street.

As the first one was such a success we will be arranging another one on 19th September. All ladies are very welcome.

Last time the price for a two course fixed menu meal was £11.50. That includes a soft drink and tip. We hope to keep the same price. The menu may change, so when we get the new one it will be circulated.

Food order and payment to me at least one week before event please.

I hope we can make it a regular event to let the ladies get to know each other better.

Lesley Odd.

Boatsteerer's Locker

Much has happened since we last "met" and the period of relative tranquillity we entered into after the Sea Pie Supper came to an abrupt halt on April 17th. with the arrival of a email from ABP advising that "due to Engineering Works from November 2014 to April 2015 the City Cruise Terminal will not be available for your Sea Pie Supper"

A hastily-arranged meeting of the Management Committee sent some of us scurrying off in various directions until, finally, we had a meeting with HALO (our SPS Caterers) at St. Mary's Stadium – and our worries were assuaged.

So, the 2015 Sea Pie Supper will now be held in the Mike Channon Suite with facilities which meet all of our requirements – with one exception – THE CAPACITY. Despite the best endeavours of the redoubtable "Becky" from HALO it is doubtful if our new venue will accommodate more than 500, inclusive of VIP's.

The Albion City Band has agreed to reduce the numbers of musicians "without reducing your programme" and the Management Committee is making decisions that will ensure a fair and equitable distribution of tickets for this event. Demand last year was considerably in excess of the 500 figure so, Cachalots ...make a note of the date when tickets come on sale (6th November) and form an orderly queue outside the door!!

HALO were made aware of the discontent relating to the non-availability of jugs of drinking water on the tables and they responded by agreeing to put TWO bottles of water, gratis, on every table. The say that their tap water has "a funny taste".

Under the watchful eye of Paul Leece, plans are well in hand for the Shipping Festival Service on June 12th at 1930 (please be seated by 1915). As the designated Preacher, The Bishop of Winchester, is no longer available we again welcome The Bishop of Southampton who gave us a memorable address last year. Posters, advertising the event, are available in the Club and you are invited to take these for display in your local church, or wherever.

The downstairs meetings, for those who find the stairs "unaccommodating", held on the second Thursday of each month have proved to be popular and there is seldom any lack of lively conversation - and trips down "memory lane".

I am optimistic that my successor, currently lurking in the wings pending his provisional appointment by the Management Committee, will be the Editor of the next "Boatsteerer's Locker" thus permitting me to revert to the more tranquil role of Cachalot –so watch this space.

As ever, I close with my thanks to Richard, Liz, Terry, Paul, and Peter together with the various others whose able assistance ensures that your Club functions smoothly –well, most of the time.

Reg Kelso, Boatsteerer

From the Editor

This edition is dominated by tales of War, firstly as Charlie Chapman's memoirs move into 1914/15 and he is very personally caught up in the horrors of the Gallipoli landings.

Then, on the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings, Roy Martin gives us accounts as reported by those war correspondents who were assigned to cover the Merchant Navy's part in them.

Following this, Roy has kindly allowed me to print the first chapter of his new book, which details the escape from newly occupied France of "Wild Jack" Howard, 20th Earl of Suffolk, and his entourage – complete with a consignment of diamonds and 'heavy water' vital to the war effort - aboard a Denholms tramp ship.

What comes across, in each of these three tales, is the bravery, selflessness and quiet dedication to duty and service shown by those civilian Merchant Navy personnel caught up in events over which they had no control and certainly had never 'signed up' for. A history of which we can be proud.

And finally, to illustrate the danger and horror of it all, comes a sad and shocking story, new to me, revealed by Cachalot David Lee in Lower Saxony.



In previous editor's refrains I have oft threatened, with the dearth of suitable contributions, to bring to you the minutes of committee meetings.

That bridge has now been reached and I cross it with a report, from our early days in 1928, of the first AGM.

You can find it on page 15 and it is not really as bad as it sounds. It is an account of the first 'Hot Pot Supper', which followed the AGM and was reported extensively in the *Southern Daily Echo*.

I say extensively because nothing seems to have been missed out, indeed there is a lot of repetition. No 140 character tweets in those days, I reckon the correspondents must have been paid by the inch. So much so that I can only include a fraction of the full page cutting.

I hope you find it as entertaining as I did but be warned: after a couple of years these reports might get a bit boring.



With this edition comes an update -Issue 2 - of the Programme of Events - 2014, which reflects any changes to the previously published programme.

Terry Clark

Editor

THE SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE



Thursday 12 June 2014

7.15 pm latest for 7.30 pm

Preacher

The Right Rev'd Dr Jonathan Frost

Bishop of Southampton

Southampton Albion Band

Everyone is welcome to attend this
historic service



Coach Outing to Bristol

Thursday 2nd October

A day trip to visit the **ss Great Britain** at Bristol is being organised and a 34 seater coach has been booked.

There will be just one pick-up, 0830 at King's Court, returning around 1900.

The price per head will be **£40**, to include entrance and a guided tour but not lunch.

An early response is requested because if we have to book a larger coach then time will be a factor.



Curry Lunch



The regular crew of about 30 continue to be satisfied with the food and service on offer at Kuti's in Oxford Street but there is always room for more if you would like to join us. We seem to have the place to ourselves most times.

The next Curry Lunch has been booked there on

12th July, 1200 for 1230.

Price held at **£12.50** per head.

Trafalgar Dinner

A Club Supper is to be held
in the Club Room

On

Friday 17th October

With a theme to commemorate
Trafalgar Day.

Past Captain and Boatsteerer Lionel Hall
will give the toast to the Immortal
Memory of
Lord Nelson

Catering will be by John Davis
and you can expect some traditional
fare (no hardtack) at around £27 per
head.

Black Tie

Further details when finalised but
numbers will be limited to **39** on a first
come basis.

A Club Buffet Supper
will be held
in the Club Room

On

Friday 12th September

It is hoped to be able to arrange a
speaker, tba.

1900 for 1930

Catering by John Davis

Price will be **£18** per head
and numbers limited to **40**.

Fifty Years on Salt Water

Episode seven of the memoirs of Leslie (Charlie) Chapman, who served his time in sail, in one trip, and went on to become a Southampton Pilot. Here, he starts his sea service with Union-Castle and becomes involved in the horrors of WW1 at Gallipoli.

Eventually I was sent back to London, and joined the *Comrie Castle* as fourth officer. She was on the Mauritius run, this meant cargo only as far as Durban, then pick up the Mauritius passengers who had been brought out by mail boat. We did have about one hundred and fifty passengers when we left London, but they were of the four legged variety, not two legged. Consisting of pedigree horses, cows and sheep. We carried ten extra hands to look after them. Again I was in my element, with all this farm stock on board, and spent a lot of my off duty time helping with the work. Needless to say we had fresh milk for the voyage.

We struck bad weather in the Bay of Biscay, so had to ease down, as we had the fore deck full of cattle boxes and could not risk taking seas on board. It was here that I received my first set back regarding my position as fourth officer. Normally I was on watch with the chief officer, a fourth was not thought capable or reliable enough to be in charge of a watch, although he had a master's certificate, and must have been in charge of a watch for at least eighteen months to have obtained that.

I had relieved the third officer for breakfast and the captain came on the bridge and found I was in charge. He went off the deep end, and said I should not have relieved the third officer, as we might pick up Cape Finisterre at any time.

I promptly told him that my last job was as master of a full rigged ship, and if I was not capable of taking the bridge of his ship, he had better land me in Las Palmas and send me home. From then onwards there was never any question as to if I was fit and capable of relieving the bridge. In fact I did two round voyages in the ship, with the same captain, covering about six months.

We landed all the cattle at Cape Town, without losing one during the voyage. We then loaded several hundred tons of snoek, a fish found off the Cape. It had been dried, and gave off the most atrocious smell imaginable, so bad that all ventilators were unshipped and covered up. This cargo was bound for Mauritius, and would be on board for some time.

In Durban we picked up passengers for Mauritius and Reunion and, as the first class cabins were directly over the snoek, I feel sure they got their money's worth. Especially in the very hot weather, when we were in port at Lourenço Marques and Beira. Mauritius, I found, was a lovely Island and, as we stayed there two weeks, we had a good opportunity to motor around.

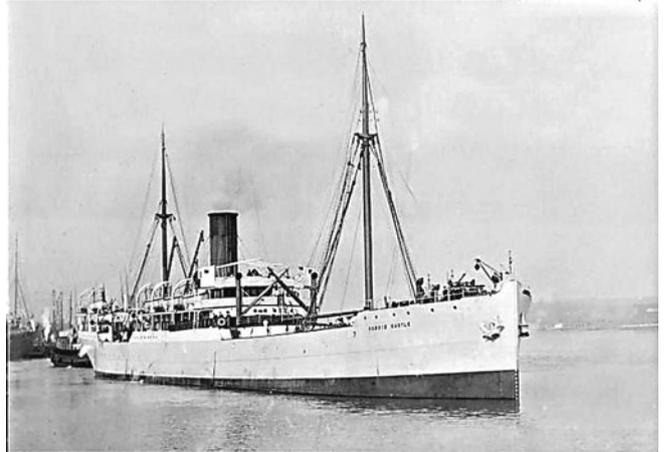
One night I still remember, I came back from Curepipe, high up in the centre of the Island, in a Ford Tin Lizzie, with an Indian driver and the car only had oil lights. There was another car behind us with electric lights, and he kept trying to pass us, but the Indian driver drove as hard as he could, using the other car's lights to show him the way. The road was narrow and on one side, a sheer drop of several hundred feet. We did arrive in Port Louis safely and the Indian had a severe telling off from the driver of the other car, who was the owner of a large sugar plantation. I also taught him a few nautical expressions, which I feel sure he had not heard before.

We loaded several tons of sugar, for our homeward voyage, also embarked our quota of passengers, including the Governor of Mauritius. These were all transferred at Durban to the homeward bound mail boat and life on board seemed very dull after the passengers had left. On the way down the coast the carpenter was taken ill. The doctor diagnosed small-pox, so he was landed in East London and everybody had to be vaccinated. Fortunately no other cases developed, the carpenter recovered and was sent home later.

On our way home, we called at St. Helena and Ascencion, and took on board several very large turtles which had to be sprayed with a hose several times in a day.

After completing another voyage in the *Comrie*, I joined the *Carisbrooke Castle*, which was on the East Coast of Africa run, through the Suez Canal to Durban and back the same way. Well named the "Rolling Carrie" as she had no bilge keels to help stop the rolling, which at times was terrific.

On arrival back in London, the Captain and all five officers were transferred from her, to the new ship *Llandoverly Castle*. We loaded a cargo for all the East Coast ports again, through the Mediterranean Sea, calling at Marseilles to pick up our passengers, who had travelled overland from England. On the way to Mombasa, a girl about twenty years old jumped overboard, from the first class deck. A young man in the third class aft saw her jump and immediately jumped in after her. The ship, which was doing nearly fourteen knots at the time, was turned round at once, as the girl could be seen floating in the water, calling for



The "Comrie Castle", launched in 1903, was torpedoed on March 14th, 1918 in the English Channel off St. Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight, whilst on a voyage from London to New York. Beached on Horse Tail Bank, despite adverse winds and tides, rough seas and other difficulties, she was refloated and beached in a more sheltered position off Netley. From there she was again refloated and towed to Portsmouth where she lay for a year before being repaired and returned to service. In 1924 she was transferred, as the *UMVOLI*, to the Natal Line, run by Bullard & King, a subsidiary of Union Castle. She was eventually scuttled as a blockship off Folkstone in 1940 and broken up on the beach in 1943.

help. A boat was lowered and she was picked up, but unfortunately the young man was not seen again. It was thought that he either hit the propeller, or was taken by a shark. This put a damper on things for a time.

On arrival in Kilindini, the ship was thrown open to all and sundry for inspection, and dances were given on board. One was attended by the Governor of Kenya and his staff. We spent a week in port, during which time the ships officers, in relays, were invited to the Governors residence in Nairobi.

The journey up by rail was very interesting indeed; there were thousands of wild animals visible, at different times, from elephants and lions to giraffes.

On leaving Kilindini for all ports down to Durban, I noted two names on the passenger list. Two young men, and they are both alive at the time I am writing, one was the Earl of Airlee, father of Princess Alexander's husband, and the other was Lord Chesham.

In each port on the way down the ship was open to the public, and a dance given. It was one of the most enjoyable trips I made in passenger ships; as a new ship she was well advertised and patronised.

The officers were entertained at nearly all the ports we called at. I kept in touch with one family in Durban for over forty years, in fact one of the sons was best man at my own son's wedding in Durban thirty five years after the *Llandoverly's* visit.

Having spent a week in Durban, we started on our return voyage, calling at Lourenço Marques and Beira. Fortunately, between these two ports, we did not have the excitement that we had on the previous voyage, on the *Carisbrooke Castle*. Then, we had come across a small Portuguese passenger ship, with distress signals flying and her anchor down, off a deserted coast. We closed her, and found the engine was broken down, and could not be repaired at sea.

She also had on board eight hundred native passengers, who had come from the "Wilds of Africa", to go to the diamond mines.

The Captain of the *Carisbrooke* decided to take the vessel in tow. This was quite an undertaking, as we were not fitted up aft for such a heavy tow. This was when my knowledge of deep sea towing came in handy, which I learned when sailing in the *Iroquois* and *Navahoe* across the Atlantic Ocean. We lowered a lifeboat, and by means of heaving lines and a rope messenger, and resting the bight of our "Insurance Wire" in the boat, we were able to connect up, and after twenty four hours we arrived in Beira. The company put in a salvage claim and, about one year later, I received my share, which amounted to £4.7.11d. This was not even enough to replace the white uniform I ruined while connecting up the tow. I noticed the Chef received £8, and I don't suppose he even knew we were towing another ship. Apparently the method of distributing the salvage money was governed by the rate of pay of each crew member.

After calling at fourteen ports on our homeward journey, the *Llandoverly* eventually arrived in London, after a very interesting and exciting voyage on a new ship. Little did I think that four years later I would be an officer in the same ship and see her plunge to her watery grave, after being torpedoed by a German submarine, but more about that later.

After my leave I was transferred to the *Balmoral Castle*, the flagship of the Company. She was on the mail service, running between Southampton and Durban, via the Cape Coast ports. The round voyage took seven weeks, with a stay of one week in Durban and nineteen days in a home port. This was really enjoying sea life but, unfortunately, this came to an end very quickly.

The *Balmoral* was about to sail from Southampton, on my second voyage in her, when there were war clouds gathering on the horizon. It was decided that she should sail for the Cape, calling at Madeira. The third day out, war was declared and we received instructions to proceed on our voyage, not to use navigation lights and all port holes had to be covered with dead lights, as there were German cruisers around in the South Atlantic Ocean. Fortunately we did not meet one, and arrived in Cape Town safely.

We received orders to discharge all our cargo and mails at Cape Town, instead of going up the Coast, and to prepare the ship to load troops for England. There were five other Union Castle ships in Cape Town at the time, all making the same preparations, and when all was ready we embarked our troops. They were the "Tenth Hussars" and, to my surprise, the two before mentioned gentlemen, The Earl of Airlee and Lord Chesham came with them, as they were subalterns in the regiment.

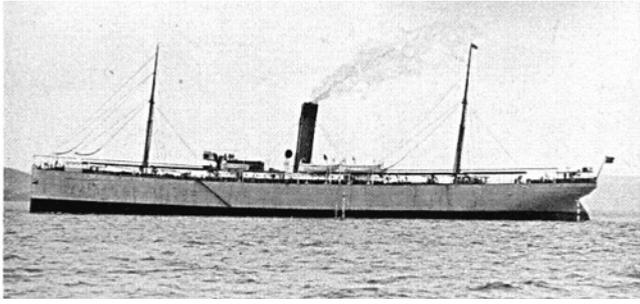
When all the ships were loaded, we were informed that we were to sail in convoy on our journey home, being escorted by two light cruisers from the Cape station part of the way, and they would be relieved later.

On sailing, we formed up in two lines, each vessel to keep station two cables behind the one ahead. This was a new experience for all the ships officers and, I believe, the first convoy consisting of merchant service steamers. It was a bit of a strain at first, during the night watches, as navigation lights were not allowed, and all ships were in darkness. Our captains were all fairly elderly men, and not used to navigating at close quarters, so it was quite a strain on them also.

It certainly was a rare sight to see six Union Castle liners, all painted in the company's colours, being escorted in one convoy.

Unfortunately the slowest vessel could only do eleven knots so we had a long journey in front of us, our usual speed being fifteen and a half knots.

We eventually arrived in Southampton and discharged our troops having met no untoward incident during the voyage. Owing to several officers being in the Royal Naval Reserve, promotion was swift, as these men were called up at once. I was appointed as third officer on the *Alnwick Castle*, which was being fitted out as a troopship in Plymouth. When this was completed we sailed for Southampton. It was blowing hard when we got into the Channel, and in swinging the accident boat out, the bosun fell overboard. The ship was quickly put round and, in spite of the wind and approaching darkness, we recovered him, but unfortunately he was dead, as the water was very cold, it being December.



The First Union-Castle Passenger Ship Lost during the War
ALNWICK CASTLE
Torpedoed March 1917

Built in 1901 as a cargo/passenger ship, she did not have the lines that we nowadays associate with passenger/troopships. She had sailed from Plymouth on March 17th 1917, Captain Benjamin Chave (later Sir Benjamin Chave KBE, and Captain of this club in 1935) in command.

A day out from England the *Alnwick Castle* picked up 25 survivors from the *Trevoise*, which had just been sunk by a submarine. Before daylight next morning, at 6.10 a.m., the *Alnwick Castle* herself was torpedoed without warning and within half an hour she had gone to the bottom of the sea.

Everyone on board was safely got off in the lifeboats, six in number, which were now cast adrift more than 300 miles from the nearest land. Within a short time the boats were separated, and were lost to sight one from another.

In the Chief Officer's boat there were 31 souls, including the one lady passenger of the *Alnwick Castle*, her baby, and the ship's stewardess. For over a week these people were tossed about in the open sea. Their experiences were horrible. The Atlantic was at its stormiest and the weather was bitter; water gave out; men went raving mad; one man jumped overboard; every day someone died of exposure. On Monday, March 26th, the coast of Spain was sighted. By this time ten of those in the boat had perished as a result of their privations and the remainder were so weak that they were unable to pull towards the shore. It was only the following day that their misery was ended, for Spanish fishermen noticing their signals, put out to sea and brought them to the small fishing village of Carino, near Cape Ortegal. There the villagers headed by the priest met them and took them to various cottages. in the neighbourhood where they were kindly looked after by the fisherfolk. Later they were taken to hospital at Ferrol, from where they ultimately returned to England.

Those in the Captain's boat, too, suffered terribly. There were similar tales of death from privation, thirst, frostbite, and exposure. On the fifth day after the disaster, early on Friday afternoon, March 23rd, the survivors in this boat were picked up by a French steamer, the *Fabre Liner Venezia*. They were so weak that they could not climb up the side of the rescuing vessel and had to be hoisted up in slings. In the lifeboat four bodies were left behind. It was impossible for the *Venezia* to wait for those also to be taken on board and given burial, for delay was dangerous in those waters where, any moment, another submarine might appear.

Weeks later a muster was taken of the survivors of the *Alnwick Castle*, and it was found that 40 of those originally on board had perished. Of the lifeboats two were never seen or heard of again.

From Ships of South Africa by Marischall Murray.

The Captain decided to bury him at sea, although we were due in Southampton in the morning. He thought it far better to do this, than land a corpse on a young widow on Christmas Day, also saving her all the expense of a funeral.

We eventually proceeded to Avonmouth, to load troops. We embarked the Deal Battalion of the Royal Naval Division, and sailed under sealed orders. After calling at Gibraltar, we proceeded into the Mediterranean, eventually landing up at Mudros in the Island of Lemnos. We then realized that the troops were to do training for a landing on the Gallipoli Peninsular. We had a lot of practice landing troops in the ships lifeboats, on different types of beaches, and re-embarking. We moved around to several Islands in the Aegean Sea, and made practice landings. Then the great day came, the *Alnwick Castle* was ordered into the Gulf of Xeros, near the Bulair Lines. At dusk we lowered lifeboats, and filled them with troops, firing several rockets, to attract the attention of the Turks. Several other ships were doing the same thing, and after dark we embarked all the troops again, as this was only a bluff landing to attract the Turks from the Peninsular.

We then hurried down to prepare for the landing at Gaba Tepe, a thing I will remember for the rest of my life. At a given signal when the time had arrived, the landing started to take place, this has been described several times by more able pens than mine, so I will only relate my own experiences during this landing. The troops embarked into ships lifeboats, of which we had six. The second officer was in charge of three and I was in charge of the other three and we had two able seamen in each boat. A destroyer took us in tow, and proceeded to the beach, where all hell had already been let loose. Guns and rifles were being fired from the cliff tops, causing a ring of shells and bullets, some little distance from the beach. The water was getting shallow before we reached this place, so the destroyer cast us off, and we were taken in tow by picket boats in charge of midshipmen, mere lads in their teens, but I thought at the time, they were the bravest boys I had ever seen.

We had quite a few men hit and killed, going through this ring of fire, and more when they were caught up on the barbed wire entanglements. The picket boats had to let go, when we got amongst the wires, so as not to foul their propellers, and the boats were pushed the rest of the way, by using the oars.

After passing the ring of fire, things were a bit quieter, as we were under the shelter of the cliffs, so the guns could not get such a good bearing on the troops. The second officer and myself were very lucky, we managed to reach the beach without being hit. Now came the problem of getting back to the ship for another load and with some dead men in the boat we thought it best to cover up the wounded with the dead bodies, then push the

boats out to the picket boats again. As soon as the boats were fast, we crawled under bodies, till we had passed the ring of fire. On arriving back, we filled up the boats again, and I must admit I didn't like the idea of going through it all again, but it had to be done. Fortunately, the firing at the boats was very much less when we made our second run, as the Turks were then concentrating their fire on the troops who had already landed, and were climbing the cliffs. Heavy gunfire could be heard from our battleships, who were covering the landing at Cape Helles, where the French were also making a landing. On my return to the ship still unscathed the second time, I was more than thankful that all troops had been landed.

During the day things were in reverse, to a certain extent. We were quickly turned into a temporary hospital ship, several wounded were brought from the shore, to be cared for, we did our best to look after them and bandage them as well as we could by tearing up bed sheets. During the day a doctor and some medical orderlies arrived from somewhere, and started to dress the wounds properly, later a few more staff arrived, and started operating on the badly wounded men, including several Turks who were among the patients. After taking on board a considerable number of men, we were ordered to proceed to Alexandria in Egypt. Unfortunately we buried several men on our way there. As is well known the casualties were very heavy in the first few days.

Having landed the wounded in Alexandria, we embarked a Scottish Regiment and returned to Gallipoli. The night before landing a party was given, and I well remember, a very young subaltern dancing the Highland Fling on a dining table, in his kilt, so full of life. We were all very sad, when we heard three days later, that he had been killed. We also disembarked these men at Gaba Tepe.

While we were at anchor, a single German plane flew over, then three shells came over, having been fired by the German cruiser *Goeben* which was lying the other side of the peninsular. The second shell landed in the hold of the collier, and because of the coal did very little damage.

The third shell landed close to us. We quickly hove up anchor and moved further away. I consider this was very good shooting as the *Goeben* was quite a few miles away and could not see the target. That was the only plane I saw during our stay in the Dardanelles. About three weeks after the first landing, we had orders to stand in close to Gaba Tepe, and embark a battalion of men. This was done at night time, and sparks could be seen where stray bullets from the shore were hitting the steel sides of the ship, several bullets coming on board. This was when I had a very lucky escape; we had just anchored and I was still on the bridge, taking anchor bearings for the captain, when a bullet passed through my hat, grazing my forehead. I was not really hurt, but stunned for a little while, and thankful that I had got off so lightly. Next morning at daylight, the captain saw a bullet embedded in the deck close to the compass which I had been using at the time. He dug it out with his knife, handed it to me and said, "give this to your girl friend when you get home, as you were very lucky with a near miss." I still have the bullet, with several other war time souvenirs. I wore it round my neck as a charm for a considerable time.

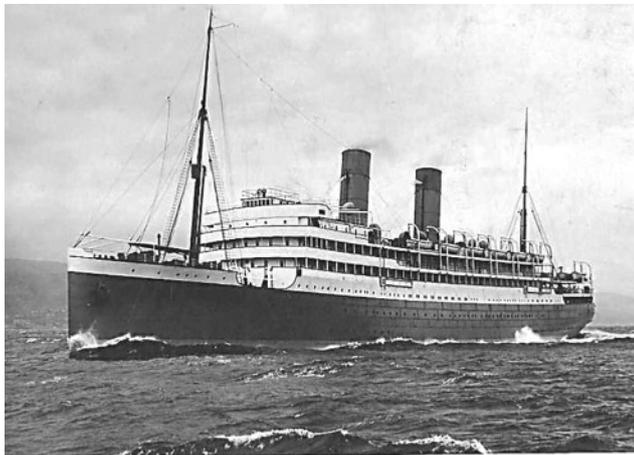
Soon after anchoring, two trawlers came alongside, full of troops. Imagine our surprise on embarking them, to find they were the same body of men we had landed in the original landing. But, sad to say, several of the familiar faces amongst the officers were missing. We felt very sad about this, as they had been shipmates with us for nearly three months, and were very friendly.

After embarkation, we proceeded down the peninsular to Cape Helles, where they were landed again, after having their first good nights sleep and rest for three weeks, also a very good meal.

It was soon after this that an occasional German submarine was reported to be in the area. So empty transports were ordered back to Mudros Bay, really a splendid safe place to be, as a boom had been stretched across the entrance since our last visit there.

On our next assignment, we were ordered to do some more transferring of troops at the Dardanelles. A new light buoy had been placed near the entrance and the captain asked the second officer, who was responsible for the charts, which side of the buoy we had to pass. Unfortunately he told him the wrong side, and we ended up with our stern on the beach. We tried all night to get refloated, but did not manage to get off till daybreak. We then continued on our mission, but found we were too late and returned to base. Subsequently, the *Alnwick Castle* did various trooping trips from Alexandria to Salonika and Mudros. We left Alexandria full of troops in early August and another ship, called the *Royal Edward*, was loading at the same time. Two days out, she caught up with us and at 8.30 a.m. on Friday the 13th August she was on our starboard beam, about three miles off, when we heard a very loud explosion. She had been torpedoed by a German submarine and started to sink quickly. Our captain did not know what to do for the best. At one time he thought he would go to the rescue, drop all our lifeboats and get away as fast as possible. But as we had a thousand troops on board ourselves, we would just be a sitting duck. So we proceeded on our way, with all the speed we could make, having sent out distress signals on our wireless. The loss of life was terrible, I think 1011 men were lost. This was a terrible tragedy as she was the first troopship to be sunk in the war. She had details of many regiments on board, including the Norfolk Regiment. When I arrived home, a month later, I learned that several of the men lost had come from my own village and those surrounding us.

The *Alnwick* eventually sailed for England, empty, and fortunately we arrived in London safely. In the meantime I had put in for leave to get married and, this accomplished, we spent a honeymoon on the Norfolk Broads. *to be continued*



R.M.S. ROYAL EDWARD.

Launched in 1907 the *Royal Edward* was requisitioned as a troopship from her owners, the Canadian Northern SS Co, at the beginning of the war.

On 28 July 1915, *Royal Edward* embarked 1,367 officers and men at Avonmouth. The majority were reinforcements for the British 29th Infantry Division, but also included were members of the Royal Army Medical Corps. All of the men were destined for Gallipoli. *Royal Edward* was reported off the Lizard on the evening of the 28th, and had arrived at Alexandria on 10 August, a day after sister ship *Royal George* which had departed from Devonport. *Royal Edward* departed Alexandria for the harbour of Mudros on the island of Lemnos, a staging point for the ships in the Dardanelles.

On the morning of 13 August, *Royal Edward* passed the British hospital ship *Soudan*, which was headed in the opposite direction. Oberleutnant zur See Heino von Heimburg on the German submarine UB-14 was off the island of Kandeloussa and saw both ships. Von Heimburg, seeing the properly identified hospital ship, allowed *Soudan* to pass unmolested, but soon focused his attention on the unescorted *Royal Edward* some 6 nautical miles (11 km) off Kandeloussa. Von Heimburg launched one of UB-14's two torpedoes from a about a mile (2 km) away and hit *Royal Edward* in the stern. The ship sank by the stern within six minutes.

Royal Edward's crew was able to get off an SOS before losing power. *Soudan*, after making a 180° turn, arrived on the scene at 10:00 and was able to rescue 440 men over the next six hours. Two French destroyers and some trawlers that responded were able to rescue another 221. According to authors James Wise and Scott Baron, *Royal Edward's* death toll was 935 and was as high as it was, they contend, because *Royal Edward* had just completed a boat drill and the majority of the men were below decks re-stowing their equipment. Some other sources report different numbers of casualties, ranging from 132 on the low end, to 1,386, or 1,865 on the upper end.

Moving from one World War to the next, Cachalot and author/maritime researcher Roy Martin brings us, on the 70 th anniversary of the D-Day landings, these accounts of the Merchant Navy's involvement in them, and

How the Press saw it

A number of newspaper correspondents joined the merchant ships for the Normandy landings; this was probably the only time in any war that the Merchant Navy had its own correspondents. The Ministry of Information hand-out that they were given said that there were 1,000 merchant ships manned by 50,000 men, all volunteers.

Though the figures have obviously been rounded, there were over 850 merchant ships from Europe, mostly British; and another 200 or so from the USA. In addition some of the requisitioned ships still had part MN crews. The merchantmen all signed 'V' articles, which required them to transfer between ships as needed, or work ashore. Their bonus was 200 cigarettes per week – valuable currency!

The first of the merchant ships were at their lowering positions off all five beaches at dawn on D-Day. There were 72 of these LSIs (Landing Ship Infantry), half of them manned by the British Merchant Navy. The Royal Navy and the American forces provided the other half between them.

Edmund Townshend, the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, was given blue battledress, with a war correspondent's shoulder tabs and a big MN badge on the chest. 'I don't envy you, old man,' said the news editor. On D-Day he sailed from the Thames aboard the British Liberty *Sampep*.

Townshend was a very experienced war correspondent, but when he returned on Sunday 11 June he wrote:

Just back in port from the most dramatic and exhilarating voyage of my life, in my eight days afloat as one of the first war correspondents accredited to the Merchant Navy I have been given an insight into the comradeship, courage and unfailing good humour of this brotherhood of the sea. I shared with them the hazards of war.

On the morning of D-Day in the Strait of Dover, he watched the ship astern (*Sambut*) take a direct hit, 130 troops and six crew members lost their lives. Later, in another ship, which was loaded with 800 tons of high-explosive ammunition, the chief officer observed: 'One enemy shell into this lot and you won't know where to look for your typewriter.' *Sampep* carried six hundred troops, as did most of the Liberties:

More than 30 different units of all three services were represented among the men we took to France. All were supremely confident ... Hard-bitten desert fighters from the Eighth Army and Dunkirk survivors.

He concluded:

Britain's Merchant Navy is living to-day its proudest hour. At last the chance has come for the men of the merchant ships to hit back. To-day the men are loading up again with fresh supplies of war material for their shuttle service to the armies in the field.

Peter Duffield, the *'Evening Standard Merchant Navy Reporter'* joined what may have been the trooper *Neuralia* in the London Docks.

On 7 June *The Times 'Special Correspondent with the Merchant Navy'* wrote:

MERCHANT NAVY'S PART IN CHANNEL CROSSING COMPLEXITY OF PREPARATION AND LOADING

Proudly prominent among the banners borne by the armada of liberation was the Red Ensign of the Merchant Navy, whose high duty it was to carry the allied fighting men and their machines to the last decisive battle-fronts. In doing so the Merchant Navy has redeemed a promise made as its ships cast off from Dunkirk and Narvik, Greece and Crete. ... With our own Merchant Navy went the merchant ships and seamen of our allies.

This civilian non-combatant service has had a glorious and costly acquaintance with all the hottest sectors in this world-wide war. It has shared set backs and triumphs.



Empire Lance was one of a class of thirteen infantry landing ships, based on C1 Victory ships, built in the USA for the Ministry of War Transport. They were managed by liner companies.

Purpose built, their histories over a short period were as complicated as their designations. For instance: this type C-1-S-AY1 LSI(L) was laid down in Wilmington as the *Cape Pine* and completed as *Empire Lance* in 1943. In 1945 she became *HMS Hugo* but in the same year reverted back to the MoWT and *Empire Lance*. Returned to the US Maritime Commission in 1949 as the *Cape Pine*, she was finally scrapped in Baltimore in 1966 as the *Imperial Lance*.

The balance of the MN and RN LSIs were mostly railway and other packets modified to carry LCAs.

He goes on to describe 'Previous Offensives', continuing:

It was then that the Merchant Navy made its long-looked-for return to Europe; it carried the soldiers to Sicily and later to Italy. Now it has carried them to Hitler's 'western fortress.'

Years of planning and preparation, invention, and work preceded the sailing of this host of merchant ships. with ships specially designed for this greatest amphibious operation of all. These last ships were designed in the Sea Transport Division of the Ministry of War Transport and built in California. (*he refers to a class of thirteen of the Infantry Landing Ships, like the "Empire Lance".*)

Besides special ships, special equipment had to be invented, such as the davits holding tiers of landing craft in the big troop-carrying ships. Hundreds of ships had to be specially fitted for the job. And then, before the Sea Transport Division of the Ministry of War Transport could go ahead with its master plan, details of all the ships to be engaged – the position of obstructions, space between decks, and so on – had to be collected and listed.

The loading plans of all the ships were prepared at a secret war-room in London: at the ports ship's officers cooperated and made improvements where possible. The technical men in the Ministry of War Transport and the Movements Directorate – many of them normally with well-known shipping lines.

He goes on to describe tactical loading at some length and then writes several paragraphs about the part played by the coasters; 'V' articles and the 26,000 lives so far lost while serving on ships of the British Merchant Navy.

On a coaster *The Daily Mirror* man John Hogan wrote on 7 June 1944:

GREAT ARMADA STRETCHED OVER THE HORIZON

The guns have finally been checked, and the ship's clocks on board synchronised. Everything is now ready for the signal to hoist anchor and sail with our cargo of men, ammunition, petrol and mines.

Months of preparations have ended. Invasion talk, gossip and speculation are no more. Zero hour has come. For twenty four hours we have known that we will sail soon.

Imagine the biggest lake you know plastered with autumn leaves and you have a picture of what I can see from the salt sprayed bridge of our ship. Everywhere on the sea are steel ships. You can't get away from them, can't look anywhere without seeing long lines of troop ships, supply vessels, assault craft and warships – stretching away to faint blobs on the horizon.

Hundreds of ships ride at anchor in our convoy. Big ones that carried passengers, small ones that used to be grimed with coal dust, and strange ones that will race to the beachheads loaded with Commandos, tanks, bulldozers. I sailed for hours and still had miles to go before the leading vessel of this gigantic convoy came up within sight.

Today has been just another day on board this coaster, if you overlook the dozens of soldiers who swarm over the decks and live in a huge canvas tent slung on deck. Brown tents are to be seen everywhere. Sleek warships are alongside us, and mine-sweepers stretch out on the port side.

He goes on to talk about two members of the crew and their experiences evacuating troops from Dunkirk. Then on 12 June he wrote:

The men I sailed with to a Normandy beachhead are back in port again – enjoying a brief spell of shore leave before weighing anchor once more – washed and shaved for the first time in a week. In the little town where we celebrated our return and toasted the boys we left on the sandy beach, no one noticed the Merchant Navy men ... the men who worked in flannels and vests under dive-bombing attacks and snipers' bullets.

They drank their beer unheeded in a bar crowded with civilians who talked of only one thing – the invasion. And when the evening ended they returned to their ship – to find her already loaded with hundreds of tons of bombs, shells and ammunition and awaiting orders to sail.

This is the life of the Merchant Navy in this huge Combined Operation. Protected only by light anti-aircraft guns, they are the most cheerful crowd in danger. They up their tin hats and swear steadily at the *Me 109s* and *Ju 88s*, and then grin as the bombs explode harmlessly in the 'suds' (?). That happened twenty five times one night while I was with them, and in the morning they had forgotten that ordeal to the extent that they never mentioned it. Such coolness is typical of the Merchant Navy.

On the way over, in between the watches they played Nine-Card brag on the mess-room table, oblivious to the roar of fighters and bombers above. Only when the kitty of 25s (*Shillings*) – won by the Major who landed on the beach next morning – was cleared did they think of the picnic ahead. And then, when we did drop anchor among the dozens of other vessels, they were disappointed by the lack of 'excitement.'

While we lay offshore a big landing-barge passed us, packed with about two to three hundred squatting Germans, including three generals with their suitcases already packed. On the beach French women were helping with the wounded. They had put on white frocks with red crosses. Two newcomers joined us during that first afternoon – two glider-pilots who obeyed orders to return to the beach immediately after landing.

He noted that the youngest member of the ship's crew was seventeen year old Charlie Brooker, who had hitch-hiked from Barnsley to Hull with only (5?) shillings in his pocket, and had a 'rare do' explaining things to his mother. Charlie joined the Merchant Navy just in time for D-Day. ...

Now the men I lived with for a week – eating, sleeping and bomb-ducking on hundreds of tons of petrol and ammunition – are sailing for the beachhead again, with their neat pin-stripped suits with the silver M.N. badges stowed away. They are wearing their patched flannels again – the battle dress of the Merchant Navy.

On 12 June there is a piece written by a correspondent describing what Fred Skinner, a Daily Sketch photographer, had told him of his trip on 'the first ammunition ship to reach the beachhead':

'AMMO' SHIP TAKES HER OWN DOCKERS

There were 18 coasters in our party. We had a load of 5,000 (?) tons of ammunition. The normal crew was nine, but we had 80 people on board, including 65 dockers, average age 35, some over 50. Tents were erected for them on the hatches, but the men took them down and went to sleep on the ammunition with cases of T.N.T. as pillows.

The sea was so rough that it looked as though the ammunition couldn't be landed. Then a call came through from the gun post 'unless we get that ammo this might be another Dunkirk. You should have seen those dockers rip into it. They worked for 30 hours with only one hours break and got all the stuff ashore.

The aft gunner shot down an F.W. 109 fighter-bomber, but Tom Humpreys, the master, would not allow the ship to claim it. 'You'll get me into trouble' he stormed ' opening fire before the Navy has its crack.'

...after a bomb dropped near the ship and doused all the lights. The men, who were playing cards below, scrambled on deck to find out what was up. After the lights were got going again it was discovered that someone had swiped the 'kitty.'

They reckoned that this was the nearest they came to 'a real set-to.'



Imperial War Museum A 24363.

Many of the coasters were beached and discharged by DUKWs at low water and Rhino ferries when the tide came in. These three sitting ducks were US built N3 'Jeeps' under the Red Ensign.

In *The Daily Sketch* on 7 June 1944, C W Kingdon wrote:

The vast panorama of ships which fills the roadsteads here – one of our finest natural harbours – knocks the most impressive peacetime Naval Review into a cocked hat. I have seen something of the supremely important part that the Merchant Navy is going to play, and particularly that of the coasting craft which will be among the first to follow the assault troops to the invasion beaches.

Three of the first ships I saw were all well known peace-time packets, now packed with troops and carrying “ducks” slung from the davits.

Altogether there are well over 4,000 ships of all kinds ... (*including*) troop ships with two rows of “ducks” slung one above the other on the same set of davits.

We have our sailing orders and time and shall soon be off in company with a host of similar craft and protecting warships to another part of the roadstead to pick up half-a-hundred troops who will camp on the fore hatch.

The ship's holds are packed with a general cargo of food, stores and spares for the troops, aircraft and fire services. There are hundreds of bicycles and also a prime selection of beer, rum, chocolates and tobacco.

In the same paper A D Divine, who may have been the one who was said to have been on the merchant LSI *Empire Spearhead*, wrote on 8 June:

But in a measure the journey home has made a deeper impression on my mind even than the hard moments of the landing....At two o'clock we turned into the swept channel that led to England. By that time there must have been a hundred of us L.S.Is of one type and another and now coming up astern of us, faster than ourselves, the personnel ships began.

He goes on to list some of the liners and flags he has seen, then:

As one convoy passed us we could see the leading ships of the next coming over the horizon. The sheer size of it all was almost too great for the eye, too heavy for the imagination. There has never been anything like this in history: there are not words enough to describe its complexity, not adjectives enough to summon up for those who were not there its staggering immensity.

Another cutting, this time from *The Daily Mail*, says:

TUG JOINED INVASION BY ACCIDENT

WITH THE ALLIED INVASION FORCES, FRIDAY.

Nobody planned it that way, but the tiny British tug was sent to France on D-day and was the only one there – a dirty, gunless little harbour ragamuffin amid the fleet of invasion giants.

On the eve of the assault, a landing craft loaded with ammunition had engine trouble just outside the harbour. H.M. (*sic*) tug *Empire Folk* was sent out to help. The skipper Arthur Hall, 41-years-old north-country-man, had no idea the invasion was on when he got the call on Monday night (5 June).

He pulled alongside the helpless vessel and said: “we are going to take you back to port.” back came the reply “You are going to take us to France.” ... Hall thought his leg was being pulled. “But pretty soon,” he said “the cruiser *Scylla* pulled up and Admiral Sir Philip Vian told us to take the L.C.T. in tow and head for France.”

“The commanding officer of the landing craft had to come aboard, because we didn't know the way through the mine-swept channels.” “We didn't know it was an ammunition ship, either, until he came aboard.” “No,” put in the first mate Francis West, “If we had, we would have given her a longer tow-line.”- *A.P.*

With the help of contacts on the WW2 Talk Forum and elsewhere, the story has been pieced together. The *LCT 413* suffered engine failure off the Nab tower and was towed to Normandy by the MOWT tug *Empire Folk*.

Empire Folk was one of several tugs and salvage vessels stationed off Spithead and other assembly areas off the south coast. This small ship had been built in Doncaster in 1942, as a river and estuary tug. She was less than one hundred feet long and her beam was restricted by the width of the lock between the shipyard and the river, making her less suitable for sea work. Two of her sisters also made it to France, one arriving on 8 June and the other on the 10th.

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

The Suffolk Golding Mission, A Considerable Service.

Escape

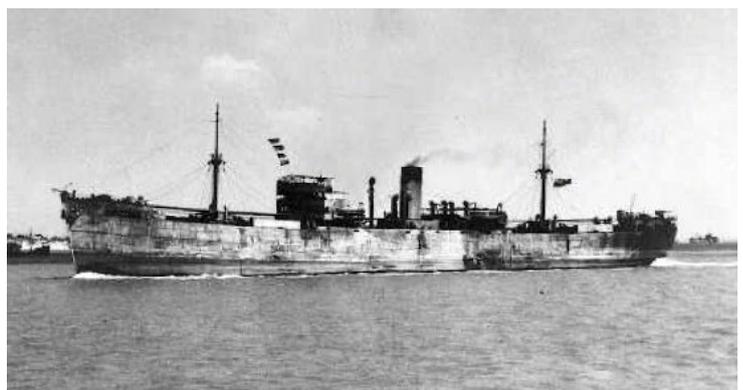
Denholm's tramp steamer *Broompark* arrived in Bordeaux on 13 June with a cargo of Tyne coal. Paris was occupied on the next day. The *Earlspark*, another Denholm ship, had also loaded coal in the Tyne; but was torpedoed and sunk while in convoy with the *Broompark*.

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.



Imperial War Museum

"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

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*.

A Sailors lot is not always a happy one.

Having retired from the MCA, I am now living in Dorfmark in Lower Saxony where my wife is working as a Psychologist with the British Army. The town is in the Lüneburg Heath area where Monty took the surrender of Northern German forces.

The countryside is beautiful and is frequented by many during the summer holidays. Wild boar and deer are plentiful and thrive on the vast NATO training areas.

There are plenty of pretty villages to visit however there are ghosts of the past. During WWII there were plenty of POW camps and in nearby Bad Fallingb. the camp for displaced POWs (Russians etc) did not close until 1958.

The other day I was driving to Honer Garrison which is situated in Bergen Belsen. On the road from Soltau is Becklingen War Cemetery. The grave stones are facing the point on Lüneburg Heath where the surrender was taken on the 4th May 1945.

Apart from the graves of pilots and aircrew, most of the young men lost their lives in the closing stages of the war. I was surprised to find the graves of sailors most of whom died in the last few weeks of the war. What were they doing in Germany so close to the point of surrender?

The grave of Commander B. G. Scurfield DSO, OBE, AM, RN stood out and a small card left by pupils of Charterhouse School revealed all. Cdr Scurfield was taken prisoner after being rescued in 1941. He had charged his ship, HMS Bedouin at the Italian fleet in June 1942 and his ship was lost during the battle.

Nearby there is a cluster on Merchant Navy graves. Chief Engineers, Chief Officers, Radio Officers, Stewards, Firemen/Trimmers and other ratings. These all appeared to have died either on the same day or around the time of Cdr Scurfield.

Unlike the young men of the Army and RAF, they were older men with a number in their late 40s. The names of their ships are fascinating as were the titles of the ratings with many trades not heard of today.

The small laminated card placed on the grave revealed a sad and shocking story.



Commander Scurfield had been moved from Italian POW camps to Germany and joined the other sailors imprisoned in the nearby camp. After spending so much of the war in captivity, imagine their relief when the camp was liberated by the Guards Division. Soon they were marched out of the camp towards the friendly British lines. Many if not all of the Merchant Navy prisoners would have been off pay from the moment they lost their ships and would be desperate to see their relatives after so much time in captivity.

As the column marched towards the British forces, there must have been much confusion in the area. Belsen camp was being liberated and my late father recalled how the Germans were fleeing in every direction for fear of capture by the Russians.

In the midst of all this, the RAF mistakenly thought the column heading towards the British lines was German forces. The date on the headstones of the accompanying Guards and the column of POW tells how devastating the strafing was.

The date was the 11th April, just 23 days before the surrender.

So close to freedom.

David Lee



Rope Ends

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1928.

MASTER MARINERS' CLUB.

Sea Shanties Sung at Hot Pot Supper.

THE wholehearted singing of old sea shanties, so intimately and appropriately associated with the picturesque days of sail, was a feature of the first annual hot pot supper of the Southampton Master Mariners' Club ("The Cachalots"), which was held at the South-Western Hotel last night. The function was a striking success, and was attended by a company of 160, embracing the principal officials of Dockland and the managers of the leading shipping lines and agencies in the port. Capt. J. King, O.B.E., R.D., R.N.R., the "Captain," of the Club, presided, and the proceedings went with a merry swing.

The Club's flag and the Red Ensign of the Mercantile Marine figured in the scheme of decoration, while several of the interesting trophies which have been presented to the club were also on view. These included the ship's bell, suspended between two bronze cachalots, on which ship's time was struck throughout the evening, the mounted head of a New Bedford harpoon, the belaying pin with which the "Captain" kept order, and the harpoon from the Dundee whaler Nova Zembla.

MESSAGES FROM FRIENDS.

After the toast of "The King" and "The Prince of Wales, Master of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets" had been honoured, the Chairman announced that he had received a radio message from the Majestic, which was on her way to New York. This read:

"The Cachalots, South-Western Hotel, Southampton. Best wishes for an enjoyable evening from all brother Cachalots on the Majestic. — (Signed) Marshall." He had also a letter of apology from Major G.S. Szlumper (Assistant Manager, Southern Railway Company), and another, which had arrived only that morning, from their dear friend and life member, Capt. E. Aikman, R.D., R.N.R., now in Vancouver. This ran: My dear Boatsteerer,—I note from a circular received that the big event of the season is to take place on October 18th. I trust there will be a large school of whales present, so that the spouting may be seen and the blowing heard for miles around. Please convey my hearty greetings to my brother whales, together with the hope that this, the first annual meeting, finds the Cachalots Club thoroughly established, its roots striking deeper every day, its trunk ribbed with Gold Lace, and its branches hung with Brass Hats and Monkey Jackets. I will be thinking of you all at lunch time (local standard is equivalent to 9 p.m. with you), and if there is hot pot on the menu, that will certainly be my order. Un-fortunately I cannot join you in a tankard of draught ale, as this country doesn't provide that, so I'll have to join you in the spirit (Black and White) instead! With every good wish, I am, your brother whale for life, Edmund Aikman.

GOOD PROGRESS.

Capt. King remarked that the club had its inception eight months ago last Tuesday, and from the inaugural

gathering of 17 or 18 Master Mariners, its membership had grown to 236. Since then they had held 29 luncheon meetings, with an average attendance of 29, and at these functions a number of discussions had proved very instructive. They had also "swopped" views on many technical subjects. Earlier that evening they had chosen officials for the ensuing year, who would come into office on January 15th, and he was sure they would carry on the work of the club in such a manner as would enable it to advance as if wearing giant seven league boots. (Applause.)

Capt. S. N. Braithwaite, M.B.E., in breezy fashion, proposed the toast of "The Visitors" coupling with, it the names of Mr. P. E. Curry, J.P. (Manager White Star Line), Mr. C. E. Cotterell (Manager Cunard Line), Mr. David Drummond (General Agent Canadian Pacific), and Mr. W. A. Penton (Local Secretary Union-Castle Line).

The above extract, from The Southern Daily Echo of 19 Oct 1928, is less than a third of the original clipping which goes on to detail the 'Growth of the Club', the 'Rollicking Choruses', who said (and sang) what and concludes with a full report on the first AGM which preceded the social event.

There is also a group photograph of the 'Master Mariners at Supper' but unfortunately, with the yellowing of the years, it is of insufficient quality for me to reproduce here.

Nowadays, one wonders at the verbosity of it all. Indeed, one wonders whether or not brother whale Aikman had not already started on the Black & White.

Nearly every meeting of the first few years seems to have been reported in full by the 'Echo', which in those days had extensive coverage of port activities in their 'Around the Port' pages.

The second annual supper in 1929 was referred to as a 'Sea Pie Supper' and has remained so since.

The Club also held annual Banquets in '29 and '30.

