



SUPPLEMENT TO The London Gazette

Of FRIDAY, the 15th of NOVEMBER, 1940

Published by Authority

Registered as a newspaper

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CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

*St. James's Palace, S.W.1.
15th November, 1940.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the undermentioned appointment to the Fourth Class of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for the following awards, and for the publication in the London Gazette of the names of individuals shown below as having received an expression of Commendation for their good services.

To be an Additional Officer of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

Tom Breaks, Deputy Chief Inspector, Fire Brigades Division, Home Office.

Mr. Breaks was in charge of the operations for the extinction of a large fire which was caused by enemy air action and which burned for a considerable time. During this period he had necessarily to expose himself to great danger on many occasions. His powers of organisation and the manner in which he handled men under his command were quite outstanding. Mr. Breaks organised the dispositions of the fire attack including the arrangements for relaying water from a distance, on more than one occasion under bombing and machine-gun fire from the enemy. At the same time he organised billeting, feeding and medical attention for the personnel engaged in an area where facilities for these purposes were very limited.

Awarded the George Medal.

Thomas Bruce, Fire Brigade Superintendent.

When an enemy bombing aeroplane crashed, destroying a shop and dwelling-houses and badly damaging two other properties, petrol and oil from the bomber were scattered over a wide area setting fire to the buildings. Three persons were also trapped in a wrecked surface shelter which was covered with debris from the demolished house. The shelter itself was on fire and rescue operations were greatly hampered by the flames and heat given off from the burning petrol. In addition, concentrations of petrol vapour were exploding continuously. Superintendent T. Bruce at once called for volunteers to assist himself and Fire Sergeant Patterson in attempting the rescue of the persons trapped in the shelter. Chief Inspector Middlemist, Detectives G. Cook and A. Buddles and P.C. A. Simpson immediately volunteered and rendered valuable assistance in moving heavy concrete slabs and other debris from the shelter, their efforts resulting in the rescue of three people from the wreckage.

During the rescue operations it was found necessary to play a jet of water on the feet of the trapped persons and the officers engaged in the work, as their clothing was being burnt by blazing petrol.

The officers concerned displayed exceptional courage and showed complete disregard of the possibility that further bombs may have been in the fallen plane and might have exploded at any time during the operations.