



SUPPLEMENT

TO

The London Gazette

Of FRIDAY, the 2nd of JANUARY, 1942

Published by Authority

Registered as a newspaper

TUESDAY, 6 JANUARY, 1942

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

*St. James's Palace, S.W.1.
6th January, 1942.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the George Medal to:—

CAN/R.64816 Sergeant Thomas Breech MILLER, Royal Canadian Air Force.

One night in September, 1941, Sergeant Miller was the air observer of an aircraft which, following a successful attack on a target in North West Germany, had been attacked by an enemy fighter. The controls were damaged and the starboard engine was put out of action, and the pilot had to effect a forced landing. The aircraft landed heavily with undercarriage retracted, came to rest half over a hedge, and caught fire. The rear gunner and second wireless operator were only slightly injured and escaped from the rear of the aircraft. Sergeant Miller was also uninjured and escaped through the top hatch. He then noticed that the pilot and first wireless operator were still in the aircraft, which was now blazing furiously. Undeterred, Sergeant Miller re-entered the aircraft through the top hatch and found the captain lying in a dazed condition, as he had been wounded about the face and head. Sergeant Miller pulled the captain through the hatch and carried him away from the aircraft. He returned for the first wireless operator who was lying in the rear of the cabin, very badly hurt and with his clothing on fire in one or two places. Sergeant Miller succeeded in lifting him through the hatch and carried him to a place of safety, where he beat out the flames from the injured man's clothing with his hands after rolling him on the ground in an attempt to smother them. The flares, oxygen bottles, ammunition and

petrol tanks began to explode immediately after Sergeant Miller got clear of the aircraft. He received severe burns to his hands while rescuing his comrades, whose lives were undoubtedly saved by his prompt and extremely brave action.

1158287 Leading Aircraftman Harry MILLER.

In August, 1941, an aircraft returning from a sortie over France landed at a home base. Unknown to the pilot, three bombs which were thought to have been released remained in the aircraft and were detached on landing, one exploding and the others falling a short distance away. The aircraft soon became a blazing inferno amid which bullets were exploding. The pilot and two of the crew managed to get out and tried to extricate the observer from the front part of the aircraft, but were unable to do so. Leading Aircraftman Miller, the driver of the fire tender which arrived shortly after the crash, then took over the rescue operations, cutting away the front part of the aircraft and succeeding in extricating the observer regardless of the fact that bombs were lying nearby and others might have been in the aircraft. Unfortunately the observer was found to have been killed when the first bomb exploded.

949358 Leading Aircraftman George WILLIAMS.
1122529 Aircraftman 1st Class Kenneth BLAND.

In June, 1941, ammunition in an aircraft exploded by spontaneous combustion. In spite of the explosions, Aircraftman Bland climbed on to the mainplane and unfastened the gun panels. By this time the ammunition tank was burning fiercely, so he released it from the gun. Leading Aircraftman Williams carried away the burning tank, which started to explode while he was carrying it. The presence of mind and courage shown by these two airmen undoubtedly

saved the aircraft and probably the lives of the air crews and armourers who were emptying the remaining ammunition tanks.

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

St. James's Palace, S.W.1.

6th January, 1942.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the British Empire Medal (Military Division) to the under-mentioned:—

506993 Sergeant John William EMMETT.

In the early hours of a day in September, 1941, this airman saw an aircraft having difficulty in landing at an aerodrome. Anticipating a crash he took charge of the fire tender, although not officially on duty, and arrived at the scene of the accident within three minutes. The aircraft, which had been broken in two by the impact, was burning furiously and two members of the crew could be seen alive in the flames below the fuselage. Sergeant Emmett, protected only by asbestos gloves, dashed into the burning wreckage and extricated one of the crew. Before he could return for the second man, the petrol tank split and the fierce heat of the blazing petrol then prevented any near approach. Sergeant Emmett tried repeatedly to extricate the other living member of the crew by means of a grab hook but without success. In spite of a violent explosion, Sergeant Emmett continued to direct the work of his fire party until the fire was completely extinguished and the remaining bodies were recovered. Unfortunately the rescued airman has since died of his injuries. Sergeant Emmett on this occasion displayed great devotion to duty and courage and disregard for his own safety. He has been in charge of the station fire fighting personnel for the past 9 months and has shown considerable fortitude and presence of mind at many flying accidents on and near the station.

1255790 Sergeant Francis Beaumont MITCHELL.

Sergeant Mitchell was the wireless operator/air gunner of an aircraft which, whilst engaged on a navigation flight, crashed into a hill side in sparsely populated mountain country. The pilot was killed and the remainder of the crew seriously injured. Sergeant Mitchell, though suffering from serious and painful injuries, crawled on his hands and knees for a distance of 2 to 3 miles, over treacherous country side and during thick fog in order to obtain assistance. The time taken was about 3 hours. As a result of this airman's courage and devotion to duty, the rescue of the other members of the crew was made possible by nightfall. There is no doubt that, but for his action, they would have succumbed to their injuries.

404216 Sergeant John James PLUNKETT.

In August, 1941, an aircraft crashed into the sea. Many gallant attempts, both collective and individual, were made to rescue the three members of the crew, but conditions were such that all lost their lives, together with eleven of the would-be rescuers. Among numerous Royal Air Force personnel concerned, Sergeant Plunkett has been chosen

for recognition as having shown outstanding gallantry. He swam out 300 yards in the raging sea and brought back an unconscious airman whom he attempted, with the help of others, to revive by artificial respiration. Unfortunately the airman died later. In addition to his efforts at artificial respiration, Sergeant Plunkett succeeded in bringing three other persons to the shore, and these owe their lives to his courage and determination.

1169029 Sergeant Jack PURCELL.

Sergeant Purcell was the front gunner of an aircraft which, whilst carrying out an attack on Ostend, received a direct hit from heavy anti-aircraft fire. Although an attempt was made to bring the aircraft back to England, it eventually crashed in the sea some ten miles from the coast. On impact, the captain was thrown down into the bomb compartment but, after being submerged in fifteen feet of water, he eventually escaped, in a semi-drowned condition, through the broken off tail of the aircraft. Sergeant Purcell, who was suffering from burns about the face and hands, had helped the captain to climb out from the wreckage and then supported and encouraged him for about half an hour until it was possible to reach the dinghy. In spite of the captain's continual suggestions that Sergeant Purcell should leave him and get to the dinghy himself, the sergeant refused to do so. There is little doubt that the captain's life was saved as a result of the determination and bravery shown by Sergeant Purcell. He subsequently displayed courage, cheerfulness and powers of endurance during the three days which the crew spent floating in the dinghy.

1173343 Leading Aircraftman Leslie Frederick HAMSHERE.

One night in September, 1941, an aircraft caught fire in the air and crashed. Leading Aircraftman Hamshere was the first on the scene and made several attempts to reach the body of the pilot but was driven back by the intense heat. Ammunition was exploding rapidly, constituting great danger. Nevertheless, Leading Aircraftman Hamshere proceeded to unload the guns and removed the ammunition to a place of safety. His coolness and courage in endeavouring to extricate the pilot and, later, in unloading the guns were of the highest order, more particularly as he, an accounts clerk, has only a very limited knowledge of either aircraft or guns.

533281 Leading Aircraftman Jack HAYNES.

In February, 1941, this airman was a passenger in an aircraft which crashed in a rubber plantation in Malaya and burst into flames. Leading Aircraftman Haynes, who had sustained superficial injuries only, quickly extricated himself from the aircraft, ran round to the front cockpit, which was enveloped in flames, and observed the pilot endeavouring to extricate himself but apparently prevented from doing so by the framework of the cockpit. Although the fuselage was burning with great intensity, and the petrol tanks had not then exploded, Leading Aircraftman Haynes immediately attempted to rescue the trapped pilot. He tried to lift the framework but found it too hot to handle. By using the branch of a tree, however, he succeeded in pushing away

the cockpit framework and was thus able to assist the pilot and drag him to safety. Leading Aircraftman Haynes, who received severe burns to his hands and arms, displayed great bravery, determination and a complete disregard for his own safety in his efforts. Unfortunately the pilot has since succumbed to his injuries.

1268479 Aircraftman 2nd Class Edward Charles UMPELBY.

In August, 1941, a fully loaded aircraft was taking off when it crashed and immediately burst into flames near the aerodrome boundary. Aircraftman Umpelby and two soldiers who were near the scene immediately endeavoured to extricate the occupants, all of whom had been killed instantaneously. The aircraft was burning fiercely but Aircraftman Umpelby and the two soldiers continued their efforts at great risk until compelled to desist by the intense heat. Although his endeavours proved unavailing, this airman showed great courage and a complete disregard of the fact that the petrol tanks might have exploded at any time.

*Air Ministry,
6th January, 1942.*

ROYAL AIR FORCE.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallantry displayed in flying operations against the enemy:—

Distinguished Service Order.

Acting Flight Lieutenant Lucian Brett ERCOLANI (62270), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 214 Squadron.

One night in November, 1941, this officer was the captain of an aircraft detailed to attack Berlin. The target area was completely obscured by heavy cloud and Flight Lieutenant Ercolani decided to retain his load of incendiary bombs in order to avoid diverting following aircraft by starting fires in the wrong places. High explosive bombs, however, were released over searchlight and anti-aircraft defences. On the return journey the aircraft was hit in the bomb racks by enemy shell fire. The floor was torn up and flames burst through the aperture. Following an unsuccessful attempt to jettison containers which were burning, the fire spread over the whole floor filling the aircraft with smoke and sparks. The fire eventually subsided, but was never completely extinguished, leaving the mid-part of the aircraft almost burned away. Both wings were holed and the fabric torn, while other damage was sustained which caused the aircraft to lose both height and speed. Despite these appalling conditions, Flight Lieutenant Ercolani attempted to fly the aircraft back to this country but shortly after crossing the enemy coast at 1,000 feet, the engines failed through lack of fuel and the aircraft came down in the sea. The pilot had then been flying a burning aircraft for some 3 hours and for most of the time the aircraft had presented a fiery target for the enemy's guns. Flight Lieutenant Ercolani received injuries when the aircraft hit the water and he went down with it but it surfaced again and he was able to get in the dinghy with

the remainder of the crew. Despite his injuries, Flight Lieutenant Ercolani took charge and, displaying great leadership, inspired his comrades until the dinghy finally went ashore on the Isle of Wight some 57 hours later. Throughout, this officer displayed courage, initiative and devotion to duty worthy of the highest praise. Flight Lieutenant Ercolani has completed 26 operational missions.

Distinguished Flying Cross.

Acting Squadron Leader Alan Michael MURPHY (33346) No. 138 Squadron.

This officer carried out a hazardous mission with complete success despite navigational difficulties and adverse weather conditions. On a previous occasion, when returning from an operational mission Squadron Leader Murphy passed over an enemy convoy at the low altitude of 100 feet. He noted its position, counted the ships and observed their course and then reported the information to base. The information proved of great value. This officer has invariably displayed great courage and initiative.

Acting Flight Lieutenant Archie Little WINSKILL (84702) Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 41 Squadron.

This officer has carried out over 250 hours operational flying and has destroyed at least 3 enemy aircraft. One day in August, 1941, he attacked 2 Messerschmitt 109's which attempted to intercept our bombers. He destroyed one of the enemy fighters and his action certainly saved the bombers from serious attack.

Flying Officer William Walter CAVE (86706) Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 502 Squadron.

This officer was captain of an aircraft engaged on an anti-submarine patrol. He observed, some 3 miles on his starboard bow, an outward bound U boat on the surface of the sea. Flying Officer Cave skilfully manoeuvred to attack and released his complete load of explosives in a stick just in front and alongside the approaching U boat. The vessel was completely engulfed in the ensuing explosions but remained long enough on the surface to allow for 6 front and rear machine gun attacks to be directed at the conning tower. During the second of these attacks an occupant of the enemy submarine tried to reach the gun near the conning tower but was driven to take refuge. Finally, the U boat submerged and a huge gush of oil rose to the surface and spread over an area 300 yards in diameter. The submarine was again seen for about 30 seconds but then disappeared amidst oil. In spite of a temporary breakdown of inter-communication, Flying Officer Cave had drilled his crew to such perfection that he was able to inflict the most effective damage on the enemy. The attack was carried out with great skill by this officer, whose leadership and devotion to duty were of the highest order.

Pilot Officer Ronald James ROBINSON (110612) Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 49 Squadron.

In December, 1941, this officer was the pilot of an aircraft which carried out a daring attack on an enemy aerodrome in daylight. Just before the attack was made, the perspex

of the navigator's cockpit was shattered by a bird, but the attack was pressed home from a height of only 100 feet despite considerable opposition. Bombs were released on a hangar while a number of Messerschmitt 109's on the ground were machine-gunned and set on fire. Pilot Officer Robinson's aircraft was hit by a cannon shell which riddled the navigator's cockpit and so seriously wounded the navigator that he died shortly afterwards. The aircraft sustained other damage, and the inter-communication and hydraulic systems were put out of action; the pilot's instrument panel was also damaged. Pilot Officer Robinson set course for this country and meanwhile the rear gunner tended the badly wounded navigator and beat out flames from his burning clothing. Overcoming many difficulties, Pilot Officer Robinson flew back to an aerodrome in this country where he made a perfect landing with the undercarriage retracted. This officer has completed 24 operational missions over enemy country and has always shown high courage and great devotion to duty.

Distinguished Flying Medal.

569680 Sergeant Ronald FERGUSON, No. 7 Squadron.

This airman was the flight engineer of an aircraft which carried out a low level attack on enemy shipping one day in December, 1941. By well directed shooting, he silenced a gun on an armed ship. The aircraft was hit by the enemy's cannon fire and sustained damage to the fuselage, the rear turret and tail chassis and the inter-communication equipment. Sergeant Ferguson cleared the rear turret and attempted to repair the inter-communication system but, finding it impossible to effect even a temporary repair, he went forward and rendered first aid to the air observer who had been wounded. Thereafter, Sergeant Ferguson rendered valuable service to his captain by acting as messenger. Throughout, this airman exhibited a fine example of discipline and teamwork. On several occasions, he has displayed great skill and has thus contributed materially to the safe return of his aircraft.

LONDON

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

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1942

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S.O. Code No. 65-35404