

*Awarded the George Medal:—*

Edward James Bell, Assistant Staff Officer, Civil Defence Rescue Service.

Mr. Bell has led his men in their difficult and dangerous work with great skill and un-sparing energy and with complete disregard of his personal safety. His courage and leadership have been a wonderful inspiration to the men under his command and have been responsible for the saving of many lives.

On one occasion, when a building had been wrecked by enemy action, Bell worked for several hours to reach a trapped casualty. Although the wreckage was extremely unstable, with a portion of the roof overhanging, he crawled through a small aperture and passed food and drink to the victim and eventually brought him to safety.

William Charles Crawley, Driver, Civil Defence Rescue Service.

Edward William Albert Dorrell, Party Leader, Civil Defence Rescue Service.

Joseph Woodhouse, Station Rescue Officer, Civil Defence Rescue Service.

Enemy action caused extensive damage to one section of a five-storey block of tenement buildings. Portions of the east wall collapsed, bringing down roof, floors and debris and leaving shattered walls 50 feet high in a most dangerous condition.

Driver Crawley, aware of the danger involved, volunteered to attempt rescue operations. He began tunnelling into the wreckage in a prone position, cutting through successive obstructions until he was below the suspended floors. He located a woman who was lying horizontally on a door which formed the base of a triangular trap straddled by floors which had collapsed above it. These were insecurely wedged at the base, some five feet above basement level and, owing to the enormous pressure from the debris above, were in constant danger of collapse. Crawley was joined by Woodhouse, who decided that it was impossible to remove the woman by the route through which the void had been entered. It was thereupon decided to cut horizontally through the west wall of the trap. Woodhouse and Crawley, from within the void, and Dorrell within the shattered shell of the building and beneath the debris on the far side of the void, started their three-hour task of tunnelling through to each other. Working with bit-and-brace and saws they cut through the joists and floor boards and, removing the debris sandwiched between successive layers of flooring, made a sufficiently large cavity to enable the casualty to be removed.

From the time that Crawley commenced tunnelling until the woman had been removed from the debris, five hours had elapsed and the three men, under the constant threat of being crushed by the unstable mass of debris above them, had worked with the utmost gallantry and with complete disregard of their personal safety.

*Awarded the British Empire Medal (Civil Division):—*

Victor Edward Bray, Police Constable.

Edward Arthur Clark, Warden, Civil Defence Wardens Service.

Frederick William Florance, Warden, Civil Defence Wardens Service.

Robert Hall, Party Leader, Civil Defence Rescue Service.

Frank Rudduck, War Reserve Police Constable.

Christopher Walter Twort, Member, Civil Defence Rescue Service.

Harold Upsher, Lorry Driver.

A house was practically demolished by enemy action and only the back wall and parts of the side and front walls remained standing. Three women were known to be in the wreckage. One of these, an elderly invalid, was trapped in her bed in the front of the basement. There was a pile of debris about 15 feet high overlapping the front area with its railings and grating. Bray and Rudduck, by clearing away sufficient of the debris to enable them to move part of the area grating, squeezed through into the area below. In doing this they were subjected to serious risk owing to the heavy load of debris on the grating and the insecure state of the partly fallen walls, and they were several times hit by bricks and falling masonry. After working for about 30 minutes they got to the woman who was found trapped under a heavy beam, but they were unable to release her. Bray was recalled after about an hour, but Ruddock remained in the basement talking to the old lady and encouraging her for about three hours.

Meanwhile the Rescue Party decided to attempt a rescue from above. This was a hazardous operation owing to the state of the walls which were liable to fall at any time. Twort and Hall, helped by Upsher, worked head downwards to make a passage through the debris and supporting floor joists which held the weight of the tons of wreckage above. After some hours' work they reached the victim and she was eventually brought to safety.

Whilst this rescue was taking place Florance and Clark entered the building although they were fully aware of the extreme danger owing to the outer walls being cracked and bulging and in imminent danger of collapse. They managed to crawl along the inside of the rear wall of the building and, after working and burrowing for a considerable time under the most difficult and dangerous conditions, they made contact with the other two women, who were brought to safety.

These seven rescuers displayed courage without thought for their own safety and, by their determination, saved the lives of three women.

Sidney Walter White, Retort House Foreman (Award dated 20th February, 1945).

A gasholder was damaged by enemy action and the escaping gas caught fire. White, who was at home at the time, immediately reported for duty. He climbed a steel framed column near to the point of damage and worked his way along a latticed framed girder to reach the hole. This journey was performed under most difficult conditions. White examined the extent of the damage and called for clay and battens. After making two or three attempts, he managed to seal the hole and put out the flames.