

an airfield, crashed and burst into flames. Corporal Woodhead who was working in the vicinity ran to the scene of the accident in company with other airmen. By the time they arrived one wing was burning fiercely and the fire was spreading to the cockpit and fuselage. Disregarding the flames and the ammunition which had started to explode, Corporal Woodhead and his helpers jumped on to the port wing and the cockpit perspex canopy and tried to break into the cockpit but they were unable to release the emergency roof exit or to get at the crew. They could see that the pilot was bent over the control column and that the navigator was on the floor. By this time a fire engine had arrived and commenced to play foam jets on to the cockpit, but the heat had become so intense that all were forced to retire. A few moments later the navigator's head and shoulders appeared through a hole which had been made in the side of the fuselage. Despite the intense heat and danger from exploding tanks, Corporal Woodhead immediately dashed into the flames and dragged the injured man to safety. Corporal Woodhead then attempted to return and search for the pilot but was driven back by the heat which was by then too great to allow of any further rescue attempt to be made. Corporal Woodhead had shown complete disregard of his personal safety and his action in finally rescuing the navigator from the blazing wreckage was one requiring great courage.

1805558 Leading Aircraftman Roland Norman GARRED, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

1666507 Leading Aircraftman Samuel William READ, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

These airmen were employed continuously on minefield clearance at an airfield for a period of 6 weeks in 1944. They have been of the utmost assistance to the N.C.O. in charge of the section in his work of breaching minefields and locating and neutralising mines. Both have been outstanding amongst about 25 airmen below the rank of corporal who have been engaged on the minefield and they have never hesitated to perform work far beyond that which could be expected of them in view of their classification and training. They have shown keenness and courage on work of a hazardous nature and have contributed much to the success which has been achieved.

1406476 Leading Aircraftman Patrick CROWLEY, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, Royal Air Force Regiment.

After the explosion of a bomb in January, 1945, this airman, assisted by a Flight Sergeant, crawled beneath a huge piece of reinforced concrete which had fallen on top of an officer. The concrete was precariously supported by loose bricks and rubble and was in imminent danger of crushing Leading Aircraftman Crowley as he worked beneath it. Failing to extricate the officer at the first attempt, this airman made a further effort by burrowing under the concrete from the opposite side. The officer was later found to have died whilst the rescue attempts were being made and was extricated by a heavy rescue party, who cut through the concrete. Leading Aircraftman Crowley made persistent and gallant efforts to rescue the officer although he had set himself an impossible task. His services were outstanding, even amongst other acts of gallantry displayed in connection with this incident.

Ind.14825 Leading Aircraftman Sitacendra PURKAYASTA, Royal Indian Air Force.

In October, 1944, an aircraft, with overload petrol tank, developed an internal glycol leak whilst taking off from an R.A.F. Station, and crashed near the end of the runway, immediately bursting into flames. Leading Aircraftman Purkayasta, who was working in the M.T. yard, saw the aircraft crash and, taking the nearest vehicle, drove to the scene of the accident. He was the first person to arrive and found the aircraft enveloped in flames with the pilot, whose clothing and parachute were on fire, lying half out of the cockpit in an unconscious condition. Disregarding the flames, this airman endeavoured to drag the pilot clear but found that he was held by his tangled harness. Leading Aircraftman Purkayasta was then obliged to retire before the intense heat. He secured a knife from a native labourer who had arrived on the scene and with this he returned to the rescue. He cut the retaining straps of the equipment, dragged the pilot clear and proceeded to extinguish his burning

clothing. Unfortunately the pilot died on the way to hospital. Leading Aircraftman Purkayasta displayed great gallantry and complete disregard for his own safety.

158734 Leading Aircraftman Francis Frederick SPRULES, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

In January, 1945, a Fortress aircraft, in attempting to land at an airfield, crashed into a hangar. Leading Aircraftman Sprules, who was the only airman in the vicinity, was working at a point about 100 yards away from the accident and ran to the scene, where he assisted 7 members of the crew to escape from the furiously burning aircraft. Although the crew warned him that the aircraft was loaded with bombs he continued to help the injured. The bomb load (3,800 lbs.) exploded about 5 minutes after his arrival, showering debris around him, but his only thought was for the men who needed medical attention. He took some of the casualties to the sick quarters in a lorry which drove up to the scene after the explosion had occurred, afterwards returning to the scene of the crash to give any further help which might be required. Until the arrival of many helpers after the explosion, Leading Aircraftman Sprules had worked alone with courage, coolness and a complete disregard for his own safety. He was fully aware that a devastating explosion was likely to occur. He was shocked by the concussion but continued to render all the assistance he could in spite of ammunition which was exploding around him. Had it not been for his efforts it is probable that the fatalities would have been more numerous. In fact, only 2 of the crew lost their lives.

*Air Ministry, 27th April, 1945.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallantry and devotion to duty in the execution of air operations:—

*Bar to Distinguished Service Order.*

Acting Group Captain Alan Ford ANDERSON, D.S.O., D.F.C., R.A.F. (Captain, Royal Warwickshire Regiment).

As commanding officer of several squadrons, Group Captain Anderson has displayed the highest standard of efficiency, great drive and outstanding devotion to duty. Much of the great success of the squadrons under his command can be attributed to this officer's brilliant leadership and tactical ability. Since being awarded the Distinguished Service Order, Group Captain Anderson has participated in very many sorties during which much loss has been inflicted on the enemy. Throughout he has continued to display a high degree of bravery, setting an example which has inspired all.

*Distinguished Service Order.*

Acting Group Captain Keith James SOMERVILLE, D.F.C., A.F.C. (41486), R.A.F.O., 105 Sqn.

Group Captain Somerville has a long and distinguished record of operational flying, having completed more than 100 sorties, most of them against well defended targets. He has displayed a high degree of skill throughout and his example of coolness and courage in the face of the fiercest enemy fire has inspired all with whom he has flown. His sterling qualities have been reflected in the efficiency and fine fighting spirit of the squadron he commands.

Squadron Leader Jack Vincent WATTS, D.F.C. (Can/J.4688), R.C.A.F., 105 Sqn.

This officer has completed more than 100 sorties. He has at all times displayed the greatest keenness and devotion to duty and his example has impressed all. Squadron Leader Watts is a navigator of high merit and the successes obtained on the many sorties in which he has taken part are a fine tribute to his outstanding skill. This officer has proved of the greatest value to the squadron.

Acting Squadron Leader Henry ALMOND, D.F.C. (106110), R.A.F.V.R., 105 Sqn.

This officer's operational record is most impressive. Since being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross he has completed a large number of sorties, many of them against targets in the Ruhr and Rhineland areas. On one occasion, whilst over Cologne, his aircraft was severely damaged when hit by anti-aircraft fire. Nevertheless, Squadron Leader Almond flew back to an airfield in this country. When coming in to land, the starboard engine failed. The hydraulic system