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CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS
OF KNIGHTHOOD,

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

26th June, 1945.

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the undermentioned appointments to the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for the following awards of the British Empire Medal, in the Merchant Navy, and for the publication in the London Gazette of the names of those specially shown below as having received an expression of Commendation for their brave conduct.

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

Captain Thomas Joseph LACEY, Master, s.s. "Defender" (Charente Steam Ship Company Ltd.).

The s.s. "Defender" has performed excellent service in the Mediterranean area and on more than one occasion has been the subject of enemy attack. When she was attacked by enemy aircraft at Malta one of her lifeboats was set on fire. The situation was handled with promptness and efficiency, the boat being cut away and a dangerous situation averted. When the vessel was lying at Bari a heavy air attack developed on the port. An ammunition ship nearby received a direct hit and blew up. The blast from the explosion caused the "Defender" to break adrift but, although the ship was extensively damaged and several of the crew were injured, she was remooed, under the direction of the Master, and later took 150 survivors of destroyed and damaged ships from Bari to Taranto. The Master displayed outstanding courage and judgment throughout. His indomitable spirit, leadership and organisation were responsible for his ship being brought safely through these dangerous and difficult experiences.

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

George Newton ALMOND, Esq., Chief Engineer Officer, m.v. "Harpagus" (National Steam Ship Company Ltd.).

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

Gilbert Roy HUGHES, Esq., Second Officer, m.v. "Harpagus" (National Steam Ship Company Ltd.).

The m.v. "Harpagus" arrived off the Normandy Beaches and was about to discharge her cargo when she was mined. The Master was killed and some of the crew, including the Chief Officer, were injured by the explosion. In view of the condition of the vessel most of the crew were sent ashore but the Second Officer, in charge of a small party, remained on board. The forward part of the ship broke off and the after part was beached. This enabled the cargo to be discharged during the course of the next ten days and, ultimately, this half of the ship was towed back to the United Kingdom.

The Chief Engineer Officer showed great courage and devotion to duty and set a splendid example by his inspiring leadership. He reboarded the ship with other members of the crew and was responsible for improvising pumping gear to cope with the water which was filling the engine-room. This action and his excellent work below undoubtedly contributed to the success of the operations.

The Second Officer displayed courage, initiative and excellent leadership throughout. When the Master was killed and other Officers injured he immediately took command. He ensured the safety of the crew by embarking them in tugs which had come to the help of the ship. His determined efforts in very difficult and dangerous circumstances resulted in the safe discharge of the cargo and the eventual saving of part of the ship.