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Air Ministry, 8th March, 1946.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following award in recognition of distinguished service while a prisoner of war.

Military Medal.

Aus.402942 Flight Sergeant (now Pilot Officer)
Harvey BESLEY, Royal Australian Air Force.

Air Ministry, 8th March, 1946.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards:—

Military Cross.

Acting Squadron Leader George WHITEHEAD (85868),
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

On 6th June, 1944, Squadron Leader Whitehead was parachuted into the Ardennes as a member of an inter-Allied Mission to act as liaison in the Ardennes between the F.F.I. and the Allied High Command. The mission personnel, and the Maquis who were with them, were attacked and surrounded on 12th June, 1944, the only way out being to break through the enemy lines in small groups. Squadron Leader Whitehead led the only group that succeeded in getting through and personally covered its withdrawal to shelter with Bren gun fire. On 2nd August, 1944, the mission and Maquis personnel were again attacked by a body of a 1,000 picked men with anti-aircraft guns. Led by a French officer with Squadron Leader Whitehead as second in command, a perfect withdrawal was made, and losses were inflicted on the enemy, 54 of whom were killed, the Maquis sustaining only three casualties. Later, Squadron Leader Whitehead assumed command of all operations, and among the many actions undertaken was the reinforcing of the Belgian Maquis, who had unsuccessfully attempted an ambush of enemy personnel. When the reinforcements arrived the Maquis had withdrawn but a party of Germans who had remained, were attacked, 30 being killed. On another occasion the Germans attacked with Mortars and a two day battle ensued, the enemy penetrating an outpost. They were forced to withdraw, losing 60 picked Kriegs-marine personnel who were killed, and about 70 wounded. At all times Squadron Leader Whitehead proved himself to be a capable and fearless leader.

Warrant Officer Stanley Kiran GORDON-POWELL (1332785), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 35 Squadron.

On the night of 28th June, 1943, Warrant Officer Gordon-Powell was the navigator of a bomber aircraft that was shot down over Liege. He at once took steps to evade capture and joined up with some members of an underground movement

who attempted to take him to Bordeaux. Whilst passing through Paris, the party was ambushed and Warrant Officer Gordon-Powell was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Stalag IVB. During his captivity, covering a period of nearly two years, he made several attempts to escape. On four occasions he managed to travel some miles from the camp and only by experiencing bad luck was he recaptured. His fifth effort was made in company with another prisoner in January, 1945. Both managed to reach Berlin, having secured civilian clothing and, posing as French workers, they ultimately reached the Danish frontier where, owing to a dense blizzard, they inadvertently walked into a German customs guard who arrested them. Warrant Officer Gordon-Powell was sent back to Stalag IVB where he was told that if he attempted to escape again he would be shot. In spite of this threat, he made a sixth effort on 21st March, 1945. With the same companion who accompanied him on the previous attempt, he again reached Berlin. Here the two escapees made contact with a Dutch doctor who fed and hid them for two days. Both subsequently travelled by train to the Danish frontier which they crossed by wading through a swamp which almost enveloped them. After walking some miles into Denmark they sought refuge with a resistance movement the members of which facilitated their passage to Sweden. Both reached Helsingborg where they were met by the Danish Vice-Consul who arranged for their journey to Stockholm in April, 1945.

Distinguished Conduct Medal.

613614 Sergeant James Reginald SMITH, M.M., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

On 8th January, 1944, in the Albanian mountains, two Army officers of the Allied Military Mission were wounded in a battle with pro-German Nationalists. Sergeant Smith at once went to the assistance of the officers, and although under heavy fire, moved them from the snow to a sheep fold 500 feet down the mountains, where he dressed their wounds. Some hours later, about 200 Nationalists made a heavy attack on the sheep fold and Sergeant Smith went out, at great risk, in an endeavour to stop the attack. He failed and returned to the sheep fold where the wounded men were collected in a small hut. The Nationalists then charged this hut. Sergeant Smith blocked the only door with his body, and fought the wild mountaineers with his fists until overcome by weight of numbers. He then protected the wounded officers, holding the attackers at bay until their leader arrived to take control. Sergeant Smith's gallantry and coolness in difficult circumstances were outstanding and, by his efforts, he saved the officers' lives. The members of the party were taken prisoner and Sergeant Smith was repatriated some 15 months later.