



## SECOND SUPPLEMENT

TO

# The London Gazette

Of TUESDAY, the 14th of MAY, 1946

Published by Authority

Registered as a newspaper

FRIDAY, 17 MAY, 1946

### CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

St. James's Palace, S.W.1.  
17th May, 1946.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following appointments to the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

*Additional Members in the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.*

Flight Lieutenant John Michael Wood (88211), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 106 Squadron.

Flight Lieutenant Wood was captured in October, 1941, near Hamburg, after baling out of his aircraft. During a train journey from Barth to Sagan in March, 1942, whilst other prisoners diverted the guard's attention, this officer and a companion made their escape through a window as the train left a small station. They reached Stettin, but found all shipping at a standstill owing to ice; they were recaptured when trying to obtain food. Six months later, Flight Lieutenant Wood was discovered cutting the wire at Oflag XXIB.

Undeterred by the failure of this attempt, he afterwards played a leading part in a tunnel scheme and, on 27th March, 1943, he and a companion succeeded in leaving the camp. Disguised as French workers, they travelled on foot and by train towards Danzig, but were recaptured during the second night of freedom.

In April, 1945, when the Germans were evacuating Stalag IIIA, Flight Lieutenant Wood and two other officers took advantage of an opportunity to leave the stationary cattle truck in which they had been placed and, in the dusk, climbed over a fence and mingled with foreign workers. They reached a village near Niemegek before they were arrested and returned to Stalag IIIA. Flight Lieutenant Wood was finally liberated on 21st April, 1945, by the Russian forces.

Flight Lieutenant William Franklin Ash (Can/J.4737), Royal Canadian Air Force, No. 411 Squadron.

Flight Lieutenant Ash crash-landed near Calais on 24th March, 1942, and made his way to Lille where arrangements were made for him to reach Paris. He was arrested in Paris at the end of May, 1942, and imprisoned at Schubin (Oflag XXII). In September, 1942, he exchanged identities with an army private and joined a fatigue party. He escaped from this party but was recaptured the same night.

In the spring, of 1943, Flight Lieutenant Ash and 32 others escaped from Schubin through a

tunnel. With a companion he tried to reach Warsaw but was recaptured four days later. Shortly afterwards he was transferred to Stalag Luft III, Sagan, where he was an active member of the Escape Committee for the next 21 months.

When other ranks were being transferred from Sagan to Stalag Luft VI (Heydekrug), Flight Lieutenant Ash changed his identity and accompanied them. Under his direction a tunnel was later made for a mass escape, but the tunnel was discovered when 10 prisoners had got away. Flight Lieutenant Ash nevertheless continued the attempt and eventually gained his freedom. He boarded a goods train for Kovno, but was discovered by station guards and returned to Sagan. He was liberated by Allied forces at the end of April, 1945.

Warrant Officer David Duncan Patrick LEITCH (921693), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 408 Squadron.

Warrant Officer Leitch was the navigator of a Halifax aircraft which was badly damaged by enemy fire and had to be abandoned on the night of 10th March, 1943. The crew baled out and Warrant Officer Leitch landed near Vassy, France. He destroyed his charts and disposed of his parachute and harness. Disguised in old clothes taken from a scarecrow, Warrant Officer Leitch obtained food and clothing from residents of Ville-en-Blaisois, and, with further help, reached Ambonville on 14th March, 1943, where he was captured. He was taken to a military prison in Paris and thence to Dulag Luft, Oberusel. Warrant Officer Leitch made his first attempt to escape on 20th June, 1943, from a train while being taken from Stalag Luft III to Stalag Luft VI. He left the train through a lavatory window but was recaptured after travelling nearly 100 miles in another train towards the Baltic coast.

His next attempt was made in February, 1944, again from a train in which he was being transferred from one camp to another. After two hours of liberty he was discovered and was returned to the P.O.W. train. On 22nd March, 1944, Warrant Officer Leitch once more escaped from a train. He made contact with some French workers who took him to their camp. They assisted him to take the identity of a French worker, providing him with a forged identity card and a written authority to travel to Danzig, where he hoped to board a Swedish ship. With coolness and resource he reached Danzig, but was recaptured when trying to board a vessel there.

Notwithstanding his previous failures, Warrant Officer Leitch made preparations for another attempt to escape early in April, 1944, with the aid of Army and Navy personnel at Stalag XXB,