

great intensity. Divisional Officer Griffiths then arrived and was joined by Station Officer Abbs. The situation developed rapidly and Griffiths ordered his men to take shelter whilst he himself went forward to obtain a closer view of what was actually happening. As he went forward he could see that the ammunition train was burning fiercely and that the sides of the ammunition trucks were already falling apart. Shortly afterwards the first and major explosion occurred. Some of the men were injured and McGregor assisted in dealing with the casualties and getting them removed to hospital. Divisional Officer Griffiths then reorganised the fire fighters into two parties, one under Station Officer McGregor and the other under Station Officer Abbs.

By this time numerous small fires were burning amongst the grass around the magazines and McGregor took control of that portion of the Depot lying on the east side of the railway track. He was warned at this time that a further explosion was imminent, but despite this he deployed his men skilfully and effectively to deal with the many incipient fires which at this stage were threatening to create a very serious situation. It was not practicable to use water and McGregor and his crew had to beat out flames around the magazines and a number of loaded ammunition trucks in the sidings. Whilst so engaged they were out in the open and caught in the blast of the second major explosion. McGregor re-deployed his men to tackle fresh outbreaks and as a result of his persistence the fires were gradually brought under control.

Abbs took over command of the territory on the west side of the railway track where numerous small fires had started. He organised parties to combat these fires and to search the magazines containing ammunition to see if they had been affected by burning debris. He had been warned of the danger of a second explosion but he carried out his task with energy and courage and succeeded in gaining control of the fires in his sector when the second explosion occurred. The fire was subdued early the next day.

Divisional Officer Griffiths with complete disregard of his safety, displayed courage, coolness and leadership in very hazardous circumstances.

Station Officer McGregor showed splendid leadership in the face of great danger, looked to the welfare of the injured and his courage was an inspiration to the men working under his command.

The coolness with which Station Officer Abbs carried out his duties in the face of extreme danger played a very material part in preventing what might have proved to be a major disaster.

As the Senior Officer of the Department at the scene of the fire, Stobart carried out his assignment in an exceptionally cool and courageous manner in the face of considerable danger from explosives and flying debris. The possibility of further mass explosions did not deter him from pressing forward to the Pier whenever possible in order to obtain

accurate information. His devotion to duty in the face of great personal danger was exemplary.

Chief Inspector Marsh was early on the scene of the fire before the mass explosion and throughout, in personal danger from flying debris, carried out his duties with commendable calmness of judgment and was responsible for the removal of an ammunition train of twelve loaded trucks from the danger area.

Police Sergeant Woods organised an attempt to bring into action a hose from the hydrant at Bedenham Pier foot. Police Constable Walder took the branch pipe and scrambled along the pier on hands and knees to avoid bursting ammunition in the endeavour to get a hose out to the burning lighter. Woods directed operations and with outstanding devotion to duty both men persisted in their efforts until ordered to withdraw.

Awarded the George Medal:—

Donald Edward MACLENNAN, Railway Porter, Aviemore, Inverness-shire.

A fire broke out in an hotel and two people were trapped in a room on the second floor. Smoke was rising through the floorboards and the passage was in flames. The couple knotted sheets and blankets into a rope but it was not long enough and reached only to the first floor. MacLennan obtained a tow rope from a nearby car, mounted a ladder contrived by tying together two short ladders end to end, and tied the tow rope to the make-shift rope. He then climbed up and was hauled in through the window. After skilfully fastening the rope around each in turn he let down first the woman and then the man, and then descended himself.

A domestic servant was trapped in her attic bedroom on the third floor, the only staircase being blocked by smoke. A lorry was backed against the foot of the wall below and the two ladders were mounted on it but did not reach to the roof gutter. MacLennan however, climbed up with a rope to about two feet from the roof and swung himself up by grasping the gutter. He levered his body round until he could lean against a chimney stack and then threw the rope to the young woman. He scrambled up the steeply sloping slate roof and entered the window. Having fastened the rope to the bedstead and around the young woman, he lowered her to the ground. He then descended himself. Shortly afterwards the roof collapsed.

MacLennan displayed considerable courage and skill and saved the lives of three persons.

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

Dennis Arthur SMITH, Schoolboy, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex.

A boy was paddling a small canoe in the sea at Jaywick and when about 700 yards from the shore it capsized. He clung to the overturned canoe and not being a strong swimmer signalled for help. The sea was very choppy and the boy was in danger of being washed away.