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**CENTRAL CHANCERY OF
THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD**

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

16th July 1968

The QUEEN 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 George Medal and of the British Empire Medal and for the publication in the *London Gazette* of the names of those specially shown below as having received an expression of Commendation for brave conduct.

To be Additional Members of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for Gallantry:

Captain Robert Charles BALLS, Helicopter Pilot, Bristow Tetney Heliport Base, Grimsby.

During a severe storm the drilling barge "Ocean Prince", on station 100 miles out in the North Sea, was pounded by waves estimated at about 50 feet. A request was made about 6.0 a.m. to commence a precautionary evacuation of the barge. Captain Balls took off alone in a Wessex helicopter from Scarborough Heliport. About an hour later, while still en route, he learnt by radio that the drilling derrick on the barge had collapsed and he decided against trying to take all members of the crew ashore. He transferred two loads of passengers from "Ocean Prince" to another rig situated about 18 miles away. The landings and take-offs were particularly hazardous in the prevailing weather because the legs of the platform projected above the level of the helipad. In order to lift the maximum number of persons the pilot flew with the minimum fuel on board and refuelled on the rig. With the wind gusting to 90 miles per hour and the risk that the landing platform might capsize, exceptional courage and skill were necessary before and during the operations on "Ocean Prince". But for Captain Balls' initiative, bravery and splendid airmanship in planning and safely carrying out this risky operation as he

did, all 45 members of the crew of "Ocean Prince" would probably have lost their lives, since the rig broke up and sank a few hours after the last group of men had been lifted clear.

Ian CROSBIE, Section Naval Auxiliary Officer, R.N. Auxiliary Service.

Mr. Crosbie was Skipper of the XSV "Birdham" during a training cruise when an electrical fire started in the engine room. Mr. Crosbie called a ship to his assistance and this vessel took off those members of "Birdham's" crew who were not required to fight the fire. Mr. Crosbie and four crew members then continued for four hours fighting the fire which was finally brought under control. The "Birdham" was then taken in tow and brought into Greenock eight hours after the fire had started. Mr. Crosbie displayed considerable courage in his handling of the fire in XSV "Birdham", which is a wooden ship and where there was a serious danger of fuel explosion. He put himself at risk, saved his ship and brought the vessel safely to port.

Awarded the George Medal:

David HUNTER, Deputy, Michael Mine, Fife, National Coal Board.

A fire broke out in an intake roadway near the bottom of a shaft in the Michael Mine. It spread fiercely and rapidly and produced a vast quantity of thick black smoke which was carried by the ventilation current to all working sections of the mine. Without delay the surface control room attendant and officials who had discovered the fire telephoned instructions to all parts of the mine for the 316 men working underground to be withdrawn but nine lives were lost. The intake airway, the shortest way to the shaft and the one which the men were accustomed to travel, was full of black smoke. Deputy Hunter, after warning men at the coal face to withdraw at once, travelled along the intake airway to warn his own men and stayed in the thick smoke a short time to keep the conveyor running and to assist men to travel from the coal face. As only one man came up from the coal face, he became anxious about three