

Glasgow, City of

Lt. G. B. MOORE (483660) commn. is terminated 30th Aug. 1971.

2nd Lt. R. WELCH (489298) (on probation) commn. is terminated, 30th Aug. 1971.

Greater London (N.E. Sector)

2nd Lt. L. A. J. CURSON (488064) (on probation) is confirmed as 2nd Lt., 17th Jun. 1969. To be Lt., 17th Jun. 1971.

Greater London (N.W. Sector)

Alan William KELSEY (492136) to be 2nd Lt. (on probation), 18th Jul. 1971.

Greater London (S.E. Sector)

Lt. R. W. HEWITT (286812) retires, 1st Jul. 1971, and is granted the hon. rank of Maj.

Lt. A. J. HYAMS (465969) commn. is terminated, 30th Aug. 1971.

Heriford

2nd Lt. A. J. BOWLES (488150) (on probation) is confirmed as 2nd Lt., 28th May 1969. To be Lt., 28th May 1971, with seniority 28th May 1969.

2nd Lt. G. P. JACKSON (488085) (on probation) is confirmed as 2nd Lt., 28th May 1969. To be Lt., 28th May 1971.

Kent

2nd Lt. G. LONEY (487202) (on probation) commn. is terminated, 30th Aug. 1971.

Michael John SCOTT (492135) to be 2nd Lt. (on probation), 9th Jul. 1971.

Lancashire (East)

2nd Lt. H. A. RAMSDALE (488766) (on probation) resigns his commn., 25th Jun. 1971.

Lincoln

Raymond Stanley TYLEE (492145) (formerly Flt./Lt. R.A.F.) to be Lt., 24th Feb. 1971, with seniority 22nd Mar. 1954.

Shropshire

2nd Lt. J. J. EMERY (488091) (on probation) is confirmed as 2nd Lt., 17th Jul. 1969. To be Lt., 17th Jul. 1971.

Somerset

Phillip John HARRIS (417725) (formerly Lt. A.C.F.), to be Lt., 10th Jul. 1971, with seniority 14th Nov. 1969.

Warwick

2nd Lt. J. A. HARTLE (467742) (on probation) is confirmed as 2nd Lt., 2nd Jul. 1969, with seniority 15th Aug. 1968. To be Lt., 15th Aug. 1970.

Wilts

Lt. K. N. MARSHALL (404810) commn. is terminated, 30th Aug. 1971.

York (East Riding)

Lt. R. COVELL (474219) resigns his commn., 14th Jul. 1971.

York (West Riding)

2nd Lt. T. H. SNEE (487944) (on probation) is confirmed as 2nd Lt., 11th Jun. 1969. To be Lt., 11th Jun. 1971, with seniority 11th Jun. 1969.

2nd Lt. J. L. LINGARD (487879) (on probation) is confirmed as 2nd Lt., 11th Jun. 1969. To be Lt., 11th Jun. 1971.

2nd Lt. M. J. CARTER (488092) (on probation) is confirmed as 2nd Lt., 22nd Jul. 1969. To be Lt., 22nd Jul. 1971.

Brunei Shell Petroleum Company for winch equipped helicopters, to assist in rescue work in the area of a floating drilling barge, "Big John", eighteen miles off Bintulu in Sarawak. It was known that there had been a severe gas flash explosion, that the barge was on fire, that the derrick had collapsed across the helicopter landing platform and that most of the seventy-seven people on board were thought to have jumped into the sea. Master Pilot Riddoch had to make the one hundred and eighty mile flight to Bintulu at low level, in the dark. There he immediately refuelled and took off to join a Shell S 61 helicopter in the disaster area. He was warned that there might be unignited gas pockets in the air near the rig and that there was a substantial risk of a second explosion, due to gas building up in the collapsed drilling hole. At about 0715 hours, as he approached the search area, he was informed that an injured man had been seen lying on the starboard after anchor grating of the barge and that the rescue boats, loaded with survivors, were unable to go alongside because of the danger of a second explosion. Master Pilot Riddoch immediately said he would attempt a rescue and informed his crew. The barge, corkscrewing in a six to eight foot swell, was still burning fiercely amidships and was partially obscured by smoke and steam. The wind was gusting at fifteen to twenty knots from the starboard quarter and this, combined with the smoke, the collapsed derrick, trailing wires and displaced antennae, made the approach to the only feasible winching point an oblique one, port side on over the collapsed derrick. Once over the barge he had under five feet clearance for the helicopter tail rotor, was hovering without visible reference points, entirely on directions from his winchman, and had to come down to less than thirty feet above the platform in order to lower his Brunei crewman safely. This he did successfully although he was being badly affected in the cockpit by fumes, smoke and heat from the barge. His winchman reported that the crewman was having difficulty in finding his way, so he moved over the barge to positions, at times nearly at sea level, where his winchman could direct the crewman to the survivor by hand signals and monitor his progress back to the winching point carrying the injured man. Master Pilot Riddoch then re-positioned the Wessex and both men were winched to safety. He was in the hover in the immediate area of the rig for eighteen minutes. Five minutes after landing the survivor at Bintulu, he took off again for the disaster area, despite the fact that he had already flown three hours that day under the most exacting flying conditions. Later he flew two further search sorties, including a further winching operation for damage control parties, once the fire had died down, flying over six hours in all. Master Pilot Riddoch was fully aware that the aircraft would not survive a second explosion or a gas pocket. He displayed superb airmanship, calmness and judgement in most hazardous and turbulent conditions and a cool, calculated, selfless courage and leadership in the finest traditions of the Royal Air Force. His actions and those of his crew earned the unqualified admiration of the seasoned and experienced Shell personnel involved in the accident. The survivor, badly burned and helpless, undoubtedly owes his life to them.

Air Force Medal

Q4220276 Sergeant Michael Richard BIRLEY, Royal Air Force.

Sergeant Birley was senior crewman and winchman of a Wessex helicopter of the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment, which was sent to Bintulu in Sarawak in the early hours of 6th January 1971, to assist in rescue work off the floating drilling barge, "Big John", eighteen miles out to sea. It was known that there had been a gas flash fire, that the rig was burning, that the derrick had collapsed across the barge's landing platform and that most of the seventy-seven people on board were thought to have jumped into the sea. After the one hundred and eighty mile flight to Bintulu, in bad weather conditions, the aircraft refuelled and immediately took off for the disaster area at about 0700 hours. The crew was briefed that there could be unignited gas pockets in the air in the immediate vicinity of the barge and that there was still a substantial risk of a secondary explosion from pressure building up in the collapsed drilling shaft. On approaching the disaster area, the Wessex received a radio message that a survivor had been seen lying on the starboard after anchor grating, but the rescue boats, loaded with survivors,

AIR FORCE DEPARTMENT

Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB.

31st August 1971.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards:

Air Force Cross

Master Pilot Alexander RIDDOCH (E1569347), Royal Air Force.

At 0500 hours on 6th January 1971, Master Pilot Riddoch took off from Brunei in heavy rain, poor visibility and turbulent conditions, as Captain of the leading Wessex helicopter of the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment, in answer to an urgent call from the