

could not go alongside because of the risk of a second explosion. Sergeant Birley and the Brunei crewman immediately and without hesitation informed their Captain that they were prepared to attempt a rescue. The barge was still burning fiercely amidst ships, was partially obscured by smoke and steam, and was corkscrewing in a six to eight foot swell. The wind was gusting at fifteen to twenty knots. Sergeant Birley informed his Captain that the only feasible winching point was on the port after quarter of the helicopter landing pad which, in the prevailing wind conditions, meant the helicopter approaching port side on over the collapsed derrick. As well as winching the second crewman onto an area of heaving deck not more than six foot square, Sergeant Birley had to direct his Captain, who was then hovering without visible reference points, so that the main rotors avoided the collapsed derrick, the tail rotor did not hit a broken antenna less than five feet behind it, the aircraft did not belly onto another antenna sticking up from the collapsed derrick, and so that various loose wires swinging about in the wind were avoided. Despite being badly affected by fumes, smoke and heat from the burning rig, Sergeant Birley winched the second crewman down successfully and his Captain cannot speak too highly of the calm manner in which he directed the helicopter in these extremely hazardous and turbulent conditions. Sergeant Birley quickly realised that the Brunei crewman on the deck was having difficulty in finding his way, so he calmly directed his Captain over and round the barge to positions where he could direct the second crewman by hand signals to the injured man. Then he again guided the helicopter back to the winching position and winched both men to safety, exercising the greatest care and gentleness in getting the badly burned survivor into the aircraft cabin, where he gave immediate first aid. During that day Sergeant Birley flew four further sorties into the disaster area with different Captains. These sorties included eight further winching operations on and off the same point on the barge, once the fire had died down, with the Shell damage control party and their equipment. Between 0500 hours and 1700 hours that day he was airborne for a total of eight hours and ten minutes and drove himself close to the limits of physical endurance. During the rescue, Sergeant Birley, a relatively inexperienced crewman, was aware that the Wessex could not survive a second explosion or gas pocket. He was badly affected by fumes near the rig, nevertheless he calmly directed the operation in the most hazardous conditions for a period of eighteen minutes displaying the highest standards of determination, professional skill, coolness and judgement, and great courage in the finest traditions of the Royal Air Force. His actions then, and throughout the day, earned the unqualified admiration of the seasoned and experienced Shell personnel involved. The survivor, badly burned and helpless, undoubtedly owes his life to this Wessex crew in which Sergeant Birley played the key role.

31st August 1971.

ROYAL AIR FORCE

GENERAL DUTIES BRANCH

Appointment to Commission (Permanent)

As Acting Pilot Officer:

Aircraftman Clive LINES, C.Eng., M.I.E.E. (8025702). 27th May 1971 (*Substituted for Notification in London Gazette dated 6th Jul. 1971*).

Promotion

Flying Officer to Flight Lieutenant:

P. R. WEBB (4335348). 16th Oct. 1970 (*Seniority 1st Apr. 1970*).

D. S. RIGBY (4232835). 21st Jul. 1971.

25th Aug. 1971

P. N. ADHEMAR (4232886).

T. S. ALLISON (4232878).

J. D. BAILEY (4232917).

E. J. BLACK (4232810).

D. BRUCE (4232932).

W. D. BUCHANAN (4232918).

N. J. CORBISHLEY (4232913).

P. C. A. FAWCUS (4232906).

R. J. HALL (4232892).

P. R. LEA (4232899).

P. C. LEE-PRESTON (4232928).

A. J. LEMON (4232893).

D. G. LLOYD (4232924).

M. M. MCKINNON (4232908).

R. M. MATTHEWS (4232926).

R. METCALFE (4232855).

M. K. MILLAR (4232846).

N. MORGAN (4232935).

P. F. MULKERN (4232896).

H. G. P. NORTON (4232937).

A. J. STACEY (4232870).

B. R. WITHERS (4232931).

26th Aug. 1971

K. F. DAVID (4088918).

E. A. SHELLEY (4067204).

D. WOOD (4081982).

N. M. S. PARRY (4231844). 1st Apr. 1970 (*Substituted for Notification in London Gazette dated 8th Sep. 1970*).

Pilot Officer to Flying Officer:

R. J. SHARP (690225). 31st Jul. 1971 (*Seniority 31st Jan. 1971*).

Specialist Aircrew

Flight Lieutenants designated Specialist Aircrew:

D. COLLINS (4081441). 26th Aug. 1971.

P. M. BELSHAM (2543972). 30th Aug. 1971.

T. L. JONES (2768292). 1st Sep. 1971.

Antedate of Seniority

The undermentioned Flying Officers are awarded antedate of seniority from the dates stated:

N. M. S. PARRY (4231844). 12th Jul. 1965 from 16th Feb. 1968.

S. SAVAGE (4335472). 1st Apr. 1967 from 11th Feb. 1970.

R. J. WEST (4335842). 22nd Sep. 1969 from 16th Oct. 1970.

Transfer between Branches

Flight Lieutenant L. ROSEFIELD (4089508) is transferred to the Supply Branch in existing rank and seniority. 8th Aug. 1971.

Acting Pilot Officer R. M. MCGEE (8025443) is transferred to the Supply Branch in the rank of Pilot Officer. 25th Jul. 1971 (*Seniority 10th Mar. 1971*).

Retirement

Group Captain W. S. NORTHCOTT, D.F.C. (at own request). 6th Aug. 1971.

GENERAL DUTIES (GROUND) BRANCH

Promotion

Flying Officer to Flight Lieutenant:

28th Aug. 1971

F. J. CROWSON (4335463).

P. M. GARDINER (4335473).

D. J. HODGE (4335410).

B. J. ORR (4335430).

R. N. PERRY (4335428).

D. STEWART (4335469).

Regrading

Acting Pilot Officer to Pilot Officer:

R. J. C. LLOYD (8024999). 1st Apr. 1970 (*Seniority 21st Mar. 1970*). (*Substituted for notification in London Gazette 28th Jul. 1970*).

Antedate of Seniority

The undermentioned Flying Officers are awarded antedate of seniority from the dates stated:

J. V. WHEELER (4232898). 25th Aug. 1968 from 13th Apr. 1969.

T. W. LEWINS (4233397). 28th Oct. 1969 from 24th Feb. 1970.

Reinstatement on the Active List

Frank Turner RIDPATH (2531444) is reinstated on the Active List in the rank of Flight Lieutenant. 30th Jul. 1971 (*Seniority 14th Sep. 1960*).

ENGINEER BRANCH

Appointment to Commission (Permanent)

As Squadron Leader

Peter LOWRY, M.I.E.E., F.I.E.R.E. (3201153). 18th Jul. 1971.

Appointment to Commission (Short Service)

Notification Amended

London Gazette 6th Apr. 1971 Concerning Barry Austin JONES, B.A. (5201660), Amend Seniority to read 22nd May 1968.