



SECOND SUPPLEMENT TO

The London Gazette

of Monday, 17th January 1977

Published by Authority

Registered as a Newspaper

TUESDAY, 18TH JANUARY 1977

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

HONOURS AND AWARDS

NAVY DEPARTMENT

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF
THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace,
London S.W.1.
18th January 1977.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the Queen's Gallantry Medal to the undermentioned:

Lieutenant Commander Timothy Kelsey CANNON, Royal Navy.

Marine Engineering Artificer 2 Carl Laurence ASHCROFT, D120299T.

Acting Petty Officer Marine Engineering Mechanic Martin Philip MIDDLETON, D104933H.

On 2nd May 1976 while berthed at Merseyside, a serious fire broke out in the Diesel Generating Compartment of HM Submarine WARSPITE. Within a minute the compartment and the main machinery compartments (including the Manoeuvring Room) became full of vicious choking black toxic smoke which reduced visibility to almost nil. The initial violent conflagration, in addition to giving off intense heat, caused secondary fires in the Diesel Generating Compartment which, together with the noxious combustion products, increased the already extremely difficult and hazardous task of fighting fires.

Lieutenant Commander Timothy Kelsey CANNON, Royal Navy

Lieutenant Commander Cannon, the Senior Engineering Officer who was not onboard at the time, arrived at the Control Room of the Submarine some 40 minutes after the fire had started. By this time the situation had become very serious indeed. Although without a self-contained breathing set, his first thought was to reach the four nuclear power watchkeepers, a distance of some 30 feet away from the fire. To achieve this he had to plug in his emergency breathing mask to fixed breathing sockets in order to take in air, hold his breath, and then feel his way to the next socket, several times. By his calm, positive

leadership he was able to steady and encourage the watchkeepers whose task is to ensure the safety of the nuclear reactor plant and the ship.

However the heat and smoke soon became so severe that the withdrawal of the watchkeepers became imperative. This was controlled by Lieutenant Commander Cannon who by this time had obtained a self-contained breathing set. One of the watchkeepers lost his breathing mask during the evacuation and was overcome by smoke and fumes: Lieutenant Commander Cannon dragged him to safety and then returned to the manoeuvring room to search by feel to ensure complete evacuation.

For the next 3 hours Lieutenant Commander Cannon monitored vital equipment and took charge of the fire-fighting. Two successive local Fire Brigade teams with breathing apparatus failed to reach the seat of the fire due to the heat and toxic fumes. It was then decided to endeavour to fill the compartment with foam: Lieutenant Commander Cannon led the team and despite the intense heat and dangerous conditions personally inserted the foam branch pipe inside the hatch cover and remained until the compartment was filled. He subsequently returned and refilled the compartment to ensure the effectiveness of the foam. By his very gallant action Lieutenant Commander Cannon not only extinguished the fire but reduced the damage to the submarine by many millions of pounds.

Lieutenant Commander Cannon's personal courage and example were as much an inspiration to the ratings and civilian firemen under conditions of great stress as his thorough technical knowledge was a vital factor in securing the safety of the reactor plant and indeed of the ship. The steadfastness, perseverance and great courage he displayed with disregard to his personal safety throughout the incident were of the highest order.

Marine Engineering Artificer 2 Carl Laurence ASHCROFT, D120299T

MEA2 Ashcroft led the initial team of two civilian firemen to survey the fire. He also searched the diesel room and adjacent compartments for personnel. Wearing a smaller civilian self-contained breathing set he crawled alongside the diesel engines which were on fire and made a complete survey of confined areas by touch to doubly ensure no personnel were present.

Despite the tremendous heat and intense toxic smoke (he could not see the flames) Ashcroft made a second entry to shut off two diesel valves and alter the ventilation flap