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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

HONOURS AND AWARDS

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF
THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

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

23rd December 1980

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

Petty Officer Aircrewman Tudor Grenville WILLIAMS, DO70213N.

On 27th June 1980 the Duty Search and Rescue Helicopter of 772 Squadron, in which Petty Officer Aircrewman Williams was the SAR Diver, was "Scrambled" to attend a Wessex III aircraft reported as having ditched 16 miles south-west of Portland Bill. It was soon established that the Wessex III had sunk immediately and that the aircrew were probably still trapped in the aircraft.

Upon arrival at the scene, Williams was dispatched into the centre of the few items of wreckage left on the surface and, using paint flecks as a guideline, commenced to dive. At about twenty metres this trail vanished so he resurfaced, was recovered by the helicopter and dispatched again into an area of aviation fuel that had by now become evident. This guide he followed down until it disappeared, by which time he could see the seabed. He therefore continued down and commenced an expanding circular search until shortage of air forced him to return to the surface. Although not certain of the depth of the water, he was fully aware from the physiological effects of the pressure that he had been operating at extreme depth. He was recovered by the SAR helicopter and, discovering that the spare diving set he had ordered to be "Scrambled" at the outset of the search had now arrived with the Stand By Helicopter, immediately volunteered to carry out a third dive, despite his knowledge of the potential hazards of repeated deep dives with only minimal ascent time available. He was then dispatched from the Duty Aircraft, recovered by the Stand By, and dispatched at his direction to a point midway between the wreckage and the fuel traces. These he again followed until they vanished near the seabed, whereupon he commenced a further expanding search until shortage of air dictated his return to the surface. During both major ascents Williams was compelled to "equalise" air bottle pressures for a third time, and was thus diving very close to the limits of his endurance.

Although his endeavours to locate and rescue the crashed aircrew were ultimately unsuccessful, Williams displayed extraordinary courage and determination. This was an outstandingly brave and selfless act in the very highest traditions of the Service. (B379)

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