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HONOURS AND AWARDS

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF
THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace, London S.W.1.
24th February 1981.

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

Acting Leading Aircrewman John Pottinger SPENCER, D125260S.

On 10th October 1980 the SAR helicopter stationed at H.M.S. *Daedalus* was scrambled following a report that a dredging barge, which was under tow, had overturned in heavy seas in the Hurst Narrows off Lymington. On arrival at the scene, it was found that one survivor had been rescued, but a remaining crew member was believed to be trapped under the barge.

The duty S.A.R. Diver, Acting Leading Aircrewman Spencer, entered the water to commence the search, whilst the helicopter returned to base to collect extra divers and equipment. Before starting his dive, Spencer learnt from one of the tug crew who was standing on the upturned hull where he thought the survivor might be. With this information Spencer dived to search in water where, not only was the visibility down to about one foot, but there were numerous obstructions and rope hanging from the hull. Feeling his way around, Spencer entered two different compartments, but failed to locate the man. Despite becoming disorientated he remained calm and returned to the surface when he realised his air was running low. By this time, extra breathing apparatus had arrived and having obtained a fresh set, he returned to the search but once again his efforts were unsuccessful. On his third search however, he located a small door which he was unable to open because it was clipped shut, so he returned to the surface to obtain a hammer and also a rope to attach to the door entrance. With great difficulty, Spencer managed to open the door and enter the completely dark hull interior which was most hazardous as the current caused the door to swing. Discovering the survivor in an air pocket, the volume of which was diminishing rapidly, Spencer reassured him that help was at hand, and that he would have to get another diving set. Returning to the surface, Spencer sought the assistance of C.P.O. Brown and both divers returned to the compartment with the spare diving set. They instructed the survivor in its use and when the man was ready, he was led out of the compartment by C.P.O. Brown. Spencer meanwhile waited a few moments to allow them to get clear, but found his exit obstructed when he attempted to leave. Feeling something flapping by his right foot, he kicked at it with his fin and when it moved he dived in that direction and seeing a lighter patch of water, he found the open hatch and surfaced.

Spencer was in the water for some 50 minutes, and for a crucial part of that time he was alone. His courage, persistence and calm professionalism in most dangerous and daunting conditions were outstanding and in the highest traditions of the Service.

Ministry of Defence,
Whitehall London S.W.1.
24th February 1981.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of The Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct to the undermentioned:

Chief Petty Officer Aircrewman David Edward BROWN, F974315J.

For his courage, support and resourcefulness in assisting in the rescue of a survivor trapped under a barge on 10th October 1980.

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