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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.
4th August 1981.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous award of the George Medal to the under-mentioned:

GEORGE MEDAL

Master Air Loadmaster David Edward BULLOCK
(SO684809), Royal Air Force.

Master Air Loadmaster David Edward Bullock was posted to Royal Air Force Coltishall as a Search and Rescue helicopter winchman with "C" Flight Number 202 Squadron on 17th February 1978. On the morning of 18th November 1980, he was a member of a Search and Rescue Sea King helicopter crew alerted at 0930 hours following a mid-air collision between two A10 fighter aircraft of the United States Air Force. Once airborne, the Sea King was directed to help one of the American pilots who had ejected from his aircraft over the sea. He was found still attached to his parachute which was deployed and dragging him through the water. Weather conditions at the scene were extremely hazardous with gale force winds raising fifteen foot waves in an icy sea. The Sea King hovered over the A10 pilot and, undeterred by the obvious dangers, Master Air Loadmaster Bullock elected to be lowered by cable into the sea so that he could directly assist the pilot who was unconscious but judged to be alive. On entering the water, Master Air Loadmaster Bullock was seen immediately to attach himself to the A10 pilot's harness with a "Grabbitt Hook" so that they would not become separated in the extreme conditions. Meanwhile, the survivor was being dragged at high speed

through the waves by his parachute which periodically was being re-inflated by vicious gusts of wind. In these appalling conditions, Master Air Loadmaster Bullock was observed calmly to set about the task of attempting to save the life of the unconscious pilot. Unable to release the parachute, he attempted in the face of great difficulty to cut the numerous shroud lines, some of which were entangled around the pilot's arms. He persisted in these efforts, despite the numbing cold and buffeting waves, for several minutes during which both men remained attached to each other and the helicopter. Eventually, however, a particularly strong gust of wind caught the parachute canopy and dramatically increased the tension on the rescue cable which snapped under the unusual load. The unrestrained parachute then continued to tow both men erratically through the numbing sea and, periodically, below its surface. Initially, Master Air Loadmaster Bullock could be seen keeping the A10 pilot's head above the water. Then, progressively, he lost strength and his ability to control the survivor's position correspondingly diminished until, after three or four minutes, he too lost consciousness. Subsequently, both men were dragged through the water for some time and were dead when finally recovered. In the most appalling weather conditions, more hazardous than any he had previously encountered during his 2 years in the Search and Rescue role, Master Air Loadmaster Bullock was winched down to a helpless pilot. Despite the unique and considerable difficulties, created by the inflated parachute, he calmly went about the business of attempting to recover the pilot to the helicopter as quickly and as safely as possible. He was close to success when the cable broke. Well aware of the very dangerous situation created by this catastrophic turn of events, he had every opportunity over a period of three or four minutes, to disconnect himself from the pilot and save his own life. However, consciously and with conspicuous courage he chose to remain with the pilot in the hope of saving him. The selfless sacrifice of his own life while trying to save another totally accords with the very highest traditions of the Royal Air Force.