

Mate was the last to jump into his boat. The Captain and the Radio Officer were about to follow him when the ship sank. The Captain was washed by the rush of water into the fore-castle head, and he and the Radio Officer and a fireman were sucked down by the whirl-pool. When "Oakgrove" touched bottom, in about 20 fathoms, the swirl abated and the latter two came up to the surface only slightly injured and were rescued by the First Mate's boat, which stood by for over half an hour in the hope of the Captain coming up too; but he was never seen again. The First Mate now set sail for the twenty mile passage to land. The Second Mate, in the other boat, had no experience of sailing, but followed the First Mate's lead, and after over six hours they reached safety. The First Mate had steered and held the sheet for all this time, and he was numb with cold.

In an unarmed ship, too slow to be handled in her own defence, the First Mate shepherded his crew with such courage, skill and coolness that the intense fire of two powerful enemy aircraft at point-blank range caused them no hurt.

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

*St. James's Palace, S.W.1,
6th February, 1940.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the following Awards:—

The Medal of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for Gallantry:—

Leo Francis O'Hagen,	}	Explosive workers (first grade), Royal Gunpowder Factory, Waltham Abbey, Essex.
Stanley William Sewell,		

When the explosion took place in the Factory on the 18th January, these men were engaged on the nitration of glycerine, the most critical stage in the process of manufacture, when the liability to detonation is greatest.

The building in which the process was carried out is some 150 yards only from the scene of the explosion, and was damaged. The hot water and air services, whereby the process is carried out, were also cut off by the explosion.

Over 1,000 lbs. of nitroglycerine were under process and in a condition of instability. O'Hagen and Sewell, realising the effect to life and property of a further explosion, stood by their posts for some two hours, until the services were restored and then continued with their work until the whole charge had been brought to a state of stability. Had they fled for safety, it is highly probable that the charge of nitroglycerine under their care would have been destroyed. This would not only have caused more wide-spread damage and loss of life, but further delay in the resumption of production in the Factory. Both men showed great gallantry and devotion to duty, and complete disregard for their personal safety.

William George Sylvester, Explosive worker (first grade), Royal Gunpowder Factory, Waltham Abbey, Essex.

On the occasion of the explosion which took place in the Factory on 18th January, he was engaged on the work of purification of nitroglycerine inside N.2 Washing House. This building, which is only 100 yards from the scene of the explosion, suffered considerable damage; half the roof was torn off, two-thirds of the walls collapsed, and the hot water and air services were interrupted. This gave rise to a condition of acute danger due to the possibility of the nitroglycerine freezing with the attendant risk of detonation.

Despite this damage and being aware of the serious situation which had developed, Sylvester continued at his post for at least two hours, until services were restored and the whole charge had been processed and brought to a state of stability. Had he left his post with the charge of over one ton of nitroglycerine standing in its unstable condition, another explosion might have resulted, greatly extending the disaster, and causing further loss of property and life. Sylvester exhibited devotion to duty and gallantry of a high order, with total disregard for his own safety.

The KING has also been graciously pleased to approve of the following Awards:—

The Medal of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for Meritorious Service.

Albert Collingwood Hutton, Colour Sergeant, Royal Marines, (Pensioner) Gunlayer, m/v. "Agnita" (The Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, Limited, London).

In heavily overcast weather, with low lying clouds, an enemy bomber suddenly attacked "Agnita". His marks were easily seen, and the gun's crew at once went to stations. The enemy crossed the ship, flying very low, and dropped a bomb which missed the ship abreast the mainmast. One round was fired, which exploded just abaft the bomber's tail. A second bomb was dropped ahead of the ship, and the enemy crossed again about amidships, this time spraying the ship with machine-gun bullets. A second round was fired, and it is believed that a hit was scored. The enemy re-appeared, dropped a third bomb off the port quarter, and again machine-gunned the ship as he crossed her. The gun was once more fired, and the bomber disappeared into the clouds.

The gunlayer, before the ship sailed, had taken all steps to see that the gun's crew were trained and efficient. In action he was a worthy example to the younger members of the gun's crew.

Henry Read, Pensioner, Royal Marines, Gunlayer s.s. "Hopestar" (Messrs. A. Stott, Limited, Newcastle-on-Tyne).

"Hopestar" is defensively equipped; she has no great speed and was not in convoy. The weather was heavy and visibility bad.

A little before noon, by putting the helm hard a port, the Chief Officer cleared a torpedo