SUPPLEMENT

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CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

St. James's Palace, S.W.1,
20th March, 1940.

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the undermentioned appointments to the Fourth and Fifth Classes of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for the following Awards of the Medal of the said Most Excellent Order, for Meritorious Service, and for the publication in the London Gazette of the names of personnel of the Merchant Navy specially shown below as having received an expression of commendation for their good services.

To be an Additional Officer of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

Captain Ernest Coultas, Master, s.s. "Clan Macbean" (Clan Line Steamers Limited, London).

To be an Additional Member of the Civil Division of the said Most Excellent Order:—

Robert Wilkie Cundale Bainbridge, Esq., Second Engineer, s.s. "Clan Macbean" (Clan Line Steamers Limited, London).

S.S. "Clan Macbean" was unarmed. She had been in a convoy which scattered shortly before being attacked by torpedoes. These found two targets. Towards night-fall, while she was proceeding alone, the Chief Officer, by putting his helm hard over, cleared by inches a torpedo fired from an ocean-going submarine about three-quarters of a mile away and three points on the port bow. From this moment the Master took control of his ship and, with the help only of the native Quartermaster, handled her with such skill that the submarine, which had now surfaced, could make no further torpedo attack. The crew, mostly natives, went to boat stations and lowered all boats to rail level. Keeping stem on to her, "Clan Macbean" now overhauled the submarine; at 200 feet the enemy fired three shells which missed, and at 100 feet he thought it wise to dive with all speed, leaving his gun's crew in the water. While they were being picked up, "Clan Macbean" got right away.

By resolute handling of his unarmed ship, by brilliantly forestalling the enemy's movements and by courageously holding on his course, and so running into point blank gunfire from the submarine, the Master of "Clan Macbean" saved his ship. He could not have achieved his success without the unflinching devotion to duty of his Second Engineer, who remained at his post single-handed in the engineroom after the native crew on duty there had gone to boat stations.

Commended:—

Captain William Stubbs, Master, s.s. "Doric Star" (Blue Star Line Limited, London).

S.S. "Doric Star" was armed with one 4" gun. Her crew was 64, none of whom was hurt. She became suddenly aware of the presence of the enemy by the landing on her deck of a piece of a shell which had exploded about 100 yards off her port quarter. The Master went on the bridge and sighted the masthead of a warship some 15 miles away. He ordered a signal to be sent out. A little later another shell, fired from about 8 miles, landed not more than 200 yards off, on the starboard bow. The superstructure of a battleship was now visible, and "Doric Star" amplified her distress call. The raider, which was "Admiral Graf Spee," temporarily named "Deutschland," and roughly disguised to look like "Renown" or "Repulse," now sent out morse lamp signals telling "Doric Star" not to use her wireless, but no notice was taken and the Radio Officer kept sending calls until he heard them repeated by other ships. The Master stopped his ship. From about half a mile away "Admiral Graf Spee" sent a launch with a boarding party, who asked what the cargo was, and when the Master told them wool they looked at all the hatches and seeing wool under them failed to find out that the cargo was in fact meat, butter and cheese. "Doric Star's" crew were given ten minutes to get ready to leave the ship. The enemy hung bombs over the side, some of which exploded before they left, but failed to sink the ship, so that seven shells and one torpedo had to be put into her.

To be an Additional Officer of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

Herbert Hedley Robinson, Esq., Chief Officer, s.s. "Dunbar Castle" (Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company Limited, London).

Commended:—

Ernest Henry Akehurst, Able Seaman;
Miss Eveline May Clarke, Stewardess;
Miss Marion Alston Copplestone, Stewardess;
Miss Sarah Ferguson, Stewardess;
s.s. "Dunbar Castle," (Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company, Limited, London).

S.S. "Dunbar Castle" was sailing in a slow convoy. She carried 50 passengers, among whom were women and children. In the early afternoon a mine exploded on her starboard hand, below the bridge structure. She broke in two at the point of impact, and in smoke and fumes crumpled up from the after end of the forewell deck. She at once heeled over to starboard and her list rapidly increased. Most of the damage was near the Officers' cabins and the bridge, on which the Master was mortally injured and the Second and Fourth Officers also hurt. All light was cut off below, fierce fires started in the galley and some men were badly burned.

The Chief Officer was on the promenade deck. He went down to the boat deck, which he found deserted, and lowered three boats. The crew were slow to action stations as the two ladders from the forecastle had collapsed. He went to his cabin to find a torch and a knife with which to cut away a boat ladder. All the boats were manned without panic, but the Doctor and one man were thrown into the water. They hung on to the gunwale of another of the boats lowered by the Chief Officer and were pulled aboard.

The Chief Officer and a volunteer, Able Seaman E. Akehurst, then went below to make sure that no one was lying injured there; they called out in the dark, but there was no answer. When they came out the boat-deck was awash and they had to leave the ship. There were men in the water, one of whom the Chief Officer picked up; two others were saved by another boat.

Three stewardesses looked after the wounded with the utmost care. All night long the Tourist Stewardess tended the injured Quartermaster.

To be an Additional Officer of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

Captain George Dennant Simpson, Master, s.s. "Egba" (Elder Dempster Shipping Company Limited, Liverpool).

Awarded the Medal of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for Meritorious Service:—

Henry Calcott, Gunlayer, s.s. "Egba" (Elder Dempster Shipping Company Limited, Liverpool).

S.S. "Egba" is armed with one 4" gun. She had no cargo or passengers. Her crew was 52. She was zigzagging at about 10 knots in clear weather and a smooth sea, when soon after daybreak a large enemy submarine was sighted chasing her on the surface at high speed. "Egba" sent out a wireless message and continued zigzagging. After about half-an-hour the enemy opened fire at about 10,000 yards, without a warning shot. She fired five rounds in some 20 minutes. None of them reached its mark: "Egba" used five smoke floats, which seemed to hamper the enemy. She hoisted her ensign and opened fire at about 7,000 yards. Five rounds in all were fired, the first three in about 30 seconds; the third detonated on the submarine. As a result the submarine dived at once and took no further action. The crew of "Egba" behaved very well and not one of them was hit.

To be an Additional Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

Captain Alexander Fotheringham Cargill, Master, s.s. "Gowrie" (Dundee, Perth and London Shipping Company Limited, Dundee).

S.S. "Gowrie" was unarmed. In the middle of the morning, when three miles

from land, the day being thick and foggy, she was attacked by two Heinkel III's which appeared from the South-East out of low-lying cloud, flying about 150 feet above the water. Both circled the ship once and attacked from the West. The Master at once began to zigzag. He mustered the crew and placed them behind sandbags on the fore part of the bridge. It would, he said, have been murder to expose them. He was alone at the helm throughout the attacks, which lasted 35 minutes. Both the aircraft flew over the ship at about 75 feet. They were so low that their crews could be seen laughing. One circled the bows, machine-gunning the bridge; the other flew in a figure of eight over the stern and dropped bombs. 31 were dropped in all; two only scored direct hits. These fell on the starboard side, just beneath the boat, right on the water-line. The explosions burst the boiler and wrecked the engineroom, which filled with water in about 10 minutes. A great cloud of steam escaped through the ship's side. The starboard boat was launched, though leaking; the Master put six men in it and the rest remained on board till picked up by a boat from the Danish ship "England," which had turned back from her course. "Gowrie" sank within less than an hour, without any of her crew of eleven being hurt.

Throughout a prolonged and merciless attack, to which he could make no reply, the Master did all he could to embarrass the enemy and save his ship.

Commended:—

Captain Matthew Hunter, Master, s.s. "Horsted" (Messrs. Stephenson, Clarke and Associated Companies, Limited, London).

S.S. "Horsted" was armed with one 12-pounder and one Lewis gun. She was in convoy. The wind was fresh to strong south-west; there was heavy rain in the evening and throughout the night. The sea was rough. She was suddenly holed some 10 feet above the waterline by a heavy explosion on the starboard side. The order was given to lower lifeboats. The Master noticed that the after tackle fall of the port lifeboat had been let go. The boat had been lowered about 10 feet and was hanging by the forward fall. Nine men had been thrown in the water. Meanwhile, the starboard boat had been lowered. The Master had gone to get papers from the cabin but was prevented by jammed bulkheads and doors. He returned to the port boat, let go the forward falls and cut the after ones, got into the boat, which was half full of water, and with the help of one sailor, who swam to the boat, rescued the nine men who would otherwise have drowned.

To be an Additional Officer of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

Captain Cyril Gilford West, Master, s.s. "Keynes" (Messrs. Stephenson, Clarke and Associated Companies, Limited, London).

To be an Additional Member of the Civil Division of the said Most Excellent Order:—

Charles Augustus Coleman, Esq., Radio Officer, s.s. "Keynes" (Messrs. Stephenson, Clarke and Associated Companies, Limited, London).

Awarded the Medal of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for Meritorious Service:—

Samuel Leonard Brown, Able Seaman, Gunner, s.s. "Keynes" (Messrs. Stephenson, Clarke and Associated Companies, Limited, London).

S.S. "Keynes" was armed with one Lewis gun. She was attacked by enemy aircraft twice in one day. On a fine clear morning, a single aircraft was observed coming from the East, flying low. He was recognised as a Heinkel III. An S.O.S. was sent out. As soon as he was within range, the Lewis gun opened fire. The enemy dropped one bomb, circled the ship and came in again from the starboard quarter, flying at about 100 feet. He dropped three more bombs, which missed, circled to port, attacked again from the starboard quarter with the sun behind him and dropped another three bombs, this time using his front and rear machine-guns before and after passing over the ship. He circled again across the ship, but dropped no bombs. His fore machine-gun had, it seems, been put out of action by the Lewis gun, but the rear gun scored hits. Three Spitfires now appeared and drove away the Heinkel, who dropped some 40 more bombs into the sea and retired with his tail smoking. The attack lasted some ten minutes, during which the Master swung his ship so that the Lewis gun could be trained on the aircraft. The gunner took all his chances and the Master reckons that some 300 of the 388 tracer bullets fired hit the enemy at close range.

In the middle of the afternoon, the day being still fine and clear, another aircraft swept down from the South-East about a mile and a half on "Keynes's" beam, flew round about a mile to the Northward, 50 feet above the water, turned sharply and came in from ahead. At about 300 yards, the Master, realising that it was an enemy aircraft, open fire. The enemy climbed steeply to avoid "Keynes's" masts. He dropped three bombs, one of which hit and put the steering gear out of action so that the Master could no longer use his helm. Three more bombs were dropped, one hitting in much the same place as the first. The ship caught fire, her engines stopped and she was out of control. Her port side had been blow clean away and she took on a list. Her whole deck was aflame, and as there was no way of quenching the fire, the order was given to abandon ship. The crew were picked up by one of H.M. ships.

The Gunner, on an exposed and open bridge in most trying conditions, showed great courage.

The Radio Officer, though severely wounded, tried again and again to send out signals.

Commended:—

Captain William Duke Falconer (deceased), Master, s.s. "Oakgrove" (Messrs. David Alexander and Sons, Limited, Glasgow).

S.S. "Oakgrove" was unarmed, 35 years old and very slow. She was attacked without warning, in hazy weather with low clouds, by two enemy aircraft, both flying in figures of eight at less than 100 feet up.

The first aircraft raked "Oakgrove" mercilessly with machine-gun fire. The crew took cover; but when the machine-gunning seemed finished, the First Mate wisely brought them out on the deck to watch the fall of the bombs that were coming from the second aircraft, which was now attacking flying mast-high. Seven pairs of bombs and one single bomb were dropped. There were several direct hits; and the ship was badly holed so that she suddenly began to sink very rapidly. In the few seconds to spare the boats were hoisted out, and by cutting the falls with axes and clearing the aerial, which fouled one of them, they were just prevented from being dragged down with the sinking ship. The First Mate's boat was damaged and nearly filled with water. By continuous bailing they later kept this down to about nine inches. "Oakgrove" went down like a stone, causing a great whirlpool in which the boats were nearly overwhelmed. The First Mate was the last to jump into his boat. The Master and the Radio Officer were about to follow him when the ship sank. The Master was washed by the rush of water into the forecastle head, and he and the Radio Officer and a fireman were sucked down by the whirlpool. When "Oakgrove" touched bottom in about 20 fathoms 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 Master coming up too; but he was never seen again. The First Mate has been honoured.

To be Additional Officers of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

Captain George Waite, Master; Thomas William Robson, Esq., First Engineer;	s.s. "San Alberto," (Eagle Oil and Shipping Company, Limited, London).

To be Additional Members of the Civil Division of the said Most Excellent Order:—

Robert Alfred Staincliffe, Esq., Third Engineer; Alfred Ernest Skea, Esq., Fourth Engineer;	s.s. "San Alberto," (Eagle Oil and Shipping Company, Limited, London).

Commended:—

Malcolm Bain (deceased), Boatswain; Maxwell Pirie, Able Seaman; John Young, Sailor;	s.s. "San Alberto," (Eagle Oil and Shipping Company, Limited, London).

S.S. "San Alberto" had been in a convoy which scattered. Before break of day she was torpedoed from the starboard hand just abaft the bridge-house. Two tanks were destroyed, and deck-plating bent up for some 60 feet. She began to go down, and orders to abandon ship were given. All boats were safely got away. The ship now broke in two, leaving the after part afloat. The Master decided to return to what was left of his ship, and the First, Third and Fourth Engineers came with him and raised full steam. By this time the weather, which had been overcast with driving rain-squalls, was getting worse, and all but one of the empty boats which were made fast by painters to the stern, were wrecked by the heavy seas. After nightfall a Belgian tanker "Alexandre André," was sighted and stood by till daylight. The breaking seas were tearing the plates from the frames, and "San Alberto" had to go slowly astern with helm hard aport to avoid going to pieces. As soon as it was light, "Alexandre André" sent her lifeboat, but she could not get within 20 feet of "San Alberto." Sailor Young and Able Seaman Pirie volunteered to jump taking lines to the boat. One was picked up by the lifeboat; the other by the Belgian after he had drifted a good mile. The next night was very dark and the seas still violent. H.M.S. "Mackay" was sighted, but she could not take off the crew till day. Whenever "San Alberto's" engines were stopped she came head to sea and her plates started. She was slowly sinking.

Just two days after she was struck, all hands were rescued from the remains of "San Alberto" by jumping and using Carley Floats on lines. The Master and the Engineers were the last to leave their ship, the after third of which they had handled with great courage, skill and endurance for 24 hours in mid-winter, in high breaking seas, so saving the lives of all their shipmates that were with them in the two lifeboats.

When "San Alberto" broke in two, there were no Officers in the forward part of the ship, so that the Boatswain was in charge. It was largely due to him that the forward boats were lowered and got way, but he could not do this in time to save himself.

To be an Additional Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

Patrick Joseph Cummins, Esq., Radio Officer, s.s. "Tairoa" (Messrs. Shaw, Savill and Albion Company, Limited, London).

S.S. "Tairoa" was armed with one 4" gun. Her crew was 81, three of whom were injured by shrapnel. Before daybreak a vessel was sighted about two points on "Tairoa's" beam some five miles away. The Master was already on the bridge because he knew there was a raider about. The enemy was not recognised as she was bow on, and her flag could not be seen. When it did show it proved to be half a small ensign, black with smoke, flying from a dummy funnel. When within two miles she signalled with flags "I am coming to board you," and made two other flag signals which

were not read. "Tairoa" stopped still, not recognising the enemy, but at three-quarters of a mile it was noticed that the ship had all her big guns trained on her. The Radio Officer started on the key and at once the unknown ship fired several shots, which damaged the steering gear, smashed the wings of the bridge and dislodged the sandbags round the Marconi room. The Officers on the bridge went below. Three times the Radio Officer tried again to send out messages and each time the enemy opened fire, but ceased as soon as the wireless stopped. After the third attempt to transmit, the enemy fired two shells which blew the wireless away, one smashing the receiver. Meanwhile, the order had been given to abandon ship, and the men had lowered and manned the boats. The enemy ship proved to be "Admiral Graf Spee," named "Deutschland" for the time being and crudely disguised as "Repulse" or "Renown." Captain Langsdorf, of "Admiral Graf Spee" later explained that he did not wish to take life, but only fired when "Tairoa" disobeyed a notice in English telling her not to use her wireless. This notice was not read. He complimented the Radio Officer on his courage and devotion to duty.

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