

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 with-
out 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 fore-castle 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;	} s.s. "San Alberto," (Eagle Oil and Ship- ping Company, Limited, London).
Thomas William Robson, Esq.,	
First Engineer;	

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

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

Commended:—

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

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 day-
light. 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. When-
ever "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 ship-
mates that were with them in the two life-
boats.

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 be-
cause 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