

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

Richard Hamilton Ayres, Esq., Second Mate.

The ship was torpedoed and three boats were got away. One, in command of the Second Mate, set out with thirty-one men in her, eight of them Europeans and twenty-three Indians. Only the Second Mate had any skill with boats.

It was a dark night and heavy seas were running, so they lay to a sea-anchor until dawn, when they set sail and steered East. Mr. Ayres fixed the water ration at two dippers a day and gave the Indians, who were least able to withstand the cold, the forward part of the boat under the canvas cover, and all the blankets. After seven days only seven men remained alive, the rest having died of exposure or from drinking sea water. By the eighth day the water had all gone, and the men's hands and feet were badly frostbitten. After thirteen days land was sighted. They were too weak to use the oars, so they ran under shortened sail for the inhospitable shore. A comber broached them to, overturned the boat, and all hands were thrown into the sea. Another breaker righted her and the Second Mate pulled himself aboard and helped to drag in others. Again she turned turtle. The only three men to survive this last ordeal now clung to the keel. One let go his hold and the others were too weak to help him.

The Second Mate and a Seaman now struck out desperately for the shore. Helpers came and the Seaman scrambled to a rock but before he could be rescued he was washed back into the sea and was not seen again. Mr. Ayres was unconscious when hauled ashore. Undismayed by suffering and death he had kept a stout heart and done all a man could to comfort his shipmates and bring them to safety.

James Flett, Esq., First Radio Officer, M.V. "San Casimiro."

The ship was attacked and captured by an enemy Raider. When she was first sighted Radio Officer Flett sent a message giving her position although the enemy jammed his set and the order had been given by signal lamp not to use it. The enemy opened fire but Mr. Flett went on with his message until the aerial was shot away.

The ship, as a result of Mr. Flett's messages, was found by one of H.M. Ships and was scuttled by the enemy. Mr. Flett was thrown into the water and it was some time before he was picked up. Though suffering from this he insisted on making a full report before receiving medical attention.

*Awarded the British Empire Medal (Civil Division):—*

Percy George Berry, Gunner.

During an attack by an enemy aircraft bombs were dropped near the ship. Berry opened fire with the ship's defensive armament and the enemy was driven off. He came back and Berry, by his cool and accurate shooting, again drove him away. The machine dived steeply as if out of control and made off losing height rapidly.

Bertram Charles Covill, Gunner.

The ship was attacked in convoy by a German aircraft. She was hit by two bombs and began to sink. As her boats pulled away it was found that some of her crew were missing.

The jolly-boat returned to the vessel which was now low in the water. Covill jumped overboard and clambered on to the deck. The only person he could find was the Chief Engineer, who was badly hurt. He put him into a lifebuoy, lifted him overboard and, towing his charge, swam to the jolly-boat. The two men were pulled away from the suction of the sinking ship and hauled to safety.

George Bradley Doncaster, Second Mate.

The ship was attacked by an enemy aircraft. Doncaster, under machine-gun fire, climbed a ladder to man the gun on the bridge and bravely stood by throughout the action.

He showed coolness and courage in the face of great danger.

George Edward Giles, Gunner.

George William Macdonald, Ship's Carpenter.

The ship was attacked in moonlight by an aircraft which came in from the starboard quarter. She replied at once and hit the enemy. The aircraft burst into flames, released her bombs, which missed, banked and fell into the sea.

It was due to the readiness, coolness and accurate shooting of Giles and Macdonald that the enemy was destroyed with the least possible delay.

William Murray, Mate.

A small coaster was on her own when she was attacked at midnight by a German aircraft. The Mate, who had just gone into the wheelhouse to take over from the Master, was wounded by machine-gun bullets. The Master ordered him below. Later, bombs fell and the Mate was stunned. On recovering, he crawled to the wheel-house and found it a smouldering mass, the Master and helmsman missing. The ship was now sinking by the head, with the foredeck awash.

In spite of many wounds and concussion, the Mate made his way aft to see if anyone was alive. He found six men, two of them hurt. They lowered the port lifeboat and pulled away.

Murray showed courage and great fortitude.

John Patterson, Able Seaman.

The ship was torpedoed and sank in six minutes. Three boats were lowered but very heavy seas were running and only one was picked up. This boat was in the charge of Able Seaman Patterson who, though only nineteen years old, by coolness, steadfastness and good seamanship, kept it afloat in the great seas for fifty-three hours and so saved the lives of ten of his shipmates.

Stanley Pinchin, Gunner.

The ship was severely attacked by an enemy aircraft with machine guns and cannon shell. She replied and as a result the aircraft was set on fire.

Pinchin showed great coolness and it was largely due to his good shooting that the enemy was damaged.