

saved the aircraft and probably the lives of the air crews and armourers who were emptying the remaining ammunition tanks.

**CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.**

*St. James's Palace, S.W.1.  
6th January, 1942.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the British Empire Medal (Military Division) to the under-mentioned:—

506993 Sergeant John William EMMETT.

In the early hours of a day in September, 1941, this airman saw an aircraft having difficulty in landing at an aerodrome. Anticipating a crash he took charge of the fire tender, although not officially on duty, and arrived at the scene of the accident within three minutes. The aircraft, which had been broken in two by the impact, was burning furiously and two members of the crew could be seen alive in the flames below the fuselage. Sergeant Emmett, protected only by asbestos gloves, dashed into the burning wreckage and extricated one of the crew. Before he could return for the second man, the petrol tank split and the fierce heat of the blazing petrol then prevented any near approach. Sergeant Emmett tried repeatedly to extricate the other living member of the crew by means of a grab hook but without success. In spite of a violent explosion, Sergeant Emmett continued to direct the work of his fire party until the fire was completely extinguished and the remaining bodies were recovered. Unfortunately the rescued airman has since died of his injuries. Sergeant Emmett on this occasion displayed great devotion to duty and courage and disregard for his own safety. He has been in charge of the station fire fighting personnel for the past 9 months and has shown considerable fortitude and presence of mind at many flying accidents on and near the station.

1255790 Sergeant Francis Beaumont MITCHELL.

Sergeant Mitchell was the wireless operator/air gunner of an aircraft which, whilst engaged on a navigation flight, crashed into a hill side in sparsely populated mountain country. The pilot was killed and the remainder of the crew seriously injured. Sergeant Mitchell, though suffering from serious and painful injuries, crawled on his hands and knees for a distance of 2 to 3 miles, over treacherous country side and during thick fog in order to obtain assistance. The time taken was about 3 hours. As a result of this airman's courage and devotion to duty, the rescue of the other members of the crew was made possible by nightfall. There is no doubt that, but for his action, they would have succumbed to their injuries.

404216 Sergeant John James PLUNKETT.

In August, 1941, an aircraft crashed into the sea. Many gallant attempts, both collective and individual, were made to rescue the three members of the crew, but conditions were such that all lost their lives, together with eleven of the would-be rescuers. Among numerous Royal Air Force personnel concerned, Sergeant Plunkett has been chosen

for recognition as having shown outstanding gallantry. He swam out 300 yards in the raging sea and brought back an unconscious airman whom he attempted, with the help of others, to revive by artificial respiration. Unfortunately the airman died later. In addition to his efforts at artificial respiration, Sergeant Plunkett succeeded in bringing three other persons to the shore, and these owe their lives to his courage and determination.

1169029 Sergeant Jack PURCELL.

Sergeant Purcell was the front gunner of an aircraft which, whilst carrying out an attack on Ostend, received a direct hit from heavy anti-aircraft fire. Although an attempt was made to bring the aircraft back to England, it eventually crashed in the sea some ten miles from the coast. On impact, the captain was thrown down into the bomb compartment but, after being submerged in fifteen feet of water, he eventually escaped, in a semi-drowned condition, through the broken off tail of the aircraft. Sergeant Purcell, who was suffering from burns about the face and hands, had helped the captain to climb out from the wreckage and then supported and encouraged him for about half an hour until it was possible to reach the dinghy. In spite of the captain's continual suggestions that Sergeant Purcell should leave him and get to the dinghy himself, the sergeant refused to do so. There is little doubt that the captain's life was saved as a result of the determination and bravery shown by Sergeant Purcell. He subsequently displayed courage, cheerfulness and powers of endurance during the three days which the crew spent floating in the dinghy.

1173343 Leading Aircraftman Leslie Frederick HAMSHERE.

One night in September, 1941, an aircraft caught fire in the air and crashed. Leading Aircraftman Hamshere was the first on the scene and made several attempts to reach the body of the pilot but was driven back by the intense heat. Ammunition was exploding rapidly, constituting great danger. Nevertheless, Leading Aircraftman Hamshere proceeded to unload the guns and removed the ammunition to a place of safety. His coolness and courage in endeavouring to extricate the pilot and, later, in unloading the guns were of the highest order, more particularly as he, an accounts clerk, has only a very limited knowledge of either aircraft or guns.

533281 Leading Aircraftman Jack HAYNES.

In February, 1941, this airman was a passenger in an aircraft which crashed in a rubber plantation in Malaya and burst into flames. Leading Aircraftman Haynes, who had sustained superficial injuries only, quickly extricated himself from the aircraft, ran round to the front cockpit, which was enveloped in flames, and observed the pilot endeavouring to extricate himself but apparently prevented from doing so by the framework of the cockpit. Although the fuselage was burning with great intensity, and the petrol tanks had not then exploded, Leading Aircraftman Haynes immediately attempted to rescue the trapped pilot. He tried to lift the framework but found it too hot to handle. By using the branch of a tree, however, he succeeded in pushing away