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

*St. James's Palace, S.W.1.
14th March, 1944.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointments to the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—

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

Flying Officer Cyril Brooking Thornton (117692), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

In November, 1943, a Mosquito aircraft, carrying full operational equipment and long range petrol tanks, crashed whilst taking off and immediately burst into flames. Soon explosions were occurring almost continuously owing to fuel tanks, cannon shells and Verey cartridges being ignited. Blazing wreckage was being flung in all directions. Flying Officer Thornton, a pilot, was one of the first to arrive at the scene of the accident. Finding the navigator had been thrown clear, he made him comfortable, organised the medical party and supervised the injured airman's removal to the ambulance. Then, with complete disregard of his own safety, this officer made straight for the main area of the crash which was surrounded by barbed wire, and saw that the pilot of the aircraft was lying beside an engine with his clothing on fire. Flying Officer Thornton went through the wire into the middle of the wreckage to reach the pilot, and, in spite of the great danger he was in, put out the flames on the pilot's clothing, and removed his parachute. With assistance he then carried the pilot to an ambulance. Unfortunately, both the rescued airmen died later but had it not been for the prompt and gallant action of Flying Officer Thornton, who sustained burns to both his hands, neither would have been rescued alive.

Lieutenant Ewen John Macdonald (205961V), South African Air Force.

One night in October, 1943, Lieutenant Macdonald was one of the crew of a Wellington aircraft detailed for an exercise in Suez Bay. While the aircraft was at 300 feet above sea level, the port engine misfired and shortly afterwards failed altogether. The aircraft could not maintain height on one engine, and was forced down on to the sea. Lieutenant Macdonald escaped from the astro hatch and noticed that the dinghy had broken away and, with a strong wind blowing, was rapidly drifting south. He immediately swam after it but his efforts to retrieve it were unsuccessful. Returning to the crew he found the pilot and navigator in difficulties, the pilot suffering from

a sprained ankle and partial paralysis of the leg. Lieutenant Macdonald inflated the navigator's life saving jacket for him and then went to the pilot's assistance. The other members of the crew separated and swam towards the shore, but Lieutenant Macdonald unselfishly continued to assist his two comrades, his cheerfulness and words of encouragement inspiring confidence in them. He tied himself to his two colleagues and the three men made slow progress towards the shore. After six hours in the water the navigator threw off his life saving jacket and swam away. Lieutenant Macdonald gave the injured pilot the extra life jacket and together they continued their slow journey towards the shore which was eventually reached after they had been in the water 13 hours. Throughout the whole period in a rough, shark-infested sea, Lieutenant Macdonald displayed great unselfishness. His conduct is worthy of high praise.

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

*St. James's Palace, S.W.1.
14th March, 1944.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the George Medal to the under-mentioned:—

Warrant Officer William Kerr McGrath (Can./R. 103014) Royal Canadian Air Force.

In December, 1943, Warrant Officer McGrath was the navigator of a Beaufighter aircraft which crashed shortly after taking off on an operational sortie. The aircraft, which was carrying a full petrol load and bombs, disintegrated on impact and burst into flames. Warrant Officer McGrath, who was uninjured, managed to extricate himself from his damaged turret and immediately went to the aid of the pilot. The pilot was unconscious and trapped in his cockpit which was enveloped by flames. The control column had been forced into his stomach and his right foot was locked under the smashed rudder bar. Ignoring the danger from possible explosions, Warrant Officer McGrath endeavoured to release the pilot. After unlocking the top hatch he moved the control column, unfastened the pilot's parachute harness and removed his right flying boot. Then by an almost superhuman effort, Warrant Officer McGrath extricated the pilot from the wreckage and dragged him 100 yards over very rough ground to safety. Warrant Officer McGrath then proceeded to the nearest farmhouse to obtain assistance. This airman displayed conspicuous courage and his prompt action undoubtedly saved his comrade's life.