

1344410 Flight Sergeant Alastair Walter McGinnis, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

1063270 Sergeant Henry Webster, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

In September, 1943, these airmen, who were in the vicinity of an airfield, observed an aircraft overhead with its starboard engine and main plane on fire. The aircraft passed from view and crashed behind neighbouring trees. Commandeering a passing car, Flight Sergeant McGinnis and Sergeant Webster proceeded to the scene of the crash. The aircraft was burning furiously and ammunition was exploding. In spite of this and of the danger that the bombs, which they could see in the wreckage, might explode at any moment, these airmen approached the aircraft to search for the crew. They found the wireless operator (air) in the rear of the aircraft and succeeded in extricating him and in beating out the flames on his clothing. They also extricated another member of the crew who was lying in the burning wreckage but was unfortunately dead. Flight Sergeant McGinnis and Sergeant Webster then carried the wireless operator (air) away from immediate danger and commenced to render first aid to him. While they were thus engaged one of the bombs exploded and both airmen were thrown to the ground and hit by falling shrapnel. Undeterred, they continued to tend to their comrade. They laid him in a ditch further away and stayed with him until an ambulance arrived. In circumstances of great danger Flight Sergeant McGinnis and Sergeant Webster displayed coolness and outstanding gallantry and undoubtedly saved the life of one member of the crew.

949144 Acting Corporal John Andrew Sinclair, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

In July, 1943, Corporal Sinclair was a passenger in a Wellington bomber which caught fire whilst taking off. A forced landing was made with the aircraft in flames and it became a total wreck. Although the petrol tanks were exploding and all had been ordered to stand clear, Corporal Sinclair, displaying complete disregard for his personal safety, re-entered the blazing aircraft and was instrumental in rescuing two passengers who were trapped in the rear turret. In effecting the rescue Corporal Sinclair sustained severe burns on the head and arms, and was subsequently in hospital for six weeks. He displayed great bravery in saving the lives of the two trapped passengers.

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 British Empire Medal (Military Division) to the undermentioned:—

535488 Flight Sergeant Thomas Hall, Royal Air Force.

In November, 1943, a Beaufighter aircraft, carrying a normal load of explosives and ammunition, crashed and burst into flames. Flight Sergeant Hall, who was working in a nearby building, immediately went to the scene of the accident and endeavoured to rescue the pilot who, although he had struggled half way out of the hatch, was dazed and unable to get clear. Flight Sergeant Hall was driven back by the flames but, persisting in his efforts, he eventually succeeded in pulling the pilot out of the aircraft and in assisting him to safety. In so doing Flight Sergeant Hall sustained severe burns to his face. His prompt and courageous action, which was performed with the knowledge that the aircraft was carrying explosives and ammunition, undoubtedly saved the pilot's life.

1389699, Sergeant Eric Victor Sharp, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

One morning in November, 1943, Sergeant Sharp was the wireless operator (air) of a Wellington aircraft which crashed and caught fire. The aircraft was fully fuelled and carrying ammunition and pyrotechnics. The crew, with one exception, managed to extricate themselves. Sergeant Sharp was just about to jump off the leading edge of the mainplane when the wing petrol tanks caught fire. At this moment, realising that one of his comrades was still in the aircraft, he returned through the fire and succeeded in pulling him out of the astro-dome on to the ground. In

so doing he sustained injuries which necessitated treatment at hospital but his gallant action saved his comrade's life.

771102 Corporal Ernest Marmaduke Bower, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

On two occasions this airman, while in charge of the crash tender, has shown outstanding gallantry in his attempts to save the lives of pilots by quelling the flames of burning aircraft. The first incident occurred in August, 1943, when two Typhoon aircraft, which had collided in the air, burst into flames on impact with the ground. The second took place in November, 1943, when an aircraft landed from an operational sortie with a bomb which had failed to release; the bomb fell off during the landing run, exploded, and set the aircraft alight. In the face of great danger from exploding cannon shells and petrol tanks Corporal Bower, on both occasions, showed fine courage and devotion to duty by approaching, without hesitation, very close to the burning aircraft to enable his extinguisher to reach the flames. His excellent example encouraged the other airmen engaged in the fire fighting and enabled the flames to be subdued in a very short time.

1250011 Corporal Sidney John Mathews, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

One night in December, 1943, this airman observed a Lancaster aircraft crash in a field. He immediately ran across several ploughed fields to reach the aircraft which was by then burning fiercely. Corporal Mathews succeeded in extricating the wireless operator and in pulling two other members of the crew from the blazing wreckage. Then after attending to the rear gunner who had been thrown clear and was dazed, Corporal Mathews went to a telephone and reported the crash to his base. Later, he directed the fire tender and the ambulance to the scene. By his prompt and courageous action this airman saved the life of the wireless operator and rendered valuable assistance in most harassing and difficult circumstances.

549750 Leading Aircraftman William Henry Goode, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

One night in October, 1943, a Lancaster aircraft, returning from an operation, crashed on a beach. A crash tender was quickly on the scene. Leading Aircraftman Goode being a member of its crew. The aircraft was found to be burning fiercely. Despite the danger from ammunition, which was continually exploding, the crew of the tender successfully extinguished the fire. There being no sign of any occupants of the bomber, an extensive search was made of the aircraft and also in the neighbourhood of the beach. The search in this latter area was a particularly hazardous operation as the locality is heavily mined and personnel had been "warned off" in orders. Throughout the fire fighting work and during the subsequent search, which was undertaken in complete darkness, Leading Aircraftman Goode showed a conspicuous example of courageous and enthusiastic leadership, displaying complete disregard for his own safety. On a more recent occasion, he displayed similar courage and leadership when an aircraft crashed on a runway of his station and burst into flames. He made a prolonged attempt to save the pilot from the flames and, although unsuccessful, he eventually was able to recover the body.

1182257 Leading Aircraftman Terence James Bysshe Shelley Giles, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. (Royal Air Force Regiment.)

1454796 Aircraftman 1st Class Leonard John Waites, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. (Royal Air Force Regiment.)

In December, 1943, an Albemarle aircraft crashed when approaching to land on an airfield. The wreckage blazed furiously. Leading Aircraftman Giles and Aircraftman 1st Class Waites, who were employed in a gun post 200 yards away, immediately ran to the scene. Disdaining the intense heat and exploding ammunition they climbed on to the fuselage to reach the seriously injured wireless operator (air) and succeeded in extricating him from his broken and burning turret and in carrying him away to safety. After removing the airman's burning shoes, Aircraftmen Giles and Waites returned to the blazing wreckage but were unable to find any other occupants of the aircraft. These airmen displayed high courage.