



SUPPLEMENT TO

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## MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

### NAVY DEPARTMENT

#### CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace, London S.W.1.

17th December 1968

THE QUEEN has been most graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointment to the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:

*To be an Additional Member of the Military Division of the said Most Excellent Order for Gallantry:*

Lieutenant (S.L.) David Austin BLYTHE, Royal Navy.

On the night of Tuesday 16th April 1968 a request was received to lift off a workman suffering from a crushed shoulder and severe head injuries from the Longships Lighthouse. Although at night, with no moon and a strong gusty wind exceeding 30 kts. at times, Lieutenant Blythe with a crew of four took off from Culdrose in a Wessex Helicopter at 2200 to attempt the rescue. During the transit towards Lands End they encountered low cloud and heavy rain showers but doggedly pressed on with the task.

On arrival in the area, the initial intention to lower the Medical Attendant down on to the top of the lamphouse was found to be impracticable. Lieutenant Blythe therefore decided to lift the injured man in a Neil Robertson stretcher from a 3 foot gallery round the lamphouse. He established a hover just above the lighthouse with his right wheel only five feet away from the aerials while his co-pilot assisted him in maintaining a steady height some 100 feet above the rocks and raging seas below.

During this exceedingly dangerous yet most skilful piece of flying the aircrewman conned Lieutenant Blythe into a position where the rescue hoist hook could be plumbed down to the waiting keepers below, who in turn attached the stretcher to the winch hook. During this operation, which took several minutes, Lieutenant Blythe was obliged to remain absolutely steady as any movement could have caused the stretcher to be dragged from the gallery and fall down on to the rocks below. To further complicate this most delicate operation, the wind was gusting between 25 kts. and 40 kts., each gust requiring a correction by Lieutenant Blythe in order to maintain an absolutely steady hover.

Eventually the stretcher was firmly lashed to the winch hook and the man safely lifted from this small tower into the relative safety of the aircraft. Throughout the entire rescue Lieutenant Blythe

acted in a most professional, competent manner fully realising each risk he was taking, yet calmly and by his exemplary conduct inspiring the remainder of his crew to complete this most hazardous rescue. His own handling of the aircraft on a night when the weather conditions were completely unsuitable for normal night flying operations was of the highest possible standard.

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Lieutenant Commander Geoffrey Norman TEAGUE, Royal Navy.

Engineer Lieutenant Commander George Theodore Alexander DARLEY, Royal Navy.

On the evening of Saturday 27th January, 1968, at 2030 H.M.S. Diana closed the Spanish tanker Bahia Gaditana in answer to an S.O.S. that she was on fire and drifting out of control. A fire party attempted to board the tanker by life raft in a force 5 wind but was unsuccessful. A second and successful attempt was made at 0745 the next morning.

The fire was situated in the tanker's engine room and was generating a fierce and intense heat so that the surrounding decks and bulkheads were red hot. Two full ready use diesel fuel tanks in the engine room were already dangerously hot and on deck in the vicinity of the hot spot were stowed dozens of drums of lubricating oil.

The party, with further support from H.M.S. Diana, worked unremittingly until 1630, when the fire in the engine room, which had burned for 30 hours, was declared out. Even then a watch was still required as re-ignition remained a strong possibility. This in fact occurred on three occasions but was speedily dealt with.

Lieutenant Commander Teague was in overall charge of the boarding and firefighting parties, ably seconded by Engineer Lieutenant Commander Darley. Both men showed courage, coolness, great presence of mind and outstanding leadership in the face of great personal danger throughout the firefighting