



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.

10th October 1972.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the British Empire Medal for Gallantry (Military Division) to the undermentioned:

Acting Petty Officer Marine Engineering Mechanic Joseph Greener THOMPSON, P/059598

P.O. THOMPSON was on watch in "B" Boiler Room in H.M.S. BULWARK on the morning of 26th November 1971 when a sprayer hose on B1 Boiler burst, spraying the bilges and the front of the boiler with hot oil which immediately caught fire.

P.O. THOMPSON organised the five men in his watch to fight the fire and had almost established a foam blanket when the fire re-ignited fiercely on either side of his party, blocking the exit route and driving them back with smoke and heat.

As he retreated, P.O. THOMPSON shut down and shut off everything he could get at in an effort to stop the fire spreading, and to safeguard machinery. This done he mustered his young inexperienced and frightened team under a ventilation outlet close to the foot of the escape tunnel.

By this time the Boiler Room was thick with choking smoke, the heat was intense and without the air supplied through the ventilation trunk the P.O. and his team could not have survived.

Once he had taken stock of the situation, P.O. THOMPSON sent a rating up the escape tunnel but he could not open the hatch and fell back down again. Eventually outside assistance reached them, the hatch was opened from above, and after being trapped for 42 minutes P.O. THOMPSON and his team were able to clear the Boiler Room.

The Boiler Room's crew were all young, and two were juniors, yet led by P.O. THOMPSON they remained calm in the face of the heat, smoke and uncertainty that surrounded them.

Without his resolute leadership and clear thinking, it is doubtful whether the crew of B1 Boiler Room would have survived. It is certain that his actions limited the damage caused by the fire.

Marine Engineering Mechanic First Class Peter SIMCOCK, D/121029

On the morning of 26th November 1971, H.M.S. BULWARK suffered a major Boiler Room fire which trapped six men below.

A fire suitman was sent into the Boiler Room to try and locate the missing men but was driven back by the flames, heat and smoke.

M.E.M. SIMCOCK then entered the blazing compartment in a fire suit and fought his way through the fire and across the plates until he found the crew mustered below a ventilation trunk. They indicated that the escape hatch was jammed and SIMCOCK went up the shaft and tried without success to clear the problem. He returned to the group and then retraced his steps through the fire to get help, reaching the normal exit, despite being burned through his fire suit, some twenty minutes after he had entered.

SIMCOCK, only 19 years old, spent twenty minutes almost alone in a compartment filled with heat, flames and smoke of a major fire, and carried out the task he had been given. As a direct result of his actions the trapped men were recovered unharmed and it became possible to close down the compartment and fight the fire in time to stop it getting out of hand.

M.E.M. SIMCOCK's courage, devotion to duty and calmness in the face of considerable danger were in the highest traditions of the Service.

ARMY DEPARTMENT

10th October 1972.

Brig. William James ARMSTRONG late R.E.M.E. is appointed Aide-de-Camp to The QUEEN, 30th Sep. 1972, in an existing vacancy.

Col. Richard Geoffrey WILKES, O.B.E., T.D., D.L. late Inf. T.A.V.R. is appointed Aide-de-Camp T.A.V.R. to The QUEEN, 1st Sep. 1972, in an existing vacancy.