

During the Indo-Pakistan confrontation the m.v. "Harmattan" was at anchor at an outer anchorage awaiting a berth from which to discharge her cargo, when an attack from the sea was launched by naval forces and "Harmattan" was struck by a guided missile which wrecked the crew accommodation, killed six members of the crew and injured seven others. The accommodation and the cargo below was set on fire and within minutes the whole mid-ship superstructure became a raging inferno of intense heat and thick smoke. When the missile struck, Mr. McPhee and Mr. Robinson were in their cabins which caught fire. The hot water pipes passing through Mr. McPhee's cabin fractured and severely scalded him, but through the jagged and torn steelwork caused by the entry of the missile he saw the ship's Electrical Officer clinging to an obstruction in a shattered opening in the engine-room casing. Without regard for his own safety and the aggravation to his injuries by the almost unbearable heat of the fire, he went to the Electrical Officer's aid, assisted him past the obstruction, over the wreckage, back through his cabin and out on to the comparative safety of the main deck; his action undoubtedly saved the man's life. Mr. Robinson escaped from his burning cabin into the working alleyway, only to find that this too was on fire. As with great difficulty he was making his way aft he found the Second Engineer Officer and one of the ratings lying seriously injured in the alleyway. Despite many difficulties he assisted one of them a distance of 25 feet out on to the deck at the aft end of the alleyway. Although by now the fire had intensified and the smoke was almost suffocating, he re-entered the alleyway and returned to where the other man was lying and got him out on to the deck aft. Unfortunately the Second Engineer Officer died from his injuries while being taken ashore in one of the ship's lifeboats. When Captain Houston found that members of his crew were missing, he made several gallant attempts to reach them in the wrecked accommodation, but each time was driven back by intense heat and suffocating smoke. When forced to abandon these efforts he coolly and efficiently mustered the remaining crew members, including the injured and shepherded them into the two ship's lifeboats which he had had swung on their davits in readiness for any emergency. On shore conditions were chaotic because of continual air raids, but he led his men to a place of comparative safety and, despite disorganisation of the local services, he got the injured men transported to hospital. This final action undoubtedly saved the life of the seriously injured engine-room rating. Captain Houston, Mr. McPhee and Mr. Robinson behaved with outstanding courage and showed a complete disregard for the safety of their own lives; but for their actions the loss of life in this incident could easily have been much greater.

George Medal

Bernard Frederick AUST, Probationary Constable, New South Wales Police Force.

Constable Aust was on guard duty one evening at a foreign Consulate in Woollahra when he saw a man loitering in the shadow of some trees. He immediately challenged the man who pointed a loaded, single barrel shotgun at his back, grabbed him by the collar and ordered him to walk to the front door of the Consulate. The man pushed him violently forward causing the barrel of the shotgun to protrude past his back, almost shoulder high. This enabled the Constable to

strike the barrel of the weapon with his right elbow and take hold of it pointing the barrel in an almost vertical position and as he struggled to gain possession of the weapon, it discharged harmlessly into the air. This caused the man to lose his balance but he regained his feet immediately and produced a sharply pointed knife with which he viciously attacked the Constable, stabbing him in the neck and shoulders as the Constable fought him off with the butt of the shotgun. The man attacked with such ferocity that Constable Aust had to drop the shotgun, retreat a few paces and draw his Service pistol; as he did, the man stabbed at his heart but fortunately the knife struck a notebook in the Constable's pocket. The officer managed to fire six rounds at the man, one of which struck him in the chest, before he turned and ran away. The Constable, although collapsing from the effect of his serious wounds, attempted to use his portable radio, but when he was unable to do this he crawled to the front door of the Consulate to summon help. The body of the man was later found in the grounds of a nearby residence. Constable Aust displayed outstanding courage in facing a desperate and armed man who undoubtedly had every intention of killing him.

John Leonard GRAHAM, Detective Senior Constable, Queensland Police Force.

A mentally disturbed man deliberately drove a car into an electric light pole in a Brisbane suburb and then left the car and threatened to kill himself with a butcher's knife. Constable Graham arrived at the scene and was at this stage armed with a revolver. He recognised the man as one who had a history of violence and tried to persuade him to hand over the knife, offering to lay down his revolver if the man would do the same with his knife. After the Constable had placed his weapon on the ground the man pretended to do the same, but threw a handful of dirt in the Constable's face and grabbed the revolver; he then fired at close range, narrowly missing the officer. Although now unarmed the Constable continued to try and pacify the man who fired the gun twice, fortunately without effect; eventually while the man's attention was momentarily distracted the officer sprang forward and overpowered him. Throughout the entire ordeal Constable Graham showed courage of a very high order in handling the situation and acted without thought for his own safety when, unarmed, he continued to persuade the man to surrender his dangerous weapons.

Awarded the British Empire Medal for Gallantry (Civil Division):

Richard Ernest BENSON, Experimental Worker III, Ministry of Defence, Bootle Station, Cumberland.

Alexander McMellon MELLON, Auxiliary Coastguard in Charge, Coast Rescue Service, H.M. Coastguard, Haverigg, Millom, Cumberland.

Francis William SIMMS, Footwear Operative, Millom, Cumberland.

Mr. Mellon, who had been watching the progress of a dinghy in heavy seas, saw that a strong wind had caused it to capsize, throwing its two occupants, a man and his six-year-old son, into the water. Mr. Mellon immediately collected his oars and rowlocks; he then enlisted the aid of Mr. Benson and Mr. Simms, commandeered the only boat available and set off towards the casualty. The bad weather conditions made