

Captain Alasdair Boyd MacNeill CAMPBELL, Pilot, British Airways Helicopters Ltd., Sumburgh, Shetland.

On 9th December 1977 Captain Bain was informed by the Coastguard that a trawler had gone aground on some rocks. Despite the fact that the weather was poor and the rescue would have to be carried out in darkness Captain Bain decided to take a helicopter to the wreck. Captain Campbell and two others volunteered to serve as his crew. It was arranged for other helicopters and a R.A.F. Nimrod to help in communications and in providing illumination.

Having left their base it took Captain Bain about an hour with some difficulty to find the wreck. Weather conditions were severe with low cloud, visibility limited to less than a mile by blown sea spray, with a strong wind blowing in violent gusts. During the rescue the trawler sank steadily with an increasing list: the boat's crew had already unsuccessfully launched their dinghies and life rafts.

It was impossible to synchronise the operation of the winch with the illumination from flares dropped by the Nimrod and for much of the time whilst trying to hover, Captain Bain and his co-pilot had to rely for illumination on one of the helicopter's landing lights to keep the wreck in sight. The boat was being moved considerably by the waves and the helicopter followed the motion so that when Captain Campbell who was the winch man, was about 30 feet below the helicopter on his first descent he was swung violently into the mast of the wreck. Only the swift reaction of the man operating the winch saved Captain Campbell who was brought back into the helicopter, but immediately volunteered to be lowered for another rescue attempt.

Captain Bain and his co-pilot managed to establish a steady hover using a small rock as a reference point, even though the rock was continually submerged. Not every attempt was successful and over the next hour and twenty minutes Captain Campbell was winched down about twelve times in order to rescue all eight men aboard the trawler.

The area of coast on which the trawler went aground is notorious and vessels have little, if any, hope of rescue from surface craft and on this occasion the lifeboat was unable to get near the wreck. In saving the lives of the eight men Captain Bain and Captain Campbell displayed outstanding bravery, skill and determination in conditions of extreme weather and darkness operating in a situation far beyond that normally expected of a helicopter on rescue service.

Stanley Noel BLAKE, Constable, Royal Ulster Constabulary.

David BRANNIGAN, Constable, Royal Ulster Constabulary.

John James CASSIDY, Constable, Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Desmond Patrick CONROY, B.E.M., Sergeant, Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Victor George FERGUSON, Constable, Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Richard Allister KNOWLES, Constable, Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Campbell Kennedy McCORMACK, Constable, Royal Ulster Constabulary.

For gallantry in Northern Ireland.

John Ross LITTLE, O.B.E., Chief Constable, Tayside Police.

James MELVILLE, Sergeant, Tayside Police.

Hans MILLER, Constable, Strathclyde Police.

On 28th October 1977 a man and woman who had carried out an armed robbery stopped a passing car and gained access to the vehicle on the pretext that the woman needed immediate medical attention. Neither the driver of the car nor his wife noticed that the man was armed, but as they drove in the direction of the nearest hospital, they were threatened by the gunman and told to drive elsewhere. During the journey the man repeatedly threatened to shoot the driver and his wife if they did not follow his instructions.

Following an earlier report the police had set up road blocks and the gunman told the driver to ignore them or his wife would be killed. However, this proved impossible, but the police officer who had stopped the vehicle realised the dangerous situation and allowed the car to proceed, immediately reporting what had happened. The car continued its journey followed by police vehicles. At a further road block the gunman again threatened to shoot the driver's wife, but the car was brought to a halt after it was rammed by one police car and collided with another. The driver was forced at gunpoint to leave his wife as a hostage in the car and to warn the police that the man was armed.

Sergeant Melville with another officer then approached the car and was confronted by a sawn-off shotgun. The Sergeant tried to persuade the man to surrender but he refused threatening to shoot the hostage if the police moved in. At this point the hostage was tied by a string from her neck to the shotgun.

Once again Sergeant Melville tried to pacify the man but he demanded a transfer with the hostage and his accomplice to a nearby unmarked police vehicle. This was arranged and the gunman fired a shot at the car they had left, he also agreed to release the hostage if a police officer would drive the car. The accomplice then asked if arrangements could be made for them to talk to Constable Miller, who was known to the gunman.

Meanwhile Chief Constable Little who had been in constant wireless contact arrived at the scene and took command. When Constable Miller arrived he agreed to approach and talk to the gunman, who in the past had threatened his life. Some time elapsed while they talked to no avail. Realising that the simplest solution was to appear to meet the man's demands Chief Constable Little agreed that he and Constable Miller should take the place of the hostage and Sergeant Melville should drive the car. The original hostage was released and the car moved off preceded and followed by cars carrying armed police. The convoy drove through the night and was then directed to some parkland and Chief Constable Little and Sergeant Melville were told to leave the car. Constable Miller who was the only policeman left in the car tried to persuade the man, who had become unreasonable and was threatening to take his own life, to give up his gun. Chief Constable Little, now armed, went back to the car with Sergeant Melville and persuaded the gunman to release Constable Miller and the woman accomplice. The man who at first refused to surrender and continued to threaten to take his own life finally jumped from the car brandishing