

".....FOR EXTREME AND HEROIC DARING"

The first Albert Medals in Gold to be awarded during the present war to personnel of the Royal Navy are announced in tonight's (20/4/43) London Gazette. The awards, which are confined to "cases of extreme or heroic daring", are for saving life at sea. They have been made to:-

Surgeon Lieutenant Malcolm Joseph Clow, M.B., B.Ch., R.N.V.R., of Hale, Cheshire, formerly of the sloop H.M.S. IBIS, which sank following an air attack during the North African operations.

Sick Berth Attendant George William Beeching, (posthumously) also of H.M.S. IBIS.

Surgeon Lieutenant Clow was between decks when the IBIS was hit and badly damaged. Wounded men were brought to him in the Sick Bay, among them an engineroom artificer badly burned about one arm. The Lieutenant gave the injured man an injection of morphia and, as the ship was by then sinking, he helped the man up a ladder and out on to the upper deck.

The injured man had no lifebelt but Lieutenant Clow put his own on him. Then the Lieutenant helped the man into the sea and made sure that he was free of the ship before himself abandoning her.

In doing this Lieutenant Clow became entangled in the rigging and he was pulled down some way before he could fight his way clear. On the surface he had to swim around for three hours without a lifebelt before being picked up.

Sick Berth Attendant Beeching was also between decks at the time the IBIS was hit and took a list to starboard. When the emergency lighting partly failed and the mess decks became flooded with oil fule he showed great courage and presence of mind in helping the wounded.

Among them was one man who was very badly burned about the face and hands. Beeching took him to the Sick Bay and gave him morphia. While there the ship began to heel over. As it was apparent that she was about to capsize, Beeching helped the man to the deck, gave him a lifebelt and assisted him into the water. Beeching then abandoned ship himself. He was never seen again.

A posthumous award of the Albert Medal in Bronze to another Sick Berth Attendant, James William Thorpe is also announced. Thorpe was on board the destroyer H.M.S. BROKE when she burst through the boom at Algiers and came under heavy fire.

Many of her company were wounded and Thorpe showed great courage in attending these men and in helping them to reach places of greater safety.

He himself was then severely wounded but spent his last strength in the care of others, working until he could no longer stand. He died of his wounds.

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The Albert Medals were originally established by Queen Victoria in 1866 to mark the "many heroic acts performed by mariners and others who endangered their own lives in saving, or endeavouring to save, the lives of others from shipwrecks and other perils of the sea." The Medals were later awarded for saving life on land.

The Albert Medal in Gold is confined to "cases of extreme or heroic daring".

The Medal consists of an oval gold badge enamelled in dark blue with a monogram in the centre composed of the letters V and A in gold interlaced with an anchor in gold. The badge is encircled by a bronze garter inscribed in raised gold letters "For Gallantry in Saving Life at Sea" and is surmounted by a representation of the Crown of H.R.H. Prince Consort.

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