

Hello.

First and foremost what follows is not my work but that of a man called PETER CHAPMAN. For his full webpage have a look here

<http://www.ww1aero.org.au/members/members%20pdfs/journal%20.pdfs/2015v1/Albert%20Medal.pdf> . It is an excellent internet document but for at least one reason, which is not obvious until explained.

All too often when researching I [and I am sure others too] lose track of a person or subject worthy of a special mention and around whom [or it] a “new” story can be told. In this case, I was looking for RN COMMUNICATORS of fame to tell you about, and I found one in the Navy List from WW1 years, which gives but a fleeting reference to him by name only. After that, his story disappears from all the normal archives and naval historic sites, and one wonders why a man with an ALBERT MEDAL could be allowed to do that?

What follows is the story of a brave man and one deeply involved in the embryonic days of W/T from aircraft. He disappeared because he started life as a W/T operator, was advanced to PO Telegraphist, changed his branch title from Telegraphist to Mechanic [that’s an air mechanic] and from there on won an air-crew commission in the RNAS.

All that follows is fully copyright to Peter Chapman without reservation, which I have cropped for RN Communicators benefit and FAA specific interest value, from his page URL quoted above before adding the excellent story to this new PDF. Were it not for Peter’s excellent and thoroughly worthy of congratulatory merit research, I dare say that “our” man would still be anonymous to this day. I commend the research portal and subsequent presentation to all interested in hero’s [and isn’t that all of us?] and naval matters of long ago.

Thank you to Peter and to you for reading this epic story and excellent scholarly piece of research.

Regards



The erstwhile Petty Officer Telegraphist James C.S. HENDRY



SELFLESS COURAGE

THE ALBERT MEDAL

AWARDS TO THE AIR SERVICES 1914-1918

BY PETER CHAPMAN

Some years ago, when reading the Spring 1964 issue of *The '14-'18 Journal*, I was rather intrigued and somewhat puzzled to see the *London Gazette* citation for the award of the Albert Medal to Major L.C. Bearne DSO, and Private A.E. Usher of the Army Service Corps, for safely extinguishing a burning French lorry full of aircraft bombs.ⁱ At the time, this struck me as an odd thing to place in a journal dedicated to World War One aviation, especially as neither recipient of this award belonged to the air services, and their courageous act has only the most tenuous link to anything aviation related, i.e. the bombs on the truck.

I gave this strange page filler no more thought until recently, and again quite by chance, when I was fortunate enough to purchase a second hand book about George Cross winners with New Zealand connections. To be honest, my interest was the book's price, which was negligible, rather than its content, as the latter decoration was only instituted in 1940 by King George VI.

Imagine my surprise on reading this book to discover that not only George Cross recipients were included, but also those who had won the Medal of the Order of the British Empire for Gallantry (also known as the Empire Gallantry Medal)ⁱⁱ and the Albert Medal, as both of these decorations predated the George Cross but were to be later superseded by the latter in 1971. Also, among the recipients presented in the book, there were no fewer than three men who had received Albert Medals for bravery whilst serving in the Royal Flying Corps, Royal Naval Air Service, or Royal Air Force between 1914 and 1918.

This discovery led me to question whether there were any other recipients of this medal from these three British air services, and who were they? The following account is a result of the subsequent research, which brings to light men whose courage was no less than their counterparts in battle, but theirs was in each case an act of supreme selflessness, which was rewarded with what was then the highest British Empire gallantry award available to both civilians and military personnel for saving or attempting to save life at the extreme risk of their own.

THE ALBERT MEDAL

The Albert Medal was instituted on 7 March 1866, and was named in honour of then Queen Victoria's late husband, Prince Albert, who had died five years earlier, in December 1861. The Royal Warrant of 1867 notes that this was a maritime bravery award, as it was "...to be awarded to those who, after the date of this instrument, have, in saving the lives of others from shipwreck or peril of the sea, endanger their own lives..."ⁱⁱⁱ

Issued in two classes from this time, the First Class medal was a gold oval-shaped decoration, enamelled in dark blue with a monogram composed of the letters "V" (for Victoria) and "A" (for Albert), interlaced with an anchor erect in gold, surrounded with a garter in bronze, inscribed in gold "For Gallantry in Saving Life at Sea", and surmounted by a representation of the crown of the late Prince Albert and suspended from a dark blue ribbon of one and three-eighths inches in width, with

ⁱ See *The '14-'18 Journal*, Spring 1964, *From The London Gazette 1918, Gallant Deeds Rewarded* p.148.

ⁱⁱ Instituted on 29 December 1922.

ⁱⁱⁱ Quoted in http://www.stephen-stratford.co.uk/am_warrant.htm (referenced 23 March 2014)

four white longitudinal stripes. The Second Class award was almost identical, the main differences being the ribbon, which was narrower at just five-eighths of an inch and had only two white longitudinal stripes, and the medal itself was made entirely of bronze.

Just ten years later, in 1877, this award was extended to include lifesaving on land, with medals designed to distinguish those acts. The Albert Medals for life saving on land were inscribed "*For Gallantry in Saving Life on Land*" and were enamelled in red; their ribbons too were correspondingly red with white longitudinal stripes, and the medal obverse did not include the anchor which could be found on the sea medals.

Finally, in 1904, the ribbon for the Second Class awards was increased in size to match that in use on the First Class medals, and the four medals were still in this form when the Great War broke out in 1914.



The Albert Medals (Obverse).

Left to right: Sea (First Class), Sea (Second Class), Land (First Class) and Land (Second Class)

Over the next four years a number of men would earn this rare and prestigious award whilst saving others, many at the cost of their own lives. Sadly, quite a few of the army awards were to men maimed or killed in grenade accidents, which were all too frequent with so many being under training. Navy recipients too are well represented in this conflict. However, there were a small number of recipients from the air services who received both First and Second Class Albert Medals, in many cases for selfless courage which in a combat situation may well have brought them the ultimate award, the Victoria Cross.

On 28 August 1917 the Albert Medal name was again changed, the First Class medal being renamed the Albert Medal in Gold, and the Second Class medal becoming the Albert Medal.

Following the war, the Albert Medal continued to be the premier award for gallantry in life threatening situations, until the advent of the George Cross. The latter was instituted by King George VI on 24 September 1940, his intention being for this new decoration to become the supreme award for civilian bravery, or that by military personnel in a non-combat situation. Strangely, at the time all current recipients of the Empire Gallantry Medal were instructed to exchange their medals for the George Cross, but no such allowance was made for holders of the Albert Medals, which were superior in order of wear and were for the greatest acts of courage.

In 1949 the Albert Medal in Gold was replaced by the George Cross, although this was not regulated by a Royal Warrant at the time. The Albert Medal was retained from this date forward but was only awarded posthumously.

This oversight was finally rectified only in 1971 by Queen Elizabeth II, when the Albert Medal was withdrawn and surviving holders of the Edward and Albert Medals were "*required to exchange their*

awards for the George Cross".^{iv} They were also no longer allowed to use the post-nominal letters 'A.M.', but henceforth had to use the letters 'G.C.', even if they did not exchange their Albert Medals. This move was not made without some controversy amongst the Albert Medal holders, a significant few of whom still chose to keep their original awards rather than accept the George Cross. Of 64 holders eligible to swap their Albert Medals for the George Cross, only 49 did so, the remaining 15 opting to keep theirs.

The final two Albert Medals were issued posthumously in 1970, to the late Geoffrey Clifford Bye and the late Kenneth Owen McIntyre, both from New South Wales, Australia. Over the 105 year lifetime of this award, there were just 568 recipients of the various classes. These included 25 Sea and 45 Land Gold, or First Class medals, and 216 Sea and 282 Land Second Class medals.

The following eighteen recipients of the Albert Medal for saving life earned their awards during the Great War, whilst employed in the British air services.



Petty Officer Mechanic JAMES CLAUDE SCOTT HENDRY

**Albert Medal, Second Class (Sea)
19 November 1914**

March 11, 1914. Helped pilot with both in water clinging to wreckage of seaplane.

July 28, 1914. Assembly Flight at Spithead, only with great difficulty could he be persuaded to share with the pilot one float of seaplane left undamaged by enforced descent.

Early morning November 19, 1914, north of Yarmouth as Observer and Operator piloted by Flt. Lt. Lan-Davis. Machine capsized by premature explosion of a bomb dropped by the pilot who was stunned by the explosion. Hendry was thrown out and fell some 150 ft. into the sea, Davis fell in plane. In spite of the fall in winter time Hendry at once swam to the pilot and released him, a very difficult and dangerous undertaking for the machine was rapidly sinking and the officer was imprisoned under water unconscious and drowning, at the risk of being entangled in the wreckage and dragged to the bottom. He swam directly to a trawler and left her boat to pick up Davis who was kept afloat by the air in his clothing. He then directed the trawler to proceed and moor alongside Crossley Hospital.^v

In what appears to be the first award of the Albert Medal for saving life to a member of the air services in World War One, P.O. James Hendry of the RNAS station at Great Yarmouth saved his pilot following a crash at sea on 19 November 1914.

James Claude Scott Hendry was born in Kilmarnock, Scotland, on 25 September 1887 to Cochrane Scott Hendry, a commercial traveller, flour dealer and general shop assistant, and his wife Edith.

Hendry joined the Royal Navy on his 18th birthday^{vi} as a Boy, 2nd Class, being trained as a wireless telegraphist. Here he rose to the rank of Petty Officer Telegraphist R.N. attached to Staff Commander in Chief, the Nore. Transferring to the Naval Wing of the Royal Flying Corps pre-war, he was one of the pioneer airmen of what would become the Royal Naval Air Service in July 1914. Gaining his Royal Aero Club aviator's certificate (No.604) on 20 August 1913, he nonetheless appears to have spent little time as a pilot, preferring to fly as an observer where he could carry out a variety of experiments in W/T from aeroplanes.

^{iv} Quoted from a speech by then British Prime Minister, Rt Hon Edward Heath, on 21 October 1971 to the House of Commons. See O'Shea, *An Unknown Few*, p.21.

^v No mention in the *London Gazette* seems to exist today. This citation is taken from PRO file HO45/10772/276085. Besides Hendry's award, two others to Chief Stoker J. Sullivan and Mechanician F.G. Marshall do not appear in the *London Gazette*, although Royal Mint records show all three awards as having been ordered and supplied, with Hendry's medal having been approved by His Majesty King George V on 15 April 1915.

^{vi} 25 September 1905.

By the beginning of 1914 Hendry was heavily involved in W/T testing within the Navy's air arm. On 11 March that year, whilst flying as observer in a Henry Farman pusher biplane seaplane, serial 98, the aircraft crashed at sea off Felixstowe. Unharmd, he helped his pilot to what remained of the aircraft and together they clung to this until rescued.

Then, on 23 July he flew as observer to Squadron Commander C.L. Courtney during the Royal Review, before returning to Yarmouth five days later from Spithead, near Calshot. This trip was made as observer to FL Reginald Bone in a Henry Farman F.22H seaplane, serial 141. Approaching Yarmouth their aircraft suffered an engine failure and FL Bone was forced to make an emergency landing. The seaplane overturned in the rough conditions, slightly injuring Bone in the process, but again he and an unharmd Hendry were able to cling to one of the aircraft's floats until rescued.

After the start of the Great War, Hendry remained at Yarmouth where he continued his W/T work in aircraft. One of the aircraft involved in this work was Sopwith HT tractor biplane, serial 58, which had been one of three such aircraft ordered by the Admiralty in 1913.

Although not clearly visible behind the RNAS personnel, the aircraft depicted here is Sopwith HT, serial 58, with a landplane undercarriage fitted. The aircraft was originally a seaplane, but following the outbreak of war it was converted to a landplane configuration and served briefly in Belgium with 3 Squadron RNAS, before being declared unsuitable for active service and returned to Yarmouth in November 1914. It was powered by a 100hp Anzani radial engine. H. King



On 19 November 1914 Hendry was flying as observer to FL Cyril Lan-Davis in No.58. On approach to land at Yarmouth, Lan-Davis jettisoned his bombs at sea rather than attempt to land with them, but left it too late to do so safely. One bomb exploded directly beneath their tail and blew the latter off, causing the aircraft to abruptly dive into the sea from an altitude of 150 feet. Hendry, who was not strapped in, was thrown from the aircraft at this altitude into the sea, whilst Lan-Davis went down with the aircraft. On striking the water Hendry collected himself and swam to the fast sinking wreckage, where he discovered his pilot still trapped and unconscious in his cockpit below the surface and in imminent danger of drowning. Diving down in amongst the wreckage, Hendry freed FL Lan-Davis and then surfaced with him, keeping him afloat until they could both be rescued by the drifter *Noreen*.

For his outstanding bravery Hendry was subsequently awarded the Albert Medal, as not only had he saved his pilot's life on this occasion, but he had also assisted his pilots greatly on two previous occasions when they had force landed at sea.

Sadly for Lan-Davis, his reprieve was to prove temporary as he was listed as missing, presumed drowned, on 14 October 1915 after the small boat he took passage on failed to reach Malta, whilst he was attached to HMS *Ark Royal* at Imbros, in the Aegean. Ironically, he was en route to Malta to have some remedial dental work done following another crash he was involved in at Hendon.

Still stationed at Yarmouth a year later, James Hendry married Florence Greenacre in Great Yarmouth on 23 October 1915. Over the next 18 months he went on to carry out instructional and experimental work at Eastchurch Central Flying School and at Cranwell, where he was Senior NCO Instructor in W/T.

On 7 May 1917 Hendry was promoted to (Temporary) Warrant Officer 2nd Class, and in September that year was posted to the RNAS station at Tresco, on the Scilly Islands, there to join 350 and 351 Flights, which were engaged in anti-submarine patrolling. On 1 April 1918, still at Tresco, Hendry was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant (observer) in the newly formed RAF.

Hendry was not fated to survive the war. On 6 July 1918 he and his pilot, FL Cyril Capes, took off from Tresco on an anti-submarine patrol in Short 184 serial N2963 but became lost and eventually were forced to land at sea when their fuel ran out. Despite an intensive search by other aircraft at Tresco over the following days, no trace of them or their aircraft was found.

On 21 July, an unidentified English officer's body was washed up on a beach at Audienne in France, the man's subsequently issued French death certificate (translated) reading:

On the 21st July 1918 an unknown body was found on the beach, which is supposed to be a stranded English officer, male, about 40., strong build and taller than the ordinary, shaved face, almost bald, brown haired on the occipital part of the skull. He was dressed with

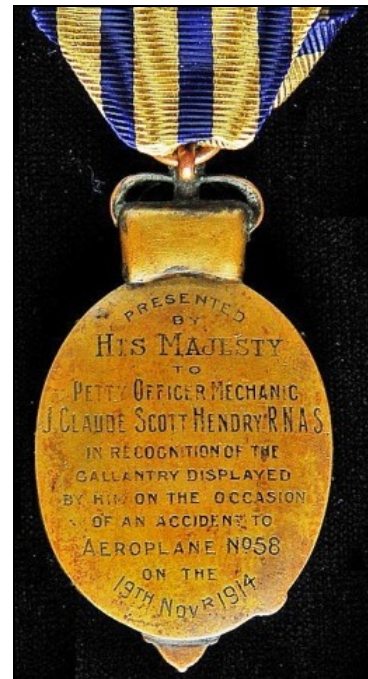
- a life jacket made of grey yellow lining cloth, with copper press-studs marked "Made in England"
- a second jacket made of marine blue sheet, with two rows of four golden buttons, wearing an eagle surmounted with a cap marked "Gibres L 1" at the obverse
- a fine white sheet shirt with fake turned-down collar marked number 816
- a black silk tie
- a dark grey sheet trousers
- dark green socks
- a shoe with rubber tread type Richelieu
- fine cellular linen underpants

He was holding a bronze signals pistol, trademark Webley Soff 2d London Birmingham 116, numbered 28390, and he was holding a rocket and a threaded iron canister.^{vii}

The dead 'English officer' was subsequently identified as 2Lt James Claude Scott Hendry AM, who had drowned. He was just 30. His pilot, FL Cyril Capes and the Short seaplane serial N2963 were never found. Today he is buried in the Guilvinec Communal Cemetery in France, the only Commonwealth War Grave in that cemetery.

There is another interesting postscript to Hendry's story, as his Albert Medal came up for auction in 2007, being sold by Spink and Son in London for an undisclosed amount. A photograph of the reverse side of the medal (on right) shows the citation as engraved at the time, which reads:

*Presented
by
His Majesty
to
Petty Officer Mechanic
J. Claude Scott Hendry R.N.A.S.
In recognition of the
gallantry displayed
by him on the occasion
of an accident to
Aeroplane N^o 58
on the
19th Novr 1914*



What is also of interest is that the medal, although clearly the bronze Second Class award, is suspended from a First Class ribbon, with four white stripes on the blue background.

^{vii} From *Unknown British officer (maybe pilot) stranded in France in July 1918*, <http://www.rootschat.com/forum/index.php?topic=275379.0> (referenced last on 8 April 2014)