



1958 Mountbatten Medal – Duncan McLean Campbell

During the afternoon of 4th September, 1958, two children bathing at Withnoe Beach, Whitsands Bay, Cornwall, got into difficulties. There was a strong south-westerly wind and the heavy surf was made more dangerous by a strong undertow due to an outgoing tide. The children were being dragged out to sea and when the alarm was raised were about a hundred yards from the shore. Mr Duncan Campbell, a scholar at the City of London School, swam out to an eleven-year-old boy who immediately seized him round the neck. Campbell broke the grip, using the second method of release, and then attempted to use the fourth method of rescue, but the boy was too frightened and he changed to the Unigrip method with supplementary restraint. He realised that the boy was being frightened by the waves and each time a wave was about to hit them Campbell told the boy to hold his breath, leaving this warning each time until the last moment in consequence he himself swallowed a considerable amount of water. The confidence which Campbell showed was transmitted to the boy who calmed down and attempted to help himself. When some 40 yards from the beach Campbell transferred the boy to another rescuer wearing a belt and lifeline and then swam out to a twelve-year-old girl who was 50 yards out and swimming parallel to the beach. As he was already feeling the effects of exhaustion he persuaded the girl to swim alongside him to the beach, which she did until they were 15 yards from the water's edge when the girl collapsed and was carried from the water by Campbell. Another man who had entered the water to assist in the rescue was drowned. On coming ashore and hearing that this man was missing Campbell was only restrained with great difficulty from again going into the sea to search for him although he was by then well-nigh exhausted.