



1966 Mountbatten Medal – Jack Eastern

On 20th of August, 1966, SS British Crown, an oil tanker of the BP fleet, was lying at the pipe line berth about half a mile from shore at Umm Said in the Persian Gulf with an almost full cargo of oil. At 5.30 am there was a violent explosion in one of the centre cargo tanks, followed quickly by three or four more explosions. The amidships accommodation was at once engulfed in flames, the cargo tanks were ruptured and the ship's side blown outwards into a great bulge. Blazing oil spread out to sea on the starboard side, and the fire aboard spread rapidly.

Junior engineer Jack Milner Easton, a strong swimmer and holder of the Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross and Award of Merit, entered the sea and went to the assistance of the Indian crew, giving them instructions and towing three men in turn 200 yards to a mooring buoy.

After rescuing the third man, Easton saw that the 40-foot mooring launch, on fire from end to end, was drifting on to the buoy and endangering the lives of many members of the crew who were clinging to it. Easton swam to the launch and managed to push it clear of the buoy.

Easton then swam back to the ship and towed a fourth man to safety on the buoy with the aid of a rope fender. He also swam twice down the port side of the ship searching for the Captain and other survivors.

During the whole of this time there was immediate danger of the whole ship blowing up and parts of the superstructure were falling in the sea.