

Gp Capt T E H Grove DSC. GM. RAF
By Stephen R Davies

In June 2010, retired naval Cdr Ken Baker, of the Royal British Legion (RBL) contacted me to say that the branch at Upper Longdon had possession of medals belonging to Gp Capt T E H Grove, who he believed had been a RAF Provost Officer, and that they wanted a safe place for the medals to be displayed. In reply, I suggested the RAF Police Museum and supplied details of the Provost Marshal as a point of contact. In November during a ceremony besides the RAF Police Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, the medals were handed over by Cdr Baker to Gp Capt John Whitmell for display in the RAF Police Museum at MOD Southwick Park. The medals were particularly unusual because they included gallantry and general service medals from both world wars in respect of service in the RN and the RAF. The ceremony was also attended by Wg Cdr Kevin Bailey, Director of the RAF Police Museum and several members of the RBL and the RAFPA.

In 1917, whilst serving in the RN Reserve, Midshipman Grove had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for bravery and resourcefulness on active service at sea. Originally designated as the Conspicuous Service Cross (1901 - 1914), the Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to naval personnel from Warrant Officer to Lieutenant for the performance of meritorious or distinguished services before the enemy. In 1938 he joined the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and at the start of the World War II, served with a barrage balloon squadron in France. He was later mentioned in dispatches for his heroism during the evacuation from Dunkirk. Back in England, Flight Lieutenant Grove (90716) was commissioned as a Deputy Assistant Provost Marshal and from September 1940 was stationed in Scotland and later in the north of England. On the 5th March 1945, RAF Bomber Command launched a total of 760 aircraft to continue *Operation Thunderclap* against Chemnitz; 498 Lancasters, 256 Halifaxes and 6 Mosquitos. The operation however, started badly when 9 aircraft of No 6 Group crashed near their bases soon after taking-off in icy conditions. No 426 Squadron, at Linton-on-Ouse, lost 3 out of their 14 Hadley Page Halifax bombers, one of which, VII LW-210 coded OW-Y, encountered severe icing problems after take-off and crashed into a school and a row of houses in York killing 5 civilians and injuring 18 others. Remarkably at the time, Sqn Ldr Grove was nearby and although wounded by shrapnel, successfully organised the rescue operation that helped to save the lives of over 80 people. The crew of the doomed aircraft who were killed comprised; Flt Lt I Emerson RCAF, Fg Off A Hutchison RCAF, Fg Off T Campbell RCAF, Plt Offr J Low RCAF, Plt Offr J MacDougall RCAF, Plt Offr R Turner RCAF and Sgt W Symes RAF. Only the wireless operator had been able to bail out before the Halifax crashed to earth. For his actions at the scene, Sqn Ldr Grove was subsequently awarded the George Medal (GM) for his gallant conduct. The GM was instituted, together with the George Cross, on the 24th September 1940, to reward a great many people in all walks of life. However, it was the intention of the authorities that the George Cross should stand supreme and that its position as the civilian Victoria Cross should not be undermined by the award of larger numbers. As a result, the GM was introduced which is the 2nd highest, to the George Cross, gallantry medal that a civilian can be awarded. As with the George Cross, Military personnel are eligible for the GM if their act does not qualify for a military gallantry award. After the war ended he remained in the RAF Police and served with the NEAF and the MEAF as the Command Provost Marshal at the HQ No 3 Wing RAF Police situated at Ismailia in Egypt. On retirement on the 1st July 1954, Gp Capt Grove returned home to Upper Longdon, near Rugeley in Staffordshire where he renewed his interest in the RBL. He held the appointment as County President between 1950 and 1958 and Midlands Area President between 1956 and 1957. After he died on the 3rd November 1968, his medals were left to his sister and upon her death in 1976 they were bequeathed to the Longdon Branch of the RBL.



Cdr Ken Baker Handing over the medals to Gp Capt Whitmell