

## 12-28-1995 – South Yorkshire UK – Michael C Mee – FF – Off duty Ice Rescue Attempt

**Memorial Tribute by: Firefighters Memorial Trust**

**Date added: 21 Mar 2016**

<https://www.theonlinebookcompany.com/OnlineBooks/FirefighterMemorialTrust/Celebrations/FirefighterMemorial/2920>

### Station Officer Michael Clive Mee, GM

**Brigade: South Yorkshire**

**Brigade:** South Yorkshire

**Date Inured:** 28 December 1995

**Location Injured:** Hemsworth Water Park

**Died:** 28 December 1995

**Age:** 48

**Location Died:** Pontefract Hospital

Cause of Death: Due to cardiac arrest whilst attempting live rescue at drowning incident

**Current Fire Authority:** South Yorkshire

**Posthumous award of George Medal for attempting to save drowning small girl**



*"Ensuring that the commitment and the dedication of members of the Fire & Rescue Service is always Remembered and Honoured"*

### Ice rescue turns into tragedy

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/ice-rescue-turns-into-tragedy-1527587.html>

28 December 1995 LOUISE JURY and WILL BENNETT

### Three die after five-hour fight to revive them fails

An astonishing attempt by doctors to save the lives of a girl who fell into an icy lake and two men who plunged in to try to save her ended in failure last night when all three were declared dead.

Medical teams fought for more than five hours to save Tracy Patterson, 11, who had run on to the one-inch-thick ice after a dog, and her two would-be rescuers Michael Mee, 48, an off-duty firefighter, and Jack Crawshaw, 51.

All three were recovered from a lake at Kinsley, West Yorkshire, by police frogmen yesterday, but despite intensive hospital treatment they never regained consciousness. Medical teams attempted to warm the bodies of the victims, whose temperatures were so low as to be unrecordable when they arrived at Pontefract General Infirmary after nearly two hours in the freezing water.

Mike Playforth, the hospital's accident and emergency consultant, said all initial resuscitation attempts had produced no sign of a heartbeat or pulse. "But in a situation like this, you cannot say that somebody has died until the core body temperature has been restored to normal."

After the accident, which occurred only a day after Robert Giles, 25, died while trying to rescue his dog from a frozen lake, Divisional Fire Officer Colin Gavaghan of West Yorkshire Fire Service warned people to avoid frozen lakes and rivers.

The tragedy unfolded at the Hemsworth Water Park in Kinsley after Tracy, who lived with her parents and two brothers in Hemsworth, and a friend had collected several dogs from relatives and taken them for a walk. One of them, a Dobermann, chased some other dogs on to the ice and went through and when Tracy tried to rescue it she, too, fell into the water.

Mr Crawshaw, of Wakefield, who was passing by, began the rescue attempt after spotting the girl in difficulty but soon became waterlogged and sank.

Mr Mee, from Pontefract, a firefighter with the South Yorkshire Fire Service for 26 years, tried to rescue him by spreading a tarpaulin across the ice to bear his weight. The rescue procedure failed and the fireman fell into the water.

Emergency services arrived in minutes but were forced to abandon their efforts in the bitterly cold waters. A specialist underwater search team was called in, and found the casualties about two hours after the accident, which had occurred at 12.15pm. Six fire officers involved in the original search needed hospital treatment for hypothermia. The dog was later found dead.

At Pontefract General Infirmary, Mr Playforth said that some people could survive for long periods in water but after one-and-three-quarter hours it would be "very unusual". Despite this the casualties had been wrapped in blankets and were being warmed by cardiac massage and warm fluids during ventilation, he said.

The aim was to continue until their body temperatures reached at least 32C. Three hours after being taken from the water the girl's temperature was 20C and the temperatures of the men were about 30C.

When someone plunges into cold water, the body goes into a form of suspended animation. There is a rapid decrease in the core body temperature, cell activity slows and the amount of oxygen the individual requires is correspondingly low. However, last night doctors admitted defeat and confirmed that the two men and the girl died just after 8pm. Mr Playforth said that their body temperatures reached the critical level of 32C, but there was still no pulse.

He said: "The core temperature was achieved and at that time we were able to attempt normal resuscitation techniques. The expectation was for the heart to begin fibrillation, but we had no indication of any electrical activity in any of the patients. "In retrospect they were dead when they arrived [at the hospital] but we could not have ascertained that." He said all the relatives had been informed.

Mr Mee was married with two children, Katy, 20, and Christopher, 18. His wife, Elizabeth, was with him on a day out at the park.

Mick Reilly, Assistant Chief Fire Officer of South Yorkshire, said of Mr Mee last night: "His gallant attempt to rescue the girl was typical of his unselfish attitude and his dedication and his commitment to others."

The cold continued to cause chaos across wide stretches of Scotland and northern England yesterday, and a homeless man was feared to have also fallen victim to the bitter weather.

As the freezing conditions swept southwards, the Benefits Agency, responsible for cold-weather payments for claimants, announced that Leeds, Manchester and Tynemouth were among the latest areas where the payouts had been triggered. About 55 Scottish Hydro-Electric engineers were expected to have restored electricity to the final 55 homes in Shetland by late last night.

### **Wife pays tribute to a brave man who died helping others**

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/wife-pays-tribute-to-a-brave-man-who-died-helping-others-1527732.html>

29 December 1995 by Will Bennett

#### **Death on the lake: As the freeze shows no sign of abating, fireman's widow tells of the heroism that ended in tragedy**

The widow of Michael Mee, the off-duty fireman who died while trying to rescue a girl from a frozen lake, yesterday described her horror as she watched him disappear under the icy waters.

Elizabeth Mee said her husband was "a wonderful, brave man who devoted his life to helping others". The couple were walking with their daughter, Katy, when the tragedy occurred at Hemsworth Water Park, Kinsley, West Yorkshire, on Thursday.

Mee, 48, fellow rescuer Jack Crawshaw, 51, and Tracey Patterson, 11, who had fallen through the ice while trying to rescue a dog, all died after medical teams spent more than five hours trying to resuscitate them.

Mrs Mee, 46, said her husband, who had been a fireman for 26 years, ran to help as soon as he realised that somebody had fallen into the water.

She said: "He sprinted round the lake, telling me and Katy to dial 999. The next thing I knew, Mike was on the ice trying to reach the little girl." At about the same time Crawshaw also plunged into the lake to try to save Tracey.

"Katy and I ran up and just kept shouting to Mike to try and support him, but he didn't have a chance. He had nothing to get hold of," said Mrs Mee, who also has a 17-year-old son, Christopher.

"The girl and the other man went underneath first, and then Mike disappeared. After that everything seems blurred. They were all gone by the time the firemen

arrived." Katy, a student at Durham University, said: "I have lost a brave and wonderful father."

Both Mee, from South Hiendley, near Barnsley, and Crawshaw may be recommended for posthumous gallantry awards by West Yorkshire Police, although a spokesman said yesterday that no definite decision had yet been made. Both the Government and the Royal Humane Society could award medals for the rescue attempt.

Crawshaw, a bachelor, lived with his brother, Ian, in Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, and used to run a corner shop which adjoined their house. Ian said: "I am terribly upset. I have been up all night, I just cannot believe it. I am proud of my brother and what he did. I don't think of him as a hero, he was just the type of person who would do what was expected."

Gareth Easton, 11, a schoolfriend of Tracey's, said: "It doesn't surprise me she went after the dog. She just would not have been able to watch it drown because she adored them. What surprised me was how easily she was able to get into the water. You think they would have fences up."

His sister Sheryl, 17, who used to help Tracey with her homework when she brought it back from West End Middle School in Hemsworth, added: "There should be wiring all the way round that lake. I am not surprised this has happened.

"There is so much vandalism round there it is dangerous. When winter comes they should put fences round the place and close it down because this was a tragedy that was just waiting to happen."

Meanwhile, council officials revealed that as the tragedy unfolded, youngsters risked their lives by playing on another frozen lake a short distance away. Staff pleaded with them to get off the dangerously thin ice, but they refused.

Chris Geeson, clerk to Hemsworth council, which is reviewing safety measures at the park, said: "While they were dragging bodies out of the big lake, kids were on the ice on the smaller lake.

"They must have known what had happened but, when they were asked to keep off the ice, we just got abuse from them. It's very difficult to stop them.

"This is a first-class leisure facility that attracts around 75,000 people a year and we are constantly reviewing our safety policies. There are already plenty of signs up with lots of 'Don'ts' on them and quite frankly while the majority of people adhere to them a small minority don't. It's very difficult to stop that."

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/54483/page/10423/data.pdf>

SUPPLEMENT TO

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FRIDAY, 2ND AUGUST 1996

### CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St James's Palace, London SW1A  
2nd August 1996

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards of the George Medal and the Queen's Gallantry Medal and for the publication in *The London Gazette* of the names of those shown below as having received an expression of Commendation for Bravery.

#### *Awarded The George Medal*

Jack CRAWSHAW, Civilian (deceased)  
Michael Clive MEE, Station Officer, South Yorkshire  
Fire Station (deceased)

For services in trying to rescue a girl who had fallen through thin ice into a lake, when they could not afford to wait for the arrival of proper equipment.

After a period of severe cold December weather a lake, used for rowing and other recreational purposes during the summer, had frozen over. Two girls were walking their dogs around the edge of the lake when one of the dogs broke free and ran onto the ice to chase some ducks. When the dog was approximately 30 metres from the edge it fell through the ice into the water which was around two metres deep. One of the girls went for help while the other ran onto the ice to try to rescue the dog. She fell through the ice into the freezing water.

Mr Mee, an off duty fireman, was walking with his family when he heard the girl's cries for help. After sending his daughter to alert the emergency services, he went to a point on the bank nearest to where the girl had fallen through the ice, and then proceeded to

crawl, slowly, across the ice towards the girl. As he reached her the ice gave way and he fell, head first, into the freezing water.

Mr Crawshaw had seen what had happened to Mr Mee and fetched a tarpaulin sheet from a Church nearby, to spread his body weight. He started to make his way towards Mr Mee and the girl, but as he neared them the ice gave way and he too fell into the freezing water. Despite their attempts to get out of the water or to stay afloat, both men and the girl eventually disappeared beneath the surface. Attempts to save them, by passers-by and the emergency services, were unsuccessful and all three died of hypothermia.

#### *Awarded The Queen's Gallantry Medal*

CHEUNG, Kwong-keung, Constable 20432, Royal  
Hong Kong Police.  
LEE, Man-ying, Sergeant 17258, Royal Hong Kong  
Police.  
Barry John SMITH, Chief Inspector, Royal Hong  
Kong Police.

For services in arresting six heavily armed gang members suspected of committing a number of robberies.

Following an investigation and surveillance operation Chief Inspector Smith, Sergeant Lee and Constable Cheung, together with twelve or so other officers, prepared to raid a flat known to be occupied by members of a gang involved in a number of robberies. The suspects were believed to be armed with pistols, hand grenades and an AK47 assault rifle.

In the early morning, Chief Inspector Smith (then Acting Chief Inspector) led the officers to the front door of the flat, a wooden door with a metal grille gate on the outside. The police placed a fishing net over the doorway to prevent grenades being thrown out before

## Ice peril is an issue not to be ducked

<http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/ice-peril-is-an-issue-not-to-be-ducked-1-2093148>

12-20-2002 By Mark Lavery

SAFETY experts are warning people to keep away from frozen rivers and lakes to avoid tragedies like the one that claimed three lives in West Yorkshire. Off-duty firefighter Michael Mee, 48, and fireplace maker Jack Crawshaw, 51, died along with 11-year-old Tracey Pattison in an incident on the frozen lake of Hemsworth Water Park in December 1995.

The two men were trying to save Tracey, of Hemsworth, after she fell through thin ice while trying to rescue a friend's dog. They too fell into the water. All three drowned. Both Mr Mee, of South Hiendley, and Mr Crawshaw, from Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, were later posthumously awarded the George Medal for their bravery.

The recent cold snap has seen temperatures plunge and sparked renewed warnings about the dangers of venturing out on to frozen water. Leading firefighter Trevor Wainwright, of Wakefield Fire Station, said: "It may look inviting and safe but weak points on ice can't be seen. Frozen water is deadly and my advice is to keep off." As schools break up for the festive break today Karen Blanchett, of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, urged parents to make children aware of the dangers. "If ice appears to take your weight the temptation is to always take another step further where the ice could be much thinner," she said.

"It is vital for parents to explain the dangers to their children and ensure they realise there really is little chance of survival if the ice gives way.