

Daphne Pearson

At 1.15am, on 31 May 1940, an Avro Anson crashed near RAF Detling in Kent. The aircraft was carrying bombs, one of which exploded killing the wireless operator. The pilot and the other two crew members were also injured.

At Detling, Daphne Pearson, a Corporal in the medical section, heard the explosion and rushed to the crash site. Although the Anson was burning, Pearson climbed on to the wreckage, revived the stunned pilot and dragged him 27 metres away from the flames. A 120lb bomb exploded, but Pearson shielded the wounded man from the blast and shrapnel with her body, protecting his head with her tin hat. Pearson stayed with the pilot until a stretcher party appeared. She then returned to the blazing wreckage in search of the fourth crew member, but discovered he was dead.

Pearson later wrote:

'My name has been sent to the King...but I hope nothing will be done about it. When I read of the things our boys did at Dunkirk my little bit is nothing at all.'

Daphne Pearson received the Empire Gallantry Medal on 19 July 1940 and was commissioned shortly afterwards. In 1941, her medal was replaced by the George Cross.