

THE EXTREMELY SCARCE KING'S POLICE MEDAL FOR GALLANTRY AND CORPORATION OF GLASGOW MEDAL FOR BRAVERY PAIR AWARDED TO A CONSTABLE, GLASGOW CITY POLICE, FOR 'RESCUING FROM CERTAIN DEATH SEVERAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN' DURING A DEADLY TENEMENT FIRE IN THE INFAMOUS GORBALS DISTRICT OF GLASGOW, ON THE MORNING ON SATURDAY 16 FEBRUARY 1929. INSTITUTED IN 1909, JUST 26 KING'S POLICE MEDAL FOR GALLANTRY TO THE GLASGOW POLICE BETWEEN 1913 AND 1948, 14 OF WHICH WERE THE GV UNCROWNED HEAD TYPE.



KING'S POLICE MEDAL, G.V.R., WITH GALLANTRY RIBBON AND ORIGINAL INVESTITURE PIN TO REVERSE 'P.C. ROBERT RATHNEY, GLASGOW CITY POLICE.', CORPORATION OF GLASGOW MEDAL FOR BRAVERY, SILVER, ENGRAVED TO REVERSE 'CONSTABLE ROBERT RATHNEY SOUTHERN DIV', WITH 'GALLANTRY' TOP BAR' AND REVERSE PIN FOR WEAR, HALLMARKS FOR GLASGOW DATED 1924

K.P.M. *London Gazette* 1 January 1930. The original recommendation, joint with P.C. McGregor:

'These constables rescued 8 persons at a fire in a tenement house at Glasgow on the night on the 16th February 1929. The fire commenced in a house on the first flat and eventually spread to a house on the upper flats and on the ground flat. The flames spread so rapidly that the occupants of the upper houses were afraid to make their escape down a narrow winding stair which was the only means of egress. Constables McGregor and Rathney rushed upstairs through dense smoke and flames and succeeded with the assistance of two other men who arrived while the constables were carrying inmates to the stairs, in rescuing 8 persons, all of whom suffered more or less from burns or suffocation. The two other men state that the constables displayed great bravery and a total disregard for their own lives. Both constables were badly scorched and suffered from the effects of their ordeal.'



Constable Robert Rathney, a native of Aberdeenshire, joined the City of Glasgow Police on 13 February 1923 and was posted to the 'D' (Southern) Division with the Register Number E-365. As stated, on the night of 16 February 1929, both constables attended a house fire where the fire had started in a first floor flat of a tenement property. The fire quickly spread to the upper floors and even to the ground floor. The fire spread so rapidly that the eight occupants of the upper floors were afraid to make their way down the narrow winding stair which was their only means of escape. Constables Rathney and McGregor rushed up through the smoke and flames and succeeded in carrying and guiding the eight occupants to safety, despite the intense heat. Both constables suffered from severe burns to their hands and face. For their bravery in rescuing the eight persons, both constables were awarded the King's Police Medal for Gallantry and the Glasgow Corporation Medal for Bravery.

106 Kidston Street, was in the Gorbals, a district of Glasgow, across the Clyde from the city centre, that was infamous at the time for poverty, overcrowding and violence.

In 1932, Constable Rathney was appointed Detective Constable in 'D' (Southern) Division and retired as a Sergeant in 'A' (Central) Division on 14 February 1953.

Much of the above extracted from the superb Glasgow Police Museum website:

<https://www.policemuseum.org.uk/personalities/honours-and-awards/awards/constables-robert-rathney-and-peter-mcgregor/>

From The Police Review and Parade Gossip Jan 17 1930:

KING'S POLICE MEDAL FOR GALLANTRY

Awarded To
Constable Robert Rathney
of the Glasgow City Police

The citation in the January 1, 1930 issue of the London Gazette reads:

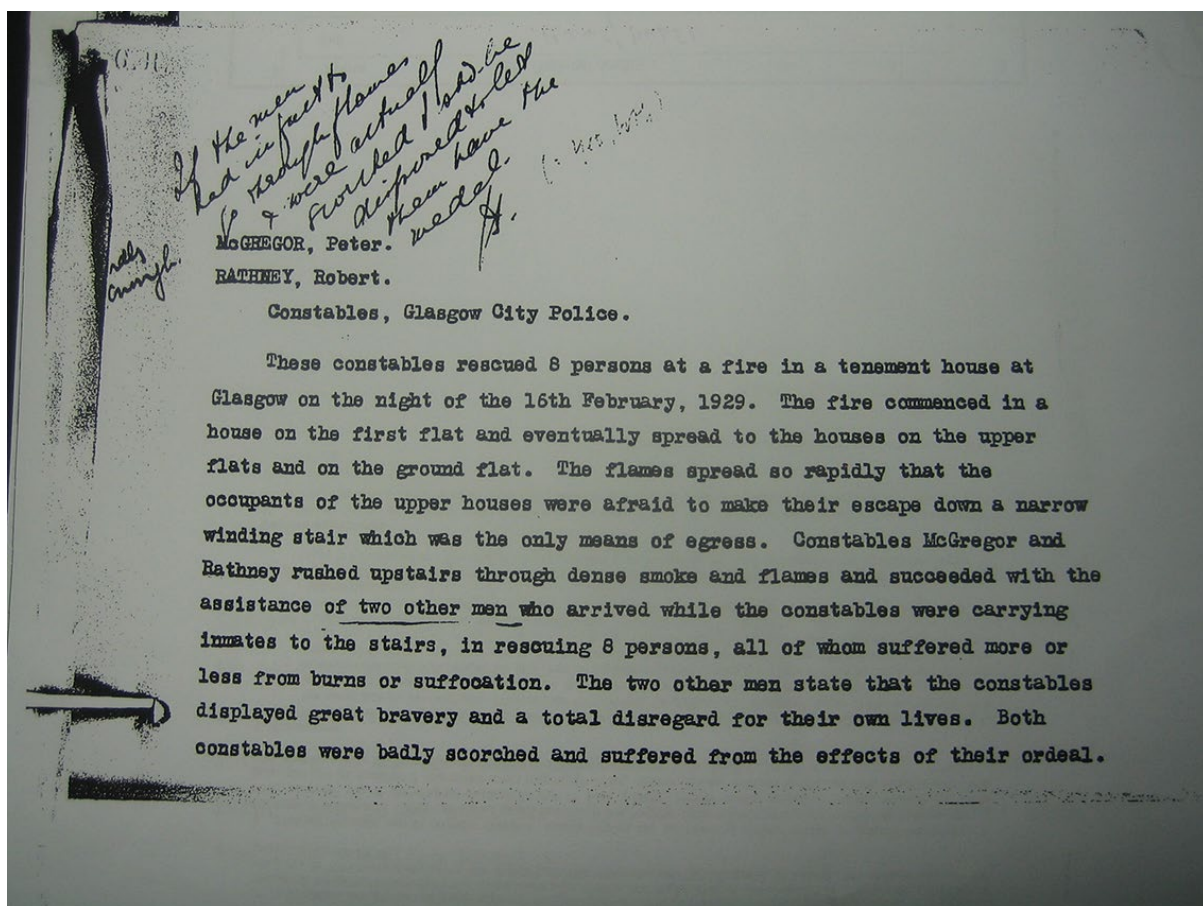
"About 10:15 P.M. on Saturday, February 16th, 1929, a fire broke out in a tenement house in a fourstorey block in a densely populated locality. The fire spread so rapidly that the occupants of the house were afraid to make their escape--egress being only obtainable by a narrow winding stair. The flames were spreading over the stair and the imprisoned people were making frantic appeals for help. There was also dense smoke.

"Constables McGregor and Rathney on arriving on the scene and seeing the position of the residents, immediately rushed upstairs through the smoke and flames, followed by two men, and through their valiant and heroic efforts succeeded in rescuing eight persons who more or less suffered from burns or suffocation. The two civilians say that when they arrived the Constables were carrying out the inmates to the stairs and rushing back through the flames in search of others with a total disregard for their lives. 'How the Constable in Mulherron's house managed to survive in such dense smoke is marvellous' was the comment of one of the civilians, whilst the other said, 'Never in my experience have I witnessed such a piece of bravery and disregard for their own safety as was displayed by Constables McGregor and Rathney in rescuing from certain death several women and children.' Both Constables, although badly scorched and suffering particulars to complete their report, and wanted to continue on duty. They were so obviously suffering that they were sent home."

The newspaper account of this fire contained in the February 18, 1929 issue of the Glasgow Herald states that the fire at 106 Kidston Street broke out on the first floor in the apartment of David Fortune as a result of a gas explosion and quickly spread to the Mulherron family apartment on the second floor. James Mulherron, his wife, Jane, and their four children, together with Sarah Pickles and Julia Hanlon were rescued by the Constables. All eight of the victims were taken to the infirmary suffering from the effects of the smoke, shock and minor burns. The Constables also suffered. McGregor was compelled to discontinue his assistance in the rescue work when almost overcome by smoke, while Rathney was badly scorched about the face and hands, although he managed to carry on in bringing the occupants to safety. In the meantime, some women tenants living on the upper floors, finding that the rapid spread of the flames was threatening to entrap them in the building, threw open their windows and shouted to the crowd that had gathered in the street below that they were going to leap to the ground. Frantic efforts to calm the excited women were made by the crowd, who assured them that aid was coming, but a number of shawls and sheets were procured from houses in the vicinity in the fear that some of the panicstricken women might carry out their threat.

The arrival of detachments of the Fire Brigade from the Central and Southern Divisions served to calm the women. Within a comparative short time the outbreak was extinguished. Fortune's apartment was practically destroyed and the one tenanted by Mulherron was damaged by water and smoke. The loss is estimated at about 300 lbs. Constable Rathney was also awarded a silver medal by the Corporation of Glasgow for Gallantry and Bravery as a result of his action in connection with this fire.





Instituted in 1909, just 26 King's Police Medal for Gallantry to the Glasgow Police between 1913 and 1948, 14 of which were the GV uncrowned head type.



Condition EF, lovely patina to both medals. Sold with copied research.

An extremely scarce Glasgow Police gallantry pair