

Dynamic duo took on gunman



Liam Wood (left) and Gareth Gent (right) from South Yorkshire receiving their award from the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke.

Winning a prestigious award for their bravery after tackling a gunman who had just shot a man — PC Gareth Gent and Liam Wood might be feeling proud, instead both played down their actions.

 The two South Yorkshire officers won the overall Police Bravery Awards and were presented with their trophy at a glitzy award ceremony in The Dorchester Hotel in London. Home Secretary Charles Clarke and a whole host of celebrities attended the event and the officers met Prime Minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street.

But far from letting the honour go to their heads, they both say they did not really have time to think as the horror of the scene unfolded in the early hours of July 30 last year when they were faced with a gunman in a darkened alleyway.

The officers had been called to a disturbance in Doncaster when they spotted two men running, one chasing the other,

before disappearing down a dark alleyway.

When the officers arrived they were stunned to see one man pull out a gun and shoot the other twice in the stomach area, leaving him doubled-up on the floor.

PC Gent, 32, an officer with the force for five years, told *Police*: 'To our horror we were about ten feet away when we saw the man being chased facing the other and pointing a handgun at him warning, 'get back or I'll shoot' and then fired two shots into him.'

The unarmed officers then instinctively lunged at the offender and wrestled the firearm from him before having to contain the injured man who, in spite of his injuries, got to his feet and started battering his attacker.

PC Gent who is married to

police officer Det Con Jane Kilner-Wright, added: 'At this point we did not know where the gun was, it had been dropped somewhere on the floor. We could have been fatally injured but we just didn't think about it.'

PC Wood, who is married to Julie and has two children, aged 11 and nine, said that he would not necessarily do the same again.

'I look back and think that it was daft really, but I couldn't see the danger — we just got on with it. There is a fine line between bravery and stupidity.'

The injured man turned out to have been shot with inferior quality ammunition from a Boer War revolver which had helped save his life.

Jan Berry, chairman of the


Federation, said: 'Constables Gent and Wood were remarkably brave. They put their own lives at risk to disarm a vicious gunman who had just shot someone before their eyes. They are worthy winners and a credit to the police service.'

Rebekah Wade, Editor of *The Sun*, said: 'Constables Gent and Wood showed exceptional courage in disarming a violent gunman. Their bravery surely saved the lives of others. It is a real honour for *The Sun* to sponsor the Police Bravery Awards and we are particularly delighted to pay tribute to two such remarkable officers. Our sincere congratulations to PCs Gent and Wood and to all the nominees of this year's awards.'

Region 1 winner

PC Ian Lawrence

Burglar attacked officer with a wrench

 Lancashire officer Ian Lawrence fought a violent burglar who beat him with a wrench and threatened to kill him.

The married father-of-one received his award for detaining the burglar along a canal towpath. The officer was beaten about the head with an 18-inch wrench by the offender who threatened to kill him.

Despite concussion, cuts and blood running down the side of his face, PC Lawrence restrained and arrested the violent burglar and prevented him attacking a member of the public.

The assault happened as the constable attended a report of a prowler in the Hest Bank area of



Ian Lawrence from Lancashire Police receiving his award from actor Bill Nighy

the county. He spotted a cyclist fitting the burglar's description while searching a towpath.

As he called to the cyclist to stop, the offender raised a weapon above his head and rode towards a female bystander to strike her. PC Lawrence made a grab for the offender and was beaten badly about the head in the struggle that ensued.


PC Lawrence recalled: 'I knew I was in trouble. I just had to hang on until other officers arrived. He was intent on causing me harm. If I'd have let go, who knows what would have happened?'

With the help of a member of the public who sat on the offender's legs, PC Lawrence detained him until colleagues arrived.

Region 2 winners

Sgt Darren Purvis - PC Gareth Gent - PC Liam Wood

Officer plunged into the icy seas to save girls

 A police officer from Northumbria and two from South Yorkshire have jointly been voted the bravest officers in the North East.

Northumbrian Sergeant Darren Purvis together with PC Gareth Gent and Liam Wood, from South Yorkshire, clinched the title.

Sgt Purvis received the accolade for diving into icy water at Collywell Bay, Seaton Sluice, to save two girls who had been swept in by a freak 30 ft wave as they played on rocks last February.

Sgt Purvis was one of the first officers on the scene and, with little regard for his own safety, tied a rope around himself and jumped into the icy water capable of killing within 30 minutes.

The married father-of-one braved a heavy 13 ft swell and near gale-force winds up to 62 knots per hour to rescue the girls.



Darren Purvis (Northumbria) receiving his award from Laila Rouass from TV's "Footballer's Wives".

He pulled both to shore but one later died.

The officer, who has a young son, said: 'You have to think that,

if that were your son out there, you wouldn't want people to stand back and simply watch.'

Joint north eastern winners

with Sgt Purvis were PC Gent and Wood who tackled a gunman who had just shot a man twice before their eyes.

Region 3 winner

PC Robert Matthews

Lone officer tackled shotgun-wielding robber

 West Mercia officer Robert Matthews has been voted the bravest cop in the Midlands.

The married father-of-three received the accolade for single-handedly tackling an armed robber who had just held up a club in Telford with a sawn-off shotgun and knives.

PC Matthews was kicked repeatedly about the head, face and upper body by the thief who was determined to escape. But despite the battering, the officer detained the suspect until back-up arrived.

The assault happened after the assailant and two accomplices had terrorised members of the Hadley United Services Club at 11.30 pm on July 23 last year. They threatened members with a shotgun and knives before stealing cash from them and the safe.



Midlands winner Robert Matthews (West Mercia) receiving his award from cast members of TV's "The Bill"

Sgt Matthews was called to a report that one suspect had run into a nearby factory. Despite knowing the man could be armed, he pursued and found

the robber who scaled a mountain of pallets to escape.


Sgt Matthews pursued him and was repeatedly kicked about the head and chest before the

pallets collapsed, bringing the suspect crashing down. The offender continued to lash out but was restrained by the officer.

Region 4 winners

Sgt Colin Webber - PC Claire Webber

Officers faced trouble and strife to combat hulking robber

 Husband and wife team Colin and Claire Webber caught a vicious knifeman in New York while on holiday.

The pair, both Leicestershire officers, were shopping in the 'diamond district' of Manhattan when they heard a scream and saw a man running down the street holding a blood-stained knife.

Without hesitation, Sgt Webber slammed into the 18-stone knifeman, wrestled him to the ground and put him in a headlock until New York cops arrived.

PC Webber held back a surging crowd, some of whom were relatives of the stab victim intent on kicking the offender in the head. In their drive to attack the knifeman, they landed several blows on Sgt Webber.

The crime drama unfolded

last October when a 44-year-old knifeman attacked a 25-year-old jewellery store clerk after an argument over a counterfeit watch. The clerk was

stabbed three times in the chest and had a mirror smashed over his head.

The Webbers acted instinctively in a city where guns are

common place. In addition to capturing the offender, the pair captured the attention of the local media, impressed by their unarmed heroics.




Husband and wife cops Colin and Claire Webber (Leicestershire) receiving their award from Patrick Mower from TV's "Emmerdale"

Region 5 winner

Det Chf Insp Adam Hibbert

Officer risked life to stop suicide death plunge

 Sussex officer Adam Hibbert has been voted the bravest cop in the South East after jumping into a car a suicidal man was trying to drive over a cliff.

Det Chf Inspector Hibbert, who works at the Major Crime Branch in Brighton, received the accolade for risking his life throwing himself into a car that was just moments from being driven off a cliff following a domestic disagreement.

The man was accelerating fast enough to drive through a fence over cliffs along the coast of East Sussex which are a magnet for suicide attempts.

Due to the bad weather and rain, the vehicle's wheels were unable to gain a grip and were spinning. It was at this point that Det Chf Insp Hibbert seized the moment and made a grab for the door handle.



South East Regional Winner Adam Hibbert (Sussex) receiving his award from former captain of England and World Cup winner Lawrence Dallaglio

The married officer from Hove forced his way into the car despite the driver's attempts to

prevent him. Det Chf Insp Hibbert threw himself at the driver to break the man's grip on the

wheel and grabbed the keys from the ignition.

The officer struggled with the man and succeeded in taking the car out of gear and putting the hand-brake on before restraining him until assistance arrived.

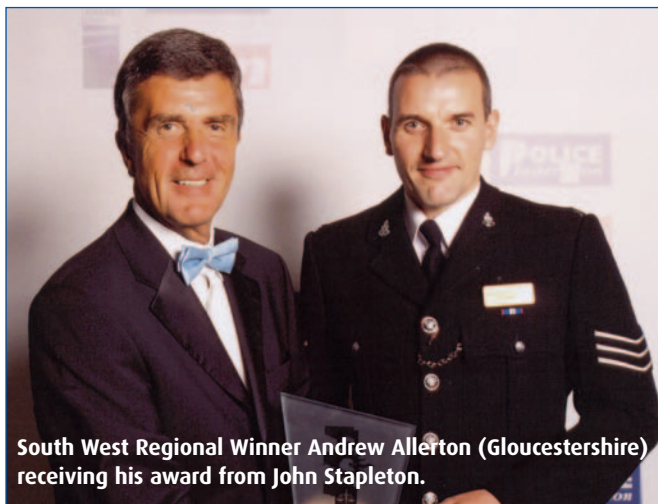
The incident took place during a wet and windy November morning. The man had driven his car beyond perimeter markings onto open ground close to the cliff edge but a fence a short distance from the edge held firm.

Other officers had tried to negotiate with the man for nearly two hours when Det Chf Insp Hibbert arrived. He was able to move closer to the vehicle and noticed the door buttons were up. When the man made a further attempt to drive over the edge, Det Chf Insp Hibbert acted in seconds to save the driver, putting his own life at risk in the process.


Region 6 winner

Sgt Andrew Allerton

Lone officer battled vicious gang



South West Regional Winner Andrew Allerton (Gloucestershire) receiving his award from John Stapleton.

 Off-duty officer Andrew Allerton single-handedly tackled a gang of vicious ram-raiders and foiled their attempt to rob a supermarket.

He was repeatedly punched and nearly mown down by the four thugs who used a stolen Land Rover to smash into a Budgens supermarket in

Newent in the early hours of January 6 last year.

Minutes earlier the off-duty bobby was asleep in bed with his nine months' pregnant wife when a neighbour began frantically ringing his doorbell shouting the local store was being targeted.

The bleary-eyed officer grabbed clothes and went to investigate. He found the offenders had driven through the store front, smashed through tills and attempted to break open a cash point machine, causing £100,000 worth of damage.

Alone, and knowing police back-up was 15 to 20 minutes away, the sergeant confronted the yobs. He said: 'I thought that if I could keep hold of one

of the men, we would stand a chance of catching the others.'

Sgt Allerton grabbed the driver and dragged him from the vehicle but was attacked by the offender's three mates, one of whom shouted, "Show him the gun."


The driver managed to get back in and reversed the vehicle towards Sgt Allerton who tried repeatedly to detain the offenders, despite being outnumbered and attacked.

The thugs escaped but, as a result of Sgt Allerton's witness statement and evidence retrieved from the scene, a 20-year-old man was later arrested, charged with burglary and sentenced to four years at a young offenders' institute.

Region 7 winner

PC Darren Morris

Hero cop rescues injured child who fell through roof

 South Wales officer Darren Morris has been voted the bravest cop in Wales after risking his life climbing onto an unstable roof of a derelict building to rescue a girl who had fallen through a skylight.

The child had been playing on the roof of the derelict factory in Bridgend when she plummeted 20 ft and seriously injured herself.

When the roof partially gave way, a paramedic accompanying the officer declared the structure unsafe and returned to ground level. But PC Morris knowingly placed himself in danger in order to rescue the injured 7-year-old.

With no means of reaching her, other than through the roof, PC Morris and a paramedic



Wales Regional Winner Darren Morris (South Wales) with the little girl whose life he saved, Shannon Jones.

tried to get to her. But when the roof started to give way under the paramedic's foot, it

was left to PC Morris to rescue the child.

'The paramedic was scream-

ing for me not to do it, but I just thought that could be my nipper. I could see she was covered in blood. She had just missed falling onto a piece of metal. It was quite bad but it could have been worse,' said PC Morris, a married man with a five-year-old son.

PC Morris smashed a hole in the skylight, crawled along a girder then dropped to the floor of the empty engineering unit. He comforted the girl, who had a broken arm, before identifying a safe entry point for emergency service staff waiting outside.

Paramedics treated the girl who was also found to have a split kidney. The youngster was transferred to the intensive care unit of Heath Hospital, Cardiff.

Region 8 winners

**PC Jane Beale - PC David Brighthouse
PC Terry Clarke - PC Paul Smitherman**

Officers faced death to save children during domestic

 Metropolitan officers Jane Beale, David Brighthouse, Terry Clarke and Paul Smitherman won the regional award after tackling a gunman threatening to shoot his two daughters in a pre-Christmas domestic.

During the incident, the officers were threatened, PC Beale had a long-barrelled shotgun pointed at her head and all were warned the children would be harmed if they attempted a rescue.

In spite of this, the team disarmed and overpowered the crazed husband, who had barricaded himself and his two daughters in a downstairs bedroom.

The officers negotiated with the man who offered to release the children if one of them took their place. They declined but, after a time, the offender removed the barricades to enable the children to be released.

PC Beale entered the room to rescue the distraught older child but the younger girl was further inside and unable to move due to her terror.

'We could not see the man but, as I walked further into the room carrying the older child, I saw the man in a corner crouched down behind a bed. He was holding a long-barrelled shotgun and pointing it at my head,' said PC Beale.

'PC Clarke grabbed hold of my belt to pull me back, but I couldn't leave the little girl. Still chatting to the children I walked further into the room and bent down to pick up the youngest child. All the time the firearm was pointed at my head. I stood up and, still talking to them, walked from the room, praying we would not be shot or killed.'

Her colleagues continued negotiating with the armed man



London Regional Winners Paul Smitherman, David Brighthouse, Jane Beale and Terry Clarke (all from Metropolitan Police) receiving their award from newsreader Alistair Stewart.

who began swinging the weapon like a club and threatening to shoot them.

They were unable to leave and wait for firearms officers as the children and PC Beale were

upstairs and would have been trapped. But when the man became more agitated, they seized the opportunity to spray him with CS, and used a baton to overpower him.

Shopkeeper wins Jill Dando Award for tackling armed robber

A shopkeeper who tackled a knife-brandishing robber in a bid to protect an elderly pharmacist and his wife has been awarded the prestigious Jill Dando Award.

His good samaritan actions resulted in him being threatened with two knives, including a steak knife, by the masked offender intent on raiding the chemists, in Meadow Street, Preston, for drugs.

Ishaq Ahmed, 35, from Preston, was presented with a bronze rose, named after the flower that bears Jill's name, at the annual Police Federation Police Bravery Awards, sponsored by *The Sun*.

He was presented with the trophy by Crimewatch presenter Fiona Bruce, in the company of 59 of the bravest police officers in England and Wales.

It was his actions tackling the robber at 10 am on December 4 last year which earned him the accolade. He was working in a neighbouring shop when he saw the armed offender enter the pharmacy.

Concerned for his neigh-

bour's safety, he approached the store and was met by the elderly owners running out. The female was hysterical but managed to say her husband had been attacked by the assailant looking for drugs.

Despite the danger, father-of-one Mr Ahmed entered the store to confront the masked robber. He told the female owner to lock the door behind him to prevent the raider from fleeing, preventing his own escape route in the process.

Mr Ahmed challenged the raider who jumped onto the shop counter and threatened to kill him. Without warning, the offender then leapt towards Mr Ahmed who tackled and disarmed him of the blades.

He detained the assailant and attempted to calm him down until the police arrived and arrested him. The raider was later sentenced at Preston Crown Court to nearly three-and-a-half years in jail.

Recalling the incident, Mr Ahmed said: 'I felt angry at the time that he had come into the area and was terrifying members



Jill Dando Award Winner Ishaq Ahmed from Lancashire, receiving his award from "Crimewatch" presenter Fiona Bruce.

of the local community. There were several old people and youngsters in the shop at the time who came running out of the place, screaming. A lot of my friends and relatives use the shop. I thought any one of them could have been in there.'

Whilst Mr Ahmed was not fearful when he ran into the shop, he became scared when the offender tried to stab him.

'I could see he was armed. I looked around for something to defend myself with and all I

could see was talcum powder.'

When the offender lunged at Mr Ahmed from the shop counter, he slipped – giving Mr Ahmed the opportunity to overpower him.

Praising Mr Ahmed, Jan Berry, chairman of the Federation, said: 'Ishaq rightly deserves the award for his selflessness and public spiritedness defending a pair of elderly pharmacists. His bravery prevented the robber's escape and enabled police officers to arrest the offender.'

The winning team - Bravery winners at 10 Downing Street

