

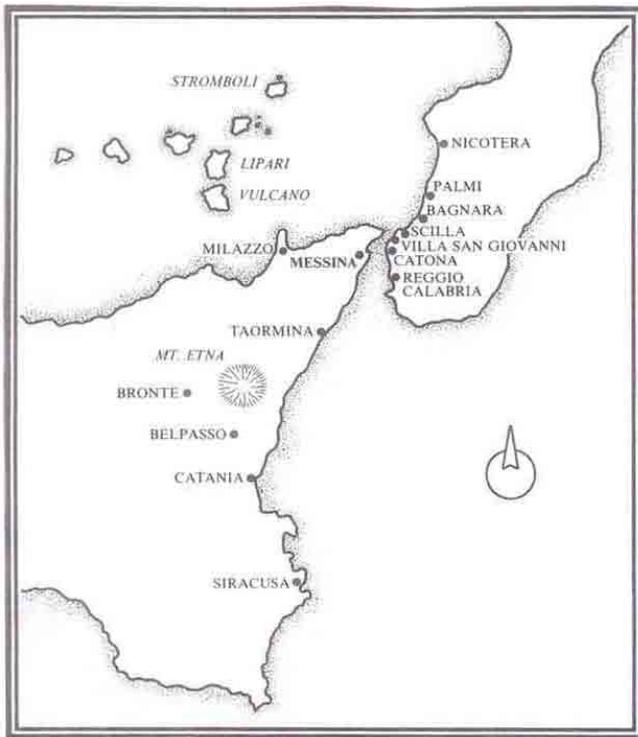
# ITALY: 20TH CENTURY EARTHQUAKE COUNTRY

JACK BODDINGTON

From the warning tremors in the first decade of the 20th century, that heralded in the devastating Messina Earthquake, to the 1997 central Italy quakes, Italy has suffered from numerous other earthquakes that have led to the issue of commemorative medals. This article discusses these earthquakes and the resulting medals.

## Messina 1908

On September 8, 1905 an earthquake of some severity struck the southern Italian regions of Reggio Calabria and Messina (Figure 1) resulting in extensive damage and almost 400 deaths, with lesser shocks being recorded as far away as Naples and Florence.



**Figure 1: Map of southern Italy showing the location of Messina and Reggio Calabria.**

While this upheaval was significant, no one imagined that it was an advance warning for the devastation which was to follow some three years later in December 1908. This earthquake struck with unimaginable force in the early hours of December 28, 1908 when nature shrugged her shoulders. The first blow came when, in 30 seconds, 98 percent of the buildings of the city of Messina were either demolished (Figure 2) or severely damaged and a third of the population of Messina was dead.

The second blow was the creation of a massive tsunami that caused millions of tons of seawater to roar inland to devastate the shoreline towns and villages and increase the number of deaths. Then nature rested, but ultimately the death toll exceeded 160,000.



**Figure 2: The Marina waterfront at Messina. Behind the elegant façade the interior floors had collapsed to ground level.**

Help came from all quarters. Ships participating in the international rescue and relief expedition carried the flags of Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Russia, the United States of America and, of course, Italy. The work carried out by the ships and crews of Great Britain and the United States are the primary focus of this article, notwithstanding the valuable work of the vessels and crews of the other nations. In attempting to identify and highlight the awards given for the “Messina Earthquake,” reference is made in several places to the fine book *Angels in Blue Jackets* by Wilson & Perkins who, in their chapter on awards, title it “The Great Medal Muddle” . . . and it was!

The first “general” medal to be struck was the Messina Merit Medal. This medal was authorized by Royal Decree of May 6, 1909 and could be awarded

to the institutions and individuals who distinguished

themselves on the occasion of the earthquake, whether by rendering assistance and medical treatment, or by donating health and administrative services and meeting the material and spiritual needs of the sufferers of the disaster.

### The Messina Merit Medal in Gold (Figure 3)



Figure 3: Obverse (top) and reverse of the Messina Merit Medal in Gold.

The obverse of the medal has the bust of King Vittorio Emanuele III surrounded by his name and followed by the words **RE D' ITALIA**, and the reverse has, within a wreath, the words **TERREMOTO 28 DICEMBRE 1908 IN CALABRIA E IN SICILIA**. The medal was struck in gold, silver or bronze and is suspended from an elongated ring by a ribbon of green with white edges. It is in two sizes: 40mm for institutions (with no ribbon) and 35mm for individuals.

Approximately 700 of these medals were issued to recipients from 47 countries. The *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno D'Italia*, Numero 131 of 1910 identifies the recipients. The recipients of Great Britain and the United States follow (as identified on the list in Italian):

### Great Britain

#### Gold Medal:

*Alla marina da Guerra*  
*All' ammiraglio in capo* Sir H. Curzon;  
*Lord Mayor di Londra.*

#### Silver Medal:

HMS *Lancaster*  
HMS *Exmouth*  
HMS *Duncan*  
HMS *Sutlej*  
HMS *Minerva*  
HMS *Euryalus*

#### *Agli ammiragli e ai commandante le navi da Guerra*

M. Frederic Inglefield  
M. Callaghan  
M. Fremantle Sidney  
M. Luard John  
M. Godenoug  
M. R. Evelyn  
M. Drury St. A. Wake  
M. Edward Philipots

#### *All'addetto militaire col. Dalme Radcliffe*

#### *All'ospedale militaire navale di Malta*

#### *Al corpo dei medici militari di terra*

#### *Al corpo dei medici di mare*

#### *Marina mercantile*

#### *Alla Societa di navigazione "White Star Line"*

#### *Alle navi mercantili*

SS *Drake*  
SS *Mariner*  
SS *Viro*  
SS *Cretic*  
SS *Ophir*  
SS *Chesapeake*  
SS *Ebro*  
SS *Afonwen*

#### *Ufficiale e marinai dell' Afonwen*

Mr. Owen  
Mr. Reed  
Mr. Possart  
Mr. Smith

#### *Enti e private*

*Lord Mayor di Liverpool*  
*Lord Mayor di Manchester*  
*Lord Mayor di Sheffield*  
*Colonnello Mac Neece*  
Mr. James Baylis Heynes  
Mrs. Lilian Baylis Heynes  
Mr. Inglis Douglas  
Mrs. S. J. Churchill

Lord Nelson *duca di Bronte*  
Mr. Cosandey  
Mr. George Turner  
Mrs. Flinte Taylor  
Mrs. Hilda Hambury

**Bronze Medal:**

Mr. Lobb  
Mr. Briglia Eduardo  
Mr. Eaton  
Mr. Marshall  
*Colonnello* Shaw Hellier  
Miss Dorotea Hood  
Mrs. Grace Hood  
Mr. Edwardes  
Lord Gramby  
Mr. R. H. Holme  
Lady Haldon  
Miss Maud Valerie White  
Mr. Roose  
Miss Mabel Frances  
Mr. Concannon Esq.  
Mr. Sharret Esq.  
Mr. Robin  
Mr. Robert Hichenes  
Mr. George Oates  
Dott. Cacciola  
Dott. Charles Dashwood  
Mr. Dyson Laurie  
*Barone di Policastrello*  
The Rev. E. C. Cawood, MM

*Due assistenti dell'esercito della salute*

Miss M. O'Connor McCreary  
Miss Porter  
Miss Hartigan  
Miss B. Gerrie  
Miss Phelan  
Miss H. L. Munn  
Mrs. Maillard  
Miss Alice Niesigh  
Miss M. E. Belcher  
Lady Hill  
*Baroness de Cosa*  
Mrs. Dashwood  
Mrs. Percy Trehwella  
Miss Hill  
The Hon Mary Palk  
Miss Maria MacDonald  
Miss Minnie George  
Miss Clara Sarraw  
Mrs. Frank Marianna  
Mr. Charles Beck  
Mr. Charles Skinner  
*Sig. Mattei Pietro*  
Mr. Frank  
Mr. Aveline  
Mr. Percy Trawella

Mr. Tadon  
Mr. Constantino Doresa

**United States of America**

**Gold Medal**

Mr. Roosevelt  
*El Presidente* Taft

**Silver Medal**

S. E. Griscom  
Mr. Reginald F. Landis  
Mr. Nelson Gay  
Mr. Martin Donelson  
Mr. Good  
Mr. Reginald Rowan  
Mr. Lieut. Belknap  
Mr. Allan Buchanan  
Mr. Robert Spofford  
Mr. John Elliot  
Mr. Lloyd Derby  
Mr. S. Parrish  
Mr. W. Hooper  
Mr. Winthrop Chandler  
Mr. W. Earle Dodge  
Mr. Harry  
Mr. R. Hale  
Mr. Francis Leland  
Mr. Charles Wood  
Mr. *Contessa Raybaudi di Massiglia*  
*Nave 'Cetic'*

**Bronze Medal**

Mr. Elworth James  
*Stato dell' Illinois*  
*Stato dell' Massachusset*  
*Stato dell' New York*  
*Stato dell' Luigiana*  
*Stato dell' Texas*  
*Stato dell' California*  
*Stato dell' Connecticut*  
*Stato dell' Rhode Island*  
*Stato dell' Nuova Jersey*  
*Stato dell' Colorado*  
*Stato dell' Pensilvania*  
*Stato dell' Missouri*  
*Stato dell' Wisconsin*  
*Stato dell' Ohio*  
*Stato dell' Michigan*  
*Stato dell' Kentucky*  
*Stato dell' Minnesota*

Early in 1910 King Victor Emanuel decided that a commemorative medal (in addition to the aforementioned merit medal) should be awarded "in recognition of

services rendered to the victims of the earthquake in Southern Italy of December 28th 1908.”

### The Messina Earthquake Commemorative Medal



*Figure 4: The obverse (top) and reverse of the Messina Earthquake Commemorative Medal.*

The medal is in silver only (Figure 4) (note following comments) and 31.5mm in diameter, with the obverse of the medal being identical to that of the Merit Medal. The reverse also carries the same wording as the Merit Medal but with an additional upper line denoting **MEDALIA COMMEMORATIVA**. The suspension is by a ring and a ribbon of green with three white stripes.

The scope of the distribution of the medal was tremendous. It would take thousands of medals to cover the recipients of all countries. The crews of the ships for Great Britain’s naval contingent alone required over 3,400 medals and her Mercantile Marine almost 400.

It will be noted that the description of the Commemorative Medal cites “the medal is in silver only,” but I have seen this medal in bronze in an Italian trio. The only explanation that I can offer for this is that the medal was privately struck as a souvenir or, more likely, to be obtained by Italians who did not receive the silver medal,

but believed they were entitled to some recognition and so this privately manufactured medal was struck. This is borne out by the maker’s name, **L. GIORGI**, hallmarked on the silver medal below the king’s head. The bronze medal has no hallmark and is minutely thinner than the silver. Also the king’s hair is slightly different.



*Figure 5: Obverses of the medals in an Italian trio that includes (from the left): the bronze “Messina Medal”; the 1915 War Medal; and the Allied Victory Medal.*

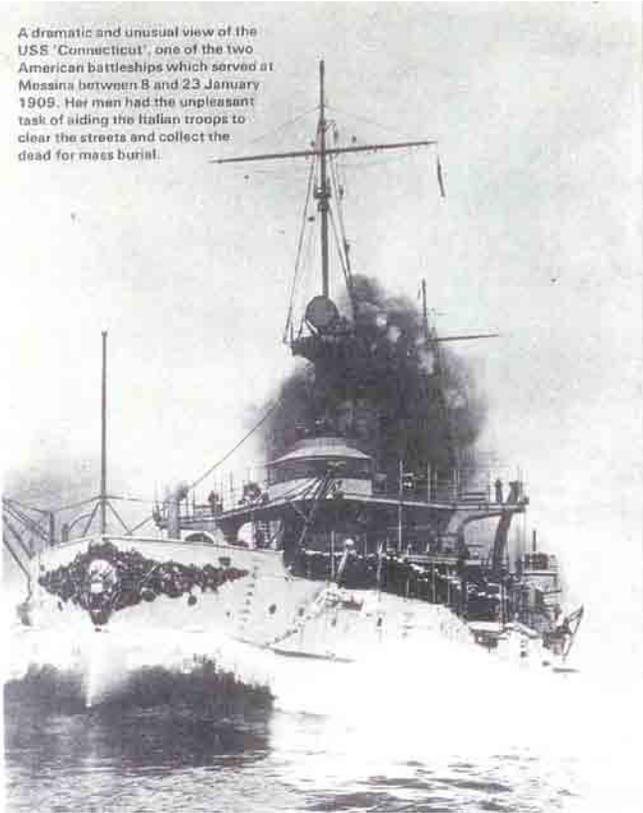


*Figure 6: Reverses of the medals in the Italian trio in Figure 5.*

Figures 5 and 6 show the bronze in a trio made up of the “Bronze Messina Medal,” 1915 War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal and perhaps belonged to a veteran of World War 1 wanting to have his Messina service recognized.

All of the ships’ crews received the medal and the number of ships involved show the magnitude of the naval Messina medals alone: American – 9 ships; British – 19; Danish – 2; French – 5; German – 5; Greek – 2; Russian – 6 and, of course, Italian – 32.

A dramatic and unusual view of the USS 'Connecticut', one of the two American battleships which served at Messina between 8 and 23 January 1909. Her men had the unpleasant task of aiding the Italian troops to clear the streets and collect the dead for mass burial.



**Figure 7: The USS Connecticut, one of two United States battleships that provided aid to the citizens of Messina between January 8 and January 23, 1909.**

The Americans arrived on January 8, 1909 (Figure 7). Several ships known as “The Great White Fleet” were on a world tour, cruising through the Mediterranean, when they were diverted to Messina. Their working parties went ashore, to assist in the rescue work and to locate and bring back the bodies of United States Consul Joseph Pierce and his family.

The identification of American recipients of the Commemorative Medal is something of a problem. Efforts by the authors of *Angels in Blue Jackets* produced no tangible results as shown by their report on the situation:

It is probable that some, if not all, of the United States Navy and United States Marine Corps personnel who served in the Straits were subsequently presented with the King of Italy’s silver commemorative medal on the same basis as the awards made to British servicemen. However, despite protracted enquiries in Washington, it has not been possible to uncover the facts of the matter. It would appear that all relevant correspondence has been destroyed.

While the names of the ships’ crews (sailors and marines) are not available I am able to show the awards to other

American citizens who participated in one capacity or another. Attached to a letter to the United States Secretary of State, from the American Embassy in Rome is a list of 43 names of individuals to whom the commemorative medal was presented. It states:

As will be seen from the enclosed list of persons for whom these medals are intended, four officers of the United States Navy, one officer of the United States Army, seven officers of the United States Diplomatic and Consular Service and four persons who were Diplomatic or Consular Officers of the United States at the time of the Messina earthquake, are among those to whom medals have been awarded.

The list follows:

Naval Officers: Belknap, Reginald R.; Donaldson, Martin; Buchanan, Allen; Spofford, Robert W.

Army Officers: Landis, J. F. Reynolds, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Military Attache, American Embassy, Rome.

At present in Diplomatic or Consular Services: Lupton, Stuart K. Consul at Karachi, India; Smith, James A., Consul General at Genoa; Smith, Felix W., Vice and Deputy Consul at Beirut, Syria; Memminger, Lucien, Vice and Deputy Consul General at Smyrna, Turkey; Garrett, John W., Minister to Venezuela at Caracas; Wilson, Charles S., Secretary of Embassy at Rome; Jerome, Thomas Spencer, Consular Agent at Capri, Italy.

Formerly in Diplomatic or Consular Services: Griscom, Lloyd C.; Bishop, William H.; Winthrop, Robert M.; Cutting, W. Bayard, Jr. (deceased).

Construction party of carpenters employed and sent to Italy by Navy Department: Freet, Howard L.; Mackay, Neil; Mackay, Thomas; Mackay William; Reinburg, Louis A.; Faust, A. H.; Cox, H. A.; Gray, J. T.; Emerson, G. W.; Gehlke, Heinrich; Judson, Charles T.; Booth, James.; Thompson, J. T.; Randall, Harry H.; Dowling, Phillip.

Other persons: Kane, Florence Bayard, Miss; Davies, Katherine B., Miss; Bowduin, Harry; Thompson, Wilfred; Billings, Edmund; McGoodwin, R. R.; Good, Mr.; Fernand, Flora, Miss; Kennedy, Walter; Clifford, P. Winslow; William, Charles; Wright, Louise, Miss.

It may be noted that some of the above recipients were also awarded the Messina Merit Medal as identified in a previous list – so they got both medals. The medals of a sailor on the German cruisers anchored off Villa San



**Figure 8: Group with the Iron Cross, 2nd Class; Hamburg Cross; World War I Honor Cross; and the Messina Medal awarded to an unknown German recipient.**



**Figure 9: The George Cross group of four to Christopher Feetham with from the left: the George Cross; British War Medal; Mercantile Marine War Medal; and the Messina Earthquake Commemorative Medal.**

Giovanni are illustrated in Figure 8.

An interesting group is the George Cross group (Figure 9) to Christopher Feetham (Figure 10). In 1918 Christopher Feetham was serving as a Fireman on the S.S. *Hornsey* when, for an act of gallantry, he was awarded the Albert Medal with the following citation:

Christopher Feetham, Fireman, S.S. *HORNSEY* of London: On the 10th November 1918, while the S.S. *HORNSEY* was lying at Sunderland, a fire broke out

in the mess-room and adjoining saloon. A quantity of ammunition was on board which, had it exploded, would have caused widespread loss of life. The whole of the ship's company behaved admirably in the emergency. The decisive factor, however, in extinguishing the fire was the heroism of Feetham. He volunteered to be let down into the cabin, and there, waist high in water, directed his hose on to that part of the fire which would have exploded the ammunition in a very short time. As it was, some of the ammunition cases were already scorched. His courage saved many lives.



**Figure 10: Christopher Feetham after the exchange presentation of an Albert Medal for his George Cross in 1971.**

In 1971 surviving Albert Medal holders were invited, should they wish, to exchange their Albert Medal for the George Cross (Figure 11). Christopher Feetham exchanged his Albert Medal accordingly. At the time of the Messina Earthquake, Christopher Feetham was serving on S.S. *Ophir*, and received the Messina Earthquake Commemorative Medal.

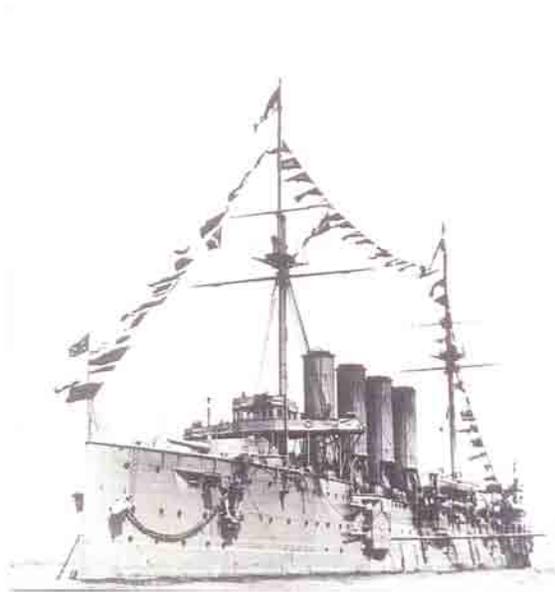


A unique group of medals to a British seaman, Petty  
**Figure 11: The naming on the reverse of the exchange George Cross awarded to Christopher Feetham.**

Officer W. E. Heath, is shown in Figure 12 courtesy of Spink. It contains not only the Messina Commemorative Medal but a rather interesting American medal, the American Legion Paris Convention Medal of 1927 (there must be a story behind that one?). Heath was one of the men who landed from the *Sutlej* to take part in the rescue operations ashore (he may even be one of the men in the 'tween-deck illustration) (Figure 13).



**Figure 12: Group of seven awarded to Petty Officer W. E. Heath including from the left: 1914-15 Star; British War Medal; World War I Victory Medal; Defence Medal; 1939-1945 War Medal; Royal Fleet Reserve Long Service and Good Conduct Medal; Italian Messina Earthquake Medal; and the American Legion Convention Medal.**



**Figure 13:** On the left. HMS Suttle, the first of the major British warships to reach Messina after the earthquake. On the right, an artist's impression of the 'tween-deck scene on HMS Suttle as she ferried casualties from Messina to Siracusa on December 1908.

**The Italian Red Cross Messina Commemorative Medal**

**Figure 14:** Obverse of the Italian Red Cross Messina



**Commemorative Medal.**

Only one other medal remains to be dealt with and this is a private medal that it was not presented by the King of Italy but rather by the Italian Red Cross Society. This medal is in silver, the white ribbon bearing the Red Cross of

the international society (Figure 14). The obverse depicts ministering angels (?) with a star shining down on them. The reverse (Figure 15) has a small disc in the upper part of the medal with a Swiss cross thereon with, below, the words **CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA – TERREMOTO CALABRO SICVIO – MCMVIII.**



**Figure 15:** Reverse of the Italian Red Cross Messina Commemorative Medal.

This medal was given mainly to medical people but no complete roll seems to be available, the only mention is that from the book *Angels in Blue Jackets* – again, the most valuable of sources, which gives a partial listing of awards of the medal to British citizens:

Capt. H. S. Anderson, RAMC  
 Miss Hartigan, QAIMNS  
 Miss M. E. Belcher  
 Miss Maillard  
 Surgeon J. C. Bringan, RN  
 Miss C. Matthews  
 Surgeon E. T. Burton, RN  
 Miss McCreary, QAIMNS  
 Miss O. Connor  
 Miss H. L. Munn  
 Surgeon Major G. S. Crawford, RAMC  
 Miss Niesigh  
 Doctor Mary Flint-Taylor  
 Miss M. Phelan  
 Lieut. A. J. Gatt  
 Miss F. Porter  
 Lieut. W. R. Gatt  
 Lieut. A. J. Semini  
 Miss B. Gerrie  
 Lieut. W. Shepherd  
 Sergeant Major G. E. Gray, RAMC  
 Assistant C. Tagliaferro

Additional awards of the Order of the Crown of Italy and the Order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus were also made to dignitaries and other officials.

### **Avezzano (sometimes called Marsica) Earthquake, 1915**

The *London Times* of January 15th, 1915 carried the following story:

ITALIAN TOWNS IN RUINS: MANY THOUSANDS  
KILLED: KING IN STRICKEN AREA

The extent of the earthquake in Italy covers a large and populous area, mainly in the provinces of Aquila

and Rome. Two towns, Avezzano and Sora, have been destroyed, with loss of life estimated at many thousands. Great damage and much loss of life has been caused in a large number of villages lying on the slopes of the Sabine Mountains, notably at Celano, Scorcola, Balsorano, Collaromele, and Gioia del Marsi. At Arpino, the tower erected to Cicero has been overthrown. The King has visited Avezzano, where his presence has given heart to the sufferers.



*Figure 17: Rescue work in Avezzano in January 1915*

The 1915 Avezzano earthquake occurred on January 13th in southern Italy. The epicenter was located in the town



*Figure 16: The total devastation of Via Napoli in Avezzano.*



**Figure 18: The obverse (left) and reverse of an Italian pair consisting of the Avezzano Earthquake Medal (the bronze medal) and a silver Italian medal for service during the war with Libya.**

of Avezzano. The area surrounding the epicenter was completely devastated resulting in 30,000 direct fatalities. In Avezzano (Figures 16 and 17) a devastating 96% of the population was killed almost simultaneously.

Two medals were issued for this disaster, and the main award is shown as part of a pair in Figure 18. The Avezzano Earthquake Medal is in bronze and is suspended from a red ribbon with two black stripes near the edges. The obverse carries the head of the king facing right with the words *VITTORIO EMANUELE III* surrounding. The reverse has the words *TERREMOTO 13 GENNAIO 1915*. The second medal is for service during the war with Libya.

The other medal awarded for this earthquake was issued by the city of Rome. It is in bronze and is suspended from a purple ribbon with yellow edges (Figure 19). The obverse depicts a mythical creature poised over two infants, while in the exurge are the words *TERREMOTO DELLA MARSICA MCMXV*. The reverse has the words *IL MVNICIPIO DI ROMA*.

### **Naples Earthquake, 1918**

An earthquake struck Naples in 1918 but was comparatively minor. However, in 1921 the city of Naples issued a medal to commemorate the third anniversary of the 1918 earthquake. The scope of issue is not known, but the medal may just have been a commemorative piece with no service or presence in the 1918 disaster required.

The medal is in bronze, 28 mm in diameter and



**Figure 19: Obverse (top) and reverse of the medal issued for service during the Avezzano earthquake by the city of Rome.**

is suspended by a ring from a narrow ribbon 28 mm wide, in the Italian colours of green, white, red in equal stripes (Figure 20). The obverse shows a stretch of land (presumably representing Naples) with two sandal clad legs and feet standing thereon. Surrounding are the words *TRIENNALE D'OLTREMARE NAPLOI XVIII*. The reverse depicts the Bay of Naples with a small sailing vessel thereon.



*Figure 20: The obverse (top) and reverse of the medal issued by the city of Naples to commemorate the third anniversary of the 1918 Naples earthquake.*

### **Friuli Earthquake, 1976**

It began on May 5th and affected 11 villages in the northern region of Friuli, near the Austrian and Yugoslav borders, then comparative quiet reigned until September

when another earthquake struck. One cemetery worker at Friuli commented “We just don’t have enough coffins,” as the death toll continued to rise (Figure 21). The local military and Red Cross were soon on the scene and were later joined by rescue workers from Venice and Trieste. Officials from the affected towns appealed for medicine and emergency lights for hospitals. American army units responded and flew in equipment and medical staff by helicopter then flew out the seriously injured (it is not known whether the American personnel received the medal which is described later). Altogether the May and September earthquakes killed 951 people, injured 2,400, and left 45,000 homeless.



*Figure 21: Caskets of some of the hundreds of people killed in the small town of Malano during the 1976 Friuli earthquake.*



*Figure 22: Obverse of the Commemorative Medal of Merit of the Friuli Earthquake, 1976.*

The Commemorative Medal of Merit of Friuli Earthquake, 1976 (awarded by the government of the Friuli) was subsequently struck and issued. The medal is in bronze and suspended from a ribbon in equal stripes of yellow/blue/yellow/blue (Figure 22). The obverse depicts a clock tower shattered (by the earthquake) and a rescuer's hand held out to a victim's hand. The reverse has the following words surrounding a blank center **COMMISSARIO STRAORDINARIO DI GOVERNO PER IL FRIULI 1976** (Figure 23).



*Figure 23: Reverse of the Commemorative Medal of Merit of the Friuli Earthquake, 1976.*

### **Campania and Basilicata (or Irpinia) Earthquake, 1980**

The 1980 Irpinia earthquake struck on Sunday, November 23, 1980. It centered on the village of Conza and killed 2,914 people, injured more than 10,000, and left 300,000 homeless. The first jolt was followed by 90 aftershocks. Towns in the province of Avellino were hardest hit. In Sant' Angelo dei Lombardi, 300 died (including 27 children in an orphanage) and 80 percent of the town was destroyed. One hundred were killed in Balvano when a medieval church collapsed during Sunday services. The towns of Lioni, Conza di Campania (near the epicenter), and Teora were destroyed, and dozens of structures in Naples were leveled, including a ten-story apartment building.

The Commemorative Medal of the Earthquake in Campania and Basilicata was instituted and consists of a bronze medal suspended from a ribbon in equal stripes of red/yellow/red/white/blue/white/red/yellow/

red (Figure 24). The obverse shows a map of a coastline with the epicenter thereon and three forces members holding out their hands (to offer assistance). The reverse shows a government building surrounded by the words: **COMMISSARIATO INTRAORDINARIO DELLA CAMPANIA E BASILICATA** and the word **BENEMERENZA** above.



*Figure 24: Obverse (top) and reverse of the Commemorative Medal of the Earthquake in Campania and Basilicata.*

### **Central Italy Earthquake, 1997**

The earthquake struck on September 26, 1997 centered in the Apennine hills and several other towns close to Assisi. The cathedrals of Orvieto, Urbino, Bevagna and Fabriano were all damaged, but the worst damage was sustained in Assisi where rescuers worked throughout the night to shift tons of rubble in the search for survivors (Figure 25). Priceless works of art were severely damaged at the upper church of St. Francis of



**Figure 25: Damage to a building during the central Italy earthquake in 1997.**

Assisi and it was in that Basilica that the cycle of frescoes by Bencivieni di Pepo Cimabue at the upper church were destroyed.

The medal subsequently created for the rescuers is in bright bronze and suspended from a ribbon of green with two center white stripes and two red outer stripes (Figure 26). The obverse depicts the outlined perimeter of the devastated area with a cracked target centered. Around the outside are the words **CRISI SISMICA UMBRO MARCHIGIANA DEL SETTEMBRE-OTTOBRE 1997 - CIPARILMENTO DELLA PROTEZIONE CIVILE** while the reverse shows a map of Italy with the central area prominent and the words **PREZIDENZA DEL CONSIGLIO DEI MINISTRI - BENEMERENZA - DIPARTIMENTO DELLA PROTEZIONE CIVILE**.

### Public Disaster Intervention

This is an Italian Government project wherein a medal has been created to be used for disaster rescue recognition. The program was initiated by a Ministry of Defense decree dated October 15, 1983. The medal is named the *Medaglia Di Interventi per Pubbliche Calamita* (Medal for Interventions at Public Disasters or Calamities). Each disaster or intervention is identified by an appropriate bar worn on the ribbon.



**Figure 26: Obverse (top) and reverse of the medal awarded to rescuers in the central Italy Earthquake in 1998.**



**Figure 27: Obverse of the Medal for Interventions at Public Disasters or Calamities.**

The medal is in bronze and suspended from a ribbon striped green/white/red/white/green (Figure 27). The obverse shows two hands, one reaching down to the other in a gesture of aid backed by lightning, flooding and damaged buildings. The reverse (Figure 28) has



*Figure 28: Reverse of the Medal for Interventions at Public Disasters or Calamities.*

the emblem of the Italian Republic surrounded by the words: ***BENEMERENZA – INTERVENTI PER PUBBLICHE CALAMITA***.

### **Acknowledgements**

A great thanks to John Wilson and Roger Perkins for invaluable aid from their book *Angels in Blue Jackets*. The information contained in that volume was, and is, invaluable. My thanks also go to Spink for permission to use the photograph of the medal group of Petty Officer W. E. Heath, Royal Navy.