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CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace, London S.W.1.
16th February 1971

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards of the British Empire Medal and for the publication in the *London Gazette* of the names of those specially shown below as having received an expression of Commendation for Brave Conduct.

Awarded the British Empire Medal for Gallantry (Civil Division)

James Herbert FORSTER, Shaftsman, Bedlington "A" Colliery, National Coal Board, Northumberland.

A cage carrying several steel arch girders and one man was being lowered from an intermediate level 300 feet below ground and some 450 feet from the bottom of a mineshaft. The arches broke loose and the cage was jammed after travelling some 40 feet. Mr. Forster who had stayed behind at the intermediate level, immediately signalled "emergency stop" and called out to the man in the cage. On hearing nothing but groans he realised that something was seriously wrong, and forthwith climbed down the shaft into the cage. He released the trapped man and suceeded in refixing the arches after 45 minutes so that the cage could be raised. The man was then brought to the surface but was found to be dead. The descent involved climbing down damp and greasy wooden baulks, set at 6 feet intervals against the sides of the 13 feet diameter shaft, by clinging to the greased steel guide attached to them. Mr. Forster had no light other than his cap lamp and had he slipped he would have fallen 400 feet to the shaft bottom. He was aware that the only alternative methods of releasing his colleague would have taken some considerable time. In deciding to descend the shaft at once he showed courage and a total disregard for his own safety.

Stanley George PRESLAND, Principal Prison Officer, New South Wales Department of Corrective Services.

It was suspected that a prisoner in the maximum security section at a prison had a firearm hidden in his cell. The prisoner, who was of big physique and strength, had a long history of demonstrated violence and was serving a life of penal servitude following conviction for a brutal crime. He was feared by other inmates and in separate incidents had badly wounded an officer at another prison and had been involved in an abortive escape plan involving high explosives. Principal Prison Officer Presland, unarmed, went to the third landing of the block in which the prisoner's cell was located. After positioning officers on the second landing and adjoining areas he moved to the cell alone and, after a talk with the prisoner, persuaded him to come to the door, which was open. As Presland moved to close the cell door the prisoner dashed into the cell and produced a firearm, with which he threatened the officer. In the face of great personal physical danger and risk to his own life, Presland immediately closed with his armed assailant. Although struck about the head he managed to gain possession of the weapon and to force the prisoner into a position so that the door could be closed. Shortly afterwards two reports were heard and when the door was opened the prisoner was lying on the floor with extensive head injuries, which proved to be fatal. A later examination of the cell produced other weapons and firearms manufactured by the deceased, which in his possession most certainly could have led to casualties and possibly deaths. By refusing to surrender to the prisoner, a murderer with a long history of violence, Mr. Presland displayed courage and devotion to duty of a very high order.