

operator on board, a call for assistance was made to the other vehicle. The cable responsible for the accident had fallen into the water between the two vehicles and although a number of people had been thrown into the water, there was still some doubt about its safety. In spite of this, Corporal Ruddy, a Citizen Military Forces soldier, swam from the undamaged vehicle to the assistance of the others. He drove the damaged vehicle to safe water and eventually to land.

Corporal Ruddy's subsequent conduct on land alone, was meritorious. One of those killed had been a close friend, yet Corporal Ruddy's cool, competent assistance to all, during the evacuation of the injured was commended by the senior officer present, and by a number of civilians. One of the civilians, although unaware of the member's previous brave conduct in the water, went out of his way to commend Corporal Ruddy to his Commanding Officer for his conduct on land. Corporal Ruddy's actions were also commended in the report of the Court of Inquiry which investigated the accident.

Corporal Ruddy's concern for others, his disregard for personal danger, and his persistent devotion to duty were an example and an inspiration to all.

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace, London S.W.1.
16th May 1975.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased, on the advice of Her Majesty's Australian Ministers, to approve the award of the Air Force Cross to the undermentioned:

(To be dated 13th May 1975)

Wing Commander John Alan PAULE (035028), Royal Australian Air Force.

No. 9 Squadron was alerted for flood rescue duties early on 26th January 1974. Because R.A.A.F. Base Amberley was isolated by flood waters, only Wing Commander Paule's crew and another crew were available for the first two days' operations. They flew a combined total of 50 rescue and medical evacuation sorties which resulted in 28 people being hoisted to safety and another 112 rescued by air landed operations.

During the first two days very low cloud and continuous rain restricted visibility to a few yards. Flood waters had hidden many map-reading features and this, combined with the poor visibility, made navigation extremely difficult. Many rescues were further complicated by difficult terrain and hazards such as trees and power lines.

Typical of the rescues executed by Wing Commander Paule and his crew was that conducted at first light on Saturday 26th January 1974. A number of Southern Electric Authority employees had been stranded in a truck on a bridge leading to Swanbank power station. Rescue by power boat was thought impossible because of the speed of the current. Although heavy rain, low cloud and poor early morning light made flying conditions hazardous Wing Commander Paule managed to reach the area. Boat rescue of the men in the truck was found to be under way. However, two men, who had attempted to swim to dry land, were seen clinging to partly submerged trees and hoisted to safety. Wing Commander Paule then reconnoitred the area and rescued a family whose house was in immediate danger of being submerged.

Wing Commander Paule was able to fly an extra crew in on the third day of the emergency but continued to fly difficult missions himself, remaining on duty some fourteen hours a day. The qualities displayed by this officer in his execution of hazardous missions were an inspiration to his Squadron. His exceptional devotion to duty, initiative and courage under adverse conditions was instrumental in saving many lives.

Squadron Leader Bruce Ivan LANE (043428), Royal Australian Air Force.

No. 9 Squadron was alerted for flood rescue duties early on 26th January 1974. Because R.A.A.F. Base Amberley was isolated by flood waters, only Squadron Leader Lane's crew and another crew were available for the first two days' operation. They flew a combined total of 50 rescue and medical evacuation sorties which resulted in 28 people being hoisted to safety and another 112 rescued by air landed operations.

During these first two days, very low cloud and continuous rain restricted visibility to a few yards. Flood waters had hidden many map-reading features and this, combined with the poor visibility, made navigation extremely difficult. Many rescues were further complicated by difficult terrain and hazards such as trees and power lines.

On 26th January 1974, Squadron Leader Lane was directed to rescue occupants of a semi-trailer which had stalled on the New England Highway whilst attempting to cross a bridge on the flooded Purga Creek. The lives of the occupants were threatened as the rapidly rising water was submerging the cabin of the vehicle. Because the bridge was located below the crest of a hill, wind gusts exacerbated the already difficult hovering conditions. Both occupants were safely hoisted. In other rescue on the same day, typical of many hazardous missions, Squadron Leader Lane hoisted a family from the roof of a submerged Ipswich house seconds before the house collapsed and sank.

Squadron Leader Lane showed exceptional devotion to duty of the highest order as he worked unceasingly and with little rest, under extremely daunting flying conditions, during the critical first two days of the emergency. He displayed competence, coolness and courage in keeping with the highest traditions of the Royal Australian Air Force.

Flight Lieutenant Anthony Michael LEA (0223860), Royal Australian Air Force.

During the search and rescue operation for a Caribou aircraft which crashed South of Wau, Papua New Guinea, on the 28th August 1972, Flight Lieutenant Lea was Detachment Commander of the No. 5 Squadron Detachment of two helicopters which played a major role in rescuing survivors and later inserting recovery and salvage teams into the crash site.

The search and rescue and subsequent recovery operations were conducted in an area of very difficult terrain and often in weather conditions of poor visibility, low cloud base and drizzle. The rescue of survivors and the initial support of recovery teams was done entirely by winching through jungle with 250 feet high trees, to the limit of the aircraft equipment and at 5,000 feet above sea level. On many occasions Flight Lieutenant Lea was also committed to hovering his helicopter in an adverse down wind condition when winching was in progress because of the proximity of obstructions.

By skilfully handling his helicopter at the limits of its performance, Flight Lieutenant Lea enabled the rescue tasks to be safely executed.

Flight Lieutenant Lea showed exceptional devotion to duty and courage of the highest order in his execution of a most hazardous flying task.

Flight Lieutenant Gary John McFARLANE (0222622), Royal Australian Air Force.

Flight Lieutenant McFarlane enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force on the 24th January 1965 and was commissioned on 23rd June 1967. He was posted to Headquarters Williamtown for search and rescue duties, flying Iroquois helicopters, on 10th January 1973. He has flown a total of 2688 hours as a pilot, including an operational tour on helicopters with No. 9 Squadron in Vietnam.

During the early hours of Sunday 26th May 1974, while a violent storm lashed the central N.S.W. coast, the 50,000 ton Norwegian bulk carrier "Sygna" was washed aground in the Stockton Bight. For several hours gale force winds and mountainous seas damaged the ship to such an extent that the lives of the thirty man crew were in jeopardy. In response to a request for a possible helicopter rescue attempt the Williamtown based SAR Flight was called to standby and within two hours the first rescue sortie was underway. For the next 1½ hours, with visibility reduced to 1,000 yards in continuous rain and a cloud base varying from 200 feet-500 feet, Flight Lieutenant McFarlane and his crew carried out eleven individual sorties to rescue the ship's crew.

Throughout the rescue attempt 40 feet waves pounded the ship's hull causing spray to rise 50 feet about the aircraft. In these appalling and extremely dangerous operating conditions it was necessary to limit the number of rescued crewmen on each sortie to guarantee an additional safety margin over the normal operations. During the latter part of the rescue the helicopter crew experienced a complete loss of inter-communications due to equipment being saturated by sea spray—in addition, all survivors were