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## CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
STATE INTELLIGENCE . . . . .	9631	Changes of Name . . . . .	9709
PUBLIC NOTICES . . . . .	9638	Next of Kin . . . . .	None
LEGAL NOTICES		Miscellaneous . . . . .	9710
Marriage Acts . . . . .	9697	Department of Trade and Industry Notices under the Bankruptcy Acts and the Com- panies Acts . . . . .	9711
Friendly Societies Act . . . . .	None	LATE NOTICES . . . . .	9711
Industrial and Provident Societies Acts and Building Societies Act . . . . .	None	The Trustee Act, 1925 . . . . .	9712
Companies Act, 1948 . . . . .	9697	SCALE OF CHARGES . . . . .	9721
Partnerships . . . . .	9708		

FRIDAY, 11TH AUGUST 1972

## State Intelligence

### HONOURS AND AWARDS

#### CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace, London S.W.1.  
11th August 1972.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased, on the advice of Her Majesty's Australian Ministers, to approve the award of the British Empire Medal for Gallantry (Military Division) to the undermentioned:  
(To be dated 10th August 1972)

- A314050 Flight Sergeant Ean John SWETNAM, Royal Australian Air Force.
- A217080 Sergeant Frank REYNOLDS, Royal Australian Air Force.
- A17120 Sergeant Cecil John Edmond LEVIEN, Royal Australian Air Force.

At approximately 0810 hours on 20th July 1971, an aviation gasoline prime-mover/pumping unit, with a 4,000 gallon trailer of fuel attached, caught fire in the prime-mover/pumping unit as it was being driven across the eastern aircraft tarmac at R.A.A.F. Base, Richmond. Soon after it started, the fire burnt intensely with flames reaching to about thirty feet and also enveloping the forward end of the trailer. There can be little doubt that had the flames been permitted to ignite the fuel in the trailer there would have been a major explosion, with consequent danger to the lives of those in vicinity and to nearby aircraft and adjacent buildings.

On receipt of the fire warning, Flight Sergeant Ean John Swetnam, Senior Fireman-in-charge of the Duty Fire Crew, immediately despatched all duty fire personnel and vehicles to the scene, and then without delay commenced operations to control and extinguish the fire.

During the operation Flight Sergeant Swetnam applied himself to his duties without regard for his personal safety. In the face of a most persistent

blaze, and with full knowledge that an explosion could occur at any time, Flight Sergeant Swetnam personally led his fire-fighting team in an attempt to quell the flames. Appreciating the gravity of the situation and acting entirely on his own initiative whilst his team sought to contain the fire, Flight Sergeant Swetnam approached the flames and commenced to unhook the trailer from the prime-mover. At one stage he was forced to withdraw temporarily when overcome by fumes and smoke.

Observing the Senior Fireman engaged in this extremely hazardous act, Sergeant Levien, with complete disregard for his own safety and with full knowledge of the danger inherent in the situation, unhesitatingly went to his assistance.

However, the Senior Fireman was overcome by fumes and smoke and Sergeant Levien had to help him clear of the area before returning to the seat of the fire to continue the uncoupling process. The trailer was eventually uncoupled and pulled clear having sustained only minimal damage, and the risk of ignition and explosion of the fuel was averted. The prime-mover was completely destroyed. Flight Sergeant Swetnam quickly recovered and without thought for himself re-entered the danger area to continue his work. Observing two firemen crouched in the vicinity of the flames attempting to uncouple the trailer from the prime-mover, Sergeant Reynolds, judging that they needed assistance and knowing full well the danger of the situation, unhesitatingly joined them. His efforts played a major part in the lowering of the trailer's jockey front wheels. With extraordinary calmness under great pressure, Sergeant Reynolds sought nearby technical confirmation of his understanding of the final mechanical release action required to free the trailer from the prime-mover. Whilst his companions at the threshold of the fire were still engaged in other uncoupling activities, Sergeant Reynolds directed the fire team to lay foam where he wanted it then calmly returned to the immediate vicinity of the fire and actuated the release lever. The trailer was pulled clear having sustained minimal damage—the prime-mover was completely burnt out.