

Constable Bartley's courageous action in highly dangerous conditions and without regard to his own safety undoubtedly saved the launch from almost certain destruction and its crew from possible death or serious injury.

William Thomas FROHMULLER, Constable First Class, Queensland Police Force.

John Leonard GRAHAM, G.M., Senior Constable, Queensland Police Force.

Gordon Lawrence HOFFMAN, Constable, Queensland Police Force.

Anthony David LACON, Constable, Queensland Police Force.

Edwin Vivian O'DEA, Senior Sergeant, Queensland Police Force.

John William Abbot PRESTON, Sergeant Second Class, Queensland Police Force.

Ian Kenneth ROGERS, Constable, Queensland Police Force.

In the early hours of 1 January 1975 smoke and flames were seen coming from an hotel where more than 30 people were known to be accommodated. The hotel was situated next to the Police Station and police personnel immediately went to the scene and unhesitatingly entered the burning building by ladders and stairs to rescue the occupants of the two storey building. The whole of the ground floor area was ablaze, filled with dense black smoke and several explosions were heard.

Senior Sergeant O'Dea, Constable Frohmuller and Sergeant Preston climbed a fire escape ladder to the top section of the hotel. Senior Sergeant O'Dea forced open a window and entered the hotel. By this time the upstairs section had caught fire, but in spite of the intense heat and smoke he went on rousing and warning the guests, until finally a sudden sheet of flame scorched his clothes and forced him to leave and jump to the ground below.

Constable Frohmuller also broke a window and gained entry. The dense smoke made vision and breathing extremely difficult, so the Constable crawled along the floor. He broke down a locked door and dragged a man to safety; he continued to enter rooms and remove the occupants until he eventually collapsed and was pulled to safety. After a few minutes he recovered and assisted a fireman to operate a hose until the fire was brought under control.

Sergeant Preston also roused guests and assisted their escape until he found it impossible to penetrate any further because of the intense heat. Although he was severely affected by smoke he managed to sound an alarm by banging a chair against a wall. He remained in the hotel until he was told that all the guests were saved.

Constable Graham entered at the rear of the building and managed to save several guests. He also broke down the door of a locked room and rescued the occupant and, in the process sustained a severe injury to his arm from broken glass.

Constable Lacon, who was prevented by a large explosion from following Senior Sergeant O'Dea and the other police officers, also went to the rear of the building where he met Constable Graham who was guiding a guest from the building. Seeing that Constable Graham was bleeding profusely from his wound, Constable Lacon entered the hotel, but almost immediately lost his bearings because of the blinding smoke and poisonous fumes. By crawling at floor level he managed to climb through an open window on to an awning where he assisted two women to the ground. He once more went into the building and heard cries for help and succeeded in rescuing two more guests.

By this time he became ill from the fumes and heat and was assisted out by Constable Rogers who had earlier assisted in the rescue of the two women from the awning. Constable Rogers then climbed back into the hotel by way of a ladder and with other police made a search to ensure that all the occupants had left.

Constable Hoffman had entered the hotel by means of a wooden staircase, roused several guests and led them to safety. He then noticed that the gas supply to the kitchen was in danger of exploding and disconnected the system. He also managed to warn the hotel proprietor and his wife of their danger.

The conditions under which the rescue work was carried out was highly dangerous because of the dense smoke, fumes from burning plastic materials and the intense heat. If it had not been for the outstanding courage of these police officers, who displayed a complete disregard for their personal safety and great devotion to duty, there is every possibility that the guests in the burning hotel would have died.

John Phillips NORRIS, Medical Practitioner, Salisbury, Wiltshire.

At about 4 p.m. on 30 July 1974 Dr. Norris was called to a caravan where a patient of his, a Social Services worker, had visited a man with a long history of mental illness. The man had bound the Social Services worker and tied him to the floor with his head under a substantial and well constructed guillotine capable of being activated from a distant corner of the caravan by means of a cord.

When Dr. Norris arrived at the scene he was invited into the caravan where he saw the Social Service worker. The doctor was then threatened with a gun and when he tried to get possession of the weapon, he was felled to the ground and stunned. He too was gagged, blindfolded and tied to the ground.

The man, after repeatedly rattling the rifle bolt and dropping cartridges into the shotgun, removed Dr. Norris' blindfold to demonstrate the plight of the Social Worker and how easily he could drop the guillotine blade from a distance. He also continued to threaten the lives of both the doctor and the Social Worker.

Eventually by the early evening the Police were contacted and one of the senior officers who arrived at the caravan managed to establish useful contact with the deranged man and was able to gain his confidence to the extent that his attitude relaxed somewhat, although he remained edgy and suspicious.

At about 10 a.m. the following morning the man said that he was prepared to allow Dr. Norris to leave the caravan, but the doctor refused to go without the Social Worker. The police officer, the doctor and the man then had a further lengthy discussion and finally the doctor and the officer were allowed to talk to each other away from the caravan, allegedly about a medical matter. The police officer told the doctor, who agreed, that an attempt must be made to overpower the man. They both resumed their discussion with the man until the officer was able to seize the man with assistance from behind by Dr. Norris. The man was pulled to the caravan door where, with the assistance of other police officers, he was overcome and arrested.

Later it was found that the caravan had been carefully prepared for this incident, with bolts for securing the hostages, bars at the windows and a raised look-out had been cut in the roof. A loaded rifle, an air rifle and quantity of ammunition was also found and the caravan was fitted underneath with an explosive device primed to explode.