

AWARD FOR GALLANTRY

Statement by the Acting Prime Minister,
The Rt. Hon. John McEwen

The Acting Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. John McEwen, announced today that Her Majesty, The Queen, had awarded the British Empire Medal for gallantry to Mr. William James Beadman, of Canberra.

Mr. Beadman, a bus driver for the Department of the Interior in Canberra, had been responsible for the rescue of Mr. Bruce David Shields from drowning in Lake Burley Griffin on November 26 last year.

He had unselfishly placed his own life in danger in entering the Lake, which had been made rough and choppy by high winds, Mr. McEwen said. Mr. Beadman had shown gallantry of a high order in entering the rough water.

The official report stated Mr. Beadman had been driving his bus over Kings Avenue Bridge when he saw three people struggling in the Lake near an overturned rowing shell.

The three - Mr. Shields, Mr. Colin Leslie Panton and his nine-year-old son, Colin Stuart Luke Panton - were returning from a rowing exercise early in the morning of November 26 when their boat was swamped in the rough water which had developed.

All three were thrown into the water when the boat rolled over.

The report said that Shields managed to cling to the boat, but Panton let go to help his son.

Shields tried to manoeuvre the boat towards them, but the force of the wind was too great and he saw father and son separate.

Shields then saw a man (Beadman) removing his clothes on the Lake shore and saw Beadman swimming towards the other two, but they vanished below the surface before he reached them.

Beadman then came over to Shields at the boat and under Beadman's instruction, the two managed to reach the shore with the boat.

The wind was blowing the waves against the Lake wall, creating a strong back current.

In the prevailing conditions, it was quite probable that Shields also would have drowned if Beadman had not gone to his rescue.

BACKGROUND :

Mr. Beadman has been employed at the Department of the Interior's Transport Section since 1936.

He was at one time a Ministerial car driver, but for the past fifteen to eighteen years, has been a bus driver bringing children to school from the Kowen area.

He was also selected, because of his aptitude, to take handicapped children to and from the Koomarri School in Canberra.

Mr. Beadman was President of the Canberra branch of the Transport Workers' Union for twelve years until relinquishing this office about three years ago.

CANBERRA.

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