

Carries Crew of Six. FLIGHT OVER SEA.

BRISBANE, Monday.

A twin-engined R.A.A.F. plane, with a crew of six, four of whom are from Queensland, is missing off the coast near Brisbane.

It left Archerfield air station this afternoon for exercises at sea, and was due to return on schedule at 5 p.m. The aircraft was last sighted when it circled over Amity cable station, heading towards Point Lookout, between 2 p.m. and 2.45 p.m.

The crew comprised the captain, Flying-Officer Mervyn Stephen Matthews, aged 22, single, of Artarmon, New South Wales; the second pilot, Pilot-Officer Walter Keith Beeston, 26, single, of Corinda, Brisbane; first wireless operator, Sergeant Dudley Howard Downs, 23, married, of South Australia; second wireless operator, Aircraftman Francis John Starr, 24, single, of Stanthorpe, Queensland; rigger, Sergeant James O'Gorman, 25, single, of Hendra, Brisbane; second rigger, Aircraftman George Leslie Savage, 24, of Coorparoo, Brisbane.

SEARCH ORDERED.

When the plane failed to return, the station ordered other aircraft to make a search. Tomorrow, at dawn, flights of other planes will take up the search. It is hoped that the missing machine has made a forced landing on some lonely beach.

Shipping in the vicinity has been asked to keep a close look-out in case the plane has been forced to land on water.

Flying-officer Matthews is regarded as a very fine pilot.

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

13.8.40

PLANE SEARCH ABANDONED.

R.A.A.F. Machine!

LOSS CONSIDERED CERTAIN.

BRISBANE, Tuesday.

It is now considered certain that the R.A.A.F. plane which left Archerfield at 1.45 p.m. yesterday for a navigation exercise to seaward, dived into the sea near Point Lookout, with the loss of all six members of the crew.

The R.A.A.F. abandoned the search for the plane this afternoon.

The plane was scheduled to cover a wide area at sea more than 100 miles from the coast, and to return to Archerfield about 4.45 p.m.

An intensive search by air, land, and sea was carried out throughout the day.

Air Force planes to-day found a large oil patch in the sea 18 miles from Jumpin Pini, and experts are almost certain that the oil was from the missing aircraft.

Whatever happened to the missing plane occurred between 28 and 48 minutes after it took off from Archerfield, as Air Force planes on such exercises must report by radio every 20 minutes. The last message, which was received 28 minutes after the take-off, gave no hint of trouble.

The absence of any further message from the plane indicates that something happened suddenly leaving no time for any message to be sent.

Police will continue to patrol Moreton Bay and the beaches from the border to Caloundra.

If the plane was able to alight on the sea, it is believed that it would have floated for several hours. The retractable under-carriage would have assisted such a landing.

MISSING PLANE'S CREW MAY BE IN RUBBER BOAT

Grave fears are held that the twin-engined R.A.A.F. plane, with a crew of six, missing from Archerfield aerodrome, has come down in the sea between 60 and 100 miles off the Queensland coast.

Hope for the crew's safety has not been given up, however, as the plane carried a collapsible rubber boat that would accommodate all six.

At 5.30 a.m., to-day—long before it was light—two twin-engined R.A.A.F. planes took off from Archerfield and headed out to sea to search for the plane. They will patrol as far as 100 miles off the coast, and cover thousands of square miles.

The missing plane was to have flown 100 miles to sea before it returned, and when the last message was received from it, it was probably about 60 or 70 miles out.

A naval vessel patrolled the area last night watching for flares from the missing plane.

Official Report

An official R.A.A.F. statement issued to-day in Sydney stated:—

"The missing aircraft left Archerfield at 1.45 p.m. yesterday to carry out a navigation exercise to seaward. It was to cover a wide area at sea, more than 100 miles from the coast, and return to Archerfield about 4.45 p.m.

"The last radio message from the aircraft was received 28 minutes after the take-off, by when it is estimated that the machine was over the sea.

Naval Report

"A naval vessel stood by in the area throughout the night, and a sharp watch for flares or Very lights was maintained.

"At 5.30 a.m. two twin-engined aircraft left Archerfield to search the entire area the missing plane set out to cover."

It is almost certain that whatever happened to the plane occurred between 28 and 48 minutes after the take-off from Archerfield, as Air Force planes on such exercises

man Francis John Starr, 24, single, of Stanthorpe, Queensland.

Rigger, Sergeant James Hamilton O'Gorman, 25, single, of Hendra, Brisbane.

Second rigger, Aircraftman George Leslie Savage, 24, of Coorparoo, Brisbane.

13.8.40 SUN

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No Trace Found Of Missing Plane

BRISBANE, Wednesday. — Fifty police, assisted by scores of civilians, failed to find any trace of the missing Air Force plane in their coastline search from Caloundra to Coolangatta today.

The plane, with a crew of six, left Archerfield Aerodrome at 1.45 p.m. on Monday, and was due back at 5 p.m.

It was piloted by Flying-Officer Mervyn Stephen Matthews, of Artarmon, Sydney.

The Archerfield air station abandoned the search yesterday, when an oil patch was found, indicating that the plane had dived into the sea.

Today's land search was continued in the chance of finding wreckage.

DAILY TELEGRAPH (SYDNEY)

15.8.40



FLYING-OFFICER Mervyn Stephen Matthews, of Artarmon, Sydney, captain of the R.A.A.F. plane which is missing with a crew of six off the coast, near Brisbane.

Air Search Ceases

BRISBANE, Tuesday.

The search for the missing R.A.A.F. plane which left Archerfield Aerodrome at 1.45 p.m. yesterday was abandoned by the R.A.A.F. late this afternoon.

Air Force officers are convinced that the plane dived into the sea near Point Lookout between 2.30 p.m. and 3 p.m. on Monday.

Air Force planes today saw a large oil patch in the sea 18 miles from Jumpin Pin. Experts are almost certain the oil was from the missing aircraft.

The plane's crew of six comprised:—

Captain, Flying-Officer Mervyn Stephen Matthews, 22, single, of Artarmon, Sydney.

Second pilot, Pilot-Officer Walter Keith Beeston, 26, single, of Corinda, Brisbane.

First wireless operator, Sergt. Dudley Howard Downs, 23, married, of South Australia.

Second wireless operator, Aircrafts-



Sergt. O'Gorman



Aircraftsman Savage

man Francis John Starr, 24, single, of Stanthorpe, Queensland.

Rigger, Sergt. James Hamilton O'Gorman, 25, single, of Hendra, Brisbane.

Second rigger, Aircraftsman George

MEMORIAL TO FLYING OFFICER.

In the Artarmon Presbyterian Church yesterday, Squadron-Leader Moran unveiled a tablet in memory of Flying-Officer M. S. Matthews, who lost his life when an R.A.A.F. plane crashed off the Queensland coast last month.

A memorial service was conducted by the Rev. J. B. Thorn, assisted by the Rev. V. Clark-Duff.

9-40

Fate Of Lost Plane's Crew

"I have no official knowledge on the subject," declared the Minister for Air (Mr. McEwen) when asked yesterday concerning reports that members of the crew of an R.A.A.F. machine, lost off the Queensland coast last August are in a German internment camp.

Relatives were reported to have received letters from members of the crew.

"Each time over a period of months that I have heard of rumors that men reputed to be off this plane were aboard a German raider I have had the fullest inquiry made to try to trace the source of the rumors but never have I been able to do so.

"I think it is the duty of any person who claims to have received such a letter to communicate with the Government so that investigation may be made through the international Red Cross."

Mrs. S. Matthews, of Artarmon mother of Flying-Officer M. S. Matthews, who was in charge of the plane, said last night that rumors had been persistent.

"I have said nothing about them because I realised that when the Air Board knew something definite they would let me know," she added.

"I agree with the Minister for that definite information will bring relief from terrible suspense."

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TELEGRAPH 14-8-40