

Plane-in-the-sea answer?

THE mystery of a plane wreckage containing skeletons found in Bass Strait near Anglesea may have been solved by a Torquay fisherman who took part in a dramatic rescue 16 years ago.

Last Friday fishermen discovered an aeroplane cockpit about seven miles from Anglesea in about 27 fathoms of water.

Mr Allan Smith of Munday-st., Torquay, said last night that a Mitchell bomber with a crew of five crashed near this spot on December 11, 1944.

Mr Smith rescued two of the crew with another fisherman about two hours after the crash.

Those killed in the 1944 crash were.—

- Flt.-Lt. Robert Alfred Wines, of Rose Bay, NSW, the plane's captain.

- Sqdn.-Ldr. Frederick McGill, of Concord, NSW.

- LAC Reginald James Cavanagh, of Hobart, Tasmania.

The rescued men were Flt.-Lt. Albert George Clare, of Kedron, Queensland, and LAC Dennis Roberts, of Norwood, South Australia.

The bomber was on a training flight over the Torquay sea range.

Mr Smith told this story of the crash last night:

"We picked up two men clinging to the tail of the bomber about eight miles south of Torquay.

"The plane broke in two when it crashed into the sea and the crew members in the cockpit section were missing and reported killed

"Tail section had drifted"

"The tail section of the plane had drifted away from the spot where the plane went in, but it was less than three miles from where the wreckage was found on Friday."

A RAAF spokesman said last night: "On the evidence of Mr Smith it is a fairly safe bet that the wreckage found is that of the plane which crashed in 1944."

The wreckage was dredged almost to the surface from a depth of 27 fathoms on Friday by a fishing trawler.

The fishermen on the trawler glimpsed what appeared to be human bones in the cockpit of the plane before it slid back into deep water.

Late yesterday six pieces of jagged metal recovered from the trawler net were examined by RAAF ex-

RAAF PLANE CRASHES INTO SEA FISHERMEN RESCUE TWO OF CREW; THREE LOST

GEELONG, Monday.—Two members of the crew of a service aircraft which crashed into the sea about six miles off Anglesea this morning were rescued by fishermen from Torquay.

The airmen were found in a cleft at 1.30 p.m. without having been located either the aircraft or the sea. Floating in a rubber bag.

... from The Sun, December 12, 1944

Trawler Drags Up Aircraft Parts

Pieces of metal trawled up from the ocean bed seven miles east of Anglesea were identified as aircraft parts by an engineer from the Department of Civil Aviation yesterday.

But the engineer said: "There is no hope of telling if the pieces come from an R.A.A.F. aircraft or a civilian aircraft."

Six Beaufort torpedo bombers disappeared from Southern Command bases in that area during the war. No civilian aircraft are known to have been lost in the same area.

The parts were trawled up on Friday from 27 fathoms by the crew of the fishing boat Little Michael, operating from Sorrento.

The skipper, Mr. J. Say, of Rye, said the boat was about 20 miles south-west of Port Phillip Heads when jagged pieces of aluminium were caught in the nets.

The largest piece measured about 2 ft. by 1 ft.

Mr. Say said nothing was showing on the boat's sounding apparatus, but he decided to go ahead and search the sea bed.

After changing the direction of the runs, the net snagged an object, which was brought to within 10 feet of the surface.

Had to Let Go

"It was extremely heavy and all we could see was the dark shadow in the sea. The surface was choppy and a strong wind was blowing, so we were forced to let the object go," Mr. Say said.

He denied earlier reports that he saw what appeared to be bones in the cockpit of the aircraft.

He reported his discovery to the Sorrento police on Saturday.

An R.A.A.F. spokesman said last night that it was unlikely that a further search would be made in the area unless the parts

could be identified as service aircraft.

The exact location of the spot was unknown and would probably be difficult to locate again.

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