

MORE PLANE PARTS ON BEACH

AW 660

Hopes For Trainer Crew Of 5 Fade

Herald Police Reporter

LAKES ENTRANCE, Wednesday.—More wreckage was sighted on 90-Mile Beach, off Lake Tyers, Lakes Entrance in a dawn search today by an RAAF Avro-Anson.

RAAF officers feel certain that the missing Avro-Anson training plane crashed into the sea, and have almost abandoned hope of finding the crew of five alive.

The rest of the search was called off after the additional wreckage was found this morning.

An RAAF ambulance has been sent to 90-mile beach with a heavy Air Force tender and 10 men to retrieve and identify the parts.

The training plane failed to return to East Sale aerodrome on Monday afternoon from a familiarisation flight.

The wreckage found yesterday included an aircraft tail wheel and a piece of fuselage 3 ft. by 6 in.

They were examined by the officer in charge of the Technical Squadron at Sale (Squadron Leader J. C. Kane), and proved to be parts of an Anson trainer.

All the parts are new. The wood is not waterlogged nor the steel corroded, and the fabric, though tattered, is impregnated with fresh paint and proofing.

The examination indicates that the trainer struck the water with terrific force, and sank swiftly. There is no evidence that the machine exploded in mid-air.

Believe Crew Trapped

RAAF officials believe the crash was so sudden and the impact so strong that the crew was trapped and had almost no chance to swim ashore.

The search plane which sighted the wreckage today was commanded by the commanding officer of Sale training station (Group Captain A. D. Charlton). It took off at 5.45 a.m.

The salvage unit is under the officer commanding the Sale technical squadron (Squadron Leader J. C. Cain). The unit has camping gear and enough food to camp out for two days if necessary.

Hopes that there might be survivors on lofty Ben Cruachen, 2765 ft., on the eastern slope of the Dividing Range have faded.

Ground Search Parties

Ground search parties at Lake Tyers today include Senior Const. J. Moore, First Const. L. J. Anstee, four civilians, Sqdr. Leader Kane, an airforce photographer, an RAAF sergeant, and six aircraft men with an ambulance and a heavy "blitz" salvage tender.

The RAAF crash boat at Lakes Entrance is standing by.

RAAF officials can only speculate on the probable course taken by the trainer when it left the aerodrome at 2.31 p.m. on Monday.

The pilot's instructors were to make a routine familiarisation flight within about a 50-mile radius, embracing Bairnsdale and Yarram.

The flight was to last about two hours. It was for the benefit of the two navigators who enlisted recently. Both pilots and the operator were skilled.

Pilot D. M. Hughes, the captain, who re-enlisted recently, was a Lancaster instructor during the war.

"This meant that he must have had at least one tour of wartime operations," a senior RAAF officer said today.

The wireless operator, being skilled, did not use his key after his brief routine message to the station after the take-off. It is practice in the service that, unless it were vital, he would not communicate again with the ground until he asked for permission to land.

Apparently disaster struck so swiftly that he did not have a chance to use his set.



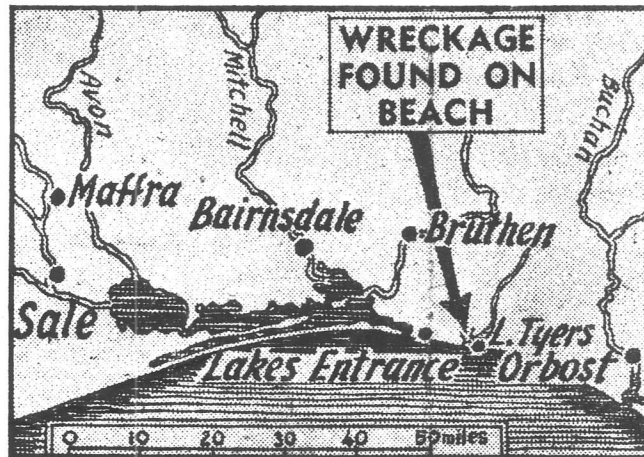
SIGNALLER D. M. WILSON, of Preston, one of the crew of the missing aircraft.

28.9.49

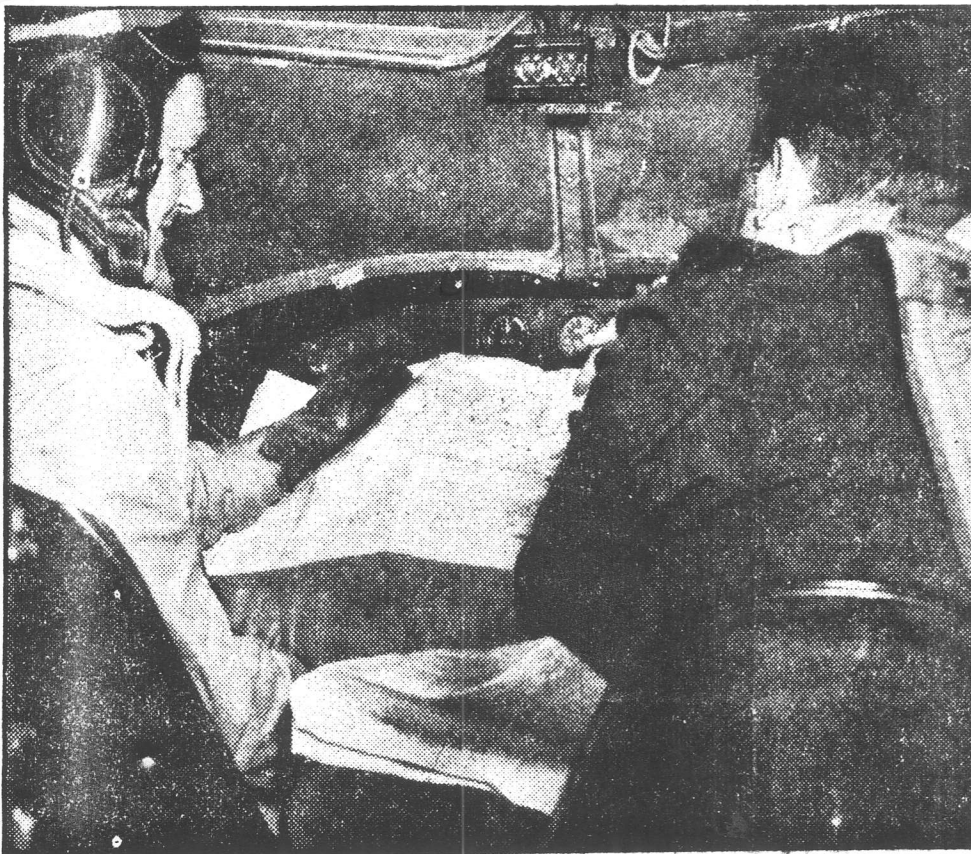
(CRASH 26.9.49)

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AREA OF SEARCH



Where plane wreckage has been found.



AIR SEARCH: Flt. Lt. J. Despie (left) and Flt. Lt. J. Hines studying a map in the cockpit of their Avro Anson search plane before taking off from Sale Aerodrome.

ANSON PARTS IDENTIFIED: PRESUMED AIRMEN DEAD

AFTER confirming that wreckage washed up on the Gippsland coast came from the Anson trainer reported missing on Monday, R.A.A.F. authorities yesterday presumed that the plane crashed into the sea, killing its crew of five.

Airfield "Not Suitable"

CANBERRA, Thursday. — East Sale airfield (Vic.) was unsuitable as a R.A.A.F. training station because of its nearness to mountains and the sea, Mr. White (Liberal, Vic.) said in the House of Representatives tonight.

Speaking on the adjournment, Mr. White, who was a R.A.A.F. group captain, said his opinion was shared by many Air Force men.

He asked whether there had been a Government inquiry into the loss of the Anson training plane from East Sale. He asked for a report from the Minister for Air (Mr. Drakeford) on the suitability of the drome.

He suggested that Amberley (Qld.) or other airfields throughout Australia might be more suitable for R.A.A.F. training.

Mr. Drakeford said he would ask the Air Board to investigate Mr. White's suggestion. Mr. White had been associated with the Air Force for a long period.

A check with records at the R.A.A.F. station Sale, showed that the tail wheel and other parts washed up, belonged to the Anson, which disappeared on a training flight.

The commanding officer of the station (Group-Captain Charlton) will convene a Court of Inquiry within the next few days.

Air Force officers believe the machine went into the sea about a mile offshore from Metung, although police yesterday found more wreckage on the beach near Orbest, about 40 miles east of Lakes Entrance.

R.A.A.F. officers are investigating the find, as they believe it may be parts of the Anson which currents have carried further down the beach.

The R.A.A.F.'s helicopter made several trips from Sale yesterday, but did not locate the main section of the crashed aircraft.

The pilot (Squadron Leader K. Robertson) saw a number of small parts.

Air patrols will go out again today, and ground parties will search the beach for bodies.

Further Plane Wreckage Seen

MELBOURNE: An Avro-Anson, captained by the Officer Commanding the East Sale R.A.A.F. Training Station (Group Captain A. D. Charlton) sighted more aircraft wreckage on the 90-mile beach of Lake Tyers, Lakes Entrance, in a dawn search today.

An R.A.A.F. ambulance was immediately sent to the scene with a heavy Air Force tender and 10 men to retrieve and identify the parts.

The salvage unit has camping gear and enough food to camp out two days if necessary.

It is in the charge of the Officer Commanding the Sale Technical Squadron (Squadron-Leader J. C. Cain), who went to the Lakes Entrance yesterday afternoon when a 3 ft long piece of metal, believed to be aircraft wreckage, was found at the mouth of Lake Tyers.

The rest of the search was called off when the additional wreckage was sighted.

R.A.A.F. officers now feel certain that the missing Avro-Anson bomber crashed into the sea, and hopes of finding any of the five members of the crew alive are slight.

One of the missing airmen

is Pilot Wilfred Sweeney, 24, of Wagga.

Sweeney, an only son, has four sisters. His mother said at Wagga today that her son always wanted to become a pilot.

"During the war he trained as a pilot, and when the war ended he was discharged. He joined the Air Force again, and had been stationed in Western Australia. He arrived in Sale (Victoria) only a fortnight ago," said Mrs. Sweeney.

Signaller David Michael Wilson, 23, the only Victorian in the missing plane crew, became the father of a daughter a week ago.

Last Sunday evening he left his parents' home in Preston after 10 days' leave to see his wife and child.

Peter Renous Trenaman, Western Australia member of the crew, was one of nine chosen from 3,000 applicants for Australia's new Fleet Air Arm last year. 1949.

9.49

No Sign Of Airmen

More wreckage of the RAAF Avro Anson which crashed into the sea on Monday was recovered early today by Air Force ground parties searching the Gippsland coast.

There is still no trace of the bodies, although it is presumed that the crew of five were killed.

The RAAF helicopter which assisted searchers yesterday, has been taken off the search and returned to Laverton. Another Avro Anson is continuing coastal sweeps, and police are working with Air Force ground parties along the coast.

A Court of Inquiry will be opened as soon as the Commanding Officer of East Sale Station (Group Captain Charlton) is satisfied there is sufficient evidence.

9.49

Believed crashed in sea

MELBOURNE, Tuesday.— The R.A.A.F. Avro Anson plane with five men on board, which has been missing from East Sale station, Victoria, since yesterday afternoon, is believed to have crashed into the sea near Lakes Entrance.

A three-foot long piece of metal, believed to be part of the trailing edge of the plane wing, was washed up on the beach at the mouth of Lake Tyers, near Lakes Entrance, this afternoon.

The missing men are: Pilot David Myrddin Hughes (captain), of Prospect, S.A.; Pilot Wilfred Joseph Barry Sweeney (co-pilot), of Wagga, N.S.W.; Signaller David Michael Wilson, of Preston, Vic.; trainee Navigator Peter Renous Trenaman, of Nedlands, W.A., and trainee Navigator John Robert Heard, of Ulverstone, Tasmania.

Twisted metal

Air Force officers who inspected the piece of metal at Lakes Entrance police station to-night, said they thought it was part of the missing aircraft. It had some shredded fabric attached which was of the same colour as that used on the missing machine.

The metal was twisted as if it had been torn from a plane which crashed into the sea with great force.

A further search of this locality will be made at daylight to-morrow by Air Force planes and ground parties of police and R.A.A.F. personnel.