

24/11/44

Albatrosses Lead To Sea Rescue

MELBOURNE, Thursday. — Albatrosses circling to attack three airmen in a dinghy in Bass Strait on Monday brought help from a passing steamer.

A seaman looking through a porthole saw the albatrosses, and the men were picked up.

They were in the water 34 hours after their Anson had been forced down with engine trouble on Sunday.

The men were Flight-Lieut. D. A. McDougall, of Carnegie (Vic.), Sergeant N. G. Hildyard, of Hobart, and W.-O. V. M. Jacques, of Middle Park (Vic.).

Good Landing

McDougall said that when the port engine seized he turned for land and jettisoned all heavy materials, but the Anson dropped swiftly, and the dinghy was prepared.

They managed a good landing, despite 20-foot-high waves.

McDougall said albatrosses with wing-spans up to ten feet attacked incessantly, and the men were forced to yell and splash to frighten them away.

On Monday they saw a ship, and searching aircraft circled them, but they were apparently lost sight of in the choppy seas.

SEA BIRDS LED RESCUE PARTY

MELBOURNE, Thursday.—Albatrosses which fiercely attacked three airmen in a dinghy in Bass Strait on Sunday ultimately guided rescuers to the men. SMH 24/11/44

The airmen, members of the crew of an Anson forced down with engine trouble, spent 31 hours in the dinghy.

They were Flight-Lieutenant D. A. McDougall, of Carnegie, Vic., Sergeant N. G. Hildyard, of Hobart, and Warrant-Officer V. M. Jacques, of Middle Park, Vic.

The searching plane lost sight of the dinghy because of bad weather, but a steamer on its way from New Zealand picked the men up and returned them safely to Melbourne on Tuesday.

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

24.11.44

ALBATROSS ATTACKS BROUGHT AIRMEN AID

MELBOURNE: Three members of a crew of an RAAF Anson, which was forced down with engine trouble in Bass Strait on Sunday, spent 31 hours in a rubber dinghy before being rescued by a steamer bound from New Zealand to Australia. During their ordeal the airmen were attacked incessantly by albatrosses, which ultimately guided rescuers to them.

The men were Flight Lieut. D. A. McDougall, of Carnegie, Victoria, W/O V. H. Jaques, of Middle Park, Victoria, and Sgt. N. S. Hildyard, of Hobart, Tasmania.

The area was searched as soon as the aircraft was reported missing, but it was not until Monday morning that the crew was first sighted.

The searching plane lost sight of the dinghy because of bad weather, but a steamer on its way from New Zealand found them and returned them to Melbourne on Tuesday.

McDougall, who was captain of the machine, said that on discovering that the port engine had ceased he turned for land, but was unable to maintain height.

All heavy materials were jettisoned to lighten the weight, but the Anson dropped so swiftly that it was soon apparent it would have to be ditched and the dinghy was prepared.

In a rough swell the men made a good landing, and the plane was soon awash to waist height. The dinghy was thrown out and inflated and the men clambered into it. The plane remained afloat for only six minutes.

The worst trouble they had was from albatrosses, which attacked them incessantly. The ferocious birds with wing spans ranging up to 10 feet swooped at them and they were forced to splash to frighten them away.

Their spirits rose when they saw a ship a quarter of a mile away, but the vessel failed to sight them, and another vessel also passed.

On Monday the searching plane sighted them and at midday a steamer was seen approaching 20 miles away. They learned later that a sailor looking from a porthole had picked them up because of the albatrosses circling the dinghy.

In the 31 hours adrift they weathered three gales of varying intensity and prayed earnestly. The Captain said: "Our prayers were answered."

OLD PAPER

11.44