

TWO KILLED IN PLANE'S TEST FLIGHT

Machine Breaks To Pieces In Mid-Air

Two men were killed when an R.A.A.F. plane broke into pieces in mid-air during a test flight near Sydney on Saturday.

There was a loud explosion and onlookers saw the plane, which was flying at 1000 feet, break up.

The two men in the machine tried to jump clear, but their parachutes caught in the wrecked fuselage.

The men killed were:—

Hubert Boss Walker, 33, test pilot, of King's Cross, Sydney.

Peter Fabian Rockingham, 36, of Edgecliff, Sydney, supply manager for de Havilland Aircraft Pty., Ltd.

The explosion which wrecked the plane could be heard for miles.

The engines tore loose from the fuselage and buried themselves deep in the ground.

Other wreckage fell over a radius of about a mile.

The two men were found lying about 100 yards apart.

The cords of their parachutes were still tangled in plane wreckage.

Parachutes Caught

Mr. Nelson Souza said: "I was working in the garden of my home when I heard the plane going over.

"Then there were two terrific crashes, as if the engines had exploded, and I looked up to see the plane burst into pieces.

"The tail came off and went sailing away by itself.

"Then the engines tore out of the fuselage and fell like lumps of lead.

"Thousands of fragments of wreckage flashed in the sunlight and fell to earth after the larger parts.

"The airmen tried to escape in their parachutes, but the wind seemed to wrap the parachutes round them, and the cords caught in large sections of the fuselage, which was breaking into smaller pieces.

"One man was caught in wreckage and fell with his parachute near the road.

"The other man, whose parachute had also become tangled with his body and fuselage, fell about 100 yards from him.

"My wife and I ran to them, but could do nothing.

Not On Fire

"The cabin of the plane fell about 200 yards away and the tail 600 yards away.

"Small pieces rained down on trees, paddocks, roads, and the roofs of buildings.

"The plane did not catch fire either in the air or when the fuel tanks hit the ground."

Mr. Rockingham had been with de Havillands for nine months. He was seconded from the R.A.A.F. in which he held the rank of squadron-leader.

He was formerly an executive officer and aviation officer of the Vacuum Oil Company in New South Wales.

He served in the R.A.A.F. for three years as an equipment officer and also as liaison officer between the R.A.A.F. and the U.S. Aircrafts Board Command.

He was married, with one daughter, aged 11.

Mr. Boss Walker was chief test pilot for de Havillands. He had been with the company six months.

He was formerly...

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