

RESCUERS IN SNOW BATTLE

RESCUERS are fighting their way through snow in Australia's toughest mountain country, 30 miles north-east of Omeo, to reach the crew of an R.A.A.F. Dakota which crash-landed at 11.30 a.m. yesterday.

Three of the four crew members are known to be safe — they were seen waving by search planes.

The other man was not sighted but may have been in the plane trying to repair the radio.

The plane was on a routine flight from Canberra to its base at East Sale.

At 11.26 a.m. the radio operator sent out this dramatic message:

"We will make a forced landing in two minutes."

Search planes from East Sale and Canberra found the plane after 40 minutes.

In clearing

With its tail wrecked and starboard wing shorn off, it was lying in a clearing 4500ft. up the slopes of 6205ft. Mt. Cobberas, near the source of the Murray River.

Food, blankets, a first-aid kit and a portable radio transmitter were parachuted to the stranded airmen.

But no radio signals have yet been received.

Search parties are being led by First-Constable Lionel Baddeley, of Omeo, and Group-Captain W. N. Gibson, of East Sale.

R.A.A.F. headquarters will not release the names of a crashed airmen until next-of-kin have been notified of their condition.



26.8.54

RAAF plane down in Alps

RESCUE IS ON THE WAY

An RAAF Dakota with a crew of four crash-landed in wild mountain country 20 miles south of Mt. Kosciusko today.

Three of the crew are known to be unhurt. They were seen by searching aircraft.

A police party which left Omeo early this afternoon, is expected to reach the wrecked aircraft about dusk, an RAAF spokesman said in Melbourne.

A Forestry Commission officer equipped with a walkie-talkie radio is with the Omeo party.

Another rescue party is on its way from Sale RAAF base.

And an RAAF helicopter has been flown from Richmond to Moruya on the New South Wales coast. It will stand by overnight and if needed will fly in to the crashed plane tomorrow morning.

The Minister for Air, Mr Townley, said in Canberra today the crew of a rescue aircraft identified three of the crew members who stood by the aircraft waving, but the fourth man had not been seen.

The Dakota, one of 86 Transport Wing based at Canberra, left there for Sale at 11 a.m.

At 11.26 it signalled: "We will make a forced landing in two minutes."

SIGNAL

The Dakota is believed to have developed engine

AG5-60

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Mr Townley said the search aircraft would stay over the crashed plane for some hours.

He said it appeared the fuselage of the Dakota had remained intact, but the wings and undercarriage had been twisted and bent.

He said the crew would be able to shelter in the fuselage of the aircraft while awaiting the search parties.

Rescue men reach three survivors of air crash

26.8.54

After struggling across the mountains a rescue party today reached the three survivors of the RAAF Dakota which crashed yesterday on the slopes of Mt. Cobboras in the Australian Alps.

All three men were well. This news was given over the rescuers' walkie-talkie radio.

This afternoon the rescue party, which includes a doctor, was on its way back to Benambra with the exhausted fliers.

The three men had spent the freezing night waiting by their wrecked plane. A fourth man lay dead. He was killed in the crush.

The survivors had first-aid equipment, food, axes, hammers, matches and paper for fire-lighting, ground sheets and a radio set dropped to them in "storpadoes" by an RAAF plane yesterday.

Throughout the night they heard the howls of the dingoes.

The rescuers were camped about 25 miles from Benambra. Early today they resumed their battle through some of the wildest country in Australia to reach the wrecked plane.

Snow lay thick on the 6025-ft. top of the mountain. The heavy timber and scrub was drenched from overnight rain and a 70 mph gale swirled round the rocky peak.

On hands

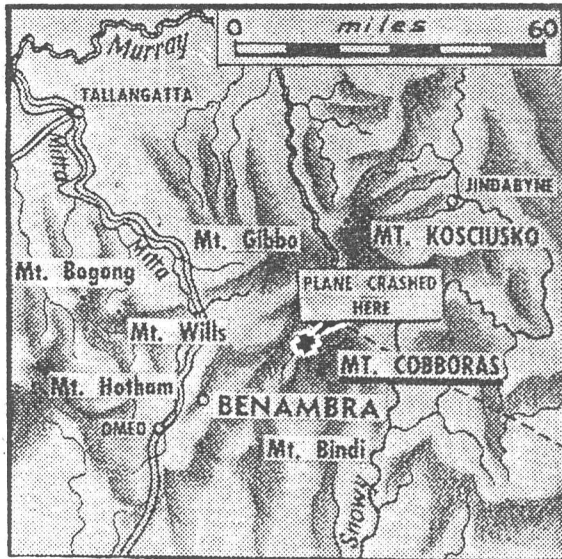
At times the party had to scramble on hands and knees and pull themselves up by scrub clinging to the rocks.

An RAAF plane flew over the wreckage the whole time. Turbulence was so great that the plane could not descend below 6000 ft.

An RAAF helicopter was standing by at Nowra in southern New South Wales, waiting for the weather to improve.

The rescue party, led by Constable L. Baddeley, of Benambra, and Mr Charles Pendergast, a Forests Commission officer, left Benambra yesterday afternoon for Mt. Cobboras.

They were forced to abandon two Land Rovers in which they had started out.



The crew

Crew of the crashed Dakota were:—

Flight Lieut. L. Hawes, of Barkley Street, Sale, captain of the aircraft;

Flight Lieut. E. H. Walker, of The Heart, Sale;

Pilot Officer F. Howie, of Gaffney Street, Coburg.

The dead man was Flying Officer B. T. Mullen, of Main Street, Lithgow

Maps show where the RAAF Dakota crashed in heavy snow country.



He fought Reds

Flying Officer Bernie Mullen, of Lithgow, NSW, who was killed in the Mt. Cobboras air crash had flown against Communists in two post-war operational theatres.

He joined the RAAF in August 1948 and won his wings at Point Cook in 1950.

In 1951, he began an operational tour with No. 1 Bomber Squadron RAAF in Malaya, and operating from Tengah, on Singapore Island in Lincoln bombers, flew many strikes against Communist terrorists.

In Korea

He was commissioned in 1952 and went to Korea as a fighter pilot with 77 Fighter Squadron RAAF.

He flew 136 missions in Meteor Jet fighters over North Korea before he returned to Australia a few months before the Korean truce.

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Killed In Crash



Pilot Officer T. B. Mullen who was killed in the crash. (Picturegram).

Survived



One of the Dakota survivors, Flight-Lieut. L. Hawes, of Sale, Victoria, captain of the aircraft.



Wreckage of the crashed R.A.A.F. Dakota in a thickly wooded area on 6,000-ft. high Mt. Cobboras, 317 miles from Melbourne. Pilot Officer T. B. Mullen of Lithgow (N.S.W.) was killed in the crash, but three other members of the crew survived. (Picturegram.)