

28 KILLED IN NEW BRITAIN PLANE CRASH

EIGHTEEN Australians were among 28 people killed when a Douglas courier plane crashed between Jacquinot Bay (New Britain) and Rabaul on Thursday.

One victim was an Australian nurse and another an R.A.A.F. stowaway.

The plane crashed into a 7000ft. mountain top soon after it took off from Jacquinot Bay. It is presumed that the disaster was caused by bad weather. The plane was last heard of 14 minutes after it had left Jacquinot Bay.

It was then discovered at the base that a stowaway was aboard. An R.A.A.F. man, he actually spoke to a friend over the radio telephone.

The victims included six Australian officers and two other ranks, one army or R.A.A.F. nurse, four R.A.A.F. passengers, an R.A.A.F. crew of four, and one R.A.A.F. stowaway.

Air Search

The remaining 10 were liberated Indian prisoners of war from Wewak who were being flown to Rabaul to join a ship to go home. They included one officer.

The Douglas took off on the 50-minute run to Rabaul at 9 a.m. When it became overdue an air search was organised and crash boats scoured the sea.

The wreckage was spotted by a Douglas plane at 3 p.m., Friday, about 100ft. from the mountain crest in the Wide Bay area. This is about half-way to Rabaul.

A party of natives led by an Angau officer has left Jacquinot Bay for the wrecked plane. It will be nearly two days before this party will be heard from as the wreckage lies in precipitous country.

Planes over the area have seen no sign of life. Wreckage is strewn over such a large

area that no hope is held out of finding anyone alive.

R.A.A.F. personnel known to have been aboard the plane included F./Lt. R. A. Hanrahan, of Moore Park, married, captain of the plane; F./Lt. G. P. Lobwein, A.F.C., of Hurstville, married, co-pilot; F./Sgt. D. A. Banderlin, of Singleton, single, wireless operator; Sister V. B. Sheah, of Narrandera, single; Cpl. H. Cushing, of Brighton Beach, Vic., married; L.A.C. M. J. Mills, of Kingsford, N.S.W., single.

Other Australians believed to be aboard are seven Army men, three R.A.A.F., and two members of the Navy.

BRISBANE PAPER

MISSING PLANE UNSIGHTED

SMH 24/9

No trace has been found of the Douglas transport plane which was carrying 17 A.I.F. medical evacuees, a R.A.A.F. nurse, and eight R.A.A.F. personnel, from Biak to Merauke, in Dutch New Guinea.

The plane has been missing since Tuesday, and the search, which had been intensified in the last 48 hours, involved hundreds of aircraft.

Members of crew were: W./O. A. J. Hunter, pilot, of Lambton, Newcastle; W./O. A. C. Hughes, second pilot, of Mount Gravatt, Brisbane; W./O. Air Gunner E. Wilkinson, of Ipswich, Queensland; P./Sgt. K. R. Wiles, wireless operator, of Footscray, Victoria; P./Sgt. A. G. Sawrey, of Concord, Sydney.

R.A.A.F. passengers were: F./O. Noel Stibbard, of Wollongong; W./O. A. Campbell, of Manly; L.A.C. W. R. Dunderdale, of Oxley, Queensland.

NO P.O.W.s ON PLANE

The Department of Air announced last night that there were no prisoners of war on the plane. Of the A.I.F., all of whom were being evacuated to the mainland, four were stretcher cases, and 13 were able to walk with the aid of a stick.

The plane was travelling between Biak and Merauke on what is known as the "goose run." This is not the usual route, but is sometimes taken by aircraft in good weather.

A plane which travelled the same route at approximately the same time reported no unusual weather circumstances. There were two experienced wireless operators in the crew. Only one signal was received from the aircraft, soon after it had left Biak.

An extensive search was made by special aircraft sent on a search mission. Other aircraft were diverted from other routes to and from Australia in the hope that the lost plane might be sighted. Special planes have now been withdrawn, but the policy of diverting other transport planes over the "goose run" route will continue for some time.

24/9-45

Wide Search For Air Force Plane

SMH 24/9

An intensive land and air search is being made for a missing R.A.A.F. Dakota transport plane.

The plane, has been missing between Biak Island and Merauke (Dutch New Guinea) since last Tuesday.

It was carrying eight R.A.A.F. personnel, an R.A.A.F. nurse, and 18 A.I.F. men.

The missing Army personnel are not liberated prisoners of war, but sick men from Army hospitals in Borneo and Morotai.

Names of the missing persons will not be released until acknowledgment of notification has been received from all the next-of-kin.

The names will probably be released this afternoon.

An R.A.A.F. spokesman said last night in Sydney that one of the most intensive searches of the war was being made for the missing plane.

The area in which the plane is believed to have been forced down is one of the most inhospitable in New Guinea, including "Shangri-La Valley," in the Dutch New Guinea mountains.

A party of American airmen and a nurse spent weeks in "Shangri-La Valley" among head-hunting tribes until they were brought out in a daring glider rescue.

Already hundreds of R.A.A.F. planes have flown thousands of miles in the search for the Dakota.

A mysterious feature of the plane's disappearance is that no wireless distress signal has been picked up, although it is believed two experienced wireless operators were aboard.

24.9.45

OCCUPANTS OF LOST PLANE

Official List

MELBOURNE, Monday.—The Department of Air to-day announced the names of all the occupants of the R.A.A.F. transport plane which has been missing over Dutch New Guinea since last Tuesday.

The names are:—

Members of the crew.—W./O. A. J. Hunter, of Carnegie, Vic., captain; W./O. A. C. Hughes, of Warialda, N.S.W., second pilot; W./O. E. Wilkinson, of Silkstone, Qld., wireless air-gunner; P./Sgt. K. R. Wiles, of North Footscray, Vic., wireless air-gunner; P./Sgt. A. G. Sawrey, of Concord, N.S.W., fitter.

Other R.A.A.F. personnel.—Sister M. E. Craig, of Drummoyne, N.S.W.; Sgt. F. L. H. Blackmore, of Henley Beach, S.A.; P./O. N. R. Stibbard, of Wollongong, N.S.W.; W./O. A. Campbell, of Manning River, N.S.W.; L.A.C. W. R. Dunderdale, of Oxley, Qld.

Sick and wounded Army men who were being evacuated in the plane are:—

NX108177, Pte. K. J. Bowden; NX92958, Pte. D. W. Smith; NX126131, Pte. J. I. Tindall; NX218663, Spr. J. Matthews; NX31956, Cpl. C. J. Welch; SX25862, Pte. L. A. Coombe; QX28187, Tpr. G. P. Duffy; QX54564, Pte. J. McAldrum; NX114117, Tpr. F. J. Ireland; NX78164, Pte. M. J. Ford; NX203687, Pte. I. P. Ray; NX20463, Spr. J. F. McDougall; QX26044, Pte. I. S. McDowell; QX60848, Pte. T. Jorgensen; QX60160, Tpr. R. L. Mathieson; NX88349, Sgt. A. J. Hyde; NX16004, Pte. L. T. Oakley.

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

25.9.45

LIST OF R.A.A.F., A.I.F. ON MISSING PLANE

MELBOURNE, Monday.—The list of 10 R.A.A.F. and 17 A.I.F. personnel on the Douglas transport plane missing in New Guinea since September 18 was released by the Department of Air tonight.

The aircraft was carrying sick and wounded men from Borneo to hospitals in Australia.

No ex-prisoners of war were on the plane.

Members of crew:

HUGHES, W./O. A. C., of Warialda, N.S.W., second pilot.
HUNTER, W./O. A. J., of Carnegie, Vic., captain.
SAWREY, Pte./Sgt. A. G., of Concord, N.S.W., fitter.
WILKINSON, W./O. E., of Silkstone, Qld., wireless air gunner.
WILES, Pte./Sgt. K. R., of North Footscray, Vic., wireless air gunner.

Other R.A.A.F. personnel:—

BLACKMORE, Sgt. F. L. H., of Henley Beach, S.A.
CAMPBELL, W./O. A., of Manning River, N.S.W.
CRAIG, Sister M. E., of Drummoyne, N.S.W.
DUNDERDALE, L.A.C. W. R., of Oxley, Central Qld.
STIBBARD, F./O. N. R., of Wollongong, N.S.W.

Army Personnel:—

BOWDEN, NX108177, Pte. K. J.
COOMBE, SX25862, Pte. L. A.
DUFFY, QX28187, Tpr. G. P.
FORD, NX78164, Pte. M. J.

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MCALDRUM, QX54564, Pte. J.
MCDUGALL, NX20463, Spr. J. F.
MCDOWELL, QX26044, Pte. I. S.
OAKLEY, NX16004, Pte. L. T.
RAY, NX203687, Pte. I. P.
SMITH, NX92958, Pte. D. W.
TINDALE, NX126131, Pte. J. I.
WELCH, NX31956, Cpl. C. J.

No news has been heard of the plane since it left Biak, off the east coast of Dutch New Guinea, for Merauke, on the south-west coast of Dutch New Guinea, on September 18.

The A.I.F. patients from Borneo were being flown from Morotai to hospitals in Australia, and were being cared for by an R.A.A.F. air evacuation sister and an R.A.A.F. medical orderly.

Besides the crew of five, the Douglas was also carrying three R.A.A.F. passengers, who joined the aircraft at Biak.

Aircraft from Northern Australia and New Guinea have maintained a continuous search since the Douglas was first reported missing, but no clue to its fate has been found.

The brave Sister Craig

A Mornington man who had flown in a RAAF Dakota a week before it crashed on a mountain in Irian in 1945 last night told of the quiet bravery of Sister Marie Craig.

Sister Craig, of Drummoyne, NSW, was one of the 28 crash victims. She was a nurse on the plane which carried wounded Australians from Biak to Townsville in World War II.

An American missionary pilot, Mr J. Reader, found the wreckage of the Dakota last week, ending a 25-year mystery.

The plane disappeared while making a scheduled run to Australia late in 1945.

Mr D. F. Wheeler, of Queen's St. Mornington, was one of the wounded on the plane's second-last flight from the islands.

During his flight from Morotai, the Dakota made three stops.

Laughter all

the time

"That's when we came to know and appreciate the devotion and kindness of Sister Craig," he said.

"Most of the fellows were very sick with wounds and diseases. She helped us by laughing all the time.

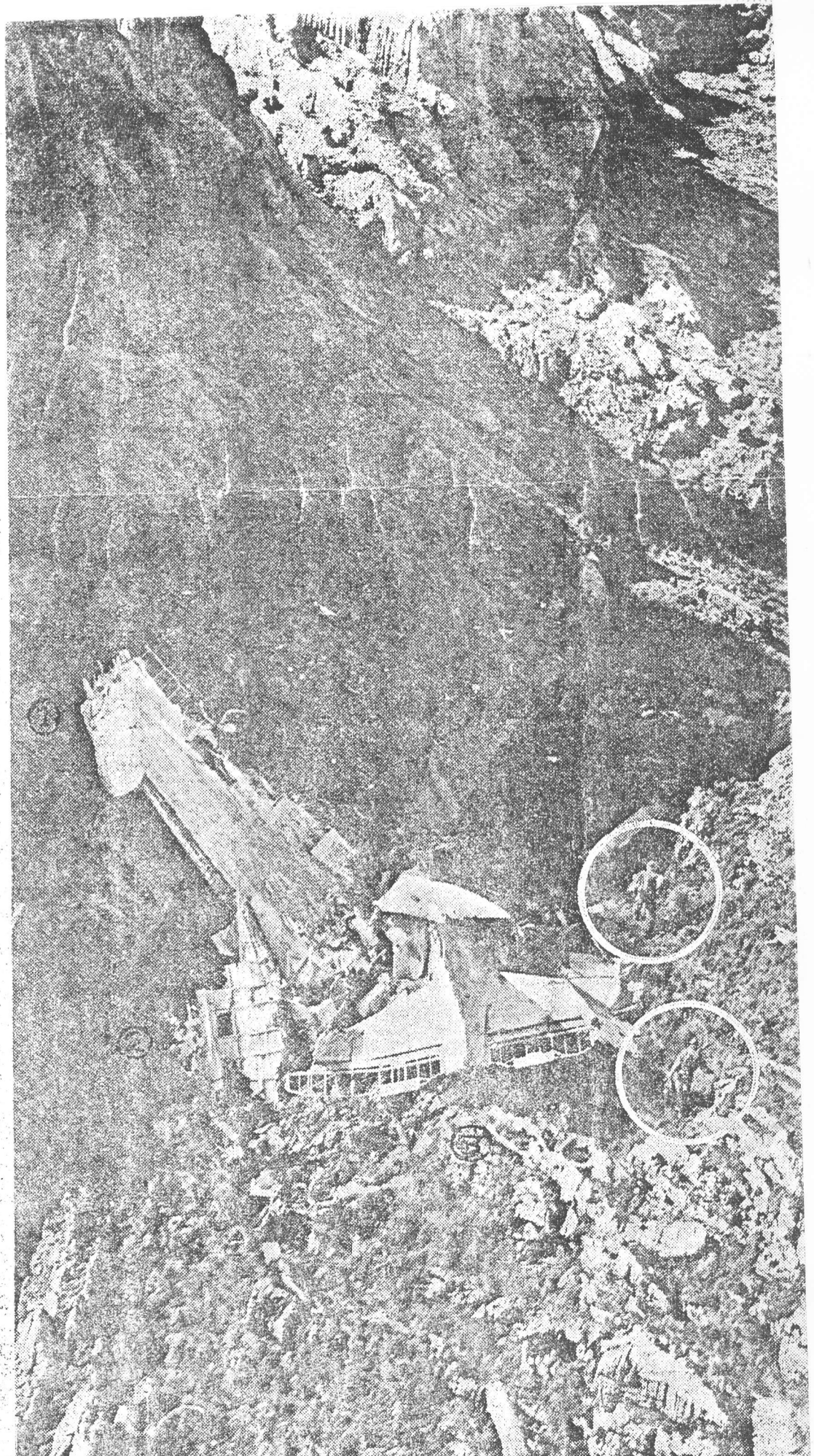
"On its way back it crashed and we heard that Sister Craig was aboard.

"It was a great shock."

A sister of Marie Craig, Mrs. K. A. Cox, of Hunters Hill, a Sydney suburb, said: "If only we had found out sooner — for mum's sake."

Her mother died only six months ago.

The only Victorian victim listed in the



EXAMINING the wreckage of the lost Dakota are Sq.-Ldr. Peter Mahood, of Canberra, a



● THE second - last flight . . . Sister Craig checks the pulse of a wounded 9th Division engineer at Morotai, in August, 1945, before the ill-fated Dakota left for Australia.



● The crashed Dakota, A65-61. This photograph, taken by RAAF Public Relations photographer, Flg Off Mal Lancaster, gives some idea of the rugged West Irian terrain, with its jagged mountain ranges.

The Dakota crashed at 13,500 feet while on a flight from Biak to Australia. All of the 27 Australian servicemen and one RAAF nursing sister perished in the crash.

● Right: The American missionary pilot, Mr Jerry Reeder, pictured second from left, who first sighted the Dakota wreckage, was on hand to assist the RAAF pilots with their recovery operations.

Pictured with Mr Reeder are (from left): Sqn Ldr Brian Dirou, Sqn Ldr Peter Mahood and Sqn Ldr Ron Raymond, who was the leader of the RAAF party.



● Mission successful, the RAAF helicopter crews relax and enjoy a well-earned refreshment.

Two hours before this picture was taken the No 5 Sqn crews were engaged on their most difficult recovery operation — the recovery of the remains of 27 Australian servicemen and one RAAF nursing sister, killed when their RAAF Dakota crashed into a mountain in West Irian 25 years ago. Success meant negotiating almost inaccessible mountains rising 14,000 to 15,000 feet, freezing temperatures and, most hazardous of all, overcoming a considerable reduction in the supply of oxygen to helicopter crews flying at such heights.

Within three days of the start of the actual operation, the well-known Air Force sig-

nal, "Mission Successful" been radioed to Canberra the RAAF party was on way home again.

Pictured (left to right) F Sgt Ken Maley, Sqn Peter Mahood, Flt Lt F Riley, Cpl John Parsons, Ldr Brian Dirou, LAC P Amos, Flg Off Joe D and Flg Off Bevin Pettit

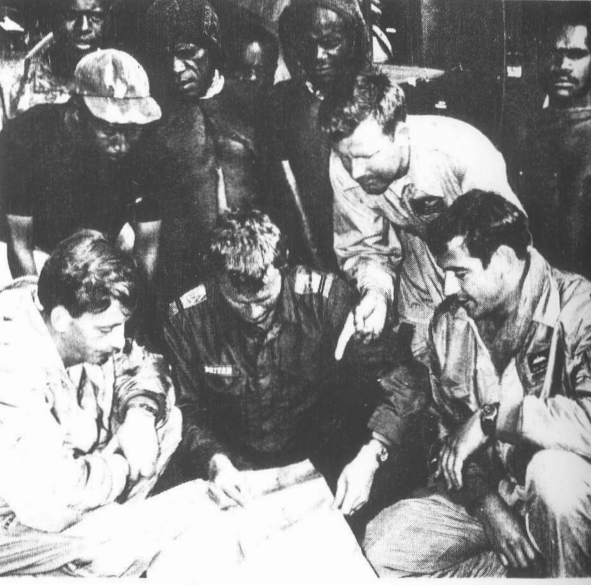
Two other members of party, not shown, who played a prominent part in the recovery operation were Flg John Gavey and Lt Mick Lymery.

The RAAF party received great support from Indonesian authorities and American missionary personnel stationed in the area.



● Ground staff assemble a helicopter at Biak.

The 10 RAAF personnel lost in the Dakota crash were: Crew: W Off A. J. Hunter, of Swansea, NSW; W Off A. C. Hughes, 24, of Warialda, NSW; W Off E. Wilkinson, 33, of Ipswich, Qld; F Sgt K. R. Wiles, 24, of Footscray, Vic; F Sgt A. G. Sawrey, 22, of Concord, Sydney; Sgt F. L. H. Blackmore, 28, of Hindmarsh, SA; Sister Marie Eileen Craig, RAAF Nursing Sister, 33, of Drummoyne, NSW.



● Surrounded by native tribesmen, this RAAF helicopter crew study the course they will fly to the mountain. They are (from left): LAC Peter Amos, Flg Off Joe Driver, Sgt Dennis Olsen and Flg Off Bevin Pettitt. The two helicopter crews established a landing pad at 10,500 feet up the mountain, from which the final successful attempt on the crash site was made.



● Left: The Caribou crew played a vital part in the operation. Here pictured are...





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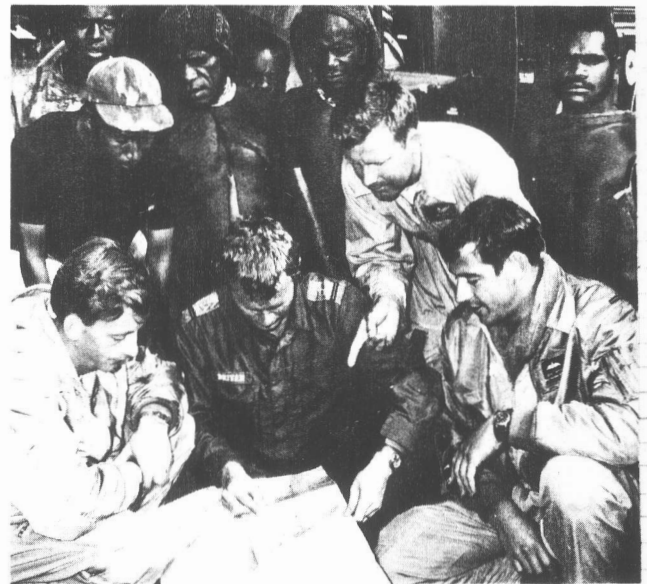
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