

# PLANE IN NIGHT CRASH AT DUNTROON: 4 KILLED

**CANBERRA, Tues. — Four airmen were killed here tonight when a R.A.A.F. Dakota crashed in the middle of Duntroon Military College grounds.**

The Dakota just missed the Duntroon married quarters, skimming the roofs and crashing only 50 yards away, close to the college transport workshops.

It also narrowly missed a store of high explosives and a petrol dump.

As the plane hit belly-first on a heap of gravel, it exploded and burst into flames.

The plane crashed at 8.23 p.m., just after it had taken off on night-flying exercises from nearby Fairbairn airport.

It was from No. 86 R.A.A.F. Transport Wing, stationed at Fairbairn, and was one of several doing night take-offs and landings.

R.A.A.F. authorities tonight confirmed that the four occupants were killed, but their names will not be released until next-of-kin have been informed.

The wreckage blazed for more than an hour before firemen extinguished the blaze with foam.

All four bodies have been recovered.

Eye-witnesses said that the port motor of the aircraft caught fire soon after take-off.

The pilot turned back toward Fairbairn aerodrome but could not maintain height.

Mr. V. Eisenach, of Airdrome-rd., Duntroon, said:

"I was listening to the radio in my house when I heard the aircraft.

"It seemed to clear my roof by only 5ft., then it hit the ground and exploded.

"I raced over to the wreckage but I could not get near it. The aircraft was a mass of flames.

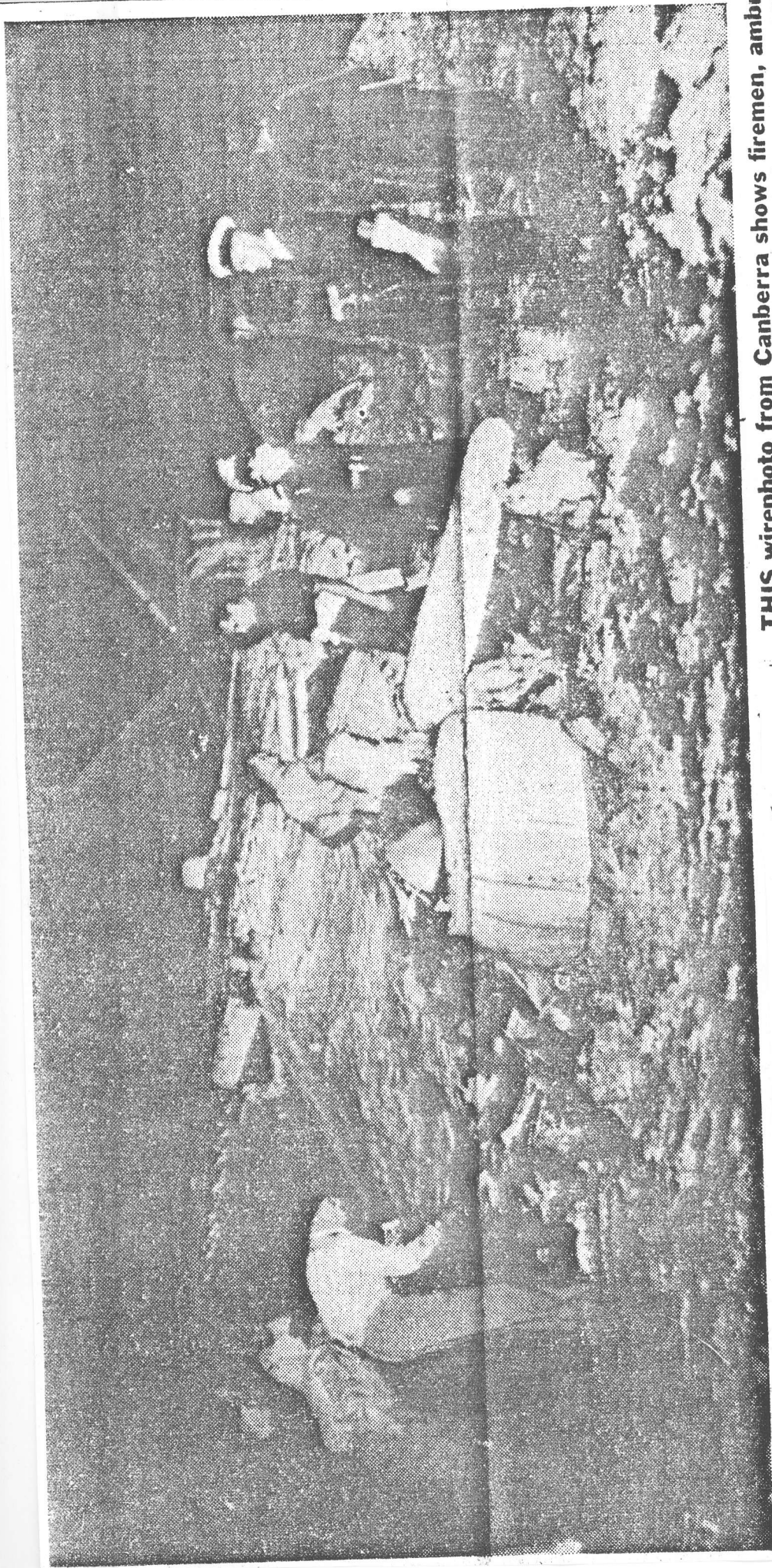
"Two seconds after the first explosion there was another."

Mr. Eisenach said that the engines of the plane sounded "quite funny" as they

shook his house before the crash.

Within a few minutes of the crash military guards took over the suburb of Duntroon, which is devoted entirely to the Royal Military College.

The crash was the worst involving a R.A.A.F. plane since a Lincoln bomber crashed on Mt. Superbus, Queensland, in April, 1955, killing six people.



THIS wirephoto from Canberra shows firemen, ambulance men, Air Force officers and Army personnel searching the plane wreckage.

20-3-57

# Foam covers plane wreck



FOAM, USED TO EXTINGUISH THE BLAZING WRECKAGE, today covers what remains of the RAAF Dakota transport, which crashed in the grounds of Duntroon Military College, Canberra, killing four airmen. Only the tail assembly and a wheel of the craft remain recognisable after the intense fire from full fuel tanks has destroyed the machine. — Today's wire-photo direct to The Herald.

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## Victorian dead in crash



**A** WILLIAMSTOWN ariman was one of the four killed in the Dakota crash at Duntroon on Tuesday.

He was Sergeant Ian Alexander Mackrill, 25, single (left).

The Air Minister, Mr. Townley, said yesterday that the others were the pilot, Flying Officer Hector Neil Macdonald, 28, married, of Canberra, the co-pilot, Flight-Sergeant Noel Heathcote Charlton, 26, married, of Queanbeyan, N.S.W. (pictured at right), and Sergeant Maxwell Charles Coombe, 19, single, of Jones Island, via Taree, N.S.W.

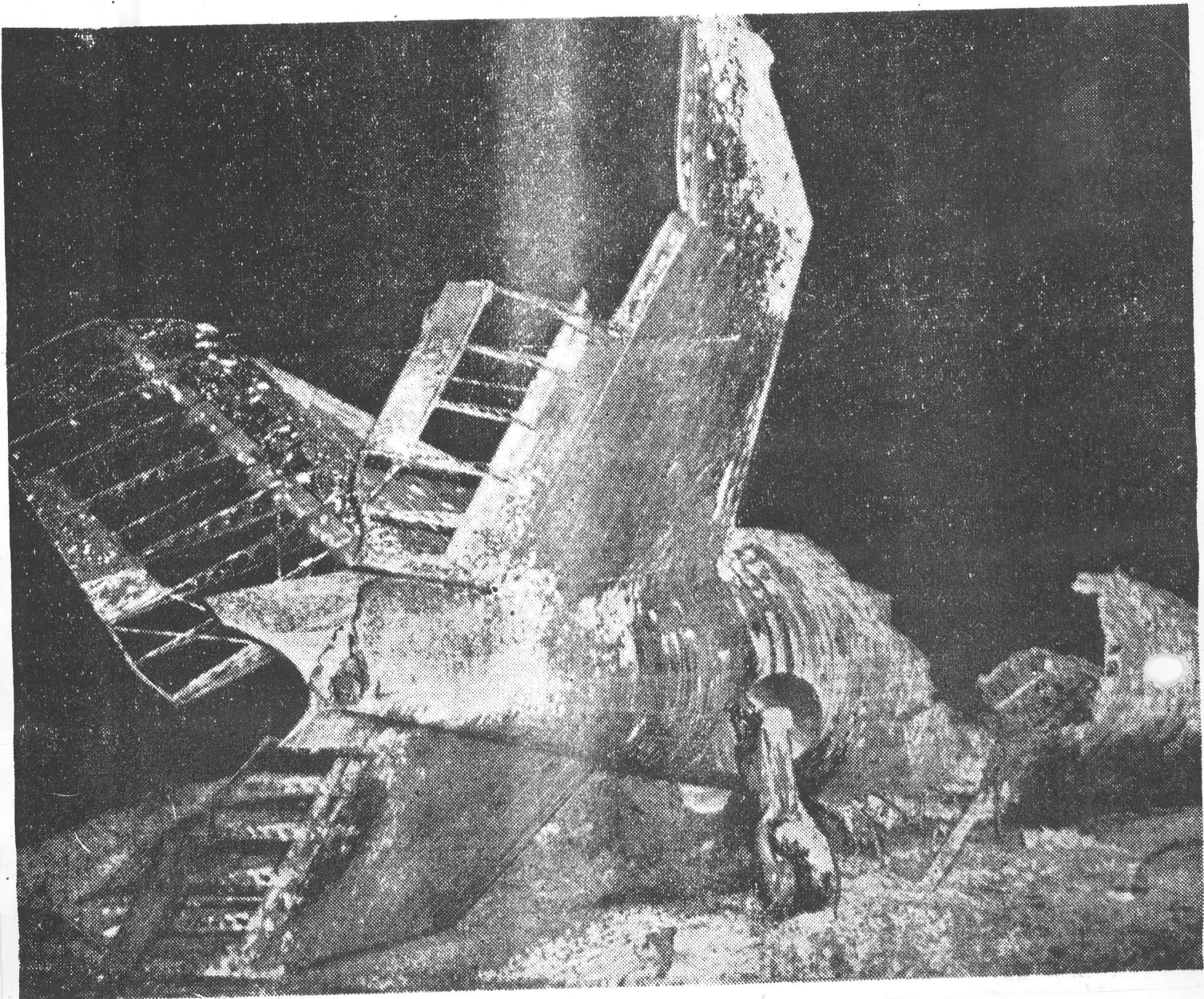
R.A.A.F. authorities said yesterday that Flight-Sgt. Charlton's wife was expecting a baby.

Mr. Townley said that the crew had apparently followed correct procedure by feathering one propeller when one engine failed on take-off.

The two men killed when a Firefly aircraft crashed near Kiama, in southern New South Wales, also on Tuesday, were:—



## Four Airmen Killed in R.A.A.F. Plane Crash



**SMOTHERED IN THE FOAM** used to quell the flames, the burnt-out tail section of the wrecked R.A.A.F. Dakota lies on a gravel heap at Duntroon Military College. (Picturegram)

# Pilot's Grim Fight to Clear Houses

**CANBERRA, Tuesday.**—Four occupants of an R.A.A.F. Dakota on a training flight were killed tonight when the plane crashed at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, just 50 yards from an explosives dump.

The plane had just taken off from Canberra airport on night exercises.

It hurtled to the ground with one engine flaming, as the pilot fought desperately with the controls to avoid the college married quarters and a block where 100 cadets are housed.

The plane crashed to the ground in a vacant square, just 100 yards from the married quarters.

The names of those killed will not be released until their next of kin have been informed.

The plane from No. 86 Transport Wing R.A.A.F. crashed at 8.23 p.m. just after it had taken off.

The site of the crash was only about half a mile from the aerodrome and flames from the burning plane could be seen at the R.A.A.F. station at the aerodrome.

The alarm sounded almost immediately.

Mrs. V. McCormack, wife of Private McCormack of the College, whose house is less than 100 yards from the crash said she heard the plane roaring towards her house and looked out the window.

One engine of the plane was in flames.

It seemed certain to hit her house and she grabbed her baby.

She remembered nothing more until she was revived from a hysterical turn.

The Roman Catholic chaplain at the college, Rev. Father Hoare, was in a room in the Kokoda wing of the college when the plane roared overhead.

He said later he had

seen one engine burning and then "waited for the worst."

The plane, zooming down over the houses, missed power lines, skimmed across a roadway and came to rest on a large pile of gravel, which had been dumped for road repairs.

R.A.A.F. and army personnel and civil police and firemen worked by the light of parked cars to free the bodies from the burnt-out wreckage.