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BATTLE

PLANE TRAILING ROPE INJURES SEVEN

Legs Torn From Man, Girl; Pilot Arrested

MELBOURNE, Monday.—A steel rope trailing from an R.A.A.F. plane flying over Ninety Mile Beach, Eastern Victoria, today tore the legs off two picnickers.

Five other people received minor injuries.

The pilot of the plane has been arrested pending an official inquiry.

The holiday-makers whose legs were severed are:

Noreen Cullen, 17, shop assistant, of Sale.

Hector Ernest Luxford, 57, laborer, of Sale.

Miss Cullen lost both her legs below the knee.

Luxford lost one leg and part of the other.

Both are in Gippsland Base Hospital at Sale in a critical condition.

The plane had been trailing a target, which fell off and left the steel rope dangling from the tail of the plane.

"Cut Like Scythe"

The accident happened at Sea Spray, about 150 miles from Melbourne, about 11 a.m. today.

Hundreds of holiday makers scattered as the plane came low over the beach trailing the rope. Many had narrow escapes.

Mr. J. R. Webb, of Sale, said the plane came down over the beach to tree-top height. A long rope was dangling from the tail and was dragged along the sand.

"The rope whistled and whined along the sand; it cut through the legs of Miss Cullen and Luxford like a scythe," he said.

"All the sand was ploughed up. After a time the rope fell off the plane.

"The pilot did not seem to realise what was happening."

Women Screamed

Mr. A. Lewis, of Sale, said the plane had flown up and down the beach several times at low altitude.

"Women screamed when it swept low and the steel rope fell to the ground," he said.

"The two people who lost their legs had been lying on the sand sun-baking.

"They bore their injuries with amazing courage.

"A local doctor gave them an injection to deaden the pain while they waited for the ambulance to come from Sale, 20 miles away."

Holiday sports which had been arranged at the beach today were abandoned.

DAILY TELEGRAPH 29.12.43

CROWD HIT BY PLANE CABLE

Girl's Legs Severed, Man Loses Foot

MELBOURNE, Monday.—Seven persons were injured, two seriously, when a quarter-inch steel cable trailing from an R.A.A.F. plane flying low over Seaspray Beach, about 22 miles from Sale, lashed a crowd of holiday-makers this morning.

Miss Noreen Cullen, 17, of Sale, had both legs severed, one above the ankle and the other below the knee. Mr. Hector Luxford, 57, also of Sale, had one foot torn off, together with part of the other heel. Both had to receive blood transfusions at Seaspray before they were removed to Sale hospital.

The five other victims were treated for cuts and bruises.

SWOOP OVER BEACH

Police Superintendent Fowles, of Sale, said to-night that the aircraft had been dragging targets for instruction for airmen. One target had been released, but the other became tangled on the end of the wire that drew the targets. The aircraft had turned, and, as it swooped over the beach, the dragging target hit the ground and was dislodged. The loose wire then lashed the crowd of holiday-makers on the beach before the aircraft could regain height.

Both Miss Cullen and Mr. Luxford, who were sitting on the sand, were entangled in the wire and were dragged for some distance. Then when the aircraft pulled upward the wire became taut and they were thrown to the ground.

The victims were the first of a party to arrive from Sale to take part in a sports carnival, and had been at the beach for only 10 minutes. The sports meeting was cancelled.

PILOT UNDER ARREST

Pending an inquiry, the pilot of the plane has been placed under close arrest by R.A.A.F. Service police.