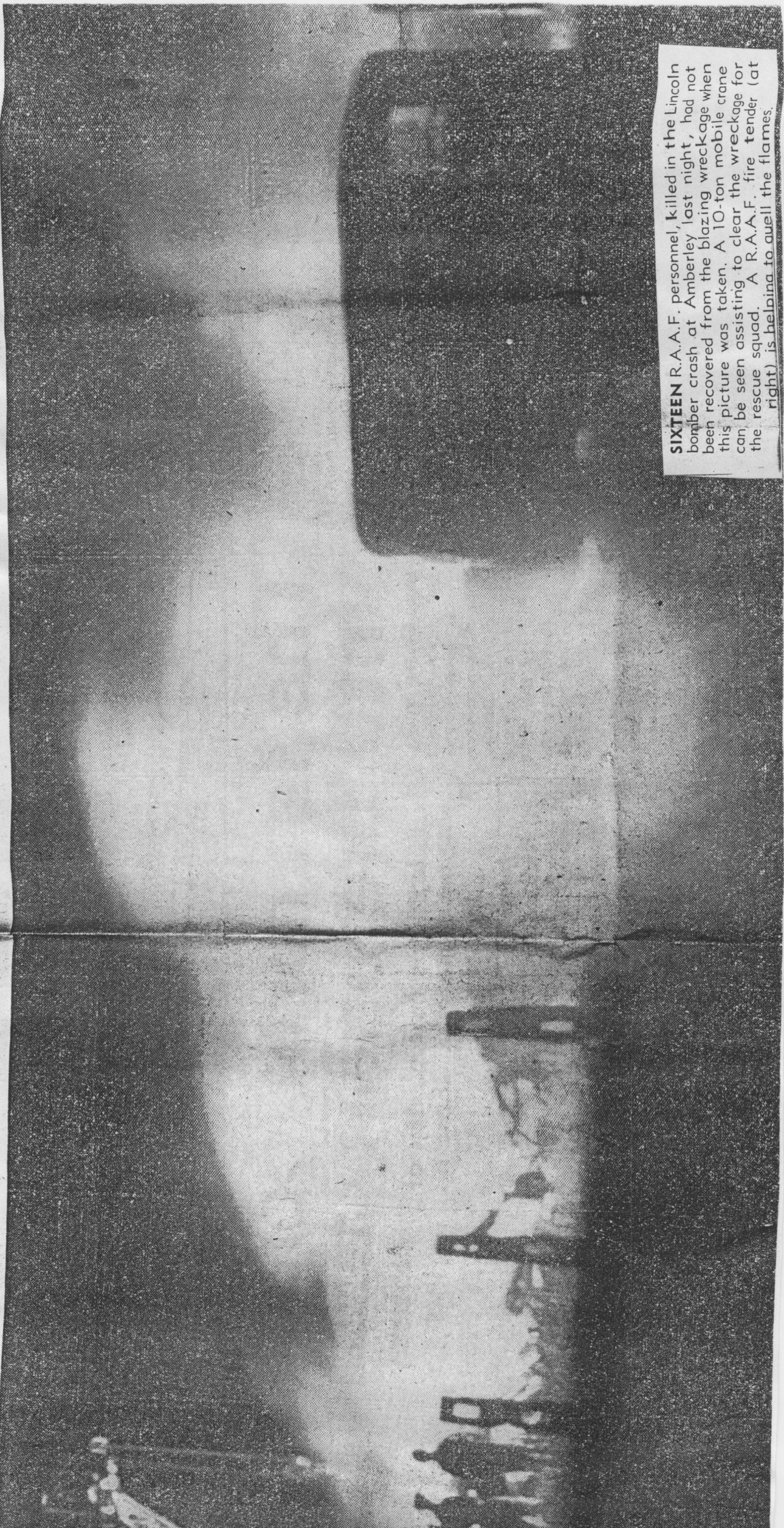


# IN AMBERLEY BOMBER CRASH



**SIXTEEN** R.A.A.F. personnel, killed in the Lincoln bomber crash at Amberley last night, had not been recovered from the blazing wreckage when this picture was taken. A 10-ton mobile crane can be seen assisting to clear the wreckage for the rescue squad. A R.A.A.F. fire tender (at right) is helping to quell the flames.

# DIVE FROM 800 FEET TO GROUND: EXPLODES

By Courier-Mail Staff Reporters.

**SIXTEEN** airmen were killed when a four-engined R.A.A.F. Lincoln bomber crashed and burst into flames at Amberley aerodrome, 29 miles from Brisbane, at 6 o'clock last night.

Coming in from Laverton (Melbourne), the machine overshot its landing strip, crashed from 800 feet and exploded.

It disintegrated and scattered burning parts over a small area. The 16 occupants, all R.A.A.F. personnel, were killed instantly.

The plane was carrying a crew of six, a spare crew, and four passengers.

R.A.A.F. Eastern Command was still notifying relatives of the victims late last night and details of casualties will not be available until this morning.

Families of some of the men killed in the crash live at Ipswich.

The Commanding Officer at Amberley, Group Captain Douglas, visited their homes to break news of the tragedy.

## Pilot's Fight

THE bomber left Melbourne at 2 p.m. yesterday on a return flight with stores and equipment to its home station at Amberley.

Eyewitnesses said the plane made a normal approach to the runway, but it appeared to be over-shooting the 'drome.

The pilot then retracted the under-carriage and attempted to lift the Lincoln for a second circuit, but the machine did not respond and failed to gain altitude.

At about 800 feet it appeared to stall.

## "No Chance"

MRS. E. A. PAUL, who watched from her home in Amberley Road, said: "The plane went over on its wing tip. Then it stood on its tail and next went over on its side and crashed.

"There was a flash of flame as it hit the ground. There was no chance for any of the men."

Other eye-witnesses said that seconds after the big bomber ploughed into vacant land near

Amberley road, about 300 yards on the eastern side of the 'drome, it exploded and flames and smoke rose 200 feet into the air.

R.A.A.F. tenders and ambulance cars raced to the wreck and units were dispatched from the Ipswich Fire Brigade.

The fire tenders raced back three times from the scene of the crash to the drome headquarters to get further supplies to fight the fire.

One group of bodies was found towards the tail.

## Escape Bid

IT is assumed that these men had anticipated the crash and crammed into the rear portion for refuge.

Late last night a search was made of the aerodrome along the line of the flight of the plane as it was thought that someone may have jumped from it a few seconds before its fatal dive.

The position of one of the forward escape hatches in the plane indicated that a desperate effort was made by some of the occupants of the plane to leap clear as it struck the ground.

## Petrol Fire

RESCUE parties of Air Force personnel and police who battled the scorching heat to recover bodies of the airmen were hampered by a series of small explosions.

Petrol from the bomber's shattered tanks soaked into the ground, vapourised, and burst into flames at the feet of the police and airmen.

Burning magnesium shot into the air and scattered spectators who flocked to the drome.

A police patrol kept hundreds of motor-cars moving along the road, and at one stage had to move motorists from the thoroughfare.

Air Force personnel with fixed bayonets were posted around the burning machine to

hold back sightseers.

## In Flames

MRS. T. Hansen, who lives nearby on Amberley Road, said her attention was attracted by the noise the plane was making. "It seemed to have over-shot the strip and appeared to be struggling for height," she said.

"It was terrible. The plane was going towards the city. It was seen as it

## 8 a.m. News

# How Crash Occurred

THE Lincoln bomber had stalled at an altitude of 800ft., said Group Captain Douglas, Commanding Officer, Amberley R.A.A.F. Station, early this morning. This was the immediate cause of the accident. The impact had exploded the fuel tanks.

"The pilot was a bit recovered, he said, but it fast on his first touch-down," he said. "He followed the correct method of revving up his engines for another circuit. The aircraft's flaps were down when the re-take-off was attempted."

In his official statement Group Captain Douglas said the Lincoln bomber was on a travel flight from Laverton, Victoria, to Amberley. It had crashed at Amberley aerodrome shortly after a re-take-off at 5.52 p.m. yesterday.

All the occupants had been killed instantly. The names of the victims would not be released until the next of kin had been notified. Wives of the dead airmen living in the Ipswich district had been informed.

All the bodies had been that he would issue a statement on the crash as soon as all relatives of the dead men had been informed.

## Big Range

THE Lincoln is the most modern heavy bomber being used by the Royal Australian Air Force. A development of the Lancaster bomber, which performed yeoman service in saturation raids over Germany in the last years of the war, the Lincoln has greater range and more striking power.

Four Rolls Royce engines developing nearly 6000 h.p. give the Lincoln a high cruising speed and it develops its great

might take some time to identify them.

He said that probably a formal Air Force funeral would be held, except where relatives and next of kin desired other arrangements.

Group Captain Douglas added that a court of inquiry would be convened as soon as possible. The officer in charge of the Air Accidents Committee (Wing Commander I. A. P. Allen) would arrive at Amberley to-day from Williamstown, a R.A.A.F. station near Newcastle.

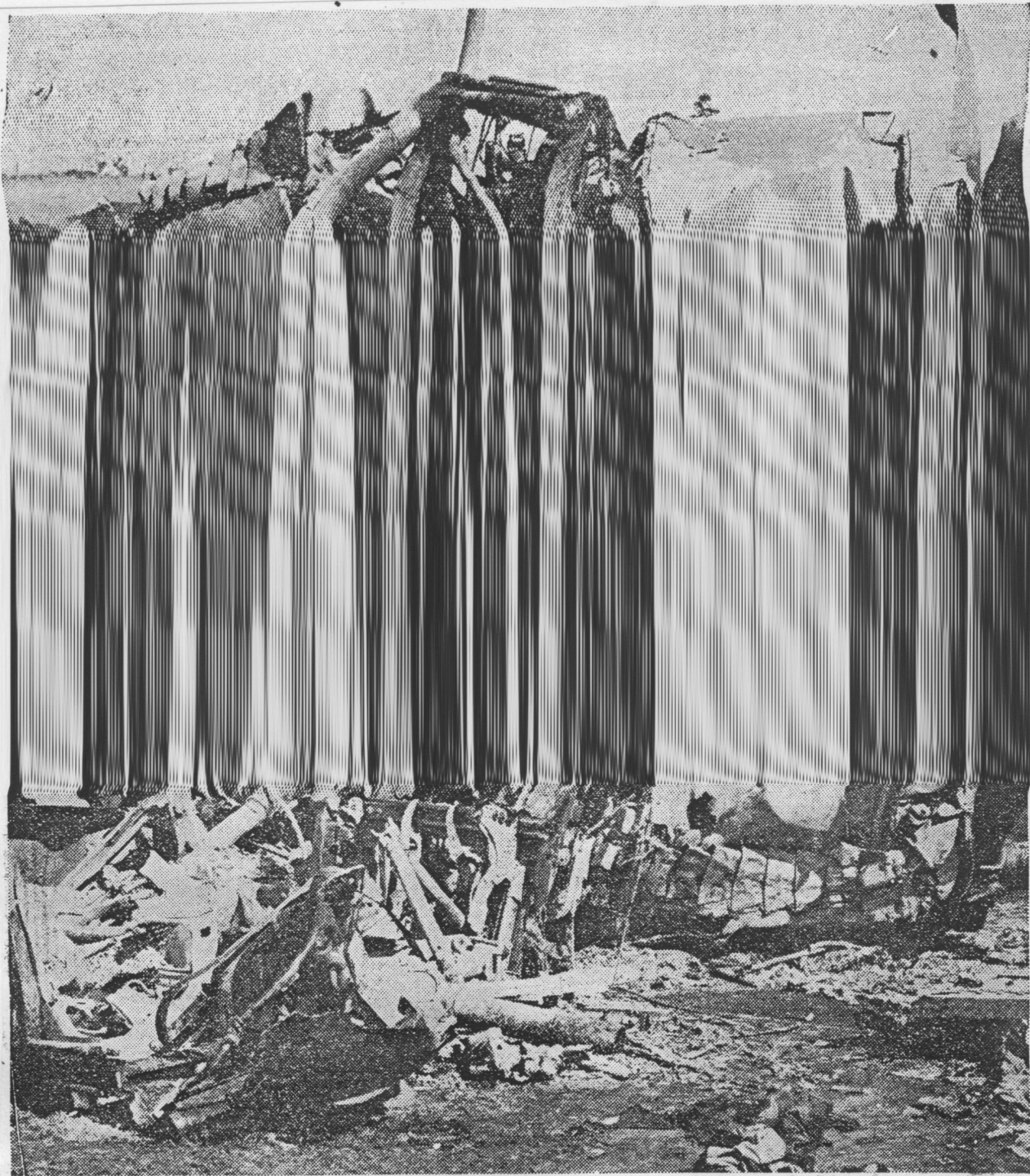
## Amberley Personnel

It is understood that a large proportion of the 16 airmen killed were Amberley personnel. Most of them had operational experience, and at least one was a former "Pathfinder."

[Pathfinders were pilots of exceptional ability who were given the task of pinpointing enemy targets for aircraft which took part in saturation raids on Ger-

many during the war. Their work called for great flying skill, particularly as many raids were carried out in bad weather.]

## P.M. TOLD OF CRASH



FIRST official photograph to be released by the R.A.A.F. following the Lincoln crash at Amberley shows all that remained of the port wing after the fire. The engine can be seen torn from its mounting. In the right foreground is clothing of one of the victims. One of the fuel tanks which exploded is on left of the picture.

## AMBERLEY BOMBER CRASH FINDINGS LIKELY THURSDAY

The R.A.A.F. Court of Inquiry, which has begun its investigation of the Lincoln bomber crash at Amberley, should announce its findings on Thursday.

The court consists of Wing-Commander K. R. J. Parsons, D.S.O., D.F.C., who is president, Wing-Commander A. J. Abicair, M.B.E., M.I.D., and Squadron-Leader W. L. Brill, D.S.O., D.F.C. and bar.

Relatives and friends of airmen killed in the Lincoln bomber crash at Amberley are arriving in Brisbane for the mass funeral on Monday.

Many of the bodies may not be identified, although Air Force doctors are continuing their efforts in this direction.

The funeral will be held with full R.A.A.F. honours. Remains of one of the victims will be taken to St. John's Cathedral at mid-day.

Those of the other 15 will leave K. M. Smith's funeral chapel between 1.15 and 1.30

on two R.A.A.F. tenders for the Cathedral, where they will stay outside the entrance.

Chaplain J. Hill, of the R.A.A.F., will conduct a service, commencing at 2.15 after which the funeral will move to Lutwyche Cemetery.

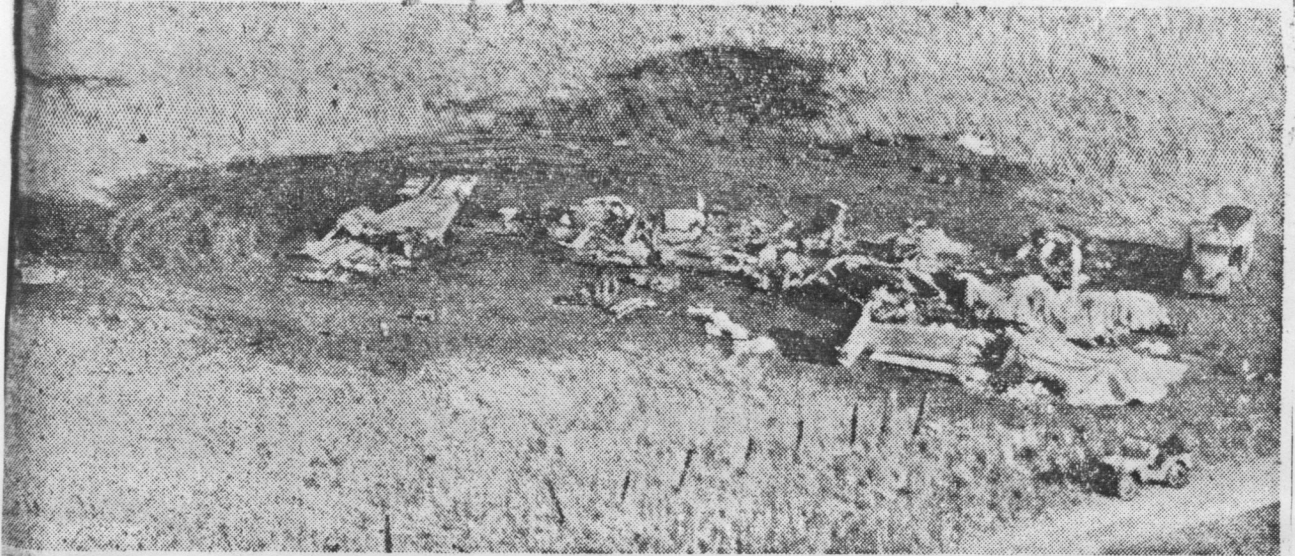
At the graveside the service will be conducted by Chaplain Hall, Chaplain A. J. Hogan (Roman Catholic), Chaplain L. G. Crisp (United

Churches), Rev. A. Crowe (Presbyterian) and Rev. Lex Robinson (Methodist).

A solemn Requiem Mass will be held at St. Stephen's Cathedral at 10 a.m. on Monday for the victims of the crash.

Seats will be reserved for relatives and friends of the victims and members of the R.A.A.F.

**AERIAL VIEW OF CRASHED LINCOLN BOMBER**



Aerial view of the wreckage of the four-engine R.A.A.F. Lincoln bomber which crashed and exploded at Amberley aerodrome, 29 miles from Brisbane, on Thursday. All 16 occupants were killed.

**IN SINGLE GRAVE**

**16 Airmen's Burial**

BRISBANE, Friday.— Because most of the bodies of the 16 airmen who died in the Lincoln bomber crash at Amberley yesterday cannot be identified, the R.A.A.F. has ordered a mass burial on Monday.

Before burial at Lutwyche Cemetery, Brisbane, the coffins containing the bodies will be taken to St. John's Cathedral on two gun carriages. Only one of the coffins will be taken inside for the service.

In a statement to-day, Group Captain Douglas, commanding officer at the Amberley station, said the immediate cause of the crash was the stalling of the aircraft at 800 feet.

The pilot, he said, had been a little fast on his touch-down. The aircraft's flaps were down when a re-take-off was attempted.

**NAMES OF DEAD**

Five of the airmen held the D.F.C. Names of the 16 dead, announced from Air Force headquarters in Melbourne, are:—

**CREW.**

- Flt.-Lt. Eric Ellis Williams**, D.F.C. (captain), of Ipswich, Qld.
- W.O. Frederick Leslie Welsh** (second pilot), Ipswich, Qld.
- Flt.-Lt. Norman Henry Kobelke**, D.F.C. (navigator), Ipswich, Qld.
- W.O. Kenneth Alfred Gibson** (wireless operator), Ipswich, Qld.
- W.O. Thomas Walter Welfare** (wireless operator), Leabrook, S.A.
- W.O. Leslie Thomas Kennerly** (air gunner), Carlisle, W.A.

**TRAINING CREW.**

- Flt.-Lt. William John Taggart**, D.F.C. (pilot), Kempsey, N.S.W.
- Flt.-Lt. Bryan Stanley Mulcahy**, D.F.C. (pilot), East Melbourne.
- Flt.-Lt. Walter Greenhough Gardner**, D.F.C. (navigator), Brisbane.
- Flt.-Lt. John James Gibb** (wireless operator), Flemington, Melbourne.
- Flt.-Lt. Mostyn Lloyd Franklin**, D.F.M. (air gunner), Corrigan, W.A.
- W.O. Robert Bruce Smith** (flight engineer), Bendigo, Vic.

**PASSENGERS.**

- Flt.-Lt. John Ryanhart**, Maroubra, Sydney.
- Flt.-Sgt. Michael James Desmond**, Pittsworth, Qld.
- Cpl. Arthur Dudley Bernard**, Ipswich, Qld.
- L.A.C. Robert John Worland**, Dalby, Qld.

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FOR BRISBANE PRESS

# LINCOLN C BLAMES C

## "Was Badly Distributed"

**CANBERRA:** Bad distribution of freight and passengers caused the R.A.F. Lincoln bomber to crash at Amberley on February 19, killing 16 airmen.

This is the finding of the R.A.A.F. Director of Flying Safety (Wing-Commander Allen) following a full investigation into the crash.

In his report to the Minister for Air (Mr. Drakeford) Wing-Commander Allen said that the pilot thought he would overshoot the landing strip, and when he attempted to take off again the load shifted to the tail.

"As a result," the report said, "the aircraft became uncontrollable and stalled at about 500 ft."

The evidence taken at the Court of Inquiry showed that a Lincoln approach could upset a pilot's judgment and cause him to come in too low and have to use power to reach the landing strip.

The bomber carried 2,200 lb. of freight, including six Merlin cylinder blocks weighing 1,734 lb.

### Touched Down At Fast Speed

On arrival at Amberley it touched down at a fast speed about 100 yards from the start of the strip, and after running a short distance left the ground.

The pilot tried to force the plane back on to the strip and the Lincoln bounced three times.

He then gave her full power about 200 yards from the end of the strip and tried to take off again.

The airspeed was then between 80 and 85 knots.

The Lincoln was seen to climb slightly, the report continued, and levelled out at about 100 feet. A few seconds the position changed abruptly and the Lincoln was climbing at an angle of 80 degrees.

On reaching 500 feet apparently the Lincoln had no forward speed and stalled. It crashed 400 yards from the end of the strip.

The Lincoln was fully serviceable at the time of the crash. It had been serviced at 5 p.m. the previous day.

[At the time of the crash, R.A.A.F. officers at Amberley, said they thought the freight broke loose before the aircraft stalled and several passengers at the rear were crushed to death before the Lincoln dived earthwards.]

QU PAPER

## BAD LOADING CAUSE OF AMBERLEY CRASH

**CANBERRA, Wed.**—The crash of the Lincoln bomber at Amberley airfield (Queensland) on February 19, when 16 R.A.A.F. men were killed, was caused by bad distribution of freight and passengers for landing.

This finding, announced today, followed a full investigation into the accident by the R.A.A.F. director of flying safety (Wing-Commander I. P. A. Allen).

His report says that the bad distribution resulted in the centre of gravity being placed outside the aft limits of the aircraft. The plane became uncontrollable, and stalled at a height of about 500 feet.

### Fully Serviceable

The report says the airframe and engine log books of the Lincoln disclosed that all modifications and special instructions had been carried out.

The official form clearly showed that the Lincoln was fully serviceable at the daily inspection made at 5 p.m. on the previous day.

The aircraft had left Laver-ton (near Melbourne) for Amberley at 2.15 p.m. on February 19. It carried about 2200lb. of freight and personnel.

On arrival at Amberley the Lincoln touched down about 300 feet from the leeward end of the strip, and, after travelling a short distance, left the ground. It then rose to about 5ft.

### Bounced 3 Times

Attempts were then made by the pilot to force the Lincoln to the ground, but they resulted in the aircraft bouncing three times.

When the plane was about 600 feet from the windward, or far, end of the strip, engine power was applied to make a baulked approach. At this time the air speed had fallen to between 80 and 85 knots.

The Lincoln was seen to climb slightly and level out at 100 feet, after which the nose of the plane rose to place it in a climbing position of 40 degrees. After a few seconds this position changed abruptly to a climb of 80 degrees.

With all engines presumably under full power an altitude of about 500 feet was reached. Then, having no forward speed, the aircraft crashed 400 yards from the end of the runway.

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