

FLYING FATALITY.

CRASH NEAR POINT COOK.

Two Airmen Killed.

Melbourne, July 1.

The list of fatal accidents in connection with the training of cadet airmen at the Point Cook school was increased this morning when two pilots were killed as the result of a crash by an Air Force plane.

The victims were William Arthur Holtham, flying officer, aged 28, of Howard-street, Box 1181; and Thomas Stuart Glendinning Watson, pupil, aged 23, of Bell-street, Coburg.

An explosion occurred immediately after the crash, and the machine burst into flames which charred the bodies almost beyond recognition before they could be recovered. The crash occurred a few minutes before 11 o'clock, near the Manor railway station, and about five miles from the school. The machine, was engaged on a training flight, and had not been in the air very long. Witnesses of the accident are of the opinion that the machine grew unsteady and behaved erratically before it finally nose dived from a height of about 200 feet and crashed into a paddock. It is thought that the two occupants of the machine were killed instantly. The machine was practically burnt to pieces.

Point Cook was notified of the crash a few minutes after it occurred; and an ambulance was on the scene within 20 minutes. The bodies were brought to the morgue, where an inquest will be held.

The machine which was a De Havilland 9A, dual controlled, took the air at Point Cook shortly after 10 o'clock; and it was stated to have then been in perfect order. It is understood that Flying Officer Holtham intended to instruct his pupil in making forced landings. The machine had been in the air about 50 minutes when the disaster occurred. The paddock into which it crashed was the only place for some distance about in which an aeroplane could in ordinary circumstances have landed with safety, the other paddocks in the vicinity being either ploughed or strewn with large boulders.

Residents of the farm houses round the Manor railway siding, in the vicinity of which the crash occurred, stated that they were watching the plane for some minutes before it dived. It appeared to fly smoothly over the siding to a point above Mr. Palmer's paddock about 2 1/2 miles away. It was then flying at less than 200 feet—a dangerous height at which to lose control. The machine then appeared to become unsteady, and suddenly it rolled sharply to the right. Its nose dropped, and it began to make a spinning dive. The machine circled once or twice over the paddocks as if the pilot were looking for a safe landing place, before the actual crash occurred. The nose of the machine struck the ground with terrific force, the tail and wings collapsing like paper. A few seconds later it was in flames and in a few minutes it was represented only by a mass of charred wood and tangled fusilage. The nose of the machine made a hole about two feet deep in the ground.

Flying Officer Holtham was regarded as one of the best instructors and most popular officers at Point Cook. He served with the 8th Machine Gun Corps in France in 1916; and on April 5, 1918, he was transferred to the Australian Flying Corps Training Wing. After the war he was attached as an instructor at Minchinghampton, England, and he was one of those who performed sensational stunts over London on Anzac Day, 1919. He was considered an expert pilot of the camel type of machine, which is regarded as the most difficult to control. He was well known in rowing circles. He leaves a widow and two young children.

Cadet Wilson was one of the most advanced and promising pupil pilots at the school.

7-26 (WA TAPED)

Reference in Federal Parliament.

Melbourne, July 1.

In the House of Representatives today the Minister for Defence (Sir Neville Howse) in reply to Mr. Riley, (Lab., N.S.W.), said that he regretted to announce that about 10.30 this morning a flying accident had taken place about eight miles from Point Cook station. The machine was an Avro type training machine, containing Flying Officer William Arthur Holtham (instructor) and Cadet Thomas Stuart Watson (pupil). The machine crashed on landing and burst into flames, both occupants being burnt to death. Flying Officer Holtham had flown some hundreds of hours dual, and 300 hours solo. Cadet Watson was a pupil under instruction, having joined in April of the present year. He had flown 19 hours dual and 16 hours solo, and was considered of great promise. A court of inquiry would be appointed. He had communicated with the friends of the two officers, tendering the sympathy of the Government.

7-26 (WA TAPED)

A6-13 Fatal crash at Manor Railway station near Point Cook July 1 1926. Flying Officer William Arthur Holtham of Box Hill and his pupil Thomas Stuart Glendinning of Coburg (both killed) on the property of Mr Palmer. Aircraft listed as de Havilland 9A. Questions asked in Parliament by Mr Riley, Labour NSW, replied to by Minister for Defence Sir Neville Howse; Major Norman Brearley, Managing Director of WA Airways Ltd was critical of the training process.

FLYING FATALITY.

Point Cook Crash.

Question in Representatives

Melbourne, July 2.

In the House of Representatives today the Minister for Defence (Sir Neville Howse), in reply to Mr. Bowden (Nat., N.S.W.), said that the machine that crashed at Point Cook was one of the same type as that which fell at Canberra being one of the gift machines presented to the Commonwealth by the Imperial Government. All machines were carefully overhauled before being sent into the air. A considerable number of air cadets were now being trained. He intended to have an inquiry at an early date into the whole question of Australian aviation, including the proportion of accidents in Australia and other countries. The machine that fell was of the class now being used in Great Britain for training purposes.

Condition of Machine.

Melbourne, July 2.

The suggestion that the equipment at Point Cook is obsolete, was unofficially commented upon in air force circles today, and it was pointed out that everything was done to keep the training machines in A1 condition. The De Havilland machine which was destroyed in the crash was recently re-conditioned, and was returned to Point Cook only on April 28. Since that date it had only done about 30 flying hours. It was pointed out that when a machine was re-conditioned it was completely overhauled and the slightest structural defects were rectified. The Avro and De Havilland type of machine were still widely used for training purposes throughout the world. The Royal Air Force have a number of Avros for this purpose.

Officials contend, however, that despite the precautions taken to ensure satisfactory equipment the human element could never be eliminated from flying.

Probable Cause of Accident.

Melbourne, July 2.

Witnesses of the disaster today are inclined to the view that when the crash occurred Flying Officer Holtham was engaged in giving landing instruction to his pupil, and it is thought that the fact that the machine circled the paddock, before turning over, indicated that they were seeking a place to land. It is not known who was in actual control of the machine at the time, while the destruction wrought by the fire has eliminated any possibility of discovering the exact cause of the crash as the framework was badly buckled and the inflammable portions, burnt.

7.26 (WA PAPER)

Methods of Instruction.

Major Brearley's Views.

Referring yesterday to the flying fatality that occurred near Point Cook, Victoria, on Thursday, when two pilots were killed, as the result of a crash by an air force plane, Major Norman Brearley (managing director of W.A. Airways, Ltd.) said that there was no reason why there should be the fatal accidents now becoming so frequent in the Royal Australian Air Force. He was of the opinion that a really thorough inquiry by independent experts would reveal any fatal weakness of existing methods employed.

"There are certain well-proved methods of teaching people to fly aeroplanes in safety, and also enabling instructors to detect any serious weaknesses in new pupils before they are permitted to fly alone," said Major Brearley. "Then only those who have fully absorbed the correctly imparted methods of instruction would ultimately take the aeroplane up on solo flights. The whole system of efficient training depends upon the capabilities of the instructors employed, and, in addition to being competent pilots, they should possess the necessary qualifications to enable them to impart their knowledge through the methods mentioned to the pupils concerned. A necessary part of this system is the periodical testing of such instructors by a competent flying examining officer, who would certify regarding the efficiency of the instructors and grade them accordingly."

"In addition to the deplorable loss of life, these unsatisfactorily explained accidents tend to seriously retard the development of aviation; and in my opinion no effort should be spared to make a genuine attempt to overcome any possible weaknesses in the complete training system. There are, of course, exceptionally fine and capable pilots in the Royal Australian Air Force, but something more than courage and capability in the air is required when new pilots are to be instructed in the art of flying, particularly when using machines of a comparatively early design."

In a subsequent conversation Major H. de Havilland, a member of the firm of the De Havilland Aircraft Company, Ltd. (England), who is at present in Perth, said that Major Brearley was particularly well qualified to speak on this question, as his experience in the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force, where he was engaged in schools of special flying imparting these special methods of instruction to officers who were to become instructors in the air force, was well known to those connected with aviation. His opinion, therefore, was undoubtedly of very great value.

7.26 (WA PAPER)

AEROPLANE CRASHES

BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

PILOT AND PUPIL KILLED.

MISHAP NEAR WERRIBEE.

NOTED OARSMAN A VICTIM.

From a height of less than 200ft. a De Havilland 9A dual-controlled instruction aeroplane from the flying school at Point Cooke fell, spinning nose first into a paddock near the railway siding at Manor, about five miles on the Geelong side of Werribee yesterday morning. As the machine crumbled it burst into flames, and a farmer and his employees, who were the first to reach the spot, found the bodies of the flying-officer and the cadet, to whom he had been giving instruction, lying among the wreckage burned beyond recognition. It is thought that both men were dead before the aeroplane caught fire. The names of the victims are:—

HOLTHAM, Flying Officer William Arthur, aged 27 years, of Point Cooke, and Howard street, Box Hill.

WATSON, Cadet Thomas Stuart Goodenough, aged 21 years, of Point Cooke, and Bell street, Coburg.

The paddock into which the aeroplane crashed is owned by Mr. V. Palmer, of the Metropolitan Board of Works farm, and it is the only place for some distance where an aeroplane in ordinary circumstances could have landed with safety. Other paddocks nearby being either ploughed or strewn with large boulders. Flying-officer Holtham and Cadet Watson, who was what is known as a "pupil pilot," left Point Cooke about 10 o'clock. It is understood that Flying-officer Holtham intended to instruct his pupil in making forced landings. It was about half an hour later that occupants of farm houses near the Manor railway station saw the aeroplane circling overhead. The machine, according to witnesses, flew smoothly over the railway station to a point above Mr. Palmer's property. It was then less than 200ft. in the air—a height at which loss of control is particularly dangerous. The aeroplane circled once or twice over the paddock as if the pilot was looking for a likely landing place. Suddenly it "rolled" sharply to the right, its nose dropped, and it began to make a spinning dive towards the ground. The nose of the aeroplane struck the ground with terrific force, and the tail and wings collapsed. A few seconds later the machine was a mass of flames.

Eye-witnesses' Stories.

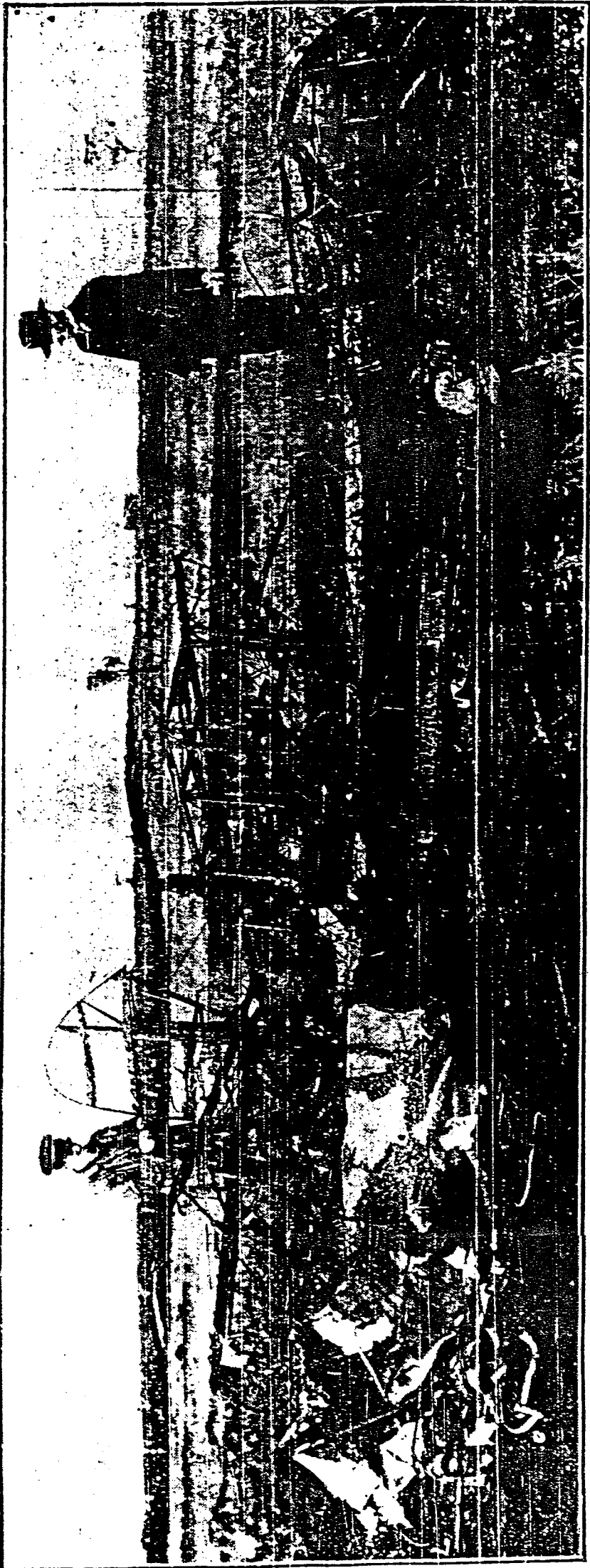
First to reach the aeroplane was Mr. Lawrence Walker, an employee of Mr. Stephen Ball, a farmer, whose house is about a quarter of a mile from the scene of the mishap. "The machine appeared to be well under control when I first saw it," Mr. Walker said later. "It flew in circles and performed other evolutions. When it was above Mr. Palmer's paddock it suddenly 'dipped' to the right and appeared to become completely out of control. Spinning, it crashed to the ground and burst into flames. I arrived at the scene within a few minutes, but was unable at first to approach the blazing aeroplane because of the great heat."

Mr. Ball saw the crash from one of his paddocks. "Directly the flames had died down a little," he said, "Lawrence and I began to tear away the wreckage, although we did not hope to find anyone alive. We found the bodies of the two men lying huddled among the wreckage. Their clothing had been burned off, and they were terribly mutilated."

Second Aeroplane Arrives Quickly.

News of the accident was received at Point Cooke shortly after the crash occurred, owing to the prompt action of Mr. F. C. Critchley, stationmaster at Manor. Mr. Critchley was in the signal-box at the station and happened to glance through the window as the machine fell. He saw flames and smoke rising and realised what had occurred. He telephoned

AEROPLANE CRASH NEAR WERRIBEE.



Two members of the Royal Australian Air Force—Flying-Officer W. A. Holtham and Cadet T. S. G. Watson—were killed when an aeroplane crashed near the Manor railway station yesterday. The machine was engaged in a training flight, and nose-dived from a height of 200ft., and the wreckage burst into flames after the crash. In the photograph of the wrecked plane is standing (right) Mr. F. C. Critchley, station-master, at Manor, who notified Point Cooke Flying School of the accident.

2-7-26 ARGUS
FRIDAY

AVIATION.
Point Cook Accidents.
The Recent Fatality.

Melbourne, March 12.

Lucky escapes from death were experienced by two men at Number 1 Flying School, Point Cook, this morning, when A.D.H.9 reconnaissance plane, piloted by a cadet, which was about to take off struck a canvas hangar, wrecking it, together with the machine housed within. At the time a number of mechanics were engaged in putting a side in the hangar, and one of them—Aircraftsman C. Roach, was rendered unconscious, whether from being struck by the runaway machine or by falling to the ground is not known. He was taken to the Caulfield Military Hospital and admitted, suffering from concussion. At a late hour to-night he had not recovered consciousness. The pilot—Cadet W. S. Hamilton, aged 20, was not injured. He is one of the 30 University undergraduates who are engaged in a course of training at Point Cook.

3-26 (WA PAPER)

CRASH 12-3-26

A6-11 Crash of A6-11 at Point Cook, 12 March 1926. Cadet W S Hamilton, one of 30 university undergraduates, when taking off, hit a canvas hangar wrecking it and the machines inside, injuring Aircraftman C Roach.