

# CRASH NEAR GEELONG. Point Cooke Cadet Killed.

Melbourne, Sept. 5.

Another aviation fatality occurred this morning when Sergeant Ernest Brian Ebell, a young pilot in training, from the Point Cooke Flying School, crashed when on a solo flight near Geelong, and sustained injuries which subsequently proved fatal. Ebell set out from Point Cooke in a De Havilland 9 machine, about 9.30. It was nearly half an hour later when he was approaching Geelong at a height of about 200 feet, and the machine suddenly made a spinning nose dive to earth. It landed in open ground, on a subdivision estate opposite the new Ford Motor Works. Ebell sustained terrible injuries. His skull was fractured, and his thigh and left arm were broken. He was also injured internally. He was hurried to the Geelong Hospital, but died about three hours later.

The cause of the accident is a matter of conjecture. Mr. P. Pratt, an experienced flying officer, of the Geelong Aerial Service, is of opinion that Ebell, realising that something had gone wrong with the machine, tried to make a forced landing in open country, but that when low down the machine stalled and nosedived before he could right it. This assumption is supported by those who witnessed the crash. About half a mile before reaching the scene of the disaster Ebell was flying at a good height, but just prior to the accident he was seen to turn with the wind and immediately descend. When about 200 feet from the ground the plane tilted and began its fatal nose dive. The nose ploughed a hole about two feet deep in the ground. The force of the impact caused the machine to rebound about 20 feet in the air, and it came to rest about 15 yards from where it first struck. The plane was splintered.

Messrs. McGrath and N. McClure, who were near by, were the first on the scene. They found Ebell practically free from all the wreckage. The police and ambulance were immediately summoned, as well as a doctor, who ordered the injured man's removal to the hospital. In less than an hour after the crash a doctor arrived from Point Cooke by aeroplane, but as Ebell had been removed he returned again.

One witness of the accident stated that, in his opinion, the machine commenced to descend suddenly when at a height of 200 feet. He was sure that the engine had been stopped and that the propeller was not revolving. When about 200 feet up it gave a bad tilt and came to earth almost vertically.

Mr. McClure, who was in bed when the machine passed over his house immediately before the crash, said that the roar of the engine was intermittent and that he felt that it was stalling when he heard the crash. Ebell apparently did not have the straps on, as he was clear of the wreckage. He was unconscious when McClure reached him.

Sergeant Ebell was aged 25 years. He enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in August, 1921, and for nearly five years had been stationed at Point Cooke as a mechanic. He was selected in April, for a course of flying instruction, and since that time had been under training for his pilot's "wings." The course for which Ebell was selected was of six months' duration, and he would have qualified for his certificate at month. He had no relatives in Australia.

## The Official Report.

The secretary of the Air Board (Major P. E. Coleman) said to-day that Sergeant Ebell had been engaged in a practice flight, and had left Point Cooke in the morning to add to his record of flying time. A qualification of 30 hours solo flying is necessary before a student is granted his pilot's certificate.

The official report made to Major Coleman indicated that the aeroplane was at an altitude of 2,000 feet when it began to fall. During the whole of its fall, the report added, the machine spun. It was wrecked, and it was considered unlikely that it would be possible, by an examination of the ruined aeroplane, to establish definitely the cause of the mishap. The accident, Major Coleman added, coincided with a severe rainstorm yesterday morning, and it was possible that Ebell, although he had had considerable flying experience, had been disturbed and unnerved by the storm.

## Record of Accidents.

Melbourne, Sept. 5.

Since the beginning of the year there have been seven air fatalities in Australia, and in three flying cadets have been involved. The first occurred on February 11, when an aeroplane from the Richmond aerodrome stalled and crashed at Ainslie, near Canberra. Flying Officer P. M. Pitt and Air-Craftsman W. Callander were killed.

A little over a week later Cadet A. J. Freeman was killed when his machine stalled and spun to the ground from a height of 200 feet at Point Cooke.

On June 3 a machine flown by Cadet A. H. Percival crashed at a point about 400 yards from the Williamstown racecourse, and he was killed instantly.

Four weeks later Cadet T. S. G. Watson was receiving instruction from Flying Officer W. A. Holtham in a De Havilland dual control machine, which stalled and spun nose first into a paddock near the siding at Manor, about five miles on the Geelong side of Weiribee. The aeroplane burst into flames on striking the ground, and when the bodies of Holtham and Watson were recovered they were burned beyond recognition.

Since the formation of the Air Force there have been 14 fatal flying accidents and nine deaths in the Air Force, and seven accidents and 12 deaths in civil aviation.

9-26 (WA PAPER)

CRASH 5-9-26

A6-17 Sergeant Ernest Brian Ebell killed in crash near the Ford motor works at Geelong. Expert opinion from Mr P Pratt of the Geelong Flying Service. Witness statements from Mr N McClure and McGrath, Official comment from secretary of the Air Board Major P E Coleman, comments on recent accidents.