

Plane Dives in Mountain Forest.

MELBOURNE, April 21.—Lost in thick fog this morning, Air Cadet Lindsay Cyril Murray (19), of the Royal Air Force, of Alexandra, flying a Wapiti aeroplane on a trial solo flight, crashed to his death in the thickly timbered forest at Mt. Egerton, near Ballarat. The machine was a total wreck. Farmers and others heard the machine flying about the district for some minutes. They assumed that the airman was seeking bearings in the impenetrable mist shrouding the slopes of the mountain. At one stage the plane was seen about 25 feet above the tree tops.

After performing a circle in the fog and flying very low, the plane was once more glimpsed as it swung away south-east, and then changed its course to south-west, from which direction a fairly strong breeze was driving up thick banks of mist. Later it skimmed over tree tops on a southern shoulder of Mt. Egerton, where the forest is fairly thick. A few hundred yards west was a large cleared paddock of soft soil, on which a landing might have been possible. If this clearing was his objective the pilot never reached it, for the machine suddenly cut out while it was cruising near the tree tops, and a sharp dive to the earth followed. It was noticed after the crash that the air speed register was showing 120 miles an hour.

Expecting a forced landing, residents made for the bush in the direction of the plane. Mrs. Ellen O'Brien, of Yarraville, who witnessed the fatal dive, said: "I heard an aeroplane engine for some minutes before I could discern its outline in the heavy mists. The undercarriage seemed to be just above the tree-tops. It made a strange noise and plunged straight down into the bush. There was nothing in the behaviour of the plane to indicate that the pilot was having trouble with his engine."

Crushed and shockingly injured, the pilot lay at the end of a trail of wreckage, near the foot of a tree into which he had been hurled when the engine drove into the earth. He was unconscious when the rescuers arrived. His boots and one sock had been wrenched off when he was thrown from the cockpit. The downward path of the Wapiti was marked by a wide break in the trees. A tree with a trunk 15 inches in diameter was snapped clean. The engine appeared to have been driven almost straight into the ground, and it had bounced again, to collapse in a twisted mass some yards further on. The tanks had been flattened in the terrific impact. When a doctor arrived Murray was dead.

Members of the Air Accidents Inquiry Board arrived later in the day. It is regarded as a grim coincidence that the name of the pilot who was killed in an accident last week—Flying-Officer Edgerton—should be the same as the district in which this crash occurred.

4-35 WA PAPER

Investigation in Progress

MELBOURNE, Monday.

A preliminary investigation into the crash of the Royal Australian Air Force Wapiti near Gordon yesterday, when air cadet Lindsay Cyril Murray (19) was killed, made by two members of the Commonwealth Air Accidents Investigation Committee, Squadron-Leader Eric Harrison and Flight-Lieutenant Ross, has revealed that the accident was not due to a mechanical defect.

The two officers of the committee examined the wreckage yesterday, and also made inquiries from persons living in the vicinity. As a result they believe that low clouds on the slopes of Mount Egerton prevented Murray from seeing how close he was to the ground, and that while descending he flew into trees on the hillside, hidden by cloud banks.

4-35 WA PAPER

A5-18

A5-18 April 22 1935 (?), Air Cadet Lindsay Cyril Murray killed at Mt Egerton, near Ballarat

INQUIRY

ENGINE WAS CUT OFF

Officers investigating the plane crash at Mount Egerton yesterday in which Air Cadet L. C. Murray was killed are convinced that it was due to bad flying conditions and not to any defect in the machine.

THE air accidents investigation committee sent two members to examine the scene of the accident to-day, and in addition an Air Force inquiry board was set up at Laverton.

Eye-witnesses have been questioned and conclusions have been reached as to the cause of the crash, but they will probably not be made public until the inquest.

It has been established that flying conditions at Mount Egerton, which is five miles from Gordon, were very bad and there was low visibility. When Wing-Commander Harrison and Squadron-Leader Bladen reached the scene yesterday afternoon they found low-lying cloud and a thick mist.

Engine Shut Off

It is believed that Air Cadet Murray, who was flying a Royal Australian Air Force Westland Wapiti day bomber lost his bearings and was suddenly confronted

MELB PAPER 22.4.35

Inquiry Into Fatal Crash

MACHINE NOT DEFECTIVE

MELB. PAPER 22-4-35

FROM the preliminary inquiry into the fatal air crash near Gordon on Sunday, when Air Cadet Lindsay Cyril Murray, 19, was killed, it appears that the accident was not caused by a mechanical defect in the R.A.A.F. Wapiti machine.

Squadron-Leader Harrison and Flight-Lieutenant Ross, of the Air Accidents Investigation Committee, who went to the scene of the crash, believe that low clouds on the slopes of Mount Egerton prevented Murray seeing how close he was to the ground and that he flew into trees hidden by clouds.

The committee will hold a full inquiry this week and submit a report to the Minister for Defence. An R.A.A.F. committee also will hold an inquiry for the Air Board.

Murray will be buried privately at Mansfield.

24 Wapitis Left

THE R.A.A.F. now has 24 Wapitis of 37 bought about seven years ago. As the planes have been used for general purposes flying, it is considered that the wastage has been very light.

The first shipment of the Hawker Demon fighting planes, with which the R.A.A.F. is to be strengthened, arrived by the Balranald yesterday. The shipment comprises two machines and four more planes are expected on Thursday.

During the next few weeks, 24 Hawker Demons will arrive.