

PLANE CRASH.

AIR FORCE PILOT KILLED.

Wing Breaks Off in Mid-Air.

MELBOURNE, April 16.—From a height of 1,500 feet, after it had apparently broken up in the air, a Royal Australian Air Force Moth crashed into a paddock at Werribee this afternoon. The pilot, Flying-Officer Clive Newton Edgerton (28), attached to No. 1 Aircraft Depot, Laverton, was killed instantly.

Although the aeroplane did not catch fire pieces of fuselage and wreckage were found almost half a mile from the scene of the crash. Eye-witnesses of the catastrophe stated that they saw one of the wings break off while the machine was in mid-air. "About 4.15 p.m. I saw an aeroplane come roaring out of the clouds," said Mr. F. W. Walters, of Werribee. "One wing was gone altogether, and although it was spinning and diving at a terrific speed I could see the other wing struck up in a perpendicular position. When the machine disappeared from sight behind the trees there were two loud explosions, and then, looking up again, I saw a wing floating in the air."

Mrs. G. L. Russell, of Meredith, who was visiting Werribee for the day, corroborated this statement. "I saw the plane spinning down," she said, "and then, after the crash, I thought that another machine was hurtling to the ground, but learnt later that this was only the wing, which had broken off in mid-air."

The body of Flying-Officer Edgerton was taken to Laverton in an Air Force ambulance. Edgerton had been killed instantly. He had suffered frightful injuries and was almost decapitated. Air Force officials from Laverton, including Wing-Commander McNamara, V.C., and Wing-Commander Harrison (Chairman of the Air Accidents Investigations Committee) arrived at Werribee soon after the disaster. It was stated that the Moth piloted by Flying-Officer Edgerton had taken off from Laverton earlier in the afternoon on a test flight, following an overhaul.

The secretary of the Air Board (Major P. E. Coleman) issued the following official announcement of the accident: "A Moth aeroplane piloted by Flying-Officer C. N. Edgerton crashed near Werribee this afternoon. The pilot was killed. Apparently the machine broke up while in the air."

Flying-Officer Edgerton was regarded as a most capable officer. He entered Point Cooke in July, 1932, and received his "wings" 12 months later. He served at Point Cooke, No. 3 squadron, Richmond, and No. 1 Aircraft Depot, Laverton. He had 400 flying hours to his credit. A departmental inquiry began as soon as the accident was reported at Laverton. Members of the Air Accidents Investigations Committee, which will also inquire into the accident, made a preliminary inspection of the wreckage this afternoon.



SECTION OF THE PORT UPPER WING of Flying-Officer Edgerton's machine, which fell 1/4 miles away from the main wreckage yesterday.

45-31 16 April 1935 Flying Officer Clive Newton Edgerton killed at Werribee. statements by F W Walters and G I Russell, investigated by Wing Commander McNamara VC, and Wing Commander Harrison

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Officer Killed When Air Force Machine Breaks Up In Clouds And Dives On To Golf

WERRIBEE PEOPLE STARTLED WHEN WAPITI PARTS COME HURLING FROM GREAT HEIGHT

BREAKING up suddenly in the air, a Royal Australian Air Force Wapiti aeroplane crashed several thousand feet on to Werribee golf links yesterday afternoon. Flying-Officer Clive Newton Edgerton, 28, of Laverton aerodrome, was killed instantly.

THE cause of the collapse is not known. Parts of the machine, including propeller blades and a wing, were found in different places up to more than two miles away.

AN explosion was heard, some witnesses say. Then the machine was seen hurtling from the clouds. By a desperate effort, the pilot straightened it out momentarily, but the wings collapsed. Spinning violently the plane dived to earth.

ONLY 30ft. from a house adjoining the links, the plane struck with terrific force. Residents quickly dragged Edgerton's body, shockingly injured, from the tangled wreckage, but the machine did not take fire. The engine was buried 3ft. in the ground.

Flying-officer Edgerton, who was testing officer at Laverton, had taken the machine up on a test flight. Instead of a passenger, he took ballast.

Before he left Laverton he said he intended to go up 15,000ft. Sergeant-Major T. Carroll, one of the last men to speak to Edgerton, said he warned him not to go so high because he believed that type of machine was not built for such strenuous duty.

Black Smoke Tail

"I HEARD an explosion in the air," said Mrs. F. Pera, of Eastcott Orchard, about two miles from Werribee. "The plane appeared from the clouds, followed by black smoke."

Spinning wildly it fell a few hundred feet, and the pilot straightened it for a few seconds. The wings crumpled up over the machine. One fell off, and with the other broken, the plane went into another spin and dived.

"We picked up the two blades of the propeller and fabric in a paddock next to my house," she said. "Except where they had broken from the engine the blades were not damaged."

Unusual Roaring

MRS. L. MYLES, of Werribee, saw the plane plunge to the ground not 20ft. from where she stood. She heard it overhead, she explained.



JOHN RYAN, 9, showing a piece of plane wreckage which fell close to where he and his brother Jim were playing, near the railway crossing at Werribee yesterday. The wreckage came from the machine piloted by the late Flying-Officer C. N. Edgerton.

There was an unusual roaring, and with wings wrapped round it, the machine seemed to be coming straight for the house. As it hit the earth, smoke, mud and splinters leapt into the air.

Telephone wires in Werribee district buzzed all the afternoon after the crash, with varied reports. Some mistook the broken wing as it twirled to the ground for another machine; others thought it a parachute.

Mrs. Myles said she thought she saw a parachute tangled in the plane as though the pilot had attempted to jump for life. It was travelling so quickly, however, that she could not see clearly.

Wreckage Impounded

WING-COMMANDER HARRISON, Air Force representative on the Air Accidents Inquiry Committee, inspected the wreckage and impounded the various parts.

The last fatal Air Force crash was in December, 1932. Two cadets were incinerated when their planes collided in mid-air and crashed at Point Cook.

Flying-officer Edgerton will be given a military funeral probably tomorrow afternoon. He has had a distinguished career at school, university and in the Air Force.



Wing-Commander Harrison

Scholar - Sportsman

AFTER leaving Wesley College he took a degree of Bachelor of Civil Engineering at Melbourne University before joining the Air Force in 1932. He won his double blue for boxing and athletics at the University.

At Point Cook he won a trophy for the highest marks in one year of the cadet course. He delighted in the arduous work of the force, and before becoming machine testing officer at Laverton he was parachute-tester at Richmond, New South Wales.

The youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. James Edgerton, of Maribyrnong Road, Ascot Vale, he was engaged to Miss Elsie Evans, of Balaclava Road, St. Kilda. They were to have been married at the end of the year.

Mr. James Edgerton, who is a director of Melbourne Iron and Steel Mills Pty. Ltd., and his wife celebrated their golden wedding only last week.

Fright For Boys

TWO boys had narrow escapes as the boss of the propellers — the part which joins the blades to the engine — crashed to the road near the Race-course Hotel, Werribee.

John Ryan, 9, of Werribee, described how he and his brother Jim, 10, heard a loud explosion in the clouds, and saw the plane breaking up. They "ran for their lives," as they saw something round "tearing down at them."

"We thought the man was dropping a bomb, so we ran along the road as fast as we could," said John. "There was a big crash about 12 yards behind, and we found the centre part of the propeller buried in the ground. Then we heard the aeroplane hit the earth."

Mr. C. Purdy, who lives about a mile from Werribee on Market Road, said the broken wing spun downward just over his house and landed in a paddock nearby.

Others in the neighborhood told how horses and cattle, frightened by parts of the machine as they fell, stampeded round the paddocks.

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