

AEROPLANE CRASHES.

FLYING CADET KILLED.

Air Force Reticence.

Melbourne, Feb. 14.

Nose diving from a height of 100ft., an S.E.5 aeroplane crashed at the Eastern Aerodrome at Point Cook this afternoon. The pilot, Flying Cadet Alexander Dix (29) sustained terrible injuries, which resulted in his death while he was being taken to the Melbourne Hospital. The machine is a complete wreck. The accident was witnessed by many members of the Air Force at the aerodrome, but owing to official secrecy it was only with the greatest difficulty that a reliable account of what happened could be obtained. Dix, it is understood, was regarded as a promising pilot and was known to be very keen. Nevertheless, he was concerned in two previous crashes—one flying solo last month, and the other in company with Flying Officer Wells, an instructor, last week, but in both cases he escaped with cuts and bruises. The Secretary of the Air Board (Major Coleman) said that Dix had joined in December for the three months' training course for applicants intending to become attached to the force. Last year he had undergone 17 days' training as a citizen force trainee, and was selected as one of a small number to receive further training.

This afternoon, about 3 o'clock, it is stated, Dix took out the S.E.5, which is also known as a fighting scout plane, and is the fastest machine in use by the Royal Australian Air Force. His intention was to practice landing. He made several successful landings from various heights, and was coming down from another short flight when the accident occurred. He tried to turn over the drone, but the machine started to spin. He was apparently too close to the ground to give him room to gather momentum again, and suddenly the plane nose dived sharply to the ground. Until a second before the crash there appeared to be nothing wrong with the machine.

Members of the force who had witnessed the accident found Dix crushed amid the wreckage of the cockpit. They dragged him out and it was obvious that he was badly injured. The doctor at the aerodrome, who examined him, ordered his immediate removal to hospital as the only means of saving his life. He was placed in the Air Force ambulance, but while passing through Footscray on the way to the Caulfield Military Hospital, he died. His body was then taken to the Melbourne Hospital, where life was pronounced extinct. An examination showed that the base of his skull had been fractured, and many of his limbs broken. It is believed that when the plane struck he was thrown heavily against the dashboard. Dix, who had two brothers and a sister, was a son of Mrs. Eleanor Dix, of Mountfield-street, East Brunswick.

The great difficulty in obtaining information concerning the accident owing to the secrecy of the Air Board officials in Melbourne and at Point Cook was considerably enhanced by a similar attitude on the part of the police. A notice appeared in a recent issue of the "Police Gazette" forbidding the giving of information concerning Air Force accidents to the Press or public. It is believed that the notice was inserted at the instance of the Air Board.

The wrecked machine is valued at between £2,500 and £3,000. A departmental inquiry will be held to-morrow. The accident in its principal features was very similar to several others which have occurred at Point Cook while flying cadets were making solo practice flights.

15-2-27 WA PAPER

Flying School Crash.

Inquest on Cadet.

Melbourne, Feb. 28.

The death of Alexander Dix, 20, an air cadet on February 14, when an aeroplane, crashed near the Point Cook Flying School, was inquired into to-day by the Acting-Coroner (Mr. Grant, P.M.).

Evidence was given that Dix was a careful cadet and understood aeroplanes perfectly. Immediately prior to the accident he had ascended twice without trouble and made good landings. After the crash Dix told Flight-Lieut. D. A. Wells that he had been practising gliding turns and when he put on his engine again it did not respond. He then worked the engine controls, but, he said, that he had not watched the machine controls carefully enough. He then observed that he was only about 40 feet from the ground, and pulled the stick back, but remembered nothing further. Dix died when being taken to the Caulfield Military Hospital. It was stated that this was the third time that the cadet had crashed. A verdict of accidental death was recorded.

3-2-27 WA PAPER

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