



THE AIR TRAGEDY IN MELBOURNE.

The worst flying accident that has ever occurred in Australia marred the people's welcome to the Duke and Duchess of York in Melbourne on Thursday afternoon. With tragic suddenness two military aeroplanes, in an escorting formation, collided, and in full view of thousands of people in St. Kilda-road, in the vicinity of Federal Government House, hurled broken to the ground. The pilot and observer in each machine were killed instantly. The only fortunate aspect in the whole of the tragic episode was the fact that the two machines

were flying practically in the same direction when they collided, and the momentum of their flight carried the wrecked planes away from the screaming, horror-stricken crowds. The victims were all members of No. 1 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force Section at Point Cook. Their names were:—Flying-Officer V. H. Thornton, 29 years, married, of Point Cook; 40 years, married, of Balmcombe-road, Black Rock; Corporal James Ramsden, single, of Point Cook.

A6-23 and A6-5 crash at Melbourne Thursday April 21 1927, killed were Flight Lieutenant Robert Imrie Dines of Werribee, Flying Officer Vincent Harry Thornton, of St Kilda (RAF), Flight Sergeant Hay, of Black Rock, Corporal Air Mechanic James Ramsden of Point Cook in front of Duke of York

Four Airmen Killed while Escorting The Duke

THE VICTIMS

Records in Brief

WAR — PEACE

Cpl. Air Mechanic James Ramsden had been in the Air Force for more than four years.

He joined the A.I.F. in 1914, and went through the Gallipoli and Palestine campaigns in the Light Horse and Camel corps.

Ramsden's parents are in Sydney, and were communicated with last night. A married sister lives in South Preston.

Spoke of Crash

"If we have a crash today, don't publish my photograph," Sergeant Hay told his wife yesterday morning.

Sergeant Hay and his family were well known at Black Rock, where they had lived since they came from England. Hay had been at Point Cooke for about six years as an aerial photographer. His gained experience in this branch of work during the war.

He saw service also in India. In his particular branch, Sergeant Hay was considered an expert.

His daughter Joyce is a member of Half Moon Bay Life-saving Club, and is a leading junior swimmer.

A son, Keith, is on a cattle station at Cloncurry, Qld.

Crashed in France

Flight Lieutenant Dines had been at Point Cooke for four years, and was considered one of the best, if not the best, instructor at the Flying School.

During the war he saw service with the I.A.F. He crashed very badly in France, and was badly injured.

After the armistice he came to Vic., and farmed at Treaco for a few years. He was extremely popular at Point Cooke.

'PLANES HIT IN MID AIR

One Falls in Flames; Other Machine is Wrecked

DUKE SEES TRAGEDY

Disaster Appals Thousands in Midst of Royal Welcome

FOUR young airmen were killed yesterday when two planes collided and crashed during the Air Force welcome to the Duke of York. Thousands of people saw them fall, one in flames.

THE Royal procession had just entered Federal Government House grounds when the aeroplanes collided almost above the line of carriages.

ONE machine, A6-23, crashed to the roadway in Dodd-street, South Melbourne, and was wrecked. The other, A6-5, burst into flames 200ft. in the air, nose dived, and crashed through the roof of the G.P.O. Garage in Surt-street, 50 yards away. The victims are:

Flight-Lieut. Robert Imrie Dines, R.A.A.F. About 30, married, no family, of Greaves-street, Werribee. (A6-23.)

Flying-Officer Vincent Harry Thornton, 31. Married, of Alma-road, St. Kilda, and Woodend. His wife is in England. (A6-5.)

Flight-Sergeant Hay, 35, of Balcombe-road, Black Rock. Attached to R.A.A.F. (A6-5.)

Cpl. Air-Mechanic James Ramsden, 31, of Point Cooke, and Alfred-street, South Preston. (A6-23.)

THE planes were so wrecked that it was impossible to recognise the victims. It was not until the other aeroplanes returned to Point Cooke, and the roll was called, that their identity was established.

STUNTED ON

Others Undeterred

POINT OF HONOR

Air Chief Explains Why

MELBOURNE was amazed to notice that, after the tragedy, the other airmen continued stunting—apparently with greater daring than before.

The R.A.A.F. chief, Group-Captain Williams, explained that it was a point of honor with the Air Force to continue its job after a crash as if nothing had happened.

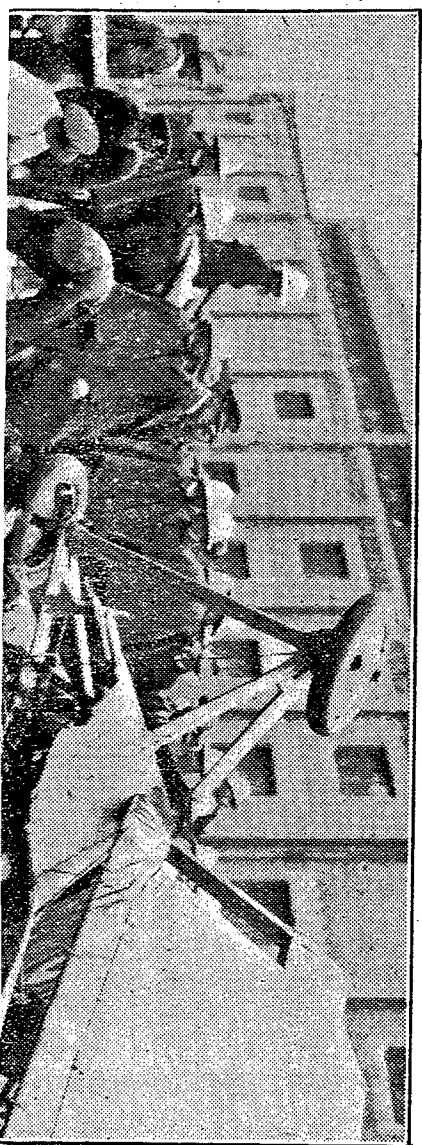
The stunts had been arranged in honor of the Royal visit, and in carrying out the program after the tragedy, the airmen were but upholding the best traditions of the service.

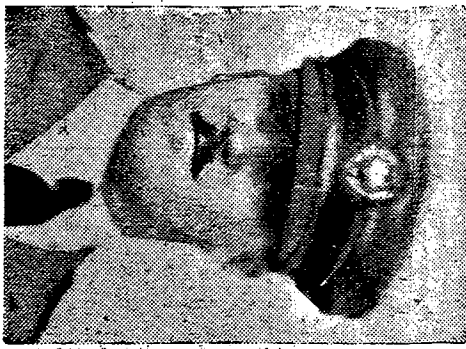
The planes continued to circle around Government House until nearly dusk. Fears of another crash were aroused. One daring pilot almost skimmed the Royal Standard at the top of the flag staff. It was long after 5 p.m. before the planes turned for Point Cooke.

Were Not Stunting

After receiving a report from responsible officers, Group-Captain Williams said the wrecked planes were not stunting at the time of the collision. They were flying in formation, he said.

He added there was no element of risk in the actual stunting, because there were three landing places near by—at Port Melbourne, Albert Park and opposite the Motorhome, at which any of the machines doing stunts could have landed easily in the event of engine trouble.





Flight-Lt. Dines

Wife in England

Flying-Officer Thornton was a war pilot with a lot of experience. He was regarded as an expert man in the air, and was connected with the Citizen Air Force trainees.

He bade his wife and child good-bye two months ago, when they sailed for England. Mrs. Thornton, an English war bride, wanted to see her parents again, and to let them see their child.

A day or two ago Thornton received a letter from his wife in which she said that now she had seen her people she was ready to come back.

During his wife's absence Thornton has been living at St. Kilda. Mr. H. K. Love, who breakfasted with Thornton yesterday, said Thornton was joking forward to his day in the air. Love and Thornton belonged to the same Air Force squadron.

He commiserated with me because it was my lot to do duty on St. Kilda. petty," said Love.

Woodend Folk Shocked

WOODEND Thursday. — Residents of Woodend were greatly shocked when news of the aerial disaster was received here.

One of the victims, Flying Officer Thornton, is a son of Mrs. Mary Emily Thornton, of Glenora, Woodend, and a brother of Sister Carlotta Thornton, who conducts the Woodend private hospital. Mrs. Thornton is at present visiting another son in Melbourne.



WRECKAGE OF THE AEROPLANE WHICH CRASHED IN DODD-STREET YESTERDAY, KILLING BOTH ITS OCCUPANTS. THE PLANE WITH WHICH IT WAS INVOLVED IN A MID-AIR COLLISION, ALSO CRASHED, WITH A LOSS OF TWO MORE LIVES.

Mid-air collision occurred almost directly above Government House

St. Kilda-road and Ithaca-gow-avenue. The troops having the avian were about to be dismissed, and the Royal Air Force Band was playing gaily when five aeroplanes, flying in battle formation, less than 1000ft. up appeared. They brought up the rear of the aerial escort.

The planes were in the act of giving a manoeuvre that battle to the Royal pair, and were doing the last dip when sudden tragedy overtook them.

All five machines swooped low, and then upwards. One plane, which was lower than the others, seemed to accelerate, and came up swiftly under another. The two collided.

LOCKED: FELL

Terrified Watchers

THE propeller of the underneath machine tore away one of the wings of the other. They hung locked together for a moment, and then fell apart. As they swirled downwards, the wing dropped from one and the tail fell from the other.

Both these pieces of wreckage were recovered from the crowd by the police. Several persons narrowly escaped injury from falling wreckage.

Screams of terror rose from the crowded watchers, attracting the attention of Lieut. Commander G. Bust, sergeant, and other members of the Royal party. They looked up and were horrified to see the two planes hurtle towards the earth.

There was a maddening rush by the crowd in its anxiety to follow the descent of the machines. Many women fainted. Others cried in dismay at the unexpected tragedy. Soldiers, foot policemen and

DUKE DISTRESSED

Sends His Sympathy

On being acquainted with details of the tragedy, the Duke sent the following message to the Minister for Defence:—

"The Duchess and I are deeply distressed at the terrible accident which occurred this afternoon, and ask you to offer our heartfelt sympathy with relatives of the airmen who lost their lives."

IN FLAMES

'Plane Through Roof

IN the wake of the first machine came the second plane, with its tail and rudder. When about 200ft. from the ground there was a loud explosion, and the plane burst into flames.

It descended with a terrific crash through the roof of the garage, tearing a gaping hole 20ft. square.

The wings collapsed, and the plane hung from twisted girders. In an instant the garage itself was ablaze. At the time the employees were off duty, and the only occupants were Messrs. F. Mulcahy, senior, mail driver, who was in charge, and G. Page, senior driver.

Horses Released

Mr. Mulcahy was standing at the entrance of the horse stables when he heard a crash. Then he saw a blaze. He released the horses from the stables, and drove them into the street. He called the brigade, and in the meantime employees from the marble works and passers by in Sturt-street tried to rescue the trapped airmen. They tried to put out the fire with chemical extinguishers, but they were beaten back by the flames. When the South Melbourne brigade arrived they found it was impossible to help the airmen.

The roof of the garage, the motor, and two motor lorries were badly damaged. When the flames were put out, the firemen had an arduous task recovering the bodies. The wings, girders, and beams had to be chopped away. In this work they were assisted by the police, ambulance men, and Citizen Force trainees. One man was buried under the debris, and it was half an



Flying-Officer Thornton

IN SYMPATHY

Word To Relatives

THE Governor-General (Lord Stonehaven) sent the following message to the Minister for Defence last night:—

"Lady Stonehaven and I deeply deplore the sad accident which occurred to two machines of the aerial escort today, and beg you to express our sincerest sympathy with the families of those who lost their lives."

Official Version

On behalf of the Air Board, Major Coleman made the following statement last night:—

"The Air Board regrets that an accident occurred to two D.H.9 machines during today's demonstration. The machines collided in mid-air, crashed, and became total wrecks. Both crews were killed.

"The pilots were, flight-lieut. Dines and flying-officer Thornton, who were among the most experienced men in Australia.

"A court of inquiry has been convened, and will report after the inquest."

Hour before his charred body was recovered

When the plane crashed in Dodd-street, Mr. A. Robb, of York-street, Prahran, engineer at the marble works, Bert Crowie, and Jack Henderson, other workmen, assisted to pull the two men out of the cockpit.

...s daughter Joyce is a member of Half Moon Bay Life-saving Club, and is a leading junior swimmer.

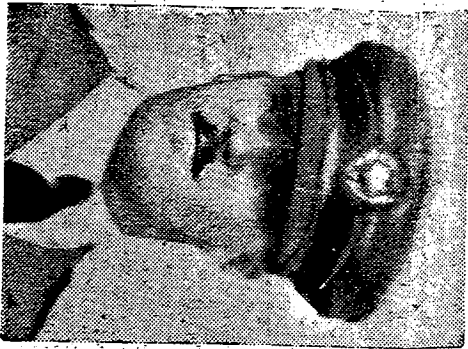
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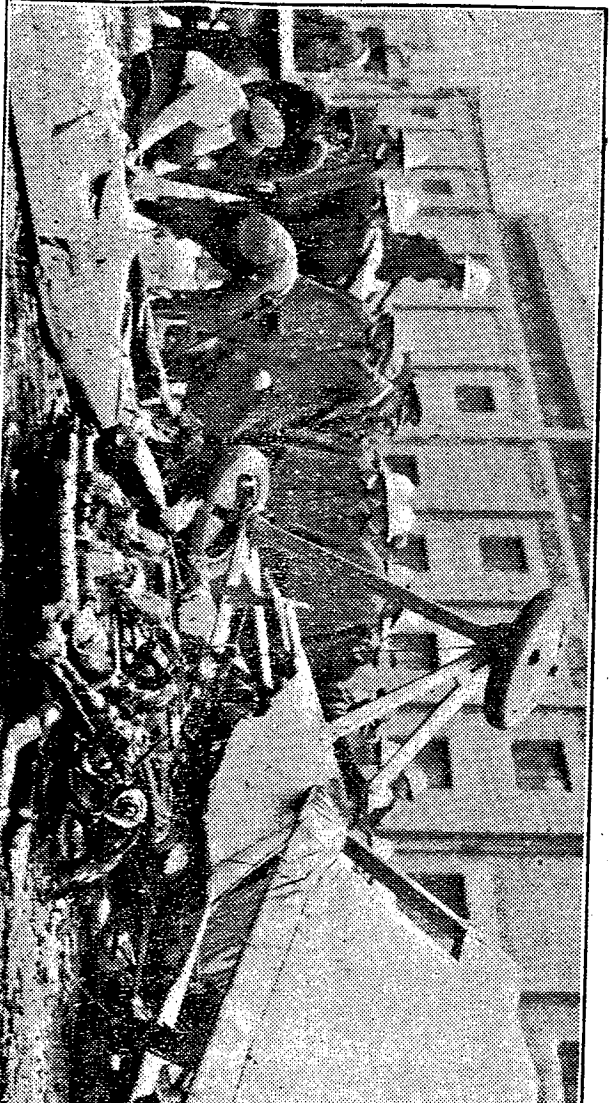
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IN FLAMES

Plane Through Ro

IN the wake of the first machine came the second plane, hitting its tail and riding. When about 2000ft. from the ground there was a loud explosion, and the plane burst

into effort to right his machine, rose, but the machine wobbled, lost its balance, and fell into Dodd-street, landing just beside Wm. Train and Co.'s marble and stone works.