

JULY 23, 1937

NO SIGN OF SEAPLANE

Air Force Search Fruitless

Five Air Force planes and a launch searching the bay today found no evidence that would help to clear up the mystery of where, in the scores of square miles of water, two young officers from Point Cook disappeared in their seaplane yesterday.

Oil floating on the sea five or six miles off shore slightly south to the east of Point Cook yesterday afternoon, and one pilot's report that he had seen a dark object, apparently an upturned plane, on the seabed, remain the only clues to the possible location of the machine, a Moth seaplane, or the bodies of the men.

The two officers, who were lost on a brief training flight from Rye to Point Cook, were:—

Pilot Officer Walter Yde, 20 of Reserve Street, Claremont, Western Australia; and

Pilot Officer Charles Alexander Houston, 23, of Wattle Road, Hawthorn.

SEARCH HAMPERED

Today a stiff northerly whipped the surface of the water, making it opaque as earth, and leaving the aerial searchers no chance of seeing anything below on the seabed.

Hope that the men might still be alive has been abandoned. Air Force officers believe that they must have been forced to alight into a choppy sea, and that as soon as the light seaplane touched the surface it overturned, was swamped, and sank, carrying its occupants with it to the bottom before they had a chance to escape.

Of 20 pilots and 20 observers who conducted an intensive aerial search all over the Bay yesterday, only one of them, Flying Officer Lansell, reported having discerned any object on the sea bed. Flying Officer Lansell was confident that what he had seen was an upturned aeroplane in deep water.

Guided by Flying Officer Lansell, other pilots flew over the area, but none of them was able to confirm his report. They saw nothing but the patch of oil, a piece of paper or fabric, something red floating on the sea, and driftwood.



Pilot-Officer C. A. Houston



Pilot Officer E. W. Yde

WATER 90FT. DEEP

The water is 90ft. deep at the spot. Even in conditions perfect for undersea observation from the air—and conditions yesterday were not favorable—an object submerged 90ft. could not be sighted from a plane, senior officers at Point Cook said today.

It was in approximately the same place that Pilot Officer E. J. Eagerty dived into the Bay and vanished in a Bristol Bulldog fighter on March 23. Nothing has ever been seen of Pilot Officer Eagerty or his machine.

A shipping channel passes through the area in which Flying Officer Lansell thinks he saw the seaplane, and the oil seen may have come from a passing vessel, although the Air Force authorities are inclined to accept it as confirmation of Flying Officer Lansell's report. The other objects on the surface might have been refuse from ships.

It was mainly the presence of the oil that led to the localised search undertaken today being based on that area.

SLUDGE ON SEABED

Three Wapitis, an Avro, and a Seagull amphibian took off from Point Cook at 8 a.m., manned by pilots and observers of the cadet training squadron. All but the Avro were equipped with wireless, which had also been fitted, long before dawn, to a Harbor Trust launch. The planes were in constant wireless communication with Point Cook and with the launch, but they could report nothing that would assist in the search.

By 10.30 a.m. all the land planes returned to their station with nothing to report, leaving the amphibian co-operating from the air with Air Force and Harbor Trust men in the launch. Later the land planes flew up and down the beach looking for wreckage.

While it was patrolling the search area the launch dragged the sea for

The depth of water is to diver to be sent down is 15ft. of sludge could not u

A7-40 Cirrus Moth: July 22 1937 loss of seaplane on training flight from Rye to Point Cook, missing crew were Pilot Officer Walter Yde and Pilot Officer Charles Alexander Houston. Also mentioned are Flying Officer Lansell, the disappearance of Pilot Officer E J Eagerty lost in a Bulldog fighter on March 23