

Another Air Force Crash. Descent in Rainstorm. Pilot's Lucky Escape.

Melbourne, May 12.

Sergeant O. Denny, of the Royal Australian Air Force, had a remarkable escape from death on Tuesday evening when, in making a forced landing in rugged country some distance from Wangaratta during a rainstorm, his aeroplane crashed and was wrecked. Sergeant Denny was practically uninjured.

According to a report received from Wangaratta to-day Denny was flying an S.E.G.A. Air Force plane back to Point Cooke from Canberra, where he took part in the air manoeuvres during the official opening of the Federal Parliament House, when a strong wind, accompanied by heavy rain, forced him completely out of his course, which was in a south-easterly direction. When the pilot could distinguish his position he found that he was flying over unknown country in the ranges about Whitfield, which is nearly 40 miles from Wangaratta. Soon afterwards the engine of the aeroplane failed and Denny was forced to land. Taking a rapid observation of the country over which he was flying, he noticed a clearance between two large trees, and he made for this spot. The area was not sufficient for a landing, however, and the plane struck a tree and was wrecked.

The pilot escaped with a few bruises, and although severely shaken he immediately set off to find a settlement. Darkness set in and the rain became heavier, adding to his discomfort, but he continued to walk about in search of habitation until at daybreak he reached the home of Mr. Burrows, at Glenmore, a distance of about 25 miles from the scene of the crash. He was in an exhausted condition, but he recovered after receiving food and attention. After he had rested for a few hours Denny was driven to Wangaratta by Mr. Burrows, and he came on to Melbourne and reported to headquarters.

Officials of the force stated to-night that the affair had been considered only as a forced landing, and it was expected that valuable portions of the wrecked plane would be salvaged.

5-27 WA PAPER

SE-5A IN RAAF SERVICE
A2-11 Crash at Mansfield May 1927 Flying Officer Orm Denny

Air Crash Survivor Tells Story of Mansfield Wreckage

SYDNEY, Wednesday. — Sixty-three-year-old retired Qantas pilot, Mr. Orm Denny, said tonight: "I was around Mt. Buffalo when the engine stopped and I had no option but to look for the thickest clump of tree-tops I could find. That's where I landed."

Mr. Denny, who is now New South Wales manager for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, was the pilot of the SE-5A which crashed in mountainous country near Mansfield, Victoria, back in 1927.

The wreckage of the plane was found by a saw miller, Mr. Neil Trotter, last Friday.

The discovery of the wreckage last Friday led to exhaustive inquiries through R.A.A.F. channels.

It was thought at first that there was no record of the accident, but Mr. Trotter's discovery was the second time the wreckage

had been "found."

Mr. Denny said he lay unconscious beside the plane for over an hour before starting a two-day trek back to civilisation.

Royal Pictures

Mr. Denny, then a flight-sergeant in the R.A.A.F., was flying official photographs to Melbourne of the inauguration of Federal Parliament in Canberra by the Duke of York, later King George VI, in May, 1927.

He left Cootamundra for Point Cook after refuelling, but was forced by storms to diverge over Mount Buffalo.

"I was somewhere around Mount Buffalo when the engine stopped and I had no option but to land in the thickest clump of tree-tops I could find," Mr. Denny said.

Unconscious

"Most of the plane stayed in the treetops, but I was flung out, and must have lain on the ground, unconscious, for an hour or more.

"I was pretty much shaken up, but the only injury I had was a cut on the forehead.

"It was pretty cold up there but, as I had no idea

where it was, I decided to spend the night by the plane.

Next morning Mr. Denny retrieved the bundle of photographs and set out to find help.

I walked all day without anything to eat or drink until evening when it was lucky enough to come across a chap who was looking after grazing stock. He added, 'I think his name was Gammas.'

Not Recovered

The next day we rode on horses to Wombat where I telephoned the air force and my wife.

Because of the difficulty of walking through the dense growth on the first day Mr. Denny wrapped the photographs in his flying suit and left them in a hollow tree.

He tried to find them later with an air force search party, and believes they are still unrecovered.

Later Mr. Denny, with an air force party and local guides, spent three days in the area trying to find the plane. On a second attempt the guides located it.

An air force party later salvaged valuables and set fire to the remaining wreckage.

Mr. Denny said an air force inquiry later found the plane's single engine had seized from lack of oil, and exonerated him from any blame.

"I was more or less patted on the back for coming out alive," he said. "There were plenty of fellows who didn't in those days."

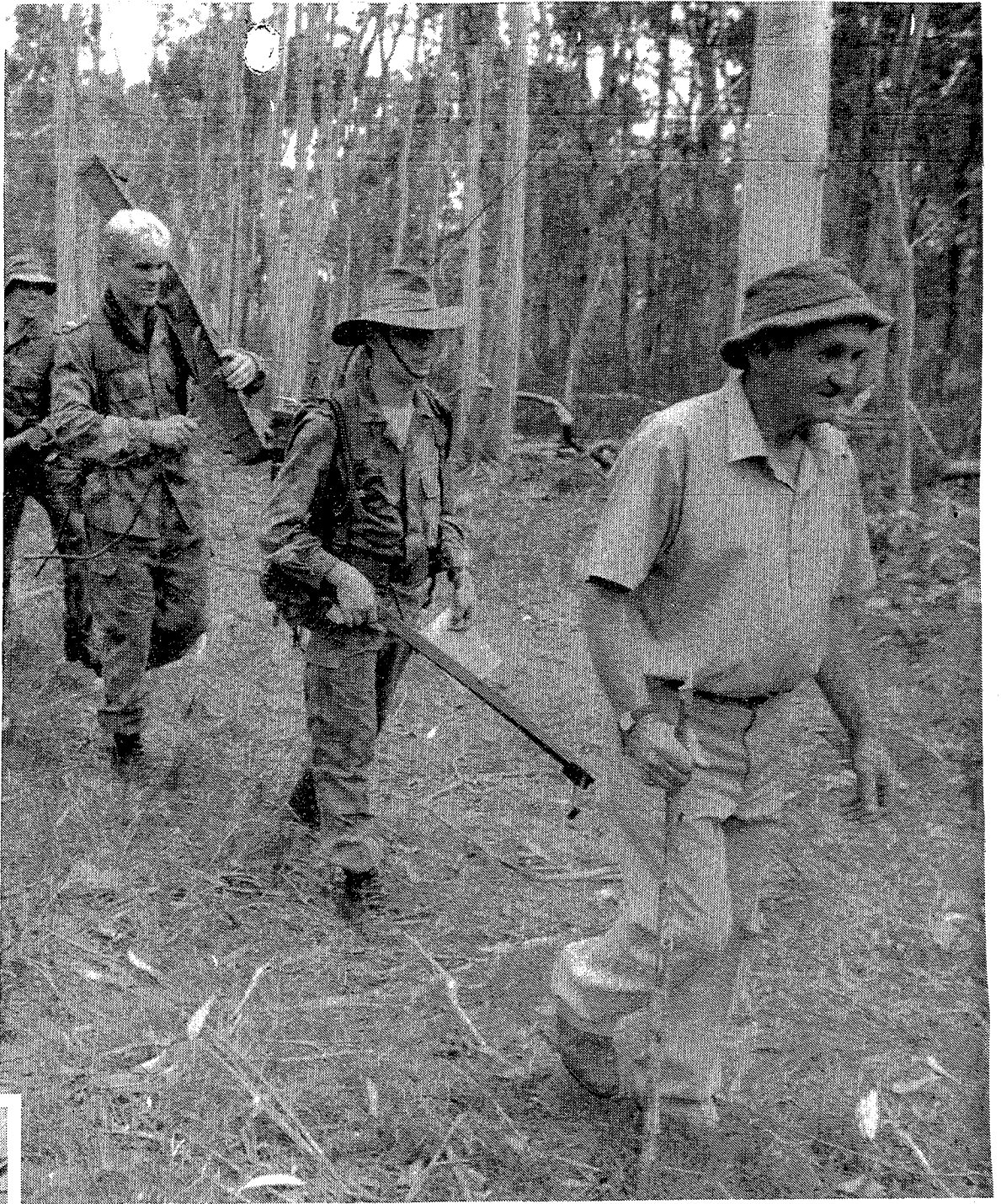
Mr. Denny became a commercial pilot after resigning from the air force in 1929.

He helped fly gold dredges into New Guinea in the 1930's, and later spent 22 years with Qantas Empire Airways until he retired three years ago.



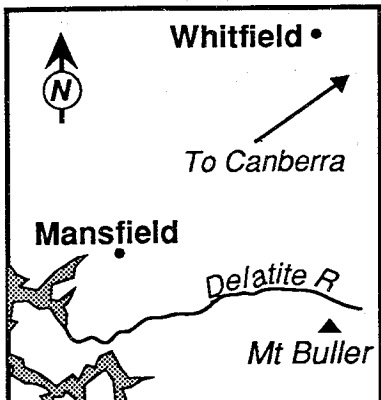
Mr. DENNY.

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Bringing home the left-overs: Mr Keith Trotter leads RAAF cadets, carrying pieces of a plane which crashed 65 years ago. The other planes, Australia's first fighter aircraft (left), also met disaster.

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Plane crash yields some souvenirs, 65 years on

By KEVIN CHILDS

A long line of youths in camouflage and jungle greens sweated up a steep slope in Victoria's high country yesterday, carrying the last evidence of an amazing escape from death.

Sixty-five years ago, a RAAF fighter plane bringing photographs of the official opening of Federal Parliament was lost in dense bush after the pilot crash-landed.

Sergeant Pilot Orme Denny was flying Australia's first fighter aircraft, the SE-5a. His plane, A2-11, was the last of five of these aircraft that had left Point Cook for Canberra.

One crashed at Cootamundra after refuelling; the other three collided when rehearsing for the opening ceremony.

Sergeant Denny flew with the photos, which were to be included in an album to be presented to the Duke of York, who performed the opening.

But while flying through a storm in the Mount Buffalo area, his engine seized. Sergeant Denny undid his seat belt and, failing to find a clearing, aimed his plane as near as possible at the treetops.

He was thrown clear and came to after about 30 minutes to see wings and bits of the tail up in the trees and the engine, cockpit and fuselage in one piece.

After sheltering for the night in a hollow log, Sergeant Denny set out along a creek, which he followed downstream. On the way he had to ditch his heavy flying suit, wrapping the photographic plates in it and storing them in a log.

By evening he found a cattleman's hut, and returned to Melbourne the next day. His wife, who had not been told he had been missing. Although he later returned to the area with three horsemen, Sergeant Denny could not find his plane or the photographs. One of the horsemen continued searching, however, and found the plane.

Then, 30 years ago, Mr Keith Trotter of Mansfield was logging in the hills when his bulldozer blade hooked some wires.

A2-11 had been found again. Last year, Mr Trotter led his former old logging boss, Mr Alan McMillan, a RAAF pilot and an air-traffic controller to the rusting wreckage.

The engine block was taken out and Mr McMillan got it to the RAAF



now a barman, led a troop carrier with 34 cadets, almost all RAAF, on a 40-minute drive up steep logging roads from the Delatite River, with in sight of Mount Buller. Four times Mr McMillan, a local all his 65 years, had tried to find the wreckage and failed.

RAAF cadets nailed a brass plaque to a tree to mark the crash site.

piece was hung from a branch to be carried out.

At the crash site, hidden among white gums and peppermints, the dimensions of Sergeant Denny's escape, in the only direction where he could have found help, became clear.

Sergeant Denny, said Mr Trotter went on to a distinguished career with Qantas but had since died.

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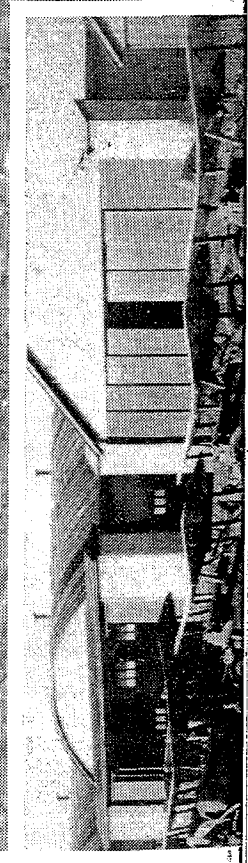
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● A bushman never forgets . . . Keith Trotter had no trouble leading RAAF cadets to the site of a 1927 plane crash — even though almost 30 years had passed since he discovered the wreckage.

At last, bush gives up aviation history

By FELICITY DARGAN

A remarkable but little-known saga in Australia's aviation history finally came to an end yesterday.

And for Mansfield resident Keith Trotter, the events surrounding an RAAF plane crash more than 60 years ago were finally given the recognition they deserved.

Thirty-one RAAF cadets set out on a mission in the Mansfield area yesterday to recover wreckage from the crash which happened on May 11, 1927.

Engine seizure had forced the pilot, Sergeant Orme Denny, to crash-land his SE5a, the RAAF's first fighter plane, while returning from the opening of Parliament in Canberra.

Sgt Denny was carrying the official photos of the opening, to

be given to the Duke of York.

He survived and led an unsuccessful search for the wreck shortly after the crash.

From 1927 until 1963 the ruin remained undisturbed.

In that year Keith Trotter was bulldozing in the high country when wires became hooked on his dozer blade.

The SE5a had been found.

Mr Trotter told his employer Alan McMillan, the owner of DSM Timber Mills, and Mr McMillan retrieved the engine the next day.

He donated the engine to the RAAF on January 6 last year.

In February last year, almost 30 years after his discovery, Keith Trotter, now 62 and the barman at Mansfield's Commercial Hotel, led two RAAF officers to the crash site.

He had no trouble locating the spot, despite the rugged terrain.

"You don't forget," said Mr Trotter. "If you've ever worked in the bush, finding your way around is second nature."

And again yesterday, Mr Trotter and Mr McMillan, 65, led the RAAF cadets to the site to retrieve remaining debris.

The team found a fuel tank and rusted twists of wreckage, which will now go to the Point Cook museum.

Mr Trotter and Mr McMillan paid tribute to Sgt Denny, who went on to have a distinguished career with Qantas before his death a few years ago.

"I would have loved to have met the man," said Mr McMillan.

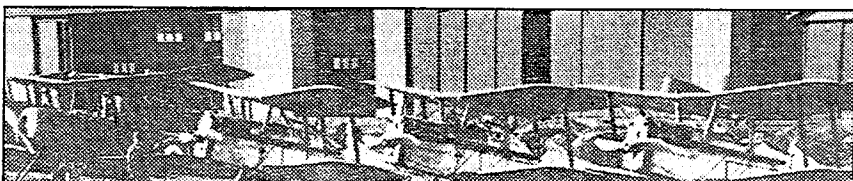
He must have been a "a real man, a man's man", according to Mr Trotter.

"It's just pure guts that he survived in this country. He kept his head the whole time."

Mr McMillan said the retrieval of the wreckage was a sign that "this generation is remembering its pioneers".

But perhaps the saga is not quite over — in his account of the crash, Sgt Denny wrote that he had buried the photos and his flying suit in a hollow tree for safekeeping.

The RAAF cadets had hoped to find the photo plates yesterday, but there was no sign of



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