

# AIRMEN ESCAPE DEATH

## Bomber Out of Control

MELBOURNE, Sunday.—His parachute harness caught in the armour plating of a R.A.A.F. Boston bomber diving out of control, Pilot-Officer Jack Reid, of Glen Innes, N.S.W., navigator, with Flying-Officer Chris Sugden, of York, W.A., pilot, had remarkable escapes from death recently off the Japanese-occupied coast of New Britain.

Sugden gave the order to bale out when one of the Boston's motors cut out, and the aircraft got out of control. The wireless-air gunner, Flying-Officer Dick Whitford, of Cottonville, S.A., jumped at once and cleared the plane, but Reid's harness fouled the armour plating, and he could not free himself.

The plane was diving at the rate of 3,000 to 4,000 feet a minute, but suddenly righted itself when dangerously low. When he had regained control, Sugden marked the position five miles off the New Britain coast where Whitford had landed in the sea, then flew to his base for help. He then joined other Australian aircraft in the search for Whitford, who was picked up by a flying-boat after three and a half hours in the water.

While Whitford was in the water, supported by his Mae West, two huge birds the size of albatrosses hovered over him threateningly. He drew his gun to fire at them, but decided not to do so in case Japanese heard the explosions. He frightened the birds off by splashing. He was then only a mile off the coast.

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# Airman's 3½ hours swim

An R.A.A.F. wireless air-gunner who parachuted into the sea off the Japanese-held coast of New Britain was rescued after three and a half hours in the water.

He is Flying-Officer Dick Whitford, Cottonville, S.A.

Pilot of Whitford's bomber, Flying-Officer Chris Sugden, of York, W.A., ordered his men to bale out when one of the motors of the Boston failed and the plane got out of control.

Whitford got out, but the navigator, Pilot-Officer Jack Reid, Glen Innes, N.S.W., was jammed when his harness fouled the armor plating.

Sugden managed to get control of the plane again a few feet above the water. He noted Whitford's position in the water, and reported it to base.

Whitford was supported by his Mae West jacket.

He jumped with the dinghy in his hand, but the slipstream tore it from his grasp.

He swam away from the shore five miles away, to avoid the Japs, and intending to slip ashore at night.

He was sighted later by a Kittyhawk, and picked up by a Catalina.

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