

Roundabout

Newsletter No. 13

Summer 2017



THE PLANE THAT CRASHED INTO THE HILLSIDE OFF MONBULK ROAD IN 1962

On the 12th of April 1962, 38 year old Scottish racing car champion, Ron Flockhart was killed when the ex RAAF Mustang he was flying slammed into a hillside.

Flockhart, had taken off from Moorabbin airport only 10 minutes before the crash on a flight to Bankstown to conduct fuel consumption tests and deliver the machine for radio modifications at Bankstown.

Ron was preparing for a second record attempt intended to break the Australia to England speed record for a single engine aircraft.



Ron Flockhart at Moorabbin Airport just hours before his fatal crash on 12th April 1962

In Monbulk this story began one cloudy damp morning with the weather starting to clear after rain during the night. The sun was trying to poke through the low cloud that was sitting on the ridge of the Grantulla and Ridge Road area.

"I've got trouble", Ron reported in a final message before he was killed in a plane crash.

"I've lost my compass. I'm at 3,000 feet and in heavy cloud."

Immediately after this message, recorded at 10.27 am, radio contact with the plane was lost.

Locals heard a light plane in the general direction of Olinda Road Monbulk that was high up in the cloud and appeared to be heading towards the township of Kallista.

'It soon became obvious that it was in trouble'.

Geoff Sands of Monbulk remembered:-

"It was mid-morning and we could hear the roar of an engine of a plane, then it appeared to be coming out of the low cloud in a steep dive. The plane did not pull out of the dive, it continued on and the motor appeared to be roaring at full throttle. In a few seconds it crashed"

Geoff, with his father George and brother Ron, drove the F500 farm truck to the area of the crash site, not knowing what to expect when they arrived at the junction of Camms Road and Monbulk-Kallista Road. The crash site was directly opposite the T intersection of the two roads, and over the other side of the Sassafra Creek, just a few metres up the slope.

Other vehicles were parked at the intersection, including the Monbulk fire truck. There was no fire apart from a few smouldering pieces that were quickly doused.

Geoff recounted: *"We found that there was nothing anyone could do, as the plane was destroyed after hitting the treetops. The motor was buried into the ground about six feet and the pilot was killed instantly"*.

Another local, Rob Rich, remembered the accident because he was working on a building site with Harry Bradshaw and his son, Peter, near the elbow on the Olinda Road. They too travelled down to the accident site. Rob and both the Bradshaws were members of the Fire Brigade.

Hundreds of twisted fragments of the plane were scattered over a large area of hillside. Police found Flockhart's body lying among the ruins of the plane. He was still strapped to the wrecked remains of his seat and his parachute was strapped on him.

The afternoon edition of 'The Herald' newspaper on Thursday April 12, 1962

"Two Ferntree Gully council workers Mr. Alan McCormack, 19, and Harry Gay, saw the plane crash. They ran 200 yards to the spot immediately, but all they found were pieces of the wings and fuselage scattered among blackberry bushes. Mr. McCormack said the dead pilot was still strapped to his seat which had been flung clear of the rest of the wreckage. The parachute had apparently been opened by the force of the impact, and it was fluttering in the slight breeze. Mr. McCormack said there was no sign of flame, but some smoke was rising from the broken engine and aircraft parts".

A report supplied by Roger Meyer, President of the Civil Aviation Historical Society states:

The pilot had arranged to fly the aircraft from Moorabbin to Bankstown where some items of radio and navigational equipment were to undergo maintenance in preparation for the record attempt. From Moorabbin Aerodrome his flight plan provided for the flight to be conducted at an altitude of 2,000 feet to Lilydale, which is some 18 miles distant from the departure point, thence to Bankstown at varying heights up to 5,000 feet. The aircraft took off at 1015 hours and, after completing one circuit of the aerodrome, set course for Lilydale at 1018 hours.

At 1023 hours the pilot reported to Moorabbin tower that he was over Lilydale and, one minute later, advised that he was unable to continue the flight in accordance with the visual flight rules and was returning to Moorabbin. At 1027 hours he reported he was 'having trouble', had 'lost' his compass and was 'in cloud at 3,000 feet'. On request, he advised that automatic direction finding equipment was available in the aircraft, whereupon he was given the Moorabbin N.D.B. frequency and was instructed to home on this beacon and maintain an altitude of 3,000 feet. This message was acknowledged by the pilot and the tower controller immediately instituted the alert phase of search and rescue procedures. At 1029 hours the pilot was requested to confirm that he was homing on the Moorabbin N.D.B. but no reply was received. Further calls to the aircraft were not answered and at 1033 hours the distress phase of search and rescue procedures was instituted.

The cause of the accident was never conclusively determined.

'The Age'
April 13, 1962

International Driver Dies in Dandenongs Air Crash



THANK YOU

Monbulk Historical Society would like to thank the following for their much appreciated support during 2017:

Bendigo Bank who gave us a grant to purchase new portable display boards enabling us to more easily show our wonderful collection of photographs to our community.

Monbulk Bowling Club for their grant enabling us to purchase an A3 scanner to help us digitise our collection.

Yarra Ranges Council whose grant helped us run a public exhibition and print our latest book 'Monbulk's Hunger for History'.

We would also like to acknowledge

Monbulk RSL, Monbulk Real Estate, Monbulk Family Clinic and the **YRC staff** at the Monbulk Hub for their wonderful support during 2017.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Monbulk Historical Society is currently undertaking a new project. We are looking at the origins of the road names in the Monbulk, The Patch, Kallista and Sherbrooke areas.

If you have any photographs, maps or information you are able to share with us, please contact us via email explore@monbulkhistoricalsociety.org.au.

We would really appreciate and welcome hearing from you. If you would like to join our group to help research, we will be back at the Monbulk Hub each Wednesday morning from 7th February 2018.

Monbulk Historical Society welcomes our new members for 2017:

Karin & Brian Seamer, Wendy and Col Dennison, David Eastham, Sue Harriage and Maxine Boyd.

*Monbulk Historical Society wishes you a happy
and safe 2018*