

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

AS/742/1018

Publication of this report is authorised by the Director-General of Civil Aviation under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulation 283(1)

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Eighteen kilometres south of Wilkurra Homestead, N.S.W.	Height a.m.s.l. 250 feet	Date 2.4.74	Time (Local) 1130 hours approx.	Zone EST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Cessna 310H	Registration VH-WRG	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 8.6.65 to 7.6.74
Certificate of Registration issued to H.M. Champion de Crespigny, P.O. Box 354, Hawthorn, Victoria	Operator G.H. Antcliffe, 8 Nethercote Drive, Mount Waverley, Victoria	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed
		Other property damaged Nil
Defects discovered Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Broken Hill	Time of departure 1046 hours	Next point of intended landing Moorabbin	Purpose of flight Travel	Class of operation Private
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4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
George Henderson ANTCLIFFE	Pilot	38	Commercial	129	974	Fatal

5. OTHER PERSONS (All passengers and persons injured on ground)

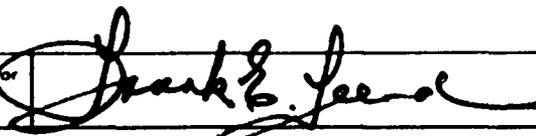
Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
Albert Alexander McAULAY	Passenger	Fatal	James Donald THOMSON	Passenger	Fatal
Joan Lillian McAULAY	Passenger	Fatal	Daphne May THOMSON	Passenger	Fatal
Helen Elizabeth ANTCLIFFE	Passenger	Fatal			

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

Prior to departure the pilot obtained a forecast which indicated that the weather conditions would be suitable for the flight. After completing the pre-flight inspection and submitting a flight plan, the pilot, together with his passengers, boarded the aircraft and departed in fine weather conditions. The pilot passed by radio a departure time of 1046 hours and an estimate of 1134 hours for his first position reporting point which was Franks Plains. Although a sight-seeing detour via Menindee Lakes had been discussed by members of the party, the estimate for Franks Plains was consistent with the flight planned time interval for the direct route. The departure message was the last known transmission from the aircraft. It is not possible to say with certainty which route was flown although, at an appropriate time an aircraft fitting the Cessna 310's description was seen flying over Munka Station (between Broken Hill and Menindee Lakes) heading some 37 degrees to port of the flight planned heading and towards Menindee. The weather conditions along the route consisted of increasing low cloud south-east from Broken Hill towards an area of unstable weather associated with a low pressure trough lying across the aircraft's track. As a result of the aircraft's failure to report position at Franks Plains the uncertainty phase of search and rescue procedures was declared. When no further information was obtained the alert phase was declared and then ultimately the distress phase. After five days of intensive air and ground search, involving 68 fixed wing aircraft and one helicopter, the aircraft wreckage was located among trees some 70 kilometres north-east of its planned route. This position was consistent with the aircraft having diverted via the Menindee Lakes area. Parts of the tailplane were found in an area 550 metres from the main wreckage. Examination of these parts revealed evidence of failure as a result of in-flight loads being experienced in excess of their ultimate structural strength. There was no evidence of any pre-existing structural deficiency in the failed components. The nature and direction of the tailplane failures show they could only have occurred in a grossly abnormal condition of flight such as a complete loss of control. Very active thunderstorms were reported in the area at about the estimated time of the accident. These could have induced a loss of control arising either from pilot disorientation in cloud or an upset in severe turbulence.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of the accident was an encounter with severe weather conditions in which the pilot was unable to retain control of the aircraft.

Approved for publication 	(Frank E. Yeend) Delegate of the Director-General of Civil Aviation	Date 28.2.75
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