

# Beaufighter Mark IC, RAAF Serial No. A19-12 Crashed at Mt. Disappointment 5 August 1942

On 5 August 1942 at approximately 12:45 Hrs, a Bristol Beaufighter Mark 1C crashed 300 metres north of the Mt. Disappointment summit. Both Pilot Officer Leslie Douglas Langusch and Sergeant Norman Edward Greasley perished in the accident. The aircraft burnt after crashing. Pilot Officer L.D. Langusch was aged 24 years from Maryborough Queensland and his navigator Sergeant. N.E. Greasley from Ascot vale, Victoria was 22 years old.

The aircraft, a Bristol Beaufighter with serial number of A19-12 departed No. 30 Squadron's home base at Richmond NSW on the morning of 5th August 1942 on route to Laverton Base, Victoria.

There was a scheduled stop over at No.11 EFTS (Elementary Flying Training School) Benalla. It departed Benalla Victoria at 1215 hours carrying a cargo of aircraft spare parts. The Navigator, Sergeant N.E. Greasley had been granted a request to visit his brother who had just been repatriated from the Middle East following injuries that he sustained as a passenger in an air crash. The Squadron were about to relocate to their temporary operations base at Bohle River in Queensland, he was assigned along with Pilot Officer Langusch on this flight.

The aircraft failed to arrive at Laverton, and when the flight endurance time expired with no reports of landing at any other location, it was reported as missing. On the 7th August, an air search reported sighting wreckage at a point to the west of the mountain, and a land party was organised to conduct a search. The location was not correct, and the search resumed the next day.

At 10:00 on the 8th of August, the wreckage was finally located north of the summit of Mt. Disappointment, with wreckage scattered over a wide area.

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) operated about 50 military airfields across Victoria during World War Two. Included were several major training bases for pilots, aircrew, gunners, wireless operators, and navigators, most notably at Point Cook- Laverton (Williams), Benalla, Ballarat, Mildura, East Sale and Bairnsdale.

Initial pilot training was conducted in DH82 Tiger Moths, CAC Wirraways and twin-engine Arvo Ansons. In addition, many operational aircraft were assembled at Fisherman's Bend near Melbourne at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) factory before being tested and deployed north to Darwin and New Guinea. Operational flights and anti-submarine patrols occurred along the Victorian coast; some 366 aircraft crashes occurred in Victoria during the Second World War.



Norman Greasley



Leslie Langusch

## Two RAAF Vultee Vengeances Crash Mount Disappointment On 25 May 1944

Two RAAF Vultee Vengeances Mk.1 dive-bombers were flying in formation on a flight from Laverton airbase when they both crashed into Mt. Disappointment. The mountain was under cloud at the time. RAAF A27-49 and A27-92 were carrying five crew at the time of the crash; there were no survivors. They were on a non-operational ferry flight to Bowen in Queensland with a scheduled stop planned at Mascot in Sydney. Whilst flying in formation at low altitude over mountains in mist and cloud, the aircraft crashed into high ground and burnt approximately two kilometres south of the summit of Mt. Disappointment.

Pilot on A27-49 was Pilot Officer Ralph Erskine aged 19 years from Box Hill, Victoria. Pilot on A27-92 was Flight Sgt. Roy John Hall aged 20 years from Calen, Queensland. Crew on A27-49 were Flying Officer Kenneth Alexander Wood aged 24 years from West Footscray Victoria and Sergeant Phillip West aged 23 years from Christmas Hills, Victoria. Crew on A27-92. Corporal William J. Falahey aged 32 years was from Elsternwick, Victoria. The aircraft were scheduled to depart Laverton airbase at 08:30 hours on a scheduled non-operational ferry flight from No.1 Aircraft Performance Unit, Laverton to the No.1 APU detachment at Bowen, 9 Queensland.

One of the pilots collected the air route forecast at approximately 08:30 hours that was based on a report and weather forecast produced at 0600 hrs. The aircraft departed Laverton on a course via Wagga NSW at 11:23 Hrs. There was no reason recorded for the delay in departure. The weather had deteriorated through the morning and although a subsequent report had come in prior to departure, the pilots had not been advised of the update in weather conditions.

At the time of departure, their chosen route to Wagga was closed. Cloud on Mt. Disappointment was reported at 1,500ft. (457 Metres, Mt. Disappointment is 796 Metres) Their instructions were to maintain a flight level of 1,000ft. above ground level (305 metres). The weather conditions made the mountain completely obscured, and witnesses gave varying estimates of height of cloud, all of which were below 1,000ft. If the aircraft were flying on the true line of the flight plan, then they would have over flown the area of Eden Park on a heading of 32 deg. However, according to witnesses, they appeared to fly direct overhead of the Whittlesea town on a heading roughly due north. The reason for this deviation is not recorded in the crash investigation reports, however, research conducted by Les Lewis in the late 1990s may give a valid reason to why the flight plan was not followed. Les Lewis interviewed relatives of the men.

The crash path cut through the trees on the mountain indicate a similar path, although they had tried to gain height, any attempt at a change in direction was not tried until the last minute. If they were able to view the terrain, they would have cleared the mountain range. The two Vultee Vengeances both slammed into the mountain at about 11:50 am on that tragic day. Evidence remains of both these aircraft including a large radial engine that was rolled downhill into a creek bed.



Kenneth Wood



Phillip West



Ralph Erskine

# Crash of a RAAF Wirraway at Mount Disappointment 21 July 1953

19-year-old, Trainee Pilot Terence (Terry) Peter Hallinan was killed when his Wirraway A20-573 crashed into the slopes of Mt. Disappointment whilst on a night-time training exercise. This crash site was about three kilometres northeast of the summit. The tragic loss was particularly hard for family and friends because his body and the Wirraway were not found for more than year after the plane disappeared.

Terry was from Maryborough in Queensland. The Wirraway A20-573 CA9 was built by Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation at Fishermans Bend and is described as a general-purpose aircraft. The RAAF utilised it as a training aircraft.

The aircraft took off from Point Cook, for a night cross-country exercise. The authorised route was Point Cook, Cressy, Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh and back to Point Cook.

The last radio contact from the pilot reported its position as Bacchus Marsh to the Essendon tower. Essendon tower felt that the transmission had come from the north. Also hearing the transmission was a Trans Australian Airlines aircraft near Kilmore who felt that the aircraft was close by. The pilot had instructed his co-pilot to keep a watch in the event of evasive action being necessary.

The next day a search was centred near Bacchus Marsh. An intensive air search failed to locate aircraft. The search extended as far as the Grampians. The Wirraway wreckage was eventually found on 16 August 1954 on Mt. Disappointment; more than a year after the incident. The wreckage and pilot were found by Forestry Commission (FCV) workers that were pushing an emergency road through heavy timber. They saw the burned-out wreck not far from the road's alignment.

The plane was found by Harry Ross and Ned Quillinan in a clearing not far from the top of the mountain. Mr. Ross said that his gang were building an emergency road at the head of a creek for use during the bushfire season. "I was walking ahead of the bulldozer checking the track when I walked on to the wreckage," he said. "The plane appears to have caught fire after the crash, but it is not completely burned out and the registration numbers A30-573-were clear." The aircraft, lay upside down in a crater made by the impact. Following the removal of the remains and examination of the aircraft, several components were salvaged, and the remaining wreckage was bulldozed into the crater.

