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Well worthy of a detour on the road to Hyden and Wave Rock.

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The Mystery of the Vultee Vengeance

Crash of the Vultee Vengeance A27-295

On Sunday the 27th August 1944 one of the most dramatic events to involve members of the 15th battalion took place in the far eastern part of the unit's area.

An RAAF Vultee Vengeance dive bomber went missing on a training flight from Pearce near Perth. The plane had apparently become lost and run out of fuel. The RAAF started searching between New Norcia and then Moora without luck.

A few days later a chance conversation between a commercial pilot and Sqd/Ldr Haber, the commanding officer of No.7 Communications Unit at Pearce, revealed that the former had sighted what he thought was a tent in the bush east of Narembeen.

Next morning a Beaufort bomber identified a parachute but no sign of life and a large number of soldiers from Northam were sent for a ground search.

The pilot Warrant Officer J Ingram was located at a remote farmhouse some four days after the crash and told his story. On realizing that he was nearly out of fuel he had warned the navigator Flt/Sgt CL King to bale out and went through the necessary roll to allow him to do so. He then climbed or height and baled out himself. There being no sign of King he headed west and found the farmhouse after four days during which he had only a goanna to eat.

A huge effort was now mounted to try and locate King and the aircraft. The wreckage was finally found by a Tigermouth on the 2nd of September in extremely thick and inhospitable scrub, however this did not deter a search party which included 15th Battalion men Cpl M Holtfreter and Pte D Wilkins from setting out to find it.

They drove a truck as far as possible then continued on foot. After they reached a spot five miles beyond the truck it was arranged that a plane would fly over and drop a smoke bomb on the crash site to mark it.

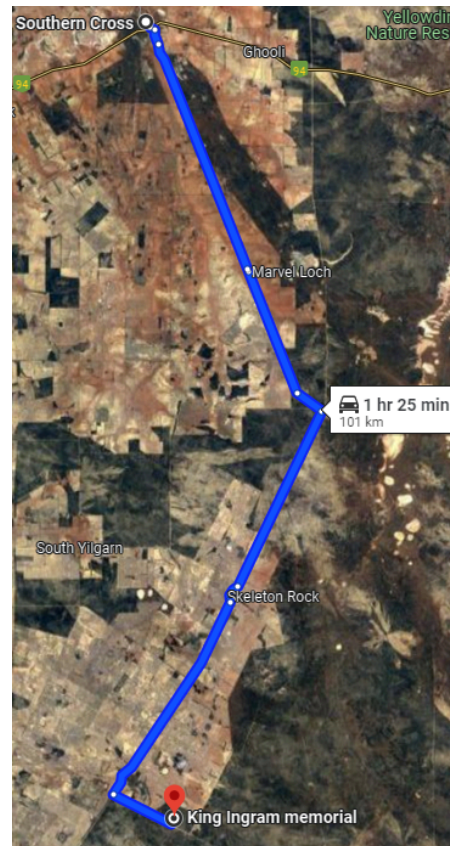


Holtfreter fired his rifle into a tree well ahead in line with the smoke then went forward and marked it so that one of the others could take a compass bearing. A further thirteen miles into the scrub they found the crash site.

A large area had been burnt and the plane's engine was buried ten feet in the earth and the wreckage strewn over ten acres. There was no trace of King or his parachute, it was believed that he had been hit by the large tailplane of the Vengeance as he bailed out.

After the war, his father traveled from the eastern states and enlisted the help of Holtfreter to make another search for his lost son, but to no avail.

Further information is available to read at the Yilgarn History Museum located on Antares Street, Southern Cross. Book, "Vengeance of the Outback" - written by Charles Page available for purchase through the Shire of Yilgarn



Sites

- Relics of Plane Crash
- Plaque placed in respect of Pilot & navigator
- Camel Well & Paddock
- Gatherer School Site
- Cockatoo Tank—Waterhole

How to get there

From Southern Cross pass the Palace Hotel on the Marvel Loch Road, at 16kms on the left is the remains of Concrete Well and Camel Paddocks used by the camel teamsters during the early days.

A large salmon gum marks the spot at the bottom of the crest. On both sides of the road at the top of the crest are good shows of wildflowers during season. 3kms further along is Gatherer School site dated 1929-1944.

Continue for 5.8kms to junction of bitumen and gravel road and continue 14.2kms, road junction signposted Hyden/Moorine Rock.

Directly alongside of signpost on the right is a track into Cockatoo Tank. A slight detour, good picnic place and water hole.

Back on the road, take the road to Hyden for 3.4kms to crossroads marked Parkers Range Road Burbidge, turn right into Emu Fence Road - Hyden. 53kms along you will find King Ingram Road to your left - turn on to this road and travel along for 7.2km. Turn left on the sandy road and follow in for 800m.



*Pilot, Warrant Officer
Allan Jack Ingram &
navigator,
Flight Sergeant
Clyde Leonard King*