

AIR CRASH

Saturday Nov. 24th 1945

Liberator Hits Hillside Near Buckland

27 KILLED

A terrible 'plane crash occurred in the fog on the Blackdown Hills, near morning. The crew of five and 22 passengers, all British Army personnel returning to India after leave, were killed – 26 outright, the other dying on the way to hospital.

The aircraft, a Liberator of R.A.F. Transport Command, had taken off from the Merryfield R.A.F. Station, near Ilminster, some four or five miles away, at 10 a.m. Apparently it did not attain sufficient height to clear the hillside (which rises to 930 feet), struck a tree, caught fire and burned out in a field not far from Castle-Neroche, belonging to Mr. J Gent, of Castle Farm, Buckland St. Mary.

“It was an appalling spectacle, with wreckage strewn about the grass field,” states a “News” reporter, who visited the scene. “Part of the 'plane had gone over the hedge into Hare Lane, which runs alongside the field. One propellor was two fields back from the lane, while other wreckage was in a field on the opposite side of the lane. Articles of Service-men's clothing, respirators, foodstuffs and personal possessions were scattered about. The lane itself was blocked to traffic. It is a lonely spot and no other property was endangered. I gather that two men for whom accommodation had been reserved on the 'plane arrived at Merryfield too late for the journey.”

No one appears to have witnessed the actual crash. When last seen in flight the troop carrier was very low.

Several people living near heard the crash and hurried to the scene. They found the 'plane smashed to pieces and blazing furiously.

The Air Ministry announced last night that further details would be available when all the next-of-kin had been communicated with.

It is understood that a R.A.F. Court of Inquiry will be held at Merryfield, where – as, indeed, all over the neighbourhood – the affair has caused a profoundly painful sensation.