

Extracted from:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/54727027/5366792?zoomLevel=3>

On 04/11/14 at 14:05:12

The Morning Bulletin, Rockhampton, Monday, May 1, 1933

FOUND IN ITALY

BODY OF BERT HINKLER

Signs Of Mutilation By Wolves

ENGINE TROUBLE OR LOST WAY

Wife On Way Home To England

MILAN, April 29.

The body of the Australian airman, Bert Hinkler, was found in an advanced state of decomposition by two workmen on the slopes of Prato Magno Mountain, north-west of Arezzo. Wounded in the head, the body was found 300 ft. from the wreckage of his aeroplane.

The discovery was made in the desolate region of the Apennines, 4600 ft high, between Florence and Arezzo. A document found on the body showed the first name to be Herbert. The surname was effaced by the weather, but the birthplace, Bundaberg, was discernible.

The body was unrecognisable, either having been burned or ravaged by wolves.

The special representative of the "Daily Mail" who visited the spot says that in addition to head injuries there were marks of burning.

What flesh remained showed signs of mutilation by wolves or foxes. The left hand was missing. Hinkler's facial features were totally unrecognisable.

It was a lonely charcoal burner's dog who found the body, to which it attracted its master's attention. Carabineers were immediately informed.

Hinkler's watch had stopped at 3 o'clock. His pockets contained Canadian Government bonds and some Italian silver coins.

The supplies of petrol and oil were exhausted and, seeing that he had started with sufficient fuel to reach Brindisi, it seems clear that either he had engine trouble or lost his way.

The front part of the machine was buried deep in the ground, and apparently it had ignited, supporting the theory that Hinkler was not killed outright, but that he extricated himself and crawled to the spot where the body was found.

BODY GOING TO ENGLAND.

ROME, April 29.

Hinkler's body is lying in an improvised "chappelle ardente" in the hamlet of Castel San Niccolo.

It will be taken thence to Florence and probably to England.

It is believed that he experienced engine trouble and crashed while looking for a landing place. The forest is not dense at the scene of the disaster, but landing was impossible. The plateau is one of the wildest places in Italy.

PRESS EULOGIES.

LONDON, April 29.

All the newspapers print eulogies of Hinkler.

"The Times" laments that although he was a great pilot and did most things well, he got most of his

satisfaction there from and could never make proper capital out of his achievements.

His fertile mind was always throwing up ideas, but he had been virtually unemployed for the last four years.

If he had possessed as good a business sense as he had an air mechanical sense he would not have been risking record-breaking flights, at 40 years of age.

It pays a tribute to Hinkler's wonderful mechanical and navigating powers, and adds that his death was due to a misfortune that no provision could have forestalled. Because the world found no steady employment for him, Hinkler undertook an exploit that might well have been left to younger men.

Major Savage told "the Daily Mail" that Hinkler apparently struck a mountain when coming down to see where he was. He added that he was sure the Aero Club would assist in bringing the body to England to enable a fitting burial to be given and homage paid by his admirers. He added that Hinkler was a great aviator and a thorough gentleman. He did great things modestly and endeared himself to everyone.

"The Daily Herald," describing Hinkler as one of the tragic heroes of our time, says he was among the world's greatest aviators and daring pioneers. He was second to none in courage, ability, and achievement; yet in life he had never won the distinction and recognition due to him. He will be buried with the honours he had so gallantly earned but which will come too late.

ILL-FATED MOUNTAIN.

The scene of Hinkler's death was 1000 ft. from the summit of the mountain, which country folks believe is ill-fated and haunted by evil spirits and which it shunned by peasants.

Only charcoal-burners occasionally climb the sombre slope. Carabineers searched throughout the night with torches for the aeroplane, but it was not until the rising sun shone on the aluminium wings that the machine was found.

Hinkler was lying on his back on steep slope. The body was almost hidden in a bush in which it was apparently caught as it rolled down the hillside.

The country is so difficult that it took four hours to transport the remains a few miles to the village.

LYING IN STATE.

FLORENCE, April 10.

Wrapped in the Italian tri-colour, with candles burning at the head, Hinkler's body lies in state in the church in the little village of Castel ganniceolo. Carabineers and black shirts' kept a night-long vigil. A crucifix hangs over the body, and little bundle of wild flowers brought by the villagers lie around the bier. Many women prayed beside the body.

A vain search was made for a Union Jack in which to wrap the body, so an Italian flag was used.

It is likely that Signor Mussolini will order that official honours be given to the body, and it may be sent to Rome.

AUSTRALIA FOR BURIAL.

BRISBANE, April 30.

When questioned to-night as to whether he would be prepared to co-operate in an effort to have Hinkler's body brought back to Australia for burial at Bundaberg, the Premier (Mr. Smith) said: "I believe that it would be the proper thing to bring his body back to Australia so that the great aviator may be accorded the honour to which his achievements entitle him.

"I will co-operate in every possible way in any such move, but it will first be necessary to find out whether that can be done. I will get in touch with the Agent-General in London immediately."

CANBERRA, April 30.

The following statement was issued by the Prime Minister (Mr. Lyons) to-night: "Though a long time has elapsed since he was last heard of it was generally accepted that Hinkler met his death on his flight from England to Australia. The news of the finding of the body will bring home to

everyone poignantly the tragic loss which Australia in particular and aviation in general have suffered.

"The deepest sympathy of all Australians will be extended to Mrs. Hinkler and the airman's relatives. Arrangements are being made on behalf of the Commonwealth Government for Mrs. Hinkler to be met on the arrival of the Strathaird at Fremantle tomorrow, and Mrs. Hinkler's wishes as to the burial of her husband will be ascertained. If it is her wish that the body should be brought back to Australia the Government will do all it can to facilitate the arrangements."

To Mrs. Hinkler Mr. Lyons sent the following message : "On behalf of the Government I send you the deepest sympathy in the tragic news of the finding of your husband's body.

All Australia will share your feelings of sorrow."