

Ian was my instructor during my training as a flying instructor at Tamworth. As I was completing the course he announced he was returning to Ag flying, as he found instructing too boring.

FORECAST

Tamworth: A very warm, sunny day. Max: 34.

Details P 31.

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PAGE 3

Plane crash: pilot's lucky escape

STORY: Scott Peters
PHOTO: Paul Mathews

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Mr Blanch

This evasive action saved the plane from plummeting into the side of the hill, and the pilot's life.

Mr Martin, a former Tamworth Aero Club instructor, was spraying superphosphate on a grazing property, owned by Mr Jim Joyce in the Danglemah area, when the plane's engine began to fail.

A bushman on horseback noticed the plane dropping altitude gradually.

"Holy ghost, he's got to hit something," Stan Blanch thought when he first noticed the plane flying so low over the hilly grazing paddocks.

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He steered the crippled aircraft along the railway line in the hope of safely gliding through the cutting.

However, one of the wings apparently hit the side of the cutting causing the plane to crash.



Ian Martin . . . the lucky pilot.

Mr Neil Chopra, assistant division engineer with the Public Transport Commission, inspects damage to the railway lines at the crash site.

escape

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Horserider heard plane crash

(From Page 1)

Mr Blanch said: "I was just about to head home for lunch when there was this great bang — like a clap of thunder."

He said he was almost afraid to look after glimpsing the wreckage from the top of the cutting minutes later.

"When I saw the plane I thought he wouldn't have had a chancing of escaping death but when I looked closer I saw the pilot sitting on the track."

Mr Martin had crawled about 10 metres from the wreckage which was leaking a continuous stream of fuel.

First-aid

Mr Blanch rode to the railway siding and brought a first-aid kit back to the injured pilot.

A railwayman phoned for help and shortly after joined Mr Blanch who had started bandaging Mr Martin's wounds.

Meanwhile, railway officials had requested a crane from Walcha to remove the wreckage from the main northern line.

The Tamworth Fire Brigade doused the crop duster and rail tracks with foam so fuel fumes would not be ignited while the clean-up was in progress. The line was open early last night.

Fumes could be smelt more than 100 metres from the crash site.

Trains delayed

The northern rail superintendent, Mr Ken Gallagher, said passengers on the Northern Tablelands Express bound for Glen Innes yesterday afternoon had to be taken by coach from Tamworth.

Two freight trains were delayed.

Mr Gallagher said the

crash had buckled the rail tracks and trains would have to travel slowly over the damaged section until repairs could be made.

Mr Martin, an employee of Air Farm Associates, was in a satisfactory condition in Tamworth Base Hospital last night.

Brownies and Guides will discard their uniforms and don the latest fashions for a parade of children's wear on March 31.

The parade, to be held at the guide hall in Jean Street, will start at 7.30 pm.

The proceeds from the night will go towards the

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Ballot for city poll

Mr Morrisford heads the lot paper for the Tamworth City Council by-election April 7.

Mr Oxford is a clerk at the Department of Highways and Roads.

The other candidates, in order of listing on the ballot paper, are: Edward Whitham, mailer; Edmund Kilvan, locomotive driver; Thomas Ershaw Bonnar, architect; Maxwell Thomas Ball, engineer; Mr William Brown, the driver, and Neilie Roberts, who is bursar of Calrossy School.

Voting places, which will be open from 8am to 6pm are: the Town Hall annexe, St Patrick's Hall, Denison