

1986

NEWS PAPER CUTTINGS AND
ARTICLES OF INTEREST for
the year 1986

AN SRLMSQN PERSPECTIVE

CRASHED AIRCRAFT DETAILS

A8-139

PILOT: FLTLT Steven Mathew ERSKINE

☒ Killed

NAVIGATOR: CPT Gregory Spence ANGELL

☒ Killed

MODEL-TYPE: D1

TYPE VERSION: F-111C

ROLLOUT DATE:

ACCEPTANCE DATE:

TRANSFER DATE:

DATE CRASHED: 28/01/1986

CRASH LOCATION: Moruya, NSW

GD S/N: 15

USAF SERIAL NUMBER: A8-139

LH Wing Sn:

LH Eng Sn:

RH Wing Sn:

RH Eng Sn:

NOTES: *RAAF AIRCRAFT. Aircraft no longer in the RAAF inventory -
Crashed at Moruya, NSW (off coast) on 28 January 1986.
Cause unknown. Lost at sea.
A8-139 impacted the water whilst flying a simulated Harpoon
profile.
FLTLT Erskine aged 24
Captain Angell aged 34 (USAF Exchange Pilot)*

Jet crash: birds blamed

Birds are believed to have caused the fatal crash of a Royal Australian Air Force F-111 jet fighter last week.

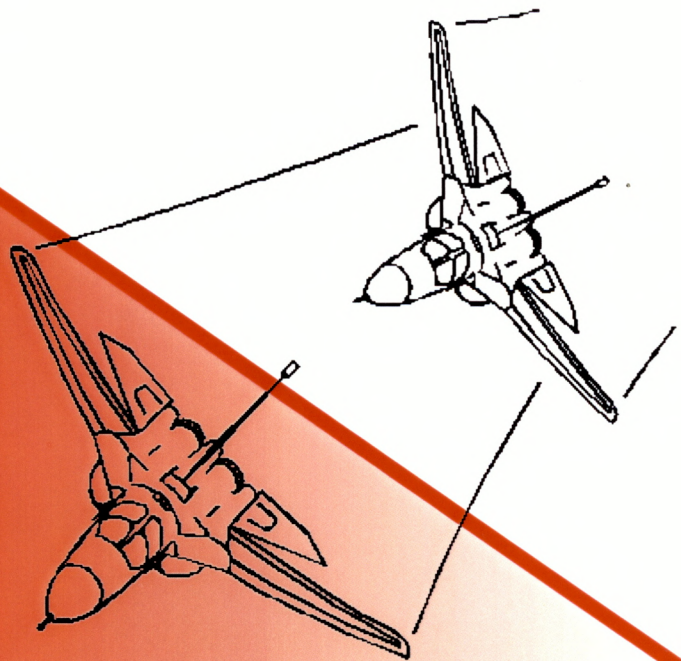
Air Commodore Ian Westmore, speaking after a memorial service at Amberley Air Base in Queensland for the two men who died, said some "cataclysmic malfunction" caused the crash.

"Birds caused Amberley's only other fatal F-111 crash, but we may possibly never know the answer," he said.

Flight-Lt. Stephen Erskine, 24, of Brisbane, and Capt. Greg Angell, 34, a US exchange pilot, were killed when their jet plunged into the sea off NSW last Tuesday.

RAAF fliers vanish

AN RAAF F-111 fighter bomber crashed into the sea off Bateman's Bay on the NSW south coast. A search found some debris of the \$27 million aircraft but no trace of the crew: pilot Lieutenant Stephen Matthew Erskine, 24, and navigator Captain Gregory Spence Angell, 34.



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CRASHED AIRCRAFT DETAILS

A8-128

PILOT: FLTLT Mark Andrew FALLON

☒ Killed

NAVIGATOR: FLGOFF William George PIKE

☒ Killed

MODEL-TYPE: D1

TYPE VERSION: F-111C

ROLLOUT DATE:

ACCEPTANCE DATE:

TRANSFER DATE: 30/Apr/1973

DATE CRASHED: 2/04/1987

CRASH LOCATION: Tenterfield, NSW

GD S/N: 4

USAF SERIAL NUMBER: A8-128

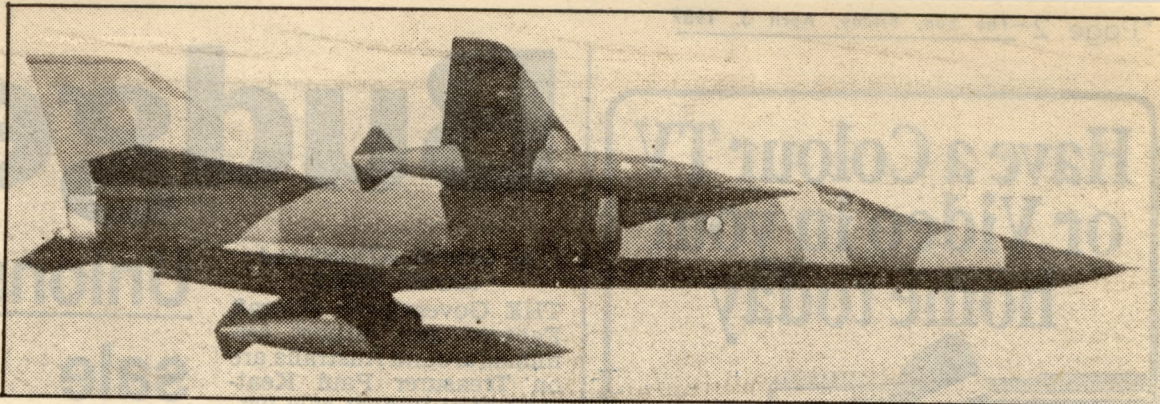
LH Wing Sn:

LH Eng Sn:

RH Wing Sn:

RH Eng Sn:

NOTES: *RAAF AIRCRAFT. Aircraft no longer in the RAAF inventory - Crashed approx 1.5 NM NNE from Tenterfield, NSW on 02 April 1987. Hit ground during low day into night flying exercise. This A/C was configured with a M61-A1 gun and cargo pannier. The Aircraft was a 6SQN asset. Callsign Falcon Sabre 1.*



● An F-111 similar to the bomber which crashed near the NSW town of Tenterfield last night.

DEATH HEROES

RAAF crew

dies to

save town

By GERVASE GREENE and TERRY PORTER

THE crew of an out-of-control F-111 bravely steered the fighter plane clear of a tiny town last night, then died when it crashed.

The pilot and navigator were killed when the jet fighter crashed and burst into flames, narrowly missing houses near Tenterfield, northern NSW.

Pieces of burning metal and glass flew through the air on impact and the blazing fuselage gouged a path through fences and across a highway.

Mrs Barbara Brown, who lives in the house next to the crash site, said: "We think those two poor flyers might have stayed in their plane to keep it away from our homes.

"If they had crashed just two seconds sooner, they would have landed in the middle of Tenterfield and this town would have been wiped out."

The drama was witnessed by the crew of another F-111, who watched helplessly as their comrades smashed into the ground.

Frightened townsfolk said last night their homes rocked with the explosion and dozens of windows were shattered.

Mrs Brown said the blast blew in her front doors and chunks of flaming wreckage smashed into a paddock nearby.

"I gathered the kids and we waited for the plane to pass overhead, but it didn't go past," she said.

"There was a big flash of orange light and windows blew in all over the house.

"Then a plane wing smashed into our driveway and the rest of the aircraft struck the ground about 100 metres away.

"Other bits of metal flew about and landed all over the garden.

"But the main part of the plane continued on its way and gouged a path through fences and right across Mt Lindsay Rd before finally stopping."

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F-111 heroes in death crash

● From Page 1

Hugh Inglis, a tail gunner in Liberator bombers during the war, said last night his home "shook from top to bottom — then I saw the plane explode in a cloud of fire".

"It was terrible — worse than anything I saw during the war," he said.

"It seemed to come low over the town, then there was a rat-tat-tat sort of sound. Everything shook and I thought the house would come down.

"The poor beggars didn't have a chance —

they died in a bloody cloud of fire."

The F-111C, from RAAF No 6 Squadron, was returning to its home base at Amberley, west of Brisbane, when it crashed about 15 km south of the NSW-Queensland border.

An RAAF spokesman said the swing-wing bomber was carrying out "normal night exercises" before the crash.

It had taken off from the East Sale base in Gippsland.

"The F-111 from RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland crashed

about 7.40 pm," the spokesman said.

"An accompanying F-111 saw the aircraft impact and burn.

"Local emergency services from Tenterfield later found two bodies amid the wreckage."

It is the sixth F-111 to crash since they were bought for more than \$300 million from the giant US firm General Dynamics in June 1973.

Four RAAF crewmen have died in the previous crashes.

The plane can fly at twice the speed of sound at sea level and operate

at an altitude of up to 25,000 metres.

Fitted out with a range of deadly missiles and other weapons systems, it is the mainstay of the RAAF.

Its most distinctive feature is the swing wing, which enables it to redesign itself in mid-air to reach top speeds or slow down to well below normal cruising speed.

The RAAF has only 22 F-111s remaining, and they are no longer available for purchase.

The US is the only other air force to use them.

F-111 ace flew in the fast lane

BRISBANE — When Bill Fallon first saw his 19-year-old son, Mark, blast off at the controls of an F-111 five years ago, a tingle ran down his spine.

He felt a mixture of pride, fear and apprehension as Australia's best fighting plane flew out of sight at a speed hard to believe.

On Thursday Mark was one of two crewmen killed when an F-111 crashed near Tenterfield, northern NSW.

Neither man tried to eject. Locals are convinced Mark and his navigator, William Pyke, 22, of Sydney, steered the bomber away from the town before crashing in a field.

Mark was the youngest man in the world to captain an F-111. But when he left Brisbane's Villanova College two years before, he had never piloted a plane.

He was tagged the fastest teenager in the world and he was definitely a young man enjoying life in the fast lane.

Mr Fallon said he was surprised when his son first told him he was going to fly an F-111.

"He was so jubilant when he was posted. We couldn't believe our ears," Mr Fallon said.

"I had plenty of confidence in his ability. The RAAF wouldn't have put him in the aircraft if they didn't share my opinion.

"He was a perfectionist and that's what the RAAF look for."

But Mark's brother, Simon, said that after five years at the top there was a hint of disillusionment.

"Mark was a bit apprehensive about what his career held. He realised he wasn't going to get any pats on the back for what he was doing, no matter how good it was," he said.

"But he still gave his best without hesitation."

Mark's best friend was flying behind him and in radio contact when the plane crashed.

Although Mr Fallon refuses to reveal his son's last words, it was clear he was proud of the way his son had faced death.

Many residents in Tenterfield



● Mr Bill Fallon holds a photo of his dead son.

were in shock yesterday, realising how close they came to death.

Mrs Margaret Hovey said houses shuddered as the plane zoomed overhead.

"It was almost as if the pilot was holding the plane up long enough to miss the town," she said. "To us they are real heroes."

In Parliament yesterday Senator Gareth Evans, representing

Defence Minister Mr Beazley, said the F-111 was involved in a practice attack against a target in the Tenterfield area.

"A second F-111 eight miles behind the accident aircraft had visual contact with its lights," he said.

"The second crew saw a flash which was a fire when they passed over."



● The search centre at Tenterfield ... locals were in shock yesterday.

Bird theory in jet crash

CANBERRA — The F-111 crash near Tenterfield in northern NSW last week probably was caused by either pilot error or bird strike.

Although the RAAF inquiry into the tragedy is only starting to assemble wreckage from the site, investigators are believed to be concentrating on these two scenarios.

A pilot and navigator were killed when the F-111, flying back to its base at Amberley, near Brisbane, crashed about 7.30 pm on Thursday.

The crew had launched a dummy night bombing

By GERVASE GREENE

exercise against the Tenterfield meatworks when the crash occurred.

The terrain-following radar was activated and the fighter-bomber was flying at about 800 kmh.

The crew made no attempt to eject and no distress signal was picked up by another F-111, also involved in the bombing exercise, flying about 6 km behind.

The terrain-following radar enables a pilot to set the plane's altitude, allowing it to hug the ground at anything

from 65 m to 300 m for low-level attacks.

It is considered unlikely the radar caused the crash. The F-111 is equipped with a fail-safe mechanism that is activated if the highly-accurate radar malfunctions or if the pre-set altitude limits are breached substantially.

Although it is technically possible other equipment with no backup might have failed, it is considered unlikely the crew would not have noticed a problem and alerted the crew following them.

Bird strike is an inevitable hazard during extremely low-level flights.

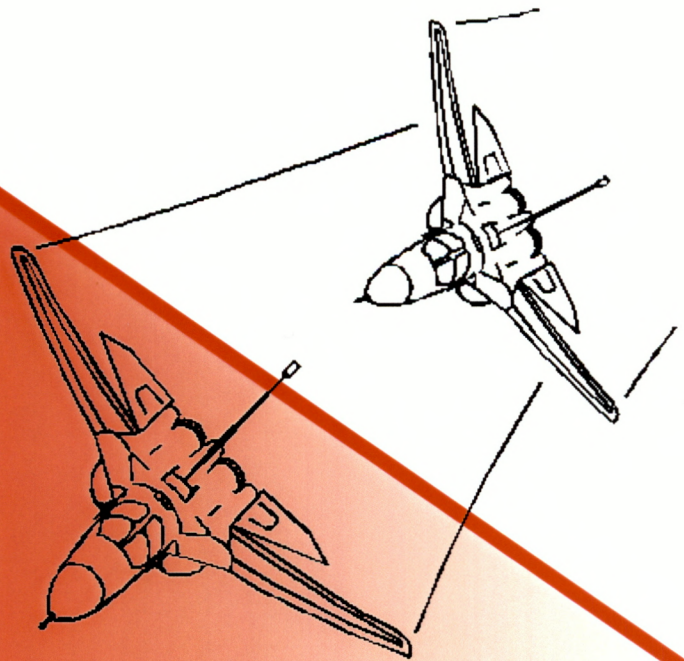
Two men were killed when an F-111 crashed near Ballina, on the northern NSW coast, after striking a flock of birds.

There is no viable protection against birds being sucked into the jet intakes of the twin engines mounted mid-fuselage on the F-111.

One RAAF official said last night bird strike was "very high on the list" of probable causes of the latest crash.

● The funeral of the navigator, Flying-Officer William Pike, 22, will be held at the Richmond RAAF base today.

The funeral of the pilot, Flt-Lt Mark Fallon, 24, will be held in Brisbane tomorrow.



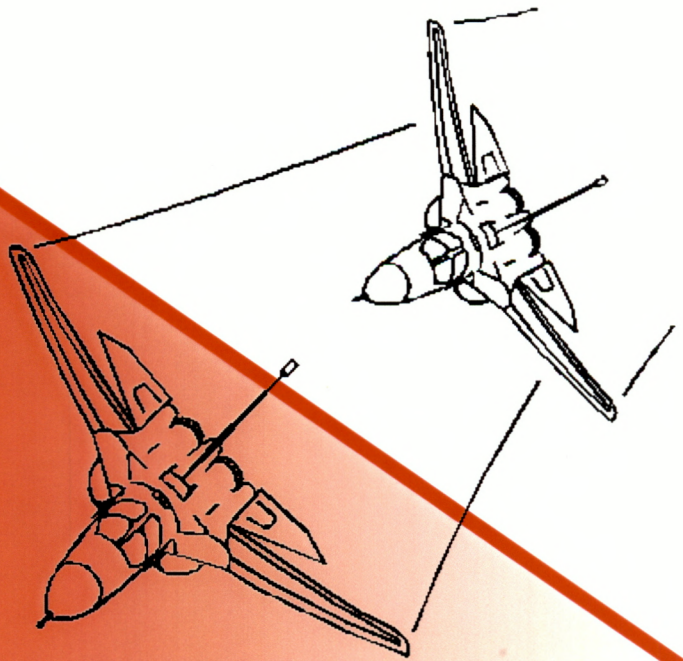
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