

Quest for WWII bomber Beaufort A9-304 lost at sea near King Island in 1943

Seventy three years ago, three Beaufort bombers took off from the RAAF operational training unit in Sale Victoria, heading south, only two returned.

The Beaufort each had four crew, training for torpedo bombing runs, they

flew in formation at a low altitude of 800feet over Bass Strait.

According to Court of Enquiry documents, buried deep in the National Archive, on Wednesday 28th of April 1943, the three planes

were instructed to turn to port, one, A9-304 turned to starboard, realised the error and corrected, turning quickly to port. At 800feet there's little room for manoeuvring and the Beaufort torpedo bomber crashed into the sea, not



Fallen Diggers are planning to search for the remains of Flight A9-304, is four miles off the coast of King Island. Fallen Diggers crowdfunding site is <https://ozcrowd.com/campaigns/finding-a9-304/#.VsGdh3xM3IX>



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IGA MANAGER'S SPECIALS

21-02-2016

Colgate Toothpaste Total Whitening 190g	\$6.52	SAVE \$2.00
Dolmio Pasta Sauce Bolognese 500g	\$3.30	SAVE \$1.22
Kelloggs Nutri Grain 290g	\$4.31	SAVE \$1.40
OPTimum Dog Food Adult Beef Rice 400g	\$1.20	SAVE \$1.97
Whiskas Adult Tuna 1kg	\$4.99	SAVE \$1.30

Main Street Currie Ph 6462 1244

far from Naracoopa on King Island's east coast.

Melbourne based military history buff and committed researcher Dennis Frank has dug deep to research and locate WWI diggers missing in action on the Western Front and has now turned his attention to WWII.

"I'm president of a group called Fallen Diggers, we are all volunteers and a not-for-profit organisation," Dennis Frank told the KICourier.

"We believe our Diggers deserve respect and to be honoured in death. We also work hard to bring some closure to relatives.

"After finding 13 WWI soldiers in France, we have now focussed closer to home and the King Island Beaufort crash is one we recently began work on researching," said Dennis who is based in Melbourne.

Of the four men on board A9-304, Fallen Diggers have been able to contact relatives of two, Flight Sergeant James Catterick from Taralgon and Flight Sergeant Graham Nichols, from Caloundra in Queensland.

Extensive research in the National Archives, led Mr Frank to the Court of Enquiry reports, which gave the Beaufort's last known co-ordinates.

"The possible location of Flight A9-304, is just four miles off the coast of King Island.

"Once we had this vital information I contacted marine archaeologist Mark Ryan of Southern Ocean Exploration Group another not-for-profit company, who committed to join our search.

"I know King Islander Jonna McLean and

through his contacts, we have spoken to locals and taken their knowledge of conditions on board. We have also received the services of a boat to help in our search off Naracoopa," said Dennis.

What Fallen Diggers may find of the Beaufort after 73 years remains to be seen.

"Depending on the impact, the fuselage might be there, but we don't expect to find the Beaufort's wings or any human remains, it has simply been too long," said Dennis.

"But finding the fuselage will at least give the families some closure and we hope some comfort, to know where they were and that their WWII RAAF relatives are honoured.

"We continue to search for the other crew members' families, but having been in contact with the brother of Flt. Sgt. Graham Nichols we are determined to have some answers for them."

As a not-for-profit group, Fallen Diggers rely on donations to fund their projects.

"We have a OZ Crowd Funding online donation set-up (see above) and hope to raise \$5,000 for our King Island Beaufort project, so far we have \$1,740 pledged," said Dennis.

"Fallen Diggers and

Southern Exploration are both working free of charge, we are just looking to cover our travel and accommodation costs.

"Weather permitting we will be on King Island, searching for the Beaufort on the 19th and 20th of March.

"If anyone would like to contribute to our project, it doesn't have to be much, every \$10 or \$20 helps," said Dennis.

"Southern Ocean Exploration Group has offered their services to find

the wreckage and to give the families of the following men some closure. Sergeant Edward John Offer Pilot, Flight Sergeant James Henry Catterick Navigator, Flight Sergeant Edward Waterman W/AG and Flight Sergeant Graham Charles Nichols W/AG

"It has been 73 years since Flight A9-304 disappeared and it is time to give the families some peace of mind in knowing where they rest."

—KICourier

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SeaRoad has ordered this LNG roll on – roll off ship to replace the SeaRoad Mersey. The delivery of the 182 metre long vessel is planned for November 2016. This ship is too big to fit into Grassy Harbour and will not service King Island



Countdown to when the SR Mersey is replaced with this ship too big for Grassy Harbour

39 weeks