

Search and Rescue – Striving Against Disaster, Easter Reflection

With reference to the book *Green Mountains*, by Bernard O'Reilly, Fortitude Press, Kemp Place, Investments Pty. Ltd., P.O. Box 97, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

An account of the events described below, with contemporary photographs may be found on en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1937_Airlines_of_Australia_Stinson_crash
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_O%27Reilly_\(author\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_O%27Reilly_(author)).

See also the O'Reilly Guesthouse website, www.oreillys.com.au/.

Some impression of the terrain in which the events took place may be gained by accessing embed.pandia.com/vstplayer2/&multi=trbhkxg&h=s&nav=2.

Note from the writer

Airline disasters are never far from people's thoughts [especially when this work was first written soon after the terrorist attack of September 11th 2001]. This is an account of another one, which happened many years ago, on a much smaller scale than the horrific and mind-numbing events of September 11th 2001 but which brought forth the same kind of resolve amongst ordinary people that we saw on that tragic day. In one sense, therefore, it is hoped that this account serves a commemorative purpose in addition to pointing to what the Lord Jesus Christ endured during "*his passion*" after which "*he shewed himself alive*" Acts 1:3 insofar as the date of this present writing is March 31st Easter Sunday 2013.

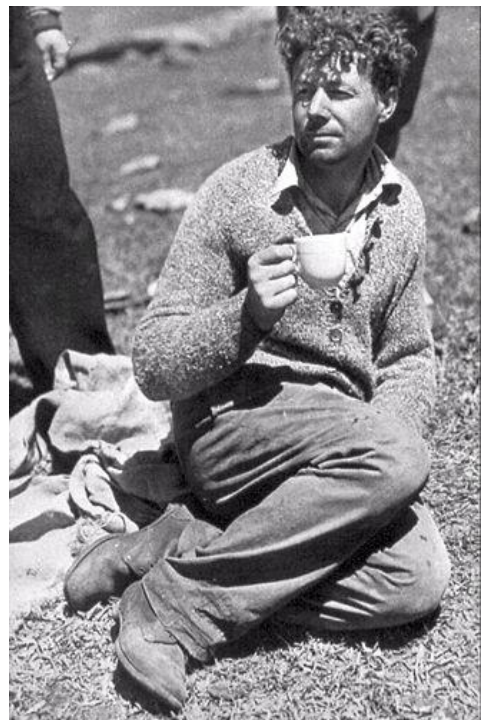
The Missing Airliner

Friday February 19th 1937 began with a violent storm in the mountains of southern Queensland, eastern Australia. On that day, a Stinson Model A airliner on a flight from Brisbane, Queensland, to Sydney, New South Wales, with two crew and five passengers on board, was reported missing. The search for the airliner went on for a week. It was the most intensive in Australia's aviation history at that time and drew upon the use of almost every available aircraft in eastern Australia at that time.

However, no trace was found of the missing Stinson or its occupants and it was presumed that the aircraft had crashed into the sea, after changing course to the east, in order to avoid the storm.

34 year old Bernard O'Reilly (no relation!) was a seasoned bushman and tracker who owned a farm that lay almost beneath the airliner's projected flight path across southern Queensland.

He reasoned that the aircraft could not have been lost at sea. The last known sighting of the Stinson confirmed that it had been on course, before becoming lost from view when it had flown into a thick cloudbank over the rugged McPherson Ranges. O'Reilly concluded that the airliner had met its fate up on the inhospitable slopes of the McPhersons, through the violence of the storm.



Bernard O'Reilly, after the Stinson Rescue

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_O%27Reilly_%28author%29
adb.anu.edu.au/biography/oreilly-alfonso-bernard-7916

O'Reilly plotted the aircraft's probable course following its last known sighting, by means the latest aerial survey map of the region. He decided that it must have gone down on one of the four highest ridges of the McPhersons, all of which cut across the probable flight path. He made up his mind to go in search of the wreckage and any survivors, although the possibility of anyone having escaped the crash seemed extremely slim.

Nevertheless, on February 27th, eight days after the aircraft had gone missing, leaving his wife and daughter on the farm, O'Reilly set out for the intersection of the flight path with the first of the four high lateral spurs of the McPhersons.



Stinson Model A Airliner

www.airhistory.net/photo/124323/VH-UGG

An Earlier Air Disaster – In Passing

The Stinson incident was not the first time that such a disaster had overtaken the fledgling Australian aviation industry. Local residents of a hamlet deep in the Snowy Mountains region of southern New South Wales, also known as the Southern Alps, were roused one misty morning in March 1931 by the faint sound of aircraft engines. They caught a glimpse of a tiny (by today's standards) three-engined passenger aircraft, smaller even than the 1937 tri-motor Stinson, evidently off-course and probably low on fuel. The airliner appeared to be on a collision course with the timbered slopes of mountain called Blackjack. It veered aside but to no avail. Looming out of the mist was the huge and menacing bulk of another mountain, ominously known as World's End. This time, there was no escape for the hapless machine and no survivors. See www.journeysetc.com/?p=1268. [2019 Update: This writer recalled additional details of the tragedy from a newspaper article published in 1958, when the wreckage of the aircraft was found by chance]

Australian airlines, like many others elsewhere in the world, face crises of a different sort now but in the early twentieth century, the Great Dividing Range of eastern Australia in its own way could justifiably lay claim to being a "**great and terrible wilderness**" Deuteronomy 1:19, 8:15 for the aero pioneers of those far-off days.

The name of the lost airliner was, ironically, *Southern Cloud*. It was a sister aircraft to the *Southern Sky* and the *Southern Cross*. Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith, after whom Sydney airport was named, piloted the latter during his epic trans-Pacific flight in 1928.



Great Dividing Range, Eastern Australia

www.gold-net.com.au/archivemagazines/jun99/range.html

See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Kingsford_Smith.

Years later, in October 1958, there was a strange sequel to the tragedy of the *Southern Cloud*. A site worker and amateur photographer from the Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme stumbled across the wreckage in dense bush-land where it had lain undetected for almost 30 years, despite extensive searching. No doubt much of the area had been cleared by then, to make way for the hydro-electric scheme construction and thereby facilitating access to the interior. The worker had ventured out in the hope of photographing the lyrebird, a creature native to Australia. He had noticed two heavy strands of wire, which he thought belonged to abandoned and overgrown mine-workings but he then discovered that they were the elevator cables of the long-lost *Southern Cloud*. It was an inevitably sombre end to the mystery of the *Southern Cloud* but also a reminder of that day when ***“the earth shall cast out the dead”*** Isaiah 26:19 following the Second Advent. Not even the mountains will conceal them in that day but after that ***“there shall be no more death”*** Revelation 21:4.



The *Southern Cloud*
www.journeysetc.com/?p=1268

Ordeal in the Mountains

O'Reilly trudged through the formidable mountain scrub for the best part of a day and night and eventually came in sight of the Lamington Plateau, the third of the four lateral spurs he had identified from the survey map. Thanks to a lifetime in the Australian bush, he could navigate through the tree-choked undergrowth with pinpoint accuracy without even a compass, relying instead on his extensive and incredibly detailed knowledge of the local terrain, flora and fauna. The position of the sun would have aided him, or that of the moon or stars after dark – such as the constellation of the Southern Cross, conspicuous in the southern sky. However, these celestial signposts were not essential and even heavily overcast weather would not necessarily have deterred one possessed of O'Reilly's tracking expertise. Newsreel audio footage shot after his expedition shows O'Reilly explaining how *“there are many ways of telling where you are in the bush, moss always grows on the south side of the trees, for instance.”* Readers will note that O'Reilly is here referring to the phenomenon as it is found in the *southern* hemisphere. Another feature of his trek was that he had none of the modern equipment or specially prepared foodstuffs upon which modern backpackers rely. As the graphic shows, see above, his clothes and boots were those that he habitually wore for work on his farm and his rations for the journey consisted of bread, onions, tea and sugar bundled with matches in a waterproof container into a simple hessian bag. He took with him, as indicated by the newsreel report, neither blanket, nor tent nor groundsheet – and he didn't even have a pet dog with him!

From such humble beginnings, the stage was set for one of Australia's most dramatic search and rescue missions.

The plateau was eight miles distant but scanning its heavily wooded crest in the clear air, O'Reilly observed an unusually light-brown tree top, contrasting markedly with the surrounding green canopies. O'Reilly guessed that this was the likely crash site. He was right.

Eight hours later, after another gruelling trek through tangled bushland during which even he could average only one mile an hour, O'Reilly stood before the wreck. He described the grim sight in his book *Green Mountains*, p 29.

“[It was] a mass of smashed and charred metal. It was more than that, it was a horrible unclean thing which held the trapped remains of what once were men, a repulsive thing which I could not go near.”

There was, however, triumph in the midst of tragedy. O'Reilly had been guided over the last stage of his journey by two male voices which had responded to his beckoning calls – probably consisting of the then well-known Australian bush salutation of “*Coo-ee!*”, pronounced with emphasis on the second syllable. He had taken the voices to be those of other rescuers, whom he supposed to have followed the same line of reasoning and action as he had but a shock was in store.

To his utter astonishment, O'Reilly discovered that the voices belonged instead to two survivors of the crash, passengers John Proud, 29 and 55 year-old Joe Binstead. They had been lost in the wilderness and exposed to the elements for almost ten days. O'Reilly provided a graphic description of their condition in *Green Mountains*, p 29.

“Proud I saw first, his eyes far back in his head like a corpse, lying as he had lain for ten days on that wet ground with a broken leg that was green and swelling and maggoty. “My God,” I thought, “You have lain all these days in hell and now I’m too late to save you.” Who can describe the anguish I felt in that second? Then I turned to Binstead. He tried to shake hands, a poor hand that was like raw meat. His legs too were like that, the cloth of his trousers was worn away by crawling over the rocks to bring water.”

So raw and inflamed had Binstead’s hands become that he had been forced to carry vine strands of wild berries between his teeth, which he had foraged for Proud and himself.

This writer’s late mother remembered the news reports of O'Reilly’s amazing adventure of 76 [2019 Update: 82] years ago and said that one of the first things that the two men had asked O'Reilly was what was happening with the test cricket! Summer in Australia extends from December to February and the English team must have been visiting for the 1937 series of test matches. Given the circumstances, the men’s question indicates that Proud and Binstead were real Australians of that era. However, they had another immediate concern.

Hard Decisions

The two men informed O'Reilly that there had been third survivor, a young Englishman named Jim Westray, who with Proud and Binstead had managed to escape from the ruptured starboard fuselage of the aircraft. It had hit the tree O'Reilly had earlier observed, burst into flames and plummeted to earth.

Interviewed on Australian television in 1978, John Proud recalled that there had been “*no hope*” for the two passengers seated on the port side of the aircraft, which had immediately been engulfed in the resulting explosion and fireball when the Stinson had struck the tree. Neither had there been any hope for the pilot, Captain Rex Boyden, a Great War Flying Corps veteran, or his navigator, because the pilots’ cabin had sustained the full force of the impact. Although describing the event so many years after it had happened, Proud’s ordeal was obviously still very much in his mind. The airliner had in fact been forced down by the unusual violence of the storm, as O'Reilly had surmised.

According to Proud and Binstead, Jim Westray had set out the morning after the crash to get help. Westray was an experienced mountaineer, having climbed extensively in Britain and on the Continent. O'Reilly wrote in *Green Mountains*, p 32:

“His sportsman’s love of the sporting risk helped to make light of his lone venture into a strange and terrible country so that help might come more quickly to his companions in misfortune.”

When some days had passed, it was evident that Westray had not succeeded in getting help and Binstead was faced with a terrible choice. O'Reilly wrote, *ibid.* p 33:

“Should he try to get out and save his own life while there was still time, before weakness or starvation made the effort impossible? Never could a man be called upon to make a harder decision. Many a man has had a bronze cross pinned on his breast for some deed in the heat of battle but to choose in cold blood a course which meant death by starvation and exposure is something different from military courage.”

Binstead had chosen to stay and help the stricken Proud by bringing water and what little food the forest had to offer, in the form of berries. Binstead's efforts had enabled both men to survive, just barely and O'Reilly realised that Proud especially was in urgent need of medical attention. The bushman knew that he therefore had to take the quickest route down the mountains to civilisation. This was by way of a steep gorge that Westray had evidently followed, which led down to a settlement called Christmas Creek, on the northern New South Wales side of the McPhersons. Leaving his remaining provisions with the two men and promising them, *"I'll bring back a doctor and a hundred men,"* O'Reilly set off in the late afternoon following Westray's trail.

The Lone Venturer

O'Reilly quickly found Jim Westray's footprints, still visible in the soft and damp soil. He observed that the Englishman had negotiated the difficult and unfamiliar country with great skill until he had tried to descend a cliff using native ferns as foot and handholds. To anyone unfamiliar with the jungle flora, they look very secure but are shallow rooted and quickly give way when grasped. This is what had happened and Westray had plunged helplessly to the bottom of the gorge.

Despite having sustained serious injuries in the fall, the Englishman had crawled on for some miles before O'Reilly found him, dead; seated against a big boulder, beside the torrent at the bottom of the gorge. He had stopped to rest, light a cigarette and bathe a smashed ankle. Then he had died quite suddenly, from cerebral haemorrhage. O'Reilly carefully reached inside the dead man's jacket pocket to search for anything by which he could confirm Westray's identity. He found the young man's wallet, containing proof of identification. It also contained enough money in paper notes to keep an average Australian family for a year. With trembling hand, O'Reilly replaced the wallet with its contents and continued on. In *Green Mountains*, p 37 he wrote:

"No time now to give way to the savage hurt which I felt. There were two other men dying for want of attention and every second was precious. The light was fading and if I was caught in that strange gorge in jungle night that was as black as the pit of hell, fatal delay might occur. So I ran off and left Jim Westray. Time will never remove that picture of him, sitting with his back to the rock."

In O'Reilly's opinion, Westray had not died in vain. We may find such sentiments strange today – although perhaps not so much after September 11th 2001 aka 9-11 – but O'Reilly had this to say of the young Englishman's efforts:

"A million Australians will be inspired by his example."

The Rescue

O'Reilly succeeded in getting to Christmas Creek on the New South Wales side of the border and sounded the alarm. The local farmers and property holders of those days were resourceful and quick-thinking men, used to coping with emergencies, including natural calamities such as flash floods and bush-fires. Many had fought in the Great War of 1914-1918 and so were no strangers to difficulty and danger. Promptly and efficiently they organised the rescue party, which included a doctor, stretcher-bearers and medical equipment. They also formed a team to cut down undergrowth and carve out a track up to the plateau for the casualties to be evacuated.

Both Proud and Binstead were brought out safely and the doctor succeeded in saving John Proud's leg, although not surprisingly he walked with a limp ever afterwards. The rescue party also had the grim task of recovering the bodies of Jim Westray and those who had died in the crash. O'Reilly remained with the rescue party for two days and nights. He wrote, *ibid.* p 43:

"My legs had to be driven, forced like things that were almost dead but there were no complaints now; over those boulders and round those waterfalls Westray had dragged his broken body. Away up above without shelter in the cold driving rain were two tortured dying men who could still joke on the eleventh day after the crash. God forgive if I ever complain again."

The account of the rescue was a major headline story at the time. One could describe as ‘awesome’ the resolution with which Bernard O’Reilly set about and carried out his mission. He gave his own explanation on page 16 of his book, *Green Mountains*:

“I am not ruling out the possibility of Divine intervention. To me it seems that if God wished to intervene and save two men beyond ordinary aid He would not necessarily do so miraculously nor would He inspire anyone with a blind, unreasoning impulse to go and do His will but it seems quite natural that He would inspire in a man the reasoning and the initiative which would send that man out of his own accord. The fact that the man so chosen had spent most of his life in unwittingly fitting himself for just such a job seems to further indicate a clear purpose behind it all. That, of course, is the way it appears to me.”

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” Ephesians 2:10.

Epilogue

The July-Sept 1992 issue of [2019 Update: www.australiangeographic.com.au/] *Australian Geographic* pp 116-117 carried an article in its regular feature *tribute* by Quentin Chester entitled *Survivor With A Vision – Sir John Proud*. See accompanying graphics following the ***Epilogue***. Chester interviewed Sir John and his wife Laurine at their home on Sydney’s upper North Shore. Part of his article reads as follows:

““Powerful air currents forced us down through the treetops and we didn’t have much time to get out – the plane caught fire very quickly,” said Sir John Proud, recounting details of an airliner crash on the Lamington Plateau, Queensland, 55 years ago.

“That crash has long since become a page in our aviation annals, and for Sir John, now 84, its details and those of his agonising, 10-day ordeal of waiting injured, to be rescued are still clear. He was one of five passengers and two crew members aboard the City of Brisbane, a Stinson of Australian Airlines on a scheduled service from Brisbane to Sydney, on 19 February 1937, when it crashed in the McPherson Range. Sir John, then a 29-year-old mining consultant, was one of three who survived the crash and the fire, although one of them died before help came. Because of erroneous sighting reports, the search for the plane was concentrated on the Sydney area and it was 10 days before bushman Bernard O’Reilly, using his own initiative, located the crash site close to the Queensland-New South Wales border.

“The recollection of O’Reilly’s bushcraft and the incredible efforts of a compassionate rescue team still stirs Sir John. “People just dropped everything and went out. Their generosity and kindnesses were remarkable,” he said with a warm smile and a slight shake of his head, as though he still could not quite believe his good fortune. “It brought home to me forcibly, the very positive aspects of human nature; the way people respond to circumstances. I was much richer more the experience.”

“Sir John went on to become one of Australia’s most enterprising mining pioneers (he was knighted in 1978 for services to the industry) and a tireless supporter of scientific endeavour in myriad forms. His reputation is that of a man who can get on with the job, encourages others to pitch in and work with him. I came away from our talk convinced that his experience on the Lamington Plateau had served to strengthen the conviction he had lived by that – people can be depended on to help in a crisis, and to use initiative and sheer competence to overcome obstacles if they are given the freedom to move.

“Sir John, tall and slender, has a slight limp, a legacy of the crash. It took him 18 months to recuperate, but by 1950 he was chairman of the Newcastle Wallsend Coal Company (NWCC) and involved with Peko Mines NL, a small mining plant that was developing gold and copper deposits near Tennant Creek, in the Northern Territory. Peko’s rapid expansion attracted considerable, covetous overseas interests but, determined to keep the operation wholly Australian, Sir John engineered a merger with NWCC to form Peko-Wallsend Ltd. His field knowledge and far-sighted business vision saw the company, with further additions, blossom into one of Australia’s great mining complexes.

““I was tying things together and looking after the finance,” he said, adding after a moment’s reflection, “Really, it’s people who make things go. If you’ve got the right sort of people and the objective is good, then it will work well.” *Shades of Bernard O’Reilly and the crashed Stinson.*”

Chester reported that Sir John was also a keen conservationist, overseeing some very ambitious agricultural and botanical projects and as concerned for the environmental efficiency of his companies as he was for their financial successes.

““Some of Australia’s early mining practices left much to be desired in relation to the environment,” he said. “At Mt. Lyell in Tasmania, for instance, the pollution from their stacks virtually wiped out the whole flora.””

Chester concludes his article on a poignant note.

“The wind was still blowing hard when Sir John led me on a brisk tour of his own garden... Pointing out trees that were damaged in the violent storm that devastated parts of northern Sydney in January 1991, he said, “We copped the lot here. The trees were smashed off about a third of the way up, but miraculously they survived and they’re coming good now.”

“Perhaps the miracle of their survival, and their vigorous new growth, reminded him of another storm long ago.”

One may well have reservations over comments like “*the very positive aspects of human nature*” but those evident on the Lamington Plateau during the fraught days in late February 1937 must have owed much, in O’Reilly’s words, to “*the possibility of Divine intervention.*” Without individuals willing to be part of that intervention as God moves them, the prospects of finding “*people who make things go*” for the right sorts of reasons and the right sorts of objectives, are not very high and the future is bleak.

As God Himself said through the prophet Ezekiel in 600 BC, Ezekiel 22:30-31.

“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them: I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.”

Profound points to ponder, not only for Easter but for the days ahead, especially in the light of St Paul’s sombre warning from 2 Timothy 3:1.

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”

Paul’s warning of 2 Timothy 3:1 leads in turn to the ***Easter Reflection***. This writer hopes that it will serve as an encouragement in these “*perilous times.*”

SURVIVOR WITH A VISION SIR JOHN PROUD

BY QUENTIN CHESTER

POWERFUL AIR CURRENTS forced us down through the treetops and we didn't have much time to get out – the plane caught fire very quickly," said Sir John Proud, recounting the details of an airliner crash on the Lamington Plateau, Queensland, 55 years ago.

Only a little earlier I had arrived at Sir John's comfortable home on Sydney's upper North Shore, which he shares with his wife, Laurine, for an interview about his long career in mining and science. Now, with this story unfolding, it seemed appropriate that a buffeting westerly should be bending the trees outside, setting the scene he was describing.

That crash has long since become a page in our aviation annals, and for Sir John, now 84, its details and those of his agonising, 10-day ordeal of waiting, injured, to be rescued, are still clear. He was one of five passengers and two crew members aboard the *City of Brisbane*, an Airlines of Australia Stinson on a scheduled service from Brisbane to Sydney, on 19 February 1937, when it crashed in the McPherson Range. Sir John, then a 29-year-old mining consultant, was one of three who survived the crash and fire, although one of them died before help came. Because of erroneous sighting reports, the search for the plane was concentrated on the Sydney area and it was 10 days before bushman Bernard O'Reilly, using his own initiative, located the crash site close to the Queensland-New South Wales border.

The recollection of O'Reilly's bushcraft and the incredible efforts of a compassionate rescue team still stirs Sir John. "People just dropped everything and went out. Their generosity and kindnesses were remarkable," he said with a warm smile and a slight shake of his head, as though he still could not quite believe his good fortune. "It brought home to me, forcibly, the very positive aspects of human



COURTESY: THE COURTFARMS



COURTESY: BRUCE MOORHEAD COLLECTION

The young John Proud (above), badly injured and with 10 days' growth of beard, is carried out of the bush by rescuers after the Stinson airliner crash in Queensland's McPherson Range in February 1937. He and another man, Joseph Binstead, survived out of the seven on board. A third escaped injury, but died in the rugged terrain while seeking help. Recovering in Beaudesert Hospital (left) later, John is visited by his mother, in black, and behind her, Binstead, who died in 1969 at the age of 87.



QUENTIN CHESTER

Now 84, Sir John Proud (he was knighted in 1978) enjoys the garden of his Sydney home. In retirement, his latest project is helping to establish a large-scale botanic garden dedicated to the great variety of plants in Sydney's Hawkesbury sandstone area.

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Sir John went on to become one of Australia's most enterprising mining pioneers (he was knighted in 1978 for services to the industry) and a tireless supporter of scientific endeavour in myriad forms. His reputation is that of a man who can get on with the job, encouraging others to pitch in and work with him. I came away from our talk convinced that his experience on the Lamington Plateau had served to strengthen the conviction he has lived by – that people can be depended on to help in a crisis; and to use initiative and sheer competence to overcome obstacles if they are given the freedom to move.

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As we discussed his ever-expanding jigsaw of interests, Sir John made several sorties into his nearby book-filled study (the wide variety of titles indicated the range of his reading) to find company histories and reports. One was about the Ranger uranium mine, one of the world's biggest (see *Australia's Uranium*, AG 16), in which he played a vital role in the formative stages of development. It soon emerged that he was as proud of the company's environmental work as he was of its financial success. "Some of Australia's early mining practices left much to be desired in relation to the environment," he said. "At Mt Lyell in Tasmania, for instance, the pollution from their stacks virtually wiped out the whole flora."

He goes a long way with the green approach on the wasteful exploitation of native forests for woodchips, the need to pursue recycling with more determination, and a belief that Australia could soon exceed its optimum population level. But he says there is a balanced solution to such issues as these, and that you "can't afford to ignore the financial side".

As a trustee of the Australian Museum, Sydney, this mining man set up and became chairman of the Lizard Island Reef Research Foundation. He also helped launch Earthwatch Australia, the first branch outside the United States of a body that encourages people to take part in scientific field work. "It's a very clever thing, really," he said. "If you've got half a dozen people around you looking for fossils, or whatever, the multiplier effect is tremendous."

Sir John's energetic spirit of wider inquiry was fostered in his early years at Sydney University, and later as a member of its senate. Also a practical farmer, in the '60s he made his 1400-hectare pastoral property, Coolamatong, near Orange, available for agricultural research.

In retirement, his latest project is helping to establish a large-scale botanic garden dedicated to Sydney's distinctive Hawkesbury sandstone flora. "There are more species and genera on this geological structure than on any other in the world. You walk through the bush and every step there's a different plant," he enthused. "People need to be educated about this."

The wind was still blowing hard when Sir John led me on a brisk tour of his own garden in the battle-axe block he has occupied for more than 40 years. Pointing out trees that were damaged in the violent storm that devastated parts of northern Sydney in January 1991, he said, "We copped the lot here. The trees were smashed off about a third of the way up, but miraculously they survived and they're coming good now."

Perhaps the miracle of their survival, and their vigorous new growth, reminded him of another storm long ago.

Easter Reflection

As indicated, Australian television broadcast a documentary of the 1937 Stinson crash in 1978, using contemporary newsreel footage. Interviews with both John Proud and Bernard O'Reilly (recorded earlier, O'Reilly died in 1975) featured in the programme. During O'Reilly's interview, he was asked what he thought of the newspaper accounts of the time, which had called him "a hero".

The elderly bushman spoke with some difficulty, not only because old memories had been stirred but also because he appeared to have sustained a stroke, not long before, such that the left side of his face was partially paralysed. He replied to this effect.

"There were three heroes in this story. Jim Westray, the Englishman, who gave his life to save his friends, Joe Binstead, who chose to stay beside the injured John Proud, even at the cost of his own life and John Proud himself, who endured such terrible agony."

Without detracting in any way from the truth and sincerity of O'Reilly's testimony, one can think of another Man who did all three, and then some, as the saying goes, for the 'search and rescue' of everyone who ever lived, for as St. Paul said in Romans 5:6-8, a most pertinent passage for Easter:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."