

## **Red Sales Training Accident – East Sale (Four Aircraft/Six Crew)**

Thursday 16 August 1962 was a black day for the RAAF when six pilots and four aircraft from *The Red Sales* aerobatic team were lost at RAAF East Sale, Vic. while training for Air Force week celebrations.

When Group Captain Peter Henderson (CO RAAF East Sale) returned from the UK in 1961 he marvelled at the RAF aerobatic teams. He conceived the notion that the RAAF should have a jet based aerobatic team using pilots from the Central Flying School, RAAF East Sale Vic.

The team would be known as ***The Red Sales*** using four De-Havilland T-33 Vampires. The *red* derived from the aircraft nose colour and *sales* from East Sale.

Training commenced under the command of Flt. Lt. Jim Rhind (RAF) and making their debut on 14 June 1962 as part of No 22 Navigator Course Graduation Ceremony at East Sale.

Through July & August the team flew four practice displays under the command of Flt. Lt. Reg Jones in preparation for their first public performance scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> September 1962. Unfortunately the Red Sales never made their public debut because they were all tragically lost on their fifth training flight.

The team were performing a low level barrel roll in diamond formation when then impacted the ground about 50m on the southside of Dutson Road with the leading three aircraft careering across the road and disintegrating in an adjoining property. The fourth aircraft crashed about 600m with the loss of all four aircraft & six occupants.

Newspaper reports of the day include descriptions of the planes crashing in a sheet of flame as well as a passing sedan having a swerve to miss the aircraft as they ploughed across the road. At least one plane apparently tried to avoid the crash by breaking formation and attempting to gain height.

Killed were Flight Lieutenants Reg Jones (30), Alec Young (30), Mike Dunbar (31), Peter Hearnden (28), Marty Burke (28) & Flying Officer Don Gow (27).

In October 1962 a court of inquiry found that the altitude of the leader was too low to commence the barrel roll. with the rest of the team basically "following the leader"

References: Always Ready - A History of RAAF East Sale, Sydney Morning Herald