

AIR CRASH ON BLACKDOWNS.

LATE ARRIVALS' ESCAPE.

ONLY through missing the Yeovil-Ilminster 'bus by a few minutes did a Yeovil soldier and his North Country friend escape being among those killed in the recent crash of a Liberator R.A.F. 'plane on the Blackdowns, near Buckland St. Mary, in which 27 Service personnel lost their lives.

He was Signaller Kenneth John Barber, only child of Mr. and Mrs. J. Barber, 8, West Coker-road. His wife is the eldest daughter of Mrs. and the late Mr G. Bird, of 13 Woodland-terrace. They were married only five weeks ago at the end of a 28 days' leave from Germany. Signaller Barber had served in the West since D-Day in June of last year. He was then stationed near London, and on the Monday before the crash was sent to Ilton, near Ilminster, a few miles from Merrifield Airfield, from which the 'plane took off.

On the day prior to the disaster (Wednesday last week) he and his friend, Lce.-Corpl. Frank Bowen, were given 24 hours' embarkation leave. As he had not time to go to his home, Lce.-Corpl. Bowen accompanied Signaller Barber to his home. Both were bound for India, and were due to report back next morning. They missed the 'bus at Yeovil and "hitch-hiked." but arrived at the airfield too late. The 'plane had left. A short while later they learnt that the 'plane in which they should have been travelling had crashed, killing all on board. Some of Signaller Barber's kit and personal belongings were in the Liberator. That evening he 'phoned his wife, telling her he was safe and well, and that he had missed the 'plane. He did not tell her of the crash. Only next day did she learn what had happened.

It is understood that both Signaller Barber and his friend have now left this country for India.

NAMES OF CASUALTIES

Among the 27 killed when a Liberator of R.A.F. Transport Command crashed shortly after leaving Merrifield R.A.F. Station near Ilminster, on Thursday last week, were four Polish members of the crew and second pilot, Flying Officer G.J. Myers, R.A.F. States an Air Ministry communique on Saturday.

Other fatal casualties were Major H. W. G. Staunton (Indian Medical Service), Capt. H. C. Buck (1st Punjab Regiment). Lieut. P. J. Biles (Royal Indian Army Service Corps), Lieut. A. G. Quick (Indian Signal Corps), and the following Signalmen of the Royal Corps of Signals: A. J. Birch, R. C. Anderson, R. O. Anderson, J. H. Attwood, B. Benjamin, J. W. A. Brewis, W. Charlton, A. E. Clark L. J. Currey. H. Donovan. L. H. Downs. L. R. Dyer. P. B. Fairburn R. D. Farrance. F. Gent. R. Williams. C. Williams and Driver (i/c) B. Fox.

MILITARY HONOURS FOR FIVE VICTIMS.

BURIED AT YEOVIL.

With full military honours five of the the young victims of the Ilminster air crash were buried at Yeovil on Wednesday morning. They were Major Harry William Gilbert Staunton (37), Indian Army Medical Corps; Lieut Peter Biles (22), Indian Army Medical Corps; and three Signalmen of the Royal Corps of Signals - Ronald Oswin Anderson (22), Owen Williams (19) and Robert Charles Anderson (19).

Lieut-Col, the Rev. W. H. King, M.C., T.D. deputy-assistant Chaplain-General, attended, and also represented Major-General M. E. Dennis, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C. The Chaplain expressed to the relatives who were able to be present the Army's heartfelt sympathy, and said it was tragic loss of young lives which might have meant so much to the country. Last post was sounded, three volleys were fired over the graves, and Reveille concluded the military ceremonial. The Rev. G. Daunt, H.C.F., and the Rev. H. J. Pollard (Methodist) conducted the service and read the lesson, respectively.

Nearly 200 officers, N.C.O.s and men took part. Capt. J. A. G. Braithwaite (Adjutant), No. 6 Training Battalion, R.A.S.C., had charge of the local arrangements, and Major J. A. G. Tozer and Lieut. k. D. Cottingtam, R.A.S.C. officially represented the mourners for the officer victims. Fifty other ranks provided bearer parties, firing party and buglers. Three officers and 100 N.C.O.s and men of the 618th Regiment Royal Artillery, stationed at Barwick, formed a guard of honour.

Messers. G. H. Cook and Son. Bondstreet, Yeovil, carried out the funeral arrangements.
