

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Mainair Blade 912, G-MZOR	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 912-UL piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1998	
Date & Time (UTC):	12 September 2010 at 1850 hrs	
Location:	Over the sea near Deal, Kent	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Aircraft destroyed	
Commander's Licence:	None	
Commander's Age:	29 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	33 hours (of which approximately 4 were on type) Last 90 days - 20 hours Last 28 days - 6 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquiries by the AAIB	

Synopsis

After a flight lasting over four hours, the engine stopped and the aircraft ditched. The engine was probably starved of fuel.

would have involved a track of approximately 325°M. After takeoff, however, the aircraft turned right and departed towards the east.

History of the flight

The aircraft took off from grass Runway 02 at Maypole Airfield in north Kent some time between 1400 and 1440 hrs¹ with two people on board. The airfield manager reported that there was a "stiff wind from the north". The pilot informed the airfield manager that he was going to fly to Peterborough and back, which

At approximately 1857 hrs², the aircraft ditched alongside a dredger just off the coast near Deal, Kent. There was one person on board who was rescued by the crew of the dredger and transferred, unhurt, to a coastguard vessel.

Footnote

¹ The pilot believed that he took off at about 1400 hrs but the airfield manager estimated it was between 1430 and 1440 hrs.

Footnote

² Based on the emergency radio call from the dredger, which occurred at 1858 hrs.

Additional information

The pilot began flying training in June 2010 but had not flown solo before the accident flight.

The aircraft's most recent permit to fly expired on 23 April 2010. Insurance cover for the aircraft ceased on 22 April 2009.

Information provided by the pilot

The pilot stated that he had bought the aircraft recently and was not aware that the permit to fly had expired.

During an initial discussion with the AAIB, the pilot recalled taking off at approximately 1400 hrs for a flight in the local area. He recalled clearly that the aircraft had 45 litres of fuel in the tank before departure and he believed that it consumed approximately 10 litres per hour. Once airborne, he encountered "very bumpy" flying conditions and decided to fly over the sea to wait for conditions at the airfield to become suitable for landing.

During a subsequent discussion, the pilot stated that he had taken off with a passenger with the intention of flying to Peterborough and back. After takeoff, he judged that he was unlikely to be able to return before dark and so decided to fly in the local area. He stated that shortly after takeoff he landed at a private site near Dargate, Kent in order to drop off the passenger after which he took off again. Dargate is 6.5 nm from Maypole Airfield on a track of 259°M.

The pilot reported that later while flying over the sea, and with no prior warning, the engine stopped. He judged that the aircraft would not reach land and instead he flew a circuit around a nearby ship in preparation for ditching alongside. He slowed the aircraft to between

30 and 40 mph, removed his helmet and gloves and released his harness. Just before ditching, he allowed the speed to build slightly so that when he pushed the control bar fully forward the nose would rise and the back end of the aircraft would hit the water first. Just before impact, he moved as far to the side of the seat as possible and, when the aircraft hit the water, was thrown clear.

Survival aspects

The pilot was reportedly very fit and yet, after only approximately five minutes in the water, he was extremely tired. A flotation aid was thrown to him from the dredger and a rope ladder was lowered over the side. Although he could reach the lower rung of the ladder with his hands, he did not have the strength to pull himself up to put a foot on the rung and climb aboard the ship. The crew of the dredger deployed a manned life raft to rescue him.

Aircraft performance

Fuel consumption for the aircraft, quoted on the manufacturer's website, is 9 to 14 litres per hour at a cruising speed of 52 kt.

Analysis

If it is assumed that the aircraft took off between 1400 and 1440 hrs, and ditched at 1857 hrs, the flight lasted for between 4 hours 17 minutes and 4 hours 57 minutes, less any time spent on the ground to drop off the passenger. Assuming that the aircraft contained 45 litres of fuel before departure, its endurance would have been between 3 hours 12 minutes and 5 hours using the manufacturer's fuel consumption figures. Given that the pilot reported no problems with the engine before it stopped, it is likely that the aircraft ran out of fuel.