

Aircraft type and registration: Piper PA28R-180 Cherokee Arrow EI-BGF (light single-engined fixed wing aircraft)

Year of manufacture: 1969

Date and time (GMT): 6 October 1983 at approximately 1700 hrs

Location: Mynydd Prescelly, near Haverfordwest

Type of flight: Private (pleasure)

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — 3

Injuries: Crew — 1 (fatal) Passengers — 3 (fatal)

Nature of damage: Aircraft destroyed

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence (issued by the Republic of Ireland)

Commander's Age: 41 years

Commander's total flying experience: Estimated as approximately 120 hours (of which not less than 35 were on type)

The aircraft arrived at Cardiff from Dublin at 1450 hrs. At 1621 hrs it took off again to return to Dublin via Strumble. The flight plan submitted by the pilot showed that he intended to fly to Dublin at a true airspeed of 120 knots at an altitude of 3,000 ft. At 1633 hrs the pilot reported to Swansea that he was passing Port Talbot and that he was level at 1800 ft to remain VMC. The cloud base at Swansea at that time was reported by another aircraft to be 1800 ft. The pilot reported north abeam Swansea at 1638 hrs and was invited to call RAF Brawdy but Brawdy had closed down communications and gave no reply. At 1645 hrs the pilot called London Information on the FIS frequency and, having established contact, reported his position as three to four miles south of Carmarthen at 1,500 ft on the standard pressure setting, and that he estimated Strumble at 1700 hrs. The actual sea level pressure at this time was 1021 mbs. Some nine minutes later, London Information advised EI-BGF that Dublin would not accept him on a VFR flight plan after 1750 hrs. The ensuing RTF conversation lasted for one and a half minutes before EI-BGF, just after 1655 hrs, reported his estimate for Dublin was in 55 minutes time. London Information called the aircraft several times at and shortly after 1700 hrs but received no reply.

The wreckage of the aircraft was found the following day on the eastern slope of a hill at 1,650 ft amsl. The aircraft had struck the ground slightly right wing low in a pitch attitude of more than 20° nose-up at a speed estimated to have been in excess of 100 mph. The site of the accident was 10 miles east of Strumble. Using the ground speed calculated from the aircraft's earlier position reports, it was estimated that the aircraft would have reached this position between 1655 and 1657 hrs. Along the estimated track of the aircraft, the level of the terrain rose 1,000 ft in the last 2 miles before the point of impact, 450 ft of this rise taking place in the last half mile.

At the estimated time of the accident there was a strengthening south-westerly airflow over Wales. Medium cloud was spreading from the west and there were variable layers of stratus cloud between 1,800 ft and 5,000 ft. Patches of lower cloud were beginning to affect SW Wales and, at 1650 hrs, the weather observation at RAF Brawdy reported 3 oktas of stratus at 1,200 ft amsl. There was no record in the Meteorological office at Cardiff of any route forecast having been issued to EI-BGF for its return flight to Dublin.

Examination of the wreckage showed that at impact the aircraft was complete and undamaged and there was no evidence of any pre-impact failure of the flying controls; evidence from the engine instruments and the propeller showed that the engine was producing not less than cruise power at the time of impact and the VHF Nav and ADF equipment were tuned to the Strumble VOR and NDB. There was no indication that the pilot had any medical condition that could have contributed to the accident.