

No: 1/87

Ref: 1c

**Aircraft type and registration:** Grumman AA-5A G-BFTE

**No & Type of engines:** 1 Lycoming O-320-E2G piston engine

**Year of Manufacture:** 1978

**Date and time (UTC):** 11 September 1986 at 1706 hrs

**Location:** Chandlers Ford, Hampshire

**Type of flight:** Private (pleasure)

**Persons on board:** Crew — 1                      Passengers — None

**Injuries:** Crew — 1 (fatal)                      Passengers — N/A

**Nature of damage:** Aircraft destroyed

**Commander's Licence:** Private Pilot's Licence

**Commander's Age:** 45 years

**Commander's Total Flying Experience:** 99 hours (of which 39 were on type)

**Information Source:** AIB Field Investigation

The pilot was authorised for up to 1 hour of solo flying in the circuit at Southampton (Eastleigh) Airport. Taxi clearance was requested at 1619 hrs. The weather, recorded at 1620 hrs, gave the surface wind as 160/03 knots and the visibility as 9 kilometres in haze. Over the next hour the wind remained calm, but the visibility deteriorated to 8 kilometres. Clearance to taxi, to runway 02, was given at 1622 hrs.

At 1638 hrs, the pilot was cleared to take off and was told that the circuit direction was right-hand. Two circuits were flown, and each was concluded with a touch-and-go landing. Air Traffic Control then changed the circuit direction to left-hand, and two more circuits were flown. The first ended with a go-around, due to landing traffic, and the second, following a 'final' call at 1702 hrs, by a touch-and-go landing.

Shortly afterwards the aircraft was seen flying level, but lower than is normal, in the downwind position. Following a slight turn to the right, the engine noise was heard to increase, and the aircraft was seen to pitch into a near vertical dive. It struck the ground at the base of the rear wall of a community centre and burst into flames. Burning fuel ignited the roof of the building which was gutted by the ensuing fire.

Investigation at the accident site showed that the aircraft had struck the ground at very high speed, whilst in an 85 degree dive, and imbedded itself 5 feet into the ground. There was no evidence of any part of the aircraft becoming detached before impact.

Examination of the wreckage, at Farnborough, showed that the engine had been developing considerable power at impact, and that the flaps had been in the retracted position. No evidence of a flying control failure, or jam, was found, nor was there any evidence of pre-

impact structural distress.

A letter, found in the pilot's clothing, expressed his intention to take his own life. The inquest, held at Winchester on 1 December 1986, returned a verdict of suicide.