

**Aircraft type and registration:** Cessna F 152 G-BKDZ (light single engine fixed wing aircraft)

**Year of manufacture:** 1979

**Date and time (GMT):** 4 November 1983 at 1630 hrs

**Location:** 1¼ Nautical miles east of Biggin Hill Aerodrome

**Type of flight:** Private

**Persons on board:** Crew — 1                      Passengers — Nil

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

**Nature of damage:** Aircraft destroyed. Damage to power cables

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

**Commander's Age:** 60 years

**Commander's total flying experience:** Approximately 6000 hours, with considerable experience on type

The aircraft was inbound to Biggin Hill from Ostend on a VFR flight plan. At the time the south east of the UK was subject to a moist south easterly airstream, and the resultant weather consisted of thin broken stratus and stratocumulus in hazy conditions, with visibility generally 2—4 kilometres except over high ground, where patches of hill fog persisted. This was in accordance with the arrival information for London (Heathrow) which was being broadcast on the Biggin Hill VOR throughout the period of the flight. At 1557 hrs the aircraft crossed the UK coastline at Dover. Its last message before changing frequency to Biggin Hill at 1609 hrs was to Kent Radar, to the effect that it was in 'GOOD VICTOR MIKE' and at 2000 feet.

The aircraft gave Biggin Hill an ETA of 1640 hrs, was informed that Runway 21 was in use, and given the altimeter settings. At that time Biggin Hill was operating normally, with moderately intensive circuit traffic. At 1613 hrs the controller informed another aircraft that there was a sudden deterioration in the surface visibility, which had fallen to 1300 metres, although aircraft were still operating in the circuit without undue difficulty. At 1620 hrs another inbound aircraft was informed that surface visibility was then 1000 metres, and almost immediately G-BKDZ advised Biggin Hill that its ETA had become 1630 hrs. ATC then advised G-BKDZ of the deterioration which had just been reported. At 1625 hrs, with aircraft still landing satisfactorily, the controller informed G-BKDZ 'THERE IS FOG APPROACHING THE AIRFIELD FROM THE SOUTH, THE VISIBILITY TO THE SOUTH OF THE FIELD IS 500 METRES' and received the reply 'I'VE ONLY GOT SIX MINUTES TO RUN NOW. I THINK RATHER THAN DO A PROCEDURE IT WOULD BE WISER IN VIEW OF THE WEATHER TO TRY AND MAKE A VISUAL'.

At 1627 hrs aircraft were still landing and taking-off, although a landing aircraft informed ATC that there was a marked deterioration to the south of the field with about 1000 metres visibility on the approach. At 1628 hrs the controller informed G-BKDZ that the control tower was in fog, with visibility 500 metres, and this was acknowledged. The aircraft requested the QFE, asked for it to be repeated, and then acknowledged it. Subsequent calls from ATC were not answered and after a very short interval the controller initiated the necessary emergency procedures. Almost immediately messages began to arrive from members of the public that the aircraft had crashed approximately 1¼ nautical miles to the east of Biggin Hill, on the edge of the plateau on which the aerodrome was situated, at a point 560 feet above mean sea level.

Witnesses reported that immediately before the impact the aircraft had been seen flying very low, just below cloud, and apparently under full control. In the course of the impact the pilot was killed immediately and the aircraft caught fire.

Examination of the wreckage showed that the aircraft had struck the tops of trees approximately 60 feet high to the east of the accident site, whilst flying towards the aerodrome. After striking the treetops the aircraft pitched nose down and descended into some high tension electricity cables before continuing to the ground in a very steep nose down attitude. There was no evidence of any defect in the aircraft and from the intensity of the fire it was apparent that a reasonable quantity of fuel was on board. The pathological examination showed that whilst the pilot had a current medical certificate his general state of health was not good; it was not possible, however, to determine whether this was a factor in the accident.