

Aircraft type and registration: Beech T 34C — 1 N 2067A (light single engined fixed wing aircraft)

Year of manufacture: 1978

Date and time (GMT): 29 May 1983 at 1049 hrs

Location: Mildenhall Aerodrome

Type of flight: Display

Persons on board: Crew — 2 Passengers — Nil

Injuries: Crew — 2 (fatal) Passengers — N/A

Nature of damage: Aircraft destroyed

Commander's Licence: FAA Commercial Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 59 years

Commander's total flying experience: 18,980 hours (of which 448 were on type)

The aircraft was being flown on the second day of a public display programme, having given with the same pilot at the controls, a safe and professional demonstration the previous morning in more limiting weather conditions. At the time of the accident the visibility was 5 kilometres with broken cloud based between 1600 and 2000 feet and with a light northerly wind. Having completed its programmed sequence of manoeuvres the aircraft landed on runway 29 and then turned through 180° in preparation for a second take-off. It was known that after completing his display the pilot intended to depart for Leavesden. However, because of cancellations there was at that moment a gap in the flying programme, with the result that ATC gave the pilot freedom to extend his display if he wished. The aircraft took off on runway 11 in what was believed to be its departure for Leavesden. The initial climb was steep without being excessive and most spectators turned their attention elsewhere. Near the aerodrome's eastern boundary the aircraft pulled up into a manoeuvre to the right. It was not possible to obtain a precise description of this manoeuvre, either from witnesses or film, but it was similar to a stall turn or a steep wing-over and as a result the aircraft reversed its direction of travel so that it was pointing back towards the airfield in a very steep nose-down attitude. Estimates of its height were variable but it was certainly no more than a few hundred feet above ground level. Most witnesses considered that there was sufficient height for recovery if action was taken immediately. However, there seemed to be no initial attempt to recover and when the pull-up was attempted it appeared to most observers to be too late to avoid an accident. The aircraft struck the ground to the left of runway 29, converging on it at an angle of 30°. Both occupants died immediately.

A detailed technical examination showed that on impact the descent path was 35°. The aircraft's attitude was rotated 15° nose-up from the descent path, it was banked slightly to the left, and had a slight left yaw. The structure was complete at impact and the engine was developing high power. There was no evidence of any malfunction of the flying control systems, or of a bird strike. The ATC tape recording gave no indication of the pilot's intentions at the time, and the pathological investigation did not reveal any medical cause for the accident.