

Aircraft type and registration: Piper PA32R-301T Saratoga G-BNJS

No & Type of engines: 1 Lycoming T10-540-SIAD piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1981

Date and time (UTC): 29 November 1987 at 1429 hrs

Location: Bow Fell, Cumbria

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: 43 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 1300 hours (estimated) of which 30 were on type

Information Source: AAIB Field Investigation

On the evening before the accident, the pilot planned his route from Staverton to Prestwick via Radnor, Wallasey, and Deans Cross. The route was to be flown VMC below the airways as the pilot held no instrument flying qualifications. It is understood that during his flight planning he expressed concern about the high ground on his planned track over the Lake District. On the morning of the accident, the pilot telephoned a colleague and requested that he prepare JS for the planned flight. In response to this request, the colleague refuelled the aircraft to full tanks and carried out a pre-flight inspection.

The pilot arrived at Staverton at about 1245 hrs which was later than planned. He was uncertain how he should obtain a meteorological forecast for the route so the colleague who had prepared the aircraft obtained the relevant forecast sheets from the local flying club. He then discussed with the pilot the actions to be taken in the event that icing was encountered en-route and ensured that the pilot understood the relevance of the Sector Safe Altitudes marked on his chart. There was no mention of what height the route was to be flown at. The colleague then telephoned Prestwick for the current weather which gave small amounts of cloud at 900 feet and a main base of 2500 feet and on the basis of this and the satisfactory route forecast, the pilot decided to undertake the flight. He then proceeded to the aircraft and just before starting the engine asked the colleague to book out for him. The colleague was unable to do so before the pilot called for taxi clearance so details were passed Staverton controller by the pilot on RT. The destination was given as Prestwick but no route was given. The planned altitude was passed as 3000 feet. After take-off at 1320 hrs the pilot turned the wrong way out of the circuit and reported on a heading that would have taken him to Radnor. At 1348 hrs contact was made with Liverpool ATC. The pilot stated that he was following

airway Amber 25 at a height of 3000 feet and that his destination was Prestwick. The pilot was offered an IFR transit of the Manchester Control Zone at 2500 feet and despite having no instrument qualification, he accepted it.

At 1418 hrs the pilot contacted Blackpool ATC and stated that he was transitting their area at 3000 feet en-route for Prestwick but gave no position or heading. Having been told that there was no conflict with known traffic, he continued at 3000 feet until at 1424 hrs he requested a descent to 2500 feet which was acknowledged. Immediately following this acknowledgement, the Blackpool controller twice requested JS's position but received no reply. At this time JS was heading directly for high ground in the Lake District which rose to over 3000 feet at a distance of only 13 nm. The meteorological aftercast indicates a cloud base of 2500 feet in this area. Radar information not available to the Blackpool controller indicates that JS then maintained a constant track of 360°T until it crashed at 1429 hrs at a height of 2820 feet amsl. The impact was not observed but it was heard by fell walkers in the area who estimate that the local cloud base was about 1000 feet amsl.

JS impacted on a vertical rock face 150 feet below the summit of Bow Fell and wreckage was contained in a gulley below the impact point. An intense fire burned for several hours and consumed the entire aircraft apart from its extremities and ferrous components. Examination of the wreckage established that the aircraft had impacted in a nose-up attitude with very little bank. It had been in the cruise configuration at an airspeed of approximately 150 kts. At impact the engine had been developing high power.

Due to the nature of the injuries sustained by the pilot during the impact and subsequent fire, extensive tests at the post mortem examination failed to establish whether or not either drugs or alcohol were factors in the accident.