

Aircraft type and registration: Percival Mew Gull G-AEXF (light single engined fixed wing aircraft)

Year of Manufacture: 1936

Date and time (GMT): 6 May 1985 at 1230 hrs

Location: Redhill Aerodrome

Type of flight: Private (pleasure)

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — None

Injuries: Crew — Minor Passengers — None

Nature of damage: Substantial — undercarriage detached, fuselage ruptured, damage to wings

Commander's Licence: Commercial Pilot's Licence with Instrument and Night Ratings

Commander's Age: 55 years

Commander's total flying experience: 9580 hours (of which 1 hour was on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by pilot, and enquiries made by the AIB.

The purpose of the accident flight was in order to allow a prospective purchaser of the aircraft, a well qualified pilot, to assess certain of the aircraft's handling characteristics.

The aircraft had been kept for some time in the hangar of a local flying club. After an inspection and engine run, a pilot experienced on type, and approved by the owner to undertake a supervisory role, was cleared to taxi to runway 19 and took off for an air test. Upon his return to the airfield he landed the aircraft to the left of the runway because of markers and a ditch in the grass runway itself which was not visible from the runway threshold.

The supervisory pilot suggested to the second pilot that he take-off from the runway and land to the left. This the second pilot took as confirmation of an earlier caution of an obstruction on the right hand side of the runway, and that he should taxi back on the left after landing. The second pilot stated that the fact that the supervisory pilot had landed off the runway and for what reason was not mentioned. The second pilot was cleared to taxi and subsequently took off on runway 19 at the pilot's discretion. The take-off was uneventful and when clear of the circuit, low and high speed characteristics were explored. At a position 8 to 10 miles east of the airfield the lower left door below the main canopy came open causing dust and paper towels to circulate within the cockpit, and a moderate to high level of air noise. Speed was reduced and partial flap lowered.

The aircraft returned to Redhill and was advised on RTF that the runway in use for landing was runway 19. A normal approach and landing to a conventional three point touchdown was carried out and during the roll out at approximately 40 kt the aircraft came to an abrupt halt and became inverted. The pilot suffered minor injuries, but does not remember evacuating the aircraft. His upper torso restraint was being used, and held on impact. There was no fire. The aircraft had come into contact with the ditch causing the main undercarriage legs to become detached, disruption of the fuselage, and damage to the wings.

A Class 1 Notam No EGGN 890 had been initiated by the Redhill authorities to the effect that runway 01/19 would be closed due to work in progress, but a short length may be available with 15 min prior notice to AFIS. Effective dates were 29 April to 10 May 1985. A bulletin issued on 26 April by the Central Briefing System of the Aeronautical Information Service (AIS) indicated that Redhill's runway 01/19 was operating, with reduced distances and with the take off run available (TORA) as 440M and landing distance available (LDA) 289M on runway 19. The end of the TORA for runway 19, and the start of runway 01 were marked by red and white markers. Bulletins issued on the 30th April, 5th and 7th of May 1985 advised that runway 01/19 was closed, with the reduced distances specified above possibly available at 15 mins notice.

Flying Club officials were briefed by the AFISO as to the extent of the work, but it has not been possible to ascertain whether a copy of the above Notam or Bulletins were displayed on club premises. The AIS do not routinely circularise briefing material to this particular club. According to RTF transcripts supplied by NATS, the only specific reference to the ditch on RTF throughout the two flights was when the supervisory pilot announced his intention to land to the left of the runway because of it.

The Mew Gull is a pre-war racing development of the Gull six and is a low wing monoplane with fixed main

undercarriage and tail skid. The single seat cockpit is well aft and is streamlined into the fuselage. The nose is deep, and unusually long and the forward visibility of the pilot may, at times, be seriously impaired.