

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Taylorcraft F-21, G-BPJV	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-235-L2C piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1980	
Date & Time (UTC):	28 November 2005 at 1510 hrs	
Location:	Corndean Wood, Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - 1 (Minor)	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Aircraft destroyed	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	52 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	340 hours (of which 220 were on type) Last 90 days - 7 hours Last 28 days - 4 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

The aircraft was returning to Enstone Airfield from Shobdon when the weather rapidly deteriorated and the aircraft entered a snow storm. In extremely difficult conditions, with severely reduced visibility, the pilot attempted to maintain a wings-level attitude on instruments. The aircraft gradually lost height and it crashed into Corndean Wood, at an elevation of 1,000 ft, 5 km to the north east of Cheltenham, and suffered significant damage. The pilot, who was injured, was able to escape from the aircraft and summon the emergency services using her mobile telephone.

History of flight

The pilot had planned to carry out a return flight from Shobdon Airfield, near Leominster, to Enstone, near Oxford. The forecast weather for the planned route indicated that, although there was the possibility of rain showers during the afternoon, the weather was suitable for the flight. The aircraft arrived at Shobdon at approximately 1230 hrs where the pilot took a friend for a 10 minute flight in the local area. After spending some time on the ground, and confirming that the weather appeared suitable for the return flight, the pilot took off from Shobdon at approximately 1400 hrs.

As the aircraft approached Worcester, at an altitude of 2,400 ft, the pilot noticed clouds building up along her intended flight path. She turned the aircraft to the south,

which appeared free from cloud, to avoid this weather but was rapidly enveloped in a heavy snow storm. With severely reduced visibility and having lost sight of the ground, the pilot attempted to maintain a wings-level attitude on instruments and fly clear of the storm. Whilst focussing on flying the aircraft in these extremely difficult conditions, the pilot became too occupied to issue a distress call. The aircraft gradually lost height and, at approximately 1500 hrs, it struck trees at an elevation of 1,000 ft on the southerly edge of Corndean Wood, some 5 km to the north east of Cheltenham. The left wing was torn from the aircraft before it fell through the trees, coming to rest with the fuselage upright. Despite her injuries, the pilot managed to escape from the aircraft unaided and summoned the emergency services on her mobile telephone.

Meteorological information

On 28 November an area of low pressure covering the North Sea and Scandinavia was producing a cold northerly flow of air across the UK, resulting in a line of heavy cloud and precipitation southwards.

The Meteorological Office forecasts for airfields close the pilot's intended route showed that, from approximately 1300 hrs, there would be a possibility of encountering rain showers and a decreasing cloud base. This forecast was revised at midday to show that, after 1500 hrs, there was the possibility of encountering both rain and snow showers. A further update was issued at 1343 hrs notifying pilots of the possibility of a further deterioration in the conditions. Given the time of the aircraft's departure from Shobdon, it is unlikely that the updated forecast released at 1343 hrs would have been available to the pilot whilst she was preparing for the return flight to Enstone.

The reported weather conditions at Gloucester airport showed that, between 1420 hrs and 1520 hrs, the weather had deteriorated from 'broken' cloud at 4,500 ft, with greater than 10 km visibility, to overcast at 1,200 ft, with rain and snow showers and a ground level visibility of 2.5 km.