

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Cessna 210M, G-TOTN
No & Type of Engines:	1 Continental Motors Corp IO-520-L piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	1977 (Serial no: 210-61674)
Date & Time (UTC):	17 July 2023 at 1159 hrs
Location:	Bradda Head, near Port Erin, Isle of Man
Type of Flight:	Private
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:	64 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	Approximately 2,500 hours (of which approximately 1,600 were on type) Last 90 days - 18 hours Last 28 days - 2 hours
Information Source:	AAIB Field Investigation

Synopsis

At 1131 hrs on 17 July 2023, the pilot took off in G-TOTN from Ronaldsway Airport, Isle of Man. The aircraft was later observed to enter a turn to the left before the wings levelled and the aircraft descended to strike the cliff at Bradda Head. The pilot did not survive. The investigation found no evidence of any technical faults that would have prevented the pilot from manoeuvring to avoid the cliff, and it is likely that the accident was a deliberate act. The pilot had been suffering from difficulties with sleep for a number of months and with anxiety in the weeks preceding the flight.

History of the flight

The pilot arrived at the airport around 0825 hrs and proceeded to the hangar where he pulled his aircraft out onto the ramp. There were numerous witnesses who saw the pilot either sitting in the plane or spoke to him around the hangar. At 1122 hrs the pilot called ATC to book out for a local flight, reporting that he was the only person on board. Having started the engine, and taxied out to the runway, the pilot took off at 1130 hrs. He flew a route to the southwest of the Isle of Man before flying up and down the coast several times. Witnesses reported the aircraft flying lower than they had seen with other aircraft but that it sounded normal. At 1155 hrs the pilot turned onto a southwest heading at Elby Point to fly parallel with the coast. He continued this heading, positioned over the sea around 1 nm from the coast until he was approximately abeam Bradda Head. At this point the aircraft

turned to the east and the track flown took the aircraft into the cliff below the tower at Bradda Head. The impact with the cliff was not survivable.

During the flight the pilot had made several phone calls to a family member which indicated that he did not intend to return from the flight.

Accident site

Bradda Head is a rocky, steep headland, rising to some 115 m from the sea.

G-TOTN struck approximately halfway up the cliff face in a sheer section of the cliffs. The aircraft then fell to a smaller ledge below, coming to rest at a point approximately quarter of the way down the cliff on a steep slope. The engine detached from the aircraft and was retrieved from the sea at the base of the cliff along with some pieces of aircraft structure.

Recorded information

Radar and radiotelephony recordings were provided to the AAIB. CCTV footage from Port Erin captured the final moments of the flight. Both sources showed the aircraft making a left turn, followed by a relatively constant rate of descent with wings level before it struck the cliff face.

Aircraft examination

All major components of the aircraft including wings, engine, propeller, flying control surfaces and landing gear were present at the accident site. There was no evidence of pre-impact failure in the flying control cables. The engine contained oil, and a significant quantity of fuel was observed to have been present at the accident site.

Medical

The pilot had been suffering from difficulties first with sleeping and then with anxiety in the lead up to the flight. He had been seen by his GP who had prescribed drugs to try and alleviate the symptoms. He had not declared either his difficulties or his prescribed drugs to his Aeromedical Examiner (AME) who had last renewed his Class 2 flying medical in January 2023. As the AME was not the pilot's GP there was no entitlement to see the full medical records. Instead, pilots are required to disclose any injury, illness or prescription that might affect their fitness to fly to their AME, who can then decide on the continued validity of the medical certificate. Had the AME been informed of the diagnosis and prescriptions given to the pilot, the medical certificate would have been suspended.

Analysis

Having taken off from Ronaldsway Airport the pilot flew to southwest of the Isle of Man before flying up and down the coast several times. At 1155 hrs the pilot made a turn onto a heading that placed the aircraft on a collision course with the cliff at Bradda Head. The aircraft descended with the wings level until it struck the cliff. The impact with the cliff was not survivable.

The investigation did not find evidence of any technical failure that would have caused the aircraft to have been unable to deviate from its path before striking the cliff. The flight path captured by radar and CCTV also suggests that the aircraft was under control before it struck the cliff.

Conclusion

The pilot had been under the care of his GP who had diagnosed sleep issues and anxiety but had not informed his AME. Several phone calls were made during the flight that indicated that the pilot did not intend to return from the flight.

G-TOTN was flown directly towards Bradda Head below the level of the clifftop. The investigation found no evidence of any technical faults that would have prevented the pilot from manoeuvring to avoid the cliff, and it is likely that the accident was a deliberate act.

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