Accident

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Sportstar SLM, G-CMGB	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 912iS piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	2022 (Serial no: 2022-2205)	
Date & Time (UTC):	1 September 2024 at 0804 hrs	
Location:	Chesterfield, Derbyshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - 1 (Fatal)	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Destroyed	
Commander's Licence:	UK National Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	71 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	390 hours (of which 181 were on type) Last 90 days - 46 hours Last 28 days - 26 hours	
Information Source:	AAIB Field Investigation	

Synopsis

After departing Coal Aston Airfield, the pilot of G-CMGB encountered weather that was not compatible with flight under VFR. Following a series of descending orbits overhead Chesterfield, the aircraft departed from controlled flight and struck the ground, fatally injuring the pilot.

History of the flight

G-CMGB, based at Clench Common Airfield in Wiltshire and owned by the pilot, had flown to Coal Aston Airfield (also known as Apperknowle Airstrip) on Thursday 29 August 2024. The pilot planned to return to Clench Common on Sunday 1 September. A friend dropped him off at Coal Aston at approximately 0646 hrs on 1 September, where CCTV recorded him walking to his aircraft. Although the pilot had originally scheduled a departure at 1000 hrs, he did not notify the airfield owner of his intent to leave earlier; a change he mentioned to his friend was due to thunderstorms that had been forecast on the route south later that morning. Earlier, while driving to Coal Aston, and passing an area west of the airfield (which was 264 ft higher in elevation), the pilot remarked that due to the poor weather and visibility, he would have to "sit it out" if conditions at the airfield were similar and delay his departure until they improved.

CCTV recorded the pilot inspecting his aircraft and loading a bag into the cockpit at 0725 hrs. He was seen to look in the direction of the takeoff path of Runway 11 and interacting with a handheld mobile device. G-CMGB started at 0750 hrs, taxied at 0754 hrs and then

took off from Runway 11 at 0756 hrs. From the CCTV recording, the AAIB assessed the visibility as 400 m to the north-east and 600 m to the east in the direction of takeoff. The height of the cloud base in the area could not be determined from the recording.

After takeoff, the aircraft entered a climbing turn to the right, followed by four right-hand orbits to the south of the airfield (Figure 1). Altitude varied during the turns but trended upward toward 2,000 ft amsl. An eyewitness in Unstone, 1.8 km south-west of Coal Aston, reported hearing and seeing a light aircraft circling several times before losing sight of it as it entered cloud.

G-CMGB then climbed on a meandering southerly track towards Chesterfield, reaching 2,500 ft amsl (2,330 ft agl). At Chesterfield, it flew two more right-hand orbits, descending to a minimum of 700 ft agl before climbing back up to 1,200 ft agl (Figure 1).

A witness located approximately one km to the east of Sheepbridge Industrial Estate, heard and then saw a "light-coloured" aircraft emerge from the clouds to their west. The aircraft, which appeared to be "about the same height as the houses", continued briefly before turning right, towards the industrial estate, and then started to climb "at a really steep angle", until it "disappeared into cloud again".

A further witness near the accident site heard an aircraft but could not see it due to "thick cloud". Moments later, they saw a yellow and red aircraft that "just fell out of the clouds… spiralling out of control, straight down towards the ground". Witnesses variously described hearing a "bang", or an "explosion", followed by smoke rising from the direction of the sound.

CCTV footage from the industrial estate[1] showed G-CMGB appearing from an easterly direction in a steep descent, rotating to the right and striking the ground at 0804 hrs. An intense fire started 13 seconds later. Emergency services arrived on scene at 0813 hrs. The pilot was fatally injured when the aircraft struck the ground.

Accident site

The accident site was in an industrial estate, with the aircraft coming to rest upright on a concrete hardstanding. A post-accident fire melted parts of the aircraft structure and no fuel remained onboard.

The wings and tail remained attached to the fuselage and compression damage on the wing leading edges indicated that the aircraft was in a steep nose-down attitude at impact. The canopy and windscreen had shattered, and items from the cockpit were ejected throughout the accident site. All three propeller blades were found inside the perimeter of the industrial estate with the furthest being approximately 25 m from the main wreckage. Burned documents indicated that an aircraft logbook and a pilot's personal logbook had been onboard. Handwritten notes for a flight between Coal Aston and Clench Common were also found in the aircraft.

The aircraft was recovered to the AAIB for further examination.

Footnote

[1] CCTV from two sources recorded video and audio; one recorded video only.

Recorded information

The aircraft was fitted with an ADS-B Out avionics device and its broadcasts of GPS position were recorded on ground stations that were in line of sight of the aircraft. Figure 1 illustrates the recorded track of the aircraft from Coal Aston airfield to a point approximately 400 ft above the accident site just under eight minutes later.

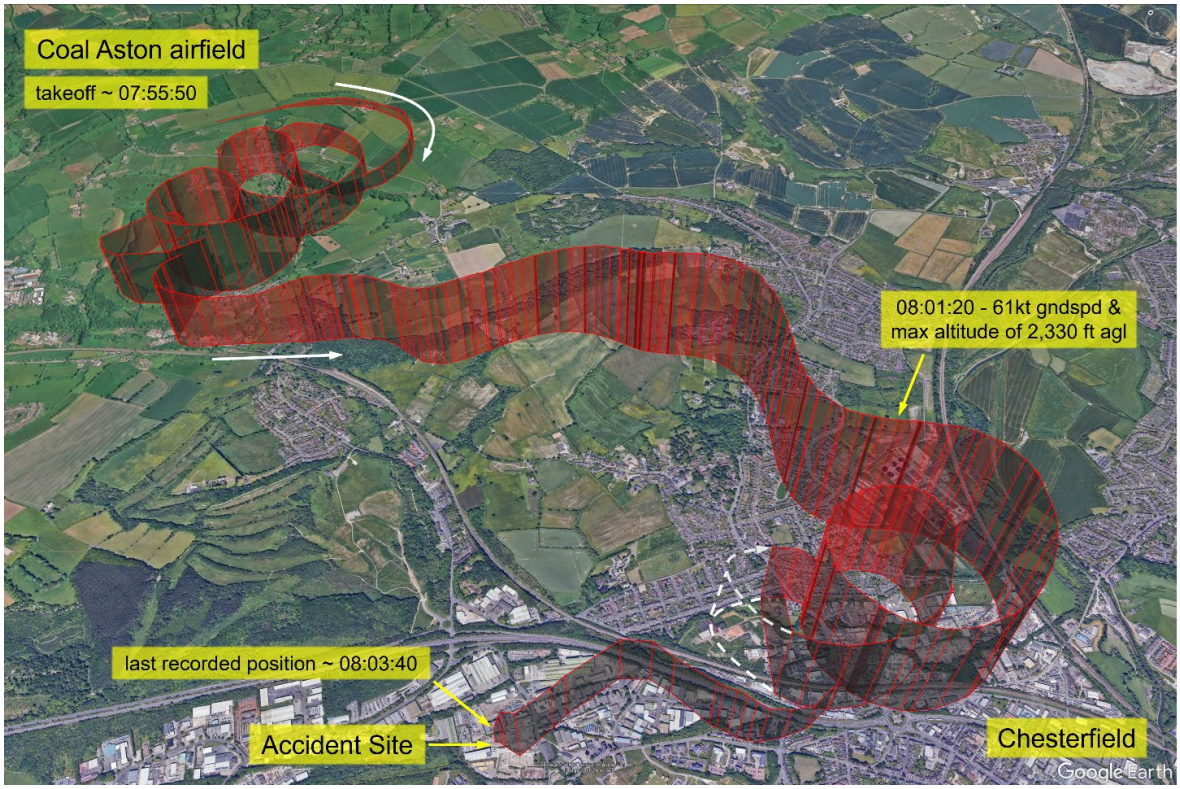

Figure 1
GPS track of the flight

Figure 2 plots altitude and data derived from the GPS positions. Both figures show the aircraft initially climbing and descending in a series of right orbits to the south of the airfield. During the first orbit the aircraft descended to about 390 ft agl and then climbed away at over 3,000 ft/min. On the fourth orbit the aircraft descended to about 670 ft agl at a similar rate. Groundspeed varied between 50 and 130 kt. The aircraft then headed towards Chesterfield, on lower ground to the south, in a series of turns and climbing to a maximum altitude for the flight of 2,330 ft agl.

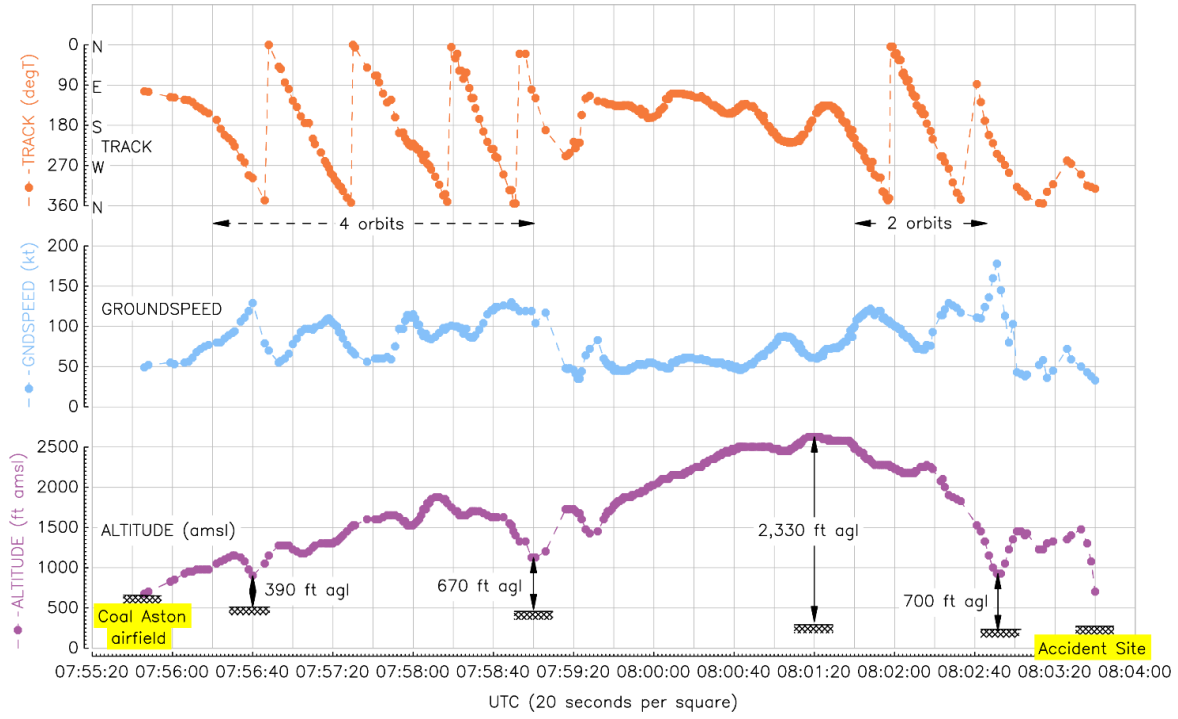

Figure 2

GPS derived data for accident flight with some ground elevations illustrated

Above Chesterfield the aircraft made two descending right orbits over a period of about 90 seconds, during which the aircraft accelerated to a groundspeed of 178 kt (Figure 3). The descent rate peaked at 5,250 ft/min. The minimum altitude in the descent was 700 ft agl before the aircraft climbed a little over 500 ft at a similar rate.

Over the next 30 seconds, the aircraft turned left through 90° towards the north, descending and climbing 200 ft before descending towards the ground in a right turn. The last recorded point positioned the aircraft about 400 ft above the ground in a steep dive.

CCTV footage recorded the aircraft descending nose first towards the ground banked slightly to the right. The descent rate was in excess of 11,200 ft/min at 110 kt. During this descent, the sound of the engine was captured on the audio channel of the CCTV.

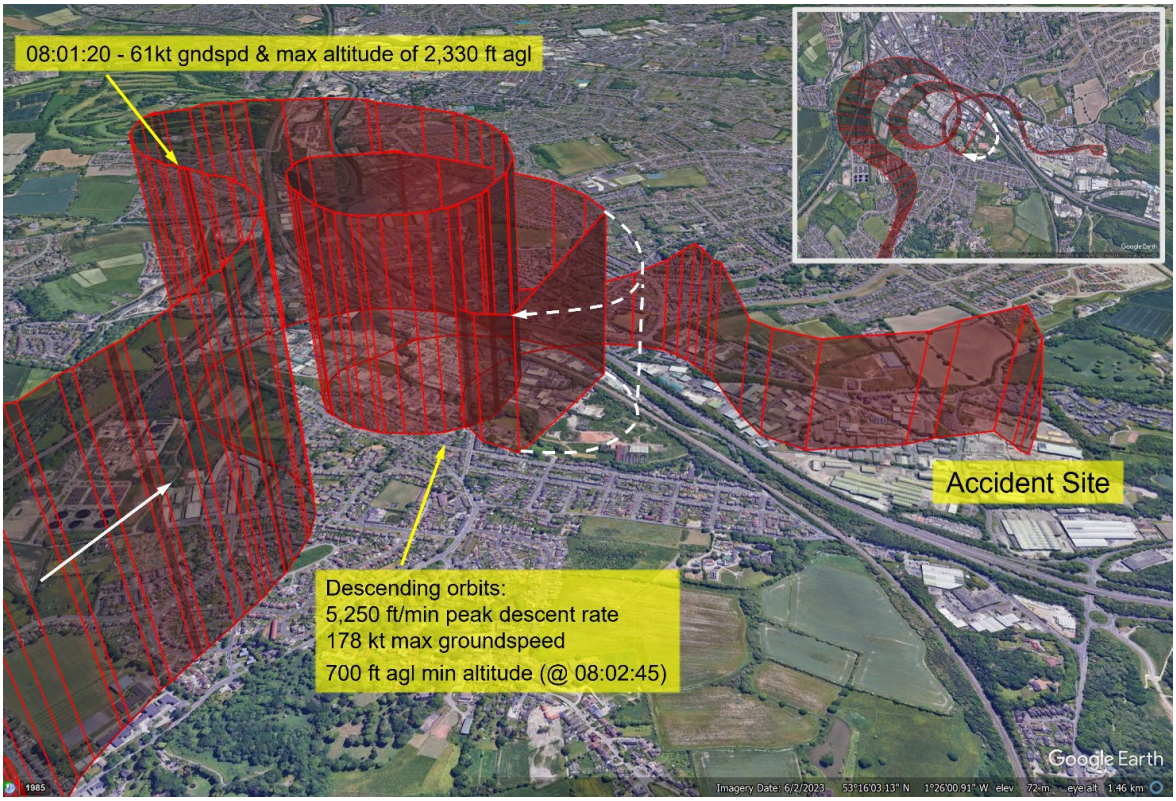

Figure 3

GPS track of aircraft over Chesterfield with descending orbits highlighted

Aircraft information

The Evektor Sportstar SLM is a two-seat microlight designed in the Czech Republic (Figure 4).

Figure 4

G-CMGB (image used with permission)

G-CMGB

G-CMGB was built in the UK in 2022. It had accrued about 137 flying hours when the Permit to Fly was renewed in July 2024.

The aircraft had a Rotax 912iS engine and a fixed pitch, three-bladed, composite propeller. It had a Dynon electronic primary flight display and a two-axis (pitch and roll) autopilot. The autopilot was prohibited from use below 1,000 ft agl, and the aircraft was only permitted to fly in daylight, VFR conditions. The aircraft was not equipped with an optional ballistic parachute recovery system.

A witness told the AAIB that the aircraft owner had recently mentioned an anomaly where the electric pitch trim had operated to its maximum extent of travel without selection. They discussed how the system operated, and the owner said that he would do his own troubleshooting.

Aircraft examination

The aircraft was subjected to a detailed examination but as it had been extensively damaged in the accident and fire, this prevented a full assessment of its condition before the accident.

Structure

There was no evidence of a structural failure before the accident.

Flying controls

The rudder control cables were intact and connected.

The aileron and pitch control systems had been extensively damaged, and parts of the metal control rods had melted. It was, however, possible to confirm that the bolted connections between the control rods and their associated levers remained intact.

The flaps were damaged in the accident and further disrupted by the fire. The flap selector lever in the cockpit had broken from the operating mechanism and the selected flap position could not be established from the wreckage.

The electric servomotor for the pitch trim system indicated that the pitch trim was set at an intermediate, unremarkable, position.

Cockpit instrument panel

The cockpit instrument panel was badly disrupted and burned. The only instruments that were identified were the broken remains of the airspeed indicator and the altimeter, both of which had been ejected from the cockpit. Several electrical switches were found but their condition prevented any meaningful analysis.

Engine and propeller

The engine sustained significant impact and fire damage. The cylinders were distorted, and the propeller reduction gearbox, oil pump, oil filter and oil tank had all broken off. The ignition system and fuel injection system were extensively damaged preventing any meaningful analysis.

Two of the propeller blades had detached from the propeller hub, and both blades had broken in two. The third blade was still attached to the remains of the propeller hub and part of the reduction gearbox. The damage sustained by the propeller blades, and the distance from the main wreckage, indicated that the propeller was turning at high speed at impact.

Survivability

The accident was not survivable.

Airfield information

Coal Aston is a privately owned and unlicensed airfield located nine km south of Sheffield at an elevation of 720 ft amsl (Figure 5). Beyond the threshold of Runway 29 there is a copse of trees, The Brushes, that are 106 ft agl, measured at the threshold of Runway 11 (Figure 6), and 600 m from the airfield office (Border Force Office).

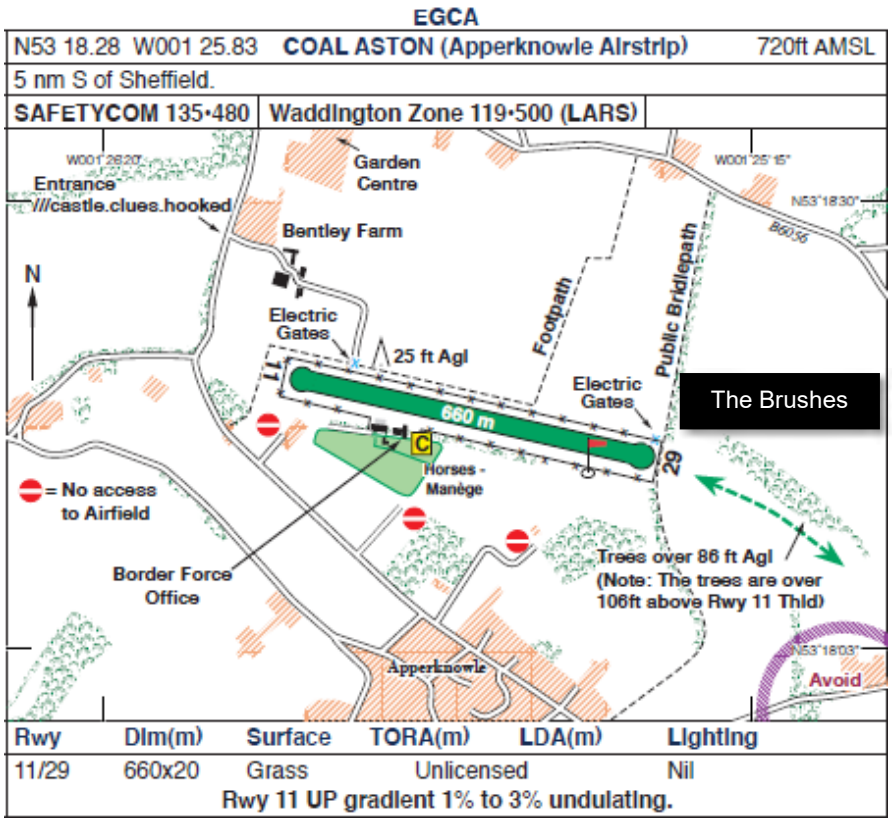

Figure 5

Coal Aston Airfield

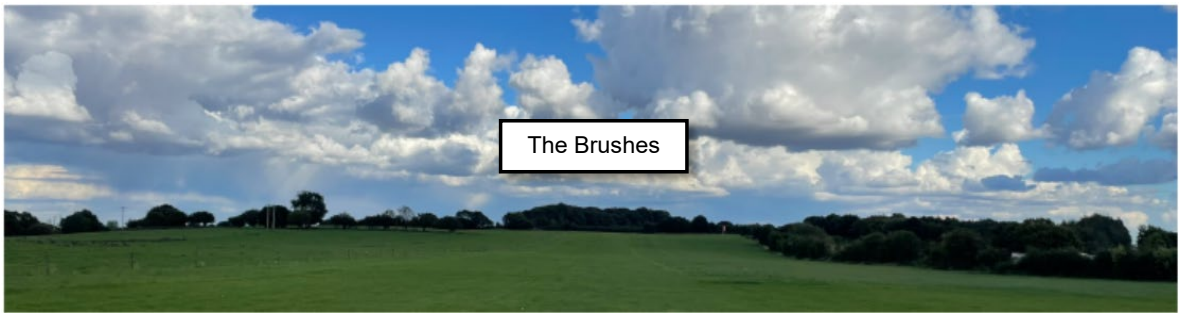

Figure 6

Coal Aston Airfield looking along Runway 11 towards The Brushes

Flight planning

The AAIB recovered handwritten notes from the wreckage that contained details of planning[2] for the flight from Coal Aston to Clench Common, which the pilot expected to take 1 hour and 40 minutes. The first note evident is,

'DON'T FLY OUT BEFORE 11 AM ON SUNDAY – rain?!'

This is followed by a further note referencing the arrival at Clench Common:

'*RAIN ?!*

CHECK CLOUD BASE; IT MAY BE ONLY 2000 FT

LANDING IN CLENCH AFTER 4 PM'

Later in the notes there appears to be an amendment to timings and weather[3]:

'COAL ASTON – LIKELY RAIN [0845 hrs onwards]

VISIBILITY GOOD [to 1130 hrs]

LOW CLOUD BASE [then] 2000 FT FROM 7 AM

CLENCH COMMON – 10 -13 FINE

VISIBILITY – VG [very good] FROM 11

CLOUD BASE - GOOD UNTIL 1 PM

MUST LEAVE BEFORE 9 AM'

It was not possible to determine which source(s) the pilot used to obtain meteorological information.

Footnote

[2] All times noted are believed to be local times.

[3] Text in square brackets is AAIB comment drawn from annotations in the notes and is included for clarity.

Meteorology

Forecast conditions

The Surface Analysis Chart published by the Met Office, valid for 1200 hrs on Sunday 1 September 2024 (Figure 7), showed an area of low pressure over northern France with a light easterly airflow across the planned route. There was a weakening warm frontal system heading north, slowly clearing the area of Coal Aston.

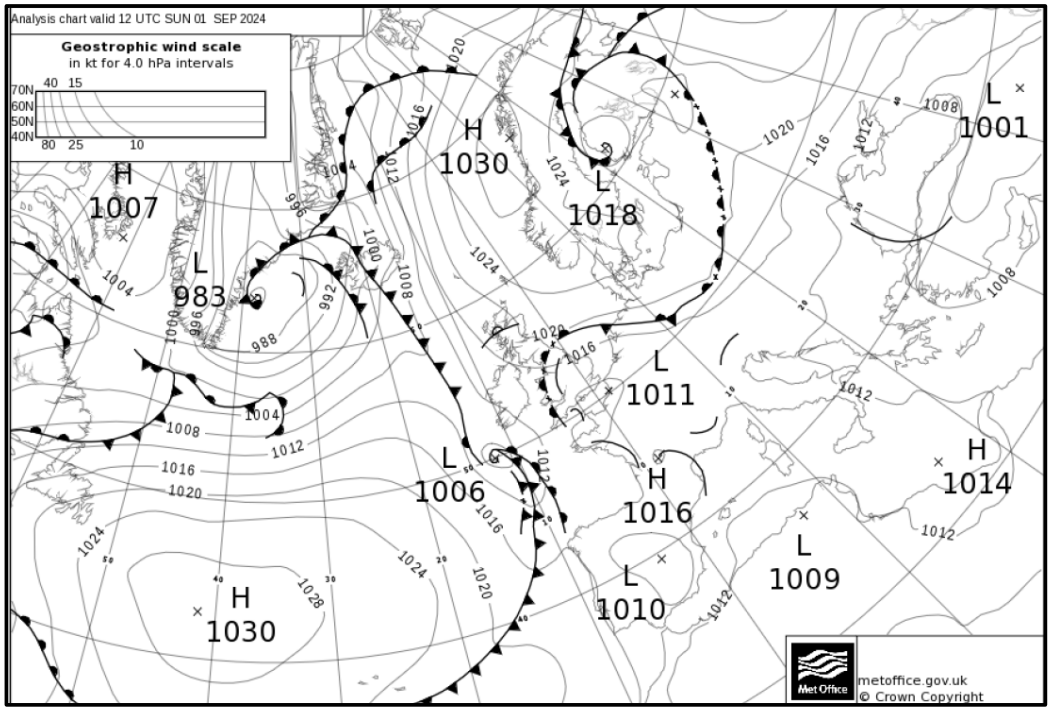

Figure 7

Surface Analysis Chart valid 1200 hrs Sunday 01 September 2024

The Met Office published a Low Level Significant Weather Chart (Form 215 – Figure 8) at 0314 hrs on Sunday 1 September 2024 (valid for 0800 to 1700 hrs). The flight was planned to be conducted within Area D.

The forecast conditions in Area D were for generally good visibility with no cloud below 5,000 ft amsl. Isolated (ISOL)[4] showers (SHRA) were forecast becoming more frequent (FRQ)[5] near troughs. These would reduce the visibility to 7 km with the cloud base lowering to between 1,500 and 4,000 ft. In addition to these showers there was a risk of isolated heavy showers or thunderstorms (+SHRA/+TSRA). This would reduce the visibility to around 3,000 m with isolated embedded (EMBD) cumulonimbus cloud between 2,000 and 7,000 ft. Isolated hill fog was expected inland associated with cloud bases between 300 and 600 ft until 1000 hrs.

Footnote

[4] Isolated: implies isolated conditions occurring randomly and which can easily be avoided. < 25% of the area affected.

[5] Frequent: implies conditions affecting many places which would be difficult to avoid. Used to describe convective types of cloud only. >50% of the area affected.

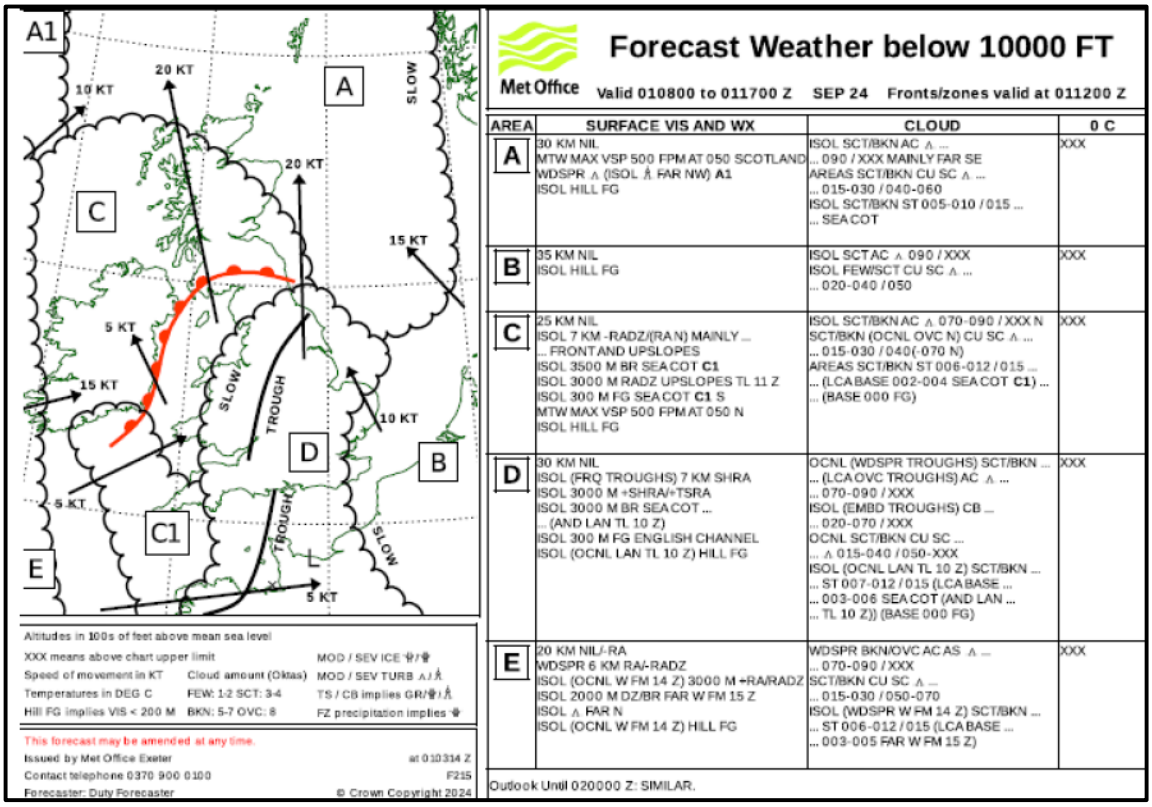

Figure 8

F215 Low Level Significant Weather Chart for 0800 to 1700 hrs 1 September 2024

The forecast at East Midlands Airport[6], 54 km to the south of Coal Aston, showed that low cloud was expected across the area and was forecast to bring a cloud base of 1,200 ft until 1100 hrs, with a 30% risk of lowering to 900 ft. There was a 30% risk of thunderstorms and cumulonimbus cloud after 1100 hrs.

Actual conditions

Humberside Airport reported scattered or broken cloud between 700 and 1,000 ft aal until 1150 hrs, when the cloud lifted to become few at 1,200 ft.

East Midlands reported scattered or broken cloud between 600 and 1,000 ft aal through the morning, lifting to become broken at 1,500 ft by 1220 hrs.

An automatic weather station at Leek, 43 km south-west of Coal Aston at an elevation of 977 ft amsl, reported overcast cloud at 200 ft agl at 0800 hrs, which lowered to 100 ft by 0900 hrs. The cloud then lifted to 9,000 ft amsl by 1100 hrs.

Weather conditions at airfields surrounding Clench Common varied throughout the day. Oxford Airport experienced improving visibility with cloud scattered or broken between 3,500 ft and 4,500 ft aal after 1020 hrs, and cumulonimbus clouds developing after

Footnote

[6] East Midland Airport elevation is 305 ft amsl.

1520 hrs. Boscombe Down maintained good visibility with brief outbreaks of light rain between 1550 and 1620 hrs. Cloud was initially reported as broken or overcast between 3,500 ft and 4,000 ft aal, breaking with largely clear skies between 1050 hrs and 1350 hrs. Lower cloud moved across the area at around 5,000 ft lowering to broken at 3,200 ft at times later in the afternoon. RAF Fairford also had consistently good visibility with broken cloud at 4,500 ft aal that lifted and cleared but partially returned in the afternoon before breaking again later.

Met Office summary

The Met Office provided the following summary of the conditions on Sunday 1 September 2024:

> *'The morning of the 1st of September 2024 would see a weakening warm front heading north, slowly clearing the departure area. A moist easterly flow would initially be present with low cloud covering the area with a base of approximately 1000 ft amsl with some light precipitation, as evidenced by the observations from Humberside Airport and the synoptic observations from Leek automatic station. As the flight proceeded south, they would gradually enter clearer skies as per the observations from Oxford Airport. However, some heavy showers started to develop from 1500 hrs near Clench Common although they generally remained west of the route.'*

Actual conditions at Coal Aston

CCTV showed the following conditions at Coal Aston at the time of takeoff (Figure 9):

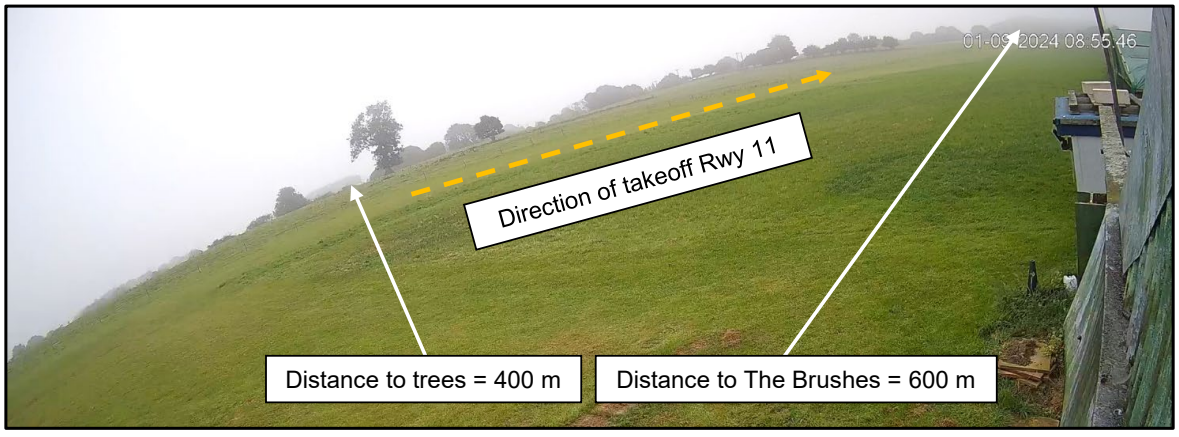

Figure 9

Coal Aston Airfield conditions at time of takeoff

Flight in accordance with VFR

Regulations governing flight in accordance with VFR are contained in the UK Standardised Rules of the Air Regulation[7]. To provide General Aviation pilots with practical guidance on safety and regulatory topics relevant to their flying, the CAA publishes the Skyway Code[8], which states on page 39 that:

> *'For operations in class G airspace, the VFR minima may allow an in-flight visibility as low as 1,500 m, provided you remain clear of cloud. The cloud height is often the limiting factor – in conditions of 1,500 m visibility, the cloud height would normally force you to fly dangerously low. The legal minima are not a good reference point for decision making because safe VFR flight normally ceases to be possible long before the visibility is that poor. They are limits not targets.'*

On page 40, the Skyway Code offers the following advice regarding VFR flight with a cloud ceiling of 1,500 ft agl or less:

> *'VFR flight with a cloud ceiling of 1,500 ft or less above ground level (AGL) requires particular attention to terrain and obstacles. Flight below 1,000 ft AGL is normally only suitable for circuits around the aerodrome or local flying in areas you are familiar with.'*

and that,

> *'VFR flight when the surface visibility is being reported as less than 5 km is not recommended. You are unlikely to have a clear horizon to control the aircraft, and navigating visually will be difficult.'*

Following a fatal accident in 2021[9], where the pilot inadvertently encountered IMC, the AAIB issued a safety recommendation to the CAA to publish guidance for general aviation pilots on responding to unexpected weather deterioration. In response, the CAA published Safety Sense Leaflet 33: '*VFR Flight Into IMC',* on 7 May 2024[10], advising pilots on how to avoid and respond to unintended IMC entry. Of note, on page 3, the leaflet warns pilots:

> *'If you are not adequately trained and qualified in instrument flying, you will struggle to control the aircraft in a VFR into IMC scenario. Flight with sole reference to the instruments is an additional skill above that required for VFR flight and without the correct training, the loss of visual references will likely cause spatial disorientation. You may suffer a loss of control accident'.*

Footnote

7 UK Regulation (EU) No 923/2012, available at https://regulatorylibrary.caa.co.uk/923-2012-pdf/PDF.pdf [accessed June 2025].

8 Available at https://www.caa.co.uk/general-aviation/safety-topics/the-skyway-code/ page 39 [accessed June 2025].

9 Available at https://www.gov.uk/aaib-reports/aaib-investigation-to-mudry-cap-10b-g-bxbu [accessed June 2025].

10 Available at https://www.caa.co.uk/publication/download/21918 [accessed June 2025].

Sensory illusions and spatial disorientation

The body's vestibular system senses both linear and rotational movements about three axes, helping the brain interpret motion in relation to the surrounding visual environment. In an aircraft, all these motions can occur, but when flying in cloud or in a degraded visual environment, there are few or no external visual references. Without a clear view of the horizon, pilots cannot reliably interpret the aircraft's orientation or movement and are subject to sensory illusions.

The lack of visual cues, combined with potentially erroneous sensory perception, can lead to spatial disorientation, where pilots may misinterpret the aircraft's motion and make incorrect control inputs. If a pilot is not trained to rely on flight instruments in these conditions, there is a significant risk of losing control of the aircraft. To prevent this, pilots must be properly trained to use the flight instruments, and the aircraft must be equipped with the appropriate instruments designed for flying without external visual references.

In its report into a fatal accident in 2021[11] where the pilot inadvertently encountered IMC, the ATSB highlighted the following research findings:

> *'Research on spatial disorientation indicates that, for pilots who are not instrument rated, loss of control will likely occur between about 60 seconds (Benson, 1988 in Gibb, Gray and Scharff, 2010) and 178 seconds on average (Bryan, Stonecipher, & Aron, 1954) after the loss of visual reference'.*[12]

Pilot Information

The pilot held a UK National Private Pilot's Licence (NPPL) issued in 2016, with an endorsement for microlights. He had flown approximately 390 hours, of which around 181 hours were in G-CMGB. He purchased G-CMGB in July 2022 and conducted 10 hours of differences training in August 2022. He last flew with an instructor on 1 June 2024. Logbook evidence available to the investigation contained no entries for IFR or night flying and the pilot did not hold an instrument rating.

The CAA PPL(A) syllabus includes one flight exercise where students are introduced to basic instrument flying skills. The PPL skills test includes simulated entry into IMC, following which the student must perform a 180° turn to escape to VMC.

In contrast, the NPPL microlight syllabus does not require the teaching of basic instrument flying skills.

Footnote

[11] Available at https://www.atsb.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/5779485/ao-2020-004-final.pdf [accessed July 2025].

[12] Gibb, R, Gray, R and Scharff, L, 2010, *Aviation Visual Perception: Research, Misperceptions and Mishaps*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Surrey, United Kingdom.
Bryan, L.A, Stonecipher, J.W and Aron, K, 1954, *180-degree turn experiment,* Aeronautics Bulletin No.11, University of Illinois Institute of Aviation, USA.

Medical

Pilot medical declaration

The pilot submitted a Pilot Medical Declaration in October 2022, which was valid until October 2025.

Post-mortem report

Post-mortem examination of the pilot revealed no evidence of incapacitation before the accident or the presence of carbon monoxide. Injuries sustained during the impact were not survivable.

Analysis

Overview

The accident sequence began when the aircraft entered meteorological conditions that were less than those required for flight in accordance with VFR. It is likely that when the pilot recognised the situation and was attempting to regain visual references, the aircraft departed from controlled flight. The pilot died from injuries sustained when the aircraft struck the ground. The post-mortem examination determined that there was no indication of medical impairment or incapacitation of the pilot before the aircraft struck the ground.

The accident

CCTV footage and associated audio recordings revealed that the aircraft was structurally intact with the engine operating up until the point of impact. Additionally, damage to the propeller blades indicated that the propeller was rotating at high speed when the aircraft struck the ground in a steep nose-down attitude.

An examination of the wreckage did not identify any pre-existing faults in the flight controls, making loss of control due to such issues very unlikely.

After takeoff at Coal Aston, the aircraft entered a climbing turn to the right, followed by four right-hand orbits south of the airfield. It is likely that, upon encountering meteorological conditions worse than anticipated, the pilot was attempting to regain visual references. An eyewitness in Unstone, 1.8 km south-west of Coal Aston, reported hearing and seeing a light aircraft circling several times before losing sight of it as it entered cloud.

Upon reaching Chesterfield, the pilot made two descending right-hand orbits. During these manoeuvres, the aircraft accelerated to a groundspeed of 178 kt with a peak descent rate of 5,250 ft/min. The aircraft then climbed from a low point of approximately 700 ft agl to just over 1,200 ft agl. A witness in the area observed an aircraft emerging from the clouds, turning towards the industrial estate, and then climbing at a steep angle until it disappeared back into clouds. It is likely that, on gaining visual contact with the ground after the descending orbits and being confronted with a built-up area and rising terrain, the pilot attempted to increase separation by initiating a rapid climb.

Over the next 30 seconds, the aircraft turned left through 90° towards the north, descending and climbing 200 ft before descending towards the ground in a right turn. The last recorded

point positioned the aircraft about 400 ft above the ground in a steep dive. A witness near the accident site observed the aircraft emerging from cloud, spiralling out of control, straight down towards the ground.

Witness observations of the aircraft appearing below cloud near Coal Aston and Chesterfield are consistent with recorded data and a cloud base of approximately 1,000 ft amsl as detailed by the Met Office aftercast (Figure 10).

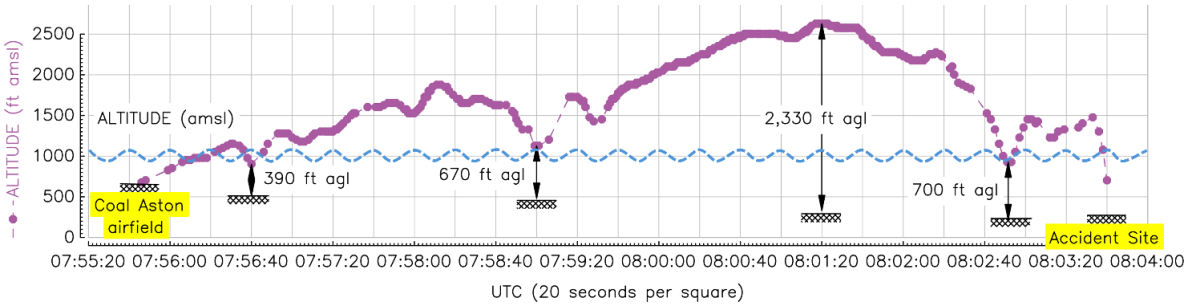

Figure 10

Aircraft altitude (extract from Figure 2) against a 1,000 ft amsl cloud base

Spatial disorientation

After orbiting south of Coal Aston and then climbing to approximately 2,500 ft amsl towards Chesterfield, it appears that the pilot was able to maintain some control of the aircraft, possibly aided by intermittent layers, or breaks in the cloud cover. However, on reaching Chesterfield, the pilot flew a series of descending right-hand orbits at high speed and with a high rate of descent. The final abrupt climb and turn reversal, performed without adequate visual references, likely resulted in the pilot becoming spatially disorientated.

Manually flying an aircraft in IMC is a skill that requires both training and recent practice to perform safely, but the pilot did not hold an instrument rating. Without the necessary training and recent experience, it is likely that the pilot lacked the skills required to safely control the aircraft on encountering IMC. Studies have demonstrated that in such conditions loss of control is likely to occur after 60 to 178 seconds, on average.

Planning and decision to fly

The investigation found that the pilot had amended his planned departure time from 1000 hrs, bringing it forward by approximately two hours. Witness evidence suggested this was partly influenced by forecasts of thunderstorms along the route later that morning. The pilot's notes indicated that he anticipated a low cloud base at Coal Aston initially, which he expected to lift to 2,000 ft amsl from 0600 hrs. He also noted that the visibility and cloud base at Clench Common would allow a suitable landing window between 1000 and 1200 hrs. His final note emphasized the importance of departing Coal Aston before 0800 hrs.

Analysis by the Met Office revealed that the area was experiencing a weakening warm front, which was slowly clearing to the north. The initial low cloud lifted throughout the morning

with clearer skies developing near the destination. Heavy showers began to develop from 1500 hrs but remained to the west of the route.

CCTV footage showed that at the time of takeoff from Coal Aston, visibility was between 400 and 600 m. The tops of the trees beyond the threshold of Runway 29 (The Brushes) appeared to be obscured by cloud. While it was not possible to determine the extent of cloud cover in the surrounding area from the footage, it is likely that, in the direction of takeoff, the cloud base was only 100 ft above the runway.

The investigation did not reveal evidence that the pilot had other pressing reasons to depart when he did, apart from his belief that, if he kept to his original plan, the weather conditions might not be suitable for reaching Clench Common. It is evident that, despite deciding to leave earlier and telling his friend during the drive to Coal Aston that he might have to wait for the weather to improve, the conditions he encountered were not perceived as sufficiently poor to cause him to postpone his departure.

The pilot's decision to depart in conditions significantly below VMC suggests he might have misjudged how poor the conditions were or underestimated the risks of flying in unsuitable weather. While his planning demonstrated some awareness of weather-related hazards, he likely lacked the knowledge and experience needed to accurately assess the conditions he encountered.

The CAA publishes comprehensive guidance on flight under VFR in the Skyway Code and highlights the key hazard that even when weather conditions are close to published limits:

> *'The legal minima are not a good reference point for decision making because safe VFR flight normally ceases to be possible long before the visibility is that poor. They are limits not targets.'*

Conclusion

The accident occurred when the aircraft struck the ground after departing from controlled flight. This resulted from the aircraft entering meteorological conditions that were incompatible with flight under VFR and exceeded the pilot's experience and capabilities.

Meteorological forecasts had indicated that conditions were likely to improve during the morning of the flight, with a low probability of thunderstorms developing along the planned route. The pilot amended his original departure time to avoid what he perceived as poor flying conditions to arrive at his destination before the weather deteriorated.

However, the weather conditions at the time of departure were below the minimum required for flight under VFR. The pilot was not qualified to fly in IMC and the evidence indicated that he subsequently lost control of the aircraft.

Examination of the aircraft did not identify any pre-existing defects or anomalies that may have contributed to the accident.

Published: 2 October 2025.