



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summary

MILITARY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT SUMMARY

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AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE

CHIPMUNK TMk10 WP980

Date:	26th August 1993
Parent Airfield:	Royal Air Force Benson
Place of Accident:	Royal Air Force St Athan
Crew:	One
Passenger:	One
Casualties:	Pilot - fatal injury Passenger - major injury

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. On the afternoon of 26th August 1993, Chipmunk WP980 took off from RAF St Athan for an air experience flight. Shortly after take-off, the aircraft was seen to climb steeply to about 250ft, whereupon the engine noise died. Witnesses then observed the aircraft to pitch up and turn sharply left (a wingover) before descending on a reciprocal track and impacting the ground adjacent to some hangars. Shortly before impact, engine power was restored. The aircraft was badly damaged and the pilot, in the front seat, killed. His passenger was promptly rescued by the airfield crash rescue services and taken to hospital with major injuries. The pilot was a retired senior officer serving with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, and his passenger a civilian ground instructor from an Air Training Corps Squadron attending a summer camp on the station. The passenger was subsequently unable to recall events surrounding the accident.

2. The Board of Inquiry reasoned that the pilot had intended to demonstrate an engine emergency that culminated in a practice forced landing; the failure would be simulated by throttling the engine back to idle. Shortly after take-off, the pilot transmitted to Air Traffic Control that he was simulating an engine failure. Following that call, the standard practice would

have been for the aircraft to descend ahead, in a direction within 30 degrees either side of the runway heading, before climbing away from a height not below 100ft. Since the aircraft did not follow this expected profile, the Board deduced that the pilot had either badly mishandled the exercise or that he had deliberately initiated a non-standard turn back towards the airfield. In either event, the Board concluded that the pilot had stalled the aircraft with insufficient height in which to effect recovery. However, since the Board could not be sure that the engine had not suffered a short-term power loss, they could not attribute negligence to the pilot.

CAUSE

3. The most probable cause of the accident was that the pilot had initiated a steep, tight wingover from a low height, mishandled the aircraft, including closing the throttle, thus placing the aircraft in a position from which there was insufficient height to recover.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

4. Regulations have been reviewed to improve the supervision of air experience flying. Investigations are in hand to determine if crash survivability of light aircraft can be improved.