

OUR HISTORY

CIVIL AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT AT DIAL POST

On 1st June 1968 the pilot of a Miles Messenger M.38, Mr R E Gold and his passenger were flying to Eder Farm, Dial Post to attend the open day. The Eder Farm project was started in Maidstone and transferred to Honey Bridge Lane, Dial Post shortly after the second world war. It was run for 18 to 23 year old Jewish students to learn the basics of agriculture before transferring to Israeli settlements to become farmers.

The aircraft took off from Elstree Aerodrome for Eder Farm at 17.16 hours with the pilot and a boy of thirteen on board. About 45 minutes later the pilot flew over the site at 150 feet to signal his arrival and intention to land. He approached a steeply sloping field nearby for a landing but apparently found it unsuitable and tried the next field. He saw poles in the field as he neared, thought they might be carrying cables, so he climbed away again. However, as the aircraft passed over the poles the pilot remarked to his passenger that there were no cables. He then decided to make a second attempt, asking his passenger to call out the airspeed indicator readings during the approach to land.

The passenger counted down the speed of descent from 60 mph to 35 mph and then heard the engine noise suddenly increase. The pilot said that there were power cables after all, and as the passenger looked out he saw them close below the aircraft. The aircraft continued in a shallow climb over the trees at the southern boundary of the field but collided with taller trees a short distance further on. It then dived almost vertically to the ground and caught fire. The passenger unfastened his safety belt and scrambled from the burning wreckage. He saw the pilot emerge shortly afterwards.

There were about 20 gallons of fuel on board and the fire could not be controlled until the local fire brigade arrived about ten minutes after the accident. The aircraft, which was built mainly from wood and fabric, was destroyed.

Although both the pilot and the boy passenger managed to extricate themselves from the burning wreckage, the pilot was so badly burnt that he died the next day.

The report concludes that the pilot did not see the cables across his proposed landing path until the aircraft was too low and flying too slowly to be able to climb away clear of the obstructions. The passenger, although badly injured, survived.

Condensed by David Webb from Board of Trade report published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1969.