

WEST ESSEX AVIATION

CRASHES & MISHAPS



POST WORLD WAR 2

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POST-WAR 1945 -

July 13, 1945

Although the war in Europe had been finished over two months, the wartime blackout still had a couple of days to run when two Mustang's collided. Mustang III KH507 flown by Polish Sergeant T Les of 306 squadron, stationed at Andrewsfield, collided with another Mustang III KH481 of 315 squadron piloted by another Pole, Sergeant F Mochocki, also stationed at Andrewsfield. The collision took place when they were doing aerobatics related to camera gun attacks near North Weald. KH507 landed back at base with no injuries reported, but KH481 was abandoned and destroyed.

August 3, 1945

The runway at North Weald had been built primarily to service light aircraft, mainly in the fighter class. Although on occasion far larger aircraft were to divert there, it soon became clear, from the structural damage some of them caused, that the regular basing of large machines would be unwise until the runway was strengthened. Unfortunately this was not a message that was clearly received at the Air Ministry, a situation that led to the basing of two Polish operated Vickers Warwick transport squadrons there from July until sanity prevailed and the aircraft were moved out in September 1945. A result of the damage this type caused was closures of sections of the runway for repair - a situation that was not clearly evident to all of the crews intending to land at the airfield.

In the face of frantic messages intended to cause the aircraft to break off from its intended landing on Friday August 3, 1945, a Vickers Warwick, HG250 'U', caused great consternation when it landed on the closed runway at North Weald and suffered a collapsed undercarriage leg.

September 1, 1945

Shortly after the end of the war, the RAF was, as could be expected, still using all of its wartime aircraft types as newer, jet powered, types came onto the scene.

One wartime type destined to remain with the RAF well into the next decade was the de Havilland Mosquito. Serving in bomber, reconnaissance and fighter roles through three-quarters of the war it had remained the fastest aircraft for the majority of its war service.

At 1000hrs on Saturday September 1 1945 a single Mosquito PR34, RG196, of 544 squadron based on a photo-survey from RAF Benson, Oxfordshire, crewed by 81138 Flt. Lt. Alan Neville-Polly from St. Leonards and F/O Malcolm Alfred Moseley from Dovercourt, crashed north of Upshire.

Twenty minutes into the flight and whilst flying in sight of Epping, the bright blue machine suffered a structural failure to an elevator trim tab, part of the tail unit. The port elevator itself became disconnected and resulted in a loss of control. During the dive to earth further parts of the structure also failed until the Mosquito struck the ground near the borders of Upshire and Epping at Parvills Farm killing both occupants in spite of Moseley been able to bale out immediately prior to the impact. The pilot had 1,940 hours flying to his credit, 260 of these on the Mosquito.

With access to the site problematical from any direction, it was fire crews from Waltham Abbey that eventually the first to make their way to the crash scene.

The Mosquito was built as a PR34 (trop) and delivered to Benson on April 21, 1945, passing to 544 squadron on May 25.

November 15, 1945

A Hawker Tempest V from 287 Squadron , JN763, assigned to an anti-aircraft co-operation flight was flying aerobatics above thick cloud in the vicinity of Harlow. It crashed killing W/O R B Farmiloe. It was thought that the aircraft had gone out of control during the aerobatics, had reached excessive speed, and broke up long before hitting the ground.

February 27, 1947

After the war years there were many aircraft demobbed from the military and a fair proportion of them were Tiger Moth bi-plane trainers. One of these civilianised aircraft, G-AHRS, was placed on the civil register on October 4, 1946 after serving through the war years as T6748 but was damaged beyond economical repair at Broxbourne on February 27, 1947.

June 23, 1947

A number of Tiger Moth and Percival Proctor aircraft, the bulk of the Herts & Essex Aero Club (1946) Ltd., fleet, were destroyed in a large hanger fire at Broxbourne in the early hours of Monday June 23, 1947. Fortunately three Tiger Moth's and a visiting Danish K.Z.111 monoplane were pulled clear. Many of these aircraft were recently released from the military to expand the fleet. The aircraft were (Tiger Moth's) G-AHLS (military identity N6462), G-AHMF (T7475), G-AIDP (NL697), G-AIDU (T8193), G-AILR (T7168), G-AILS (T6644) and G-AILT (DE997).(Proctor's) G-AGZL (P6251), G-AHLW (P6168) & G-AIAC (n/a).

September 21, 1948

At 12.30hrs on September 21, 1948, a de Havilland Tiger Moth, NL984, of 22 EFTS was on a flight from Kenley, Surrey, to Cambridge crewed by Flt. Lt. Madgett and trainee pilot, P2 2602524 Leonard R. Bird from Kings Lynn. Twenty minutes into the flight they were passing over Waltham Abbey at a height of 1,700 to 2,000 feet when the Gipsy engine started to give trouble.

The pilot, Bird, brought the Moth down onto the Town Mead safely and easily and befitted his 146 hours flying experience, managing to avoid a selection of pot holes and roaming cattle, rolled to a stop and switched off the ailing engine.

After about three and a half hours R.A.F. mechanics arrived from Cambridge to inspect, and hopefully repair, the engine. Unfortunately the fault, a failed valve head on No.1 cylinder, was beyond local repair and arrangements were put in hand to dismantle and take the aircraft away by road.

The Tiger Moth, NL984, was built by Morris Motors in 1944. It served with 16 EFTS, 19 FTS and 22 EFTS. After a further seven years with the R.A.F. it was sold, on October 26, 1955.

August 22, 1949

North Weald provided men to assist at Broxbourne when a Blackburn built Percival P40 Prentice T1 trainer, VS267, crashed into greenhouses near the airfield.

November 27, 1949

Last officially stationed at North Weald with Blenheim aircraft in January 1940, in March 1949 604 Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force returned to the airfield with its peacetime aircraft – late model Spitfire's. A North Weald based 604 Squadron Spitfire LFXVIE, flown by PII Ridge, force landed near Chigwell short of fuel.

December 10, 1949

Another Auxiliary squadron arriving in March 1949 was 601. They were also equipped with the same late production mark of Spitfire. From December they started re-equipping with the new de Havilland Vampire F3 jet [604 had to wait until 1951 for theirs]. A newly arrived Vampire flown by F/O Eddleston stalled and crash landed on the runway at North Weald on December 10. The aircraft was wrecked but the pilot was uninjured.

July 23, 1950

An Auster AOP6 of 662 Squadron, VX112, normally based at Kenley was involved in an accident in gusty conditions at Stapleford. The pilot, Captain 262893 B R M Austin, 27 years old and with 463 hours flying to his credit, was accompanied by Gunner 20292327 G Kort as his passenger. Kort was seriously injured.

May 17, 1951

A de Havilland Tiger Moth, T6194, attached to 9 RFS crashed south of Hornchurch.

June 4. 1951

The pilot of a 72 Squadron Vampire jet, Sergeant 650278 Charles Harry Hunter, aged 29 and single and from Ulley, Yorkshire. was seven minutes into a solo flight intended to last between 45 minutes and one hour when the aircraft crashed, nose first, a few yards off Kiln Lane near the Underground railway embankment.

He was seen to start to pull out of a loop but the aircraft flipped over onto its back and went into a spin taking the Yorkshireman to his death.

Sgt. Hunter had flown for a total of 718 hours, including some 114 on the Vampire. The records show that the aircraft cashed at 1035hrs whilst undertaking aerobatics. Seen to pull out of a loop but flipped over on back and dived in almost vertically. The Vampire crashed in clockwise spin from 2,000 feet. It was suggested that as the aircraft had gone into a loop at 10,000 feet immediately beforehand, the pilot may have blacked out.

July 9. 1951

Another Vampire accident, occurring on Monday, July 9 involved Flying Officer 201760 G J Briggs who had a total flight experience of 125 hrs, of which 23 hours had been on the Vampire.

Setting off along the North Weald runway for a low flying detail at 0952hrs that Monday the pilot believed that the aircraft, VV187, was not going to fly, he quickly throttled back and braked the aircraft but it was going too fast and ended up going through the airfield boundary fence. The pilot climbed out and walked away from the Vampire, which had crashed across the main Epping Road with part of the fuselage across road, in a style that had been performed many times before!

July 12. 1952

Vampire FB5, WA366, was being flown at 1505 hrs on July 20, 1951 by Flt. Lt 58762 G W Abel when it suffered a severe air strike on nose, the aircraft and pilot made a safe return to North Weald.

A year later, this same Vampire FB5 WA366, and another from 72 squadron, VV683, were being flown with two other Vampire's by a pair of weekend flyers in fine weather on Sunday July 12, 1952.

A formation of four aircraft took off from North Weald on a practice training mission for the forthcoming Battle of Britain display. The squadron were flying in a loose diamond formation with Squadron leader Clive Mason as leader, Sgt Gordon Buckle to his left and slightly astern, Sgt Cecil Victor Randall (24) to the right and astern and Flight Lt. Raymond George Sylvanus Wyborn (25) to the rear. Randall came from Hammersmith and Wyborn's address was given as The Old Rectory, Stanford Rivers, but the 6'1" pilot actually hailed from Arundel, Sussex.

The formation performed loops and rolls for some 20 minutes a distance away from North Weald, before returning to repeat what they had practiced over the airfield. After completing a roll and loop in very close formation an attempted roll to the left at 2,000 feet resulted in a collision between Randall and Wyborn to the left rear of the formation. Neither survived. An inquest on the incident was held on July 16.

When I was a boy, I remember cycling with a friend near Chigwell Row when we saw two aircraft collide and fall to the ground. We naturally went to investigate and, along with some locals, went to the field where the planes had crashed. my memory is that this was near to Lambourne End, I think near to Hoe Lane.

I recall seeing the covered bodies being carried to an ambulance and, because the field was muddy and the ambulances were 'stuck', we all pushed the ambulances across the field.

Your offer to send me a copy of the picture you showed and also a picture of the Goggles which were handed to the museum would be much appreciated.

August 30, 1952

In late August 1952 there was a ground collision between the North Weald Station Flight

Tiger Moth T7265 and a visiting DHC-1 Chipmunk WKS79 of the Manchester University Air Squadron.

The Tiger Moth was being flown on circuits and landings with Flying Officer J H Phillips and a sergeant pilot on board. As Phillips was taking off he abandoned the manoeuvre fearing a loss of power. The Tiger Moth crashed onto the Chipmunk which was at dispersal.

The inquiry decided, after finding nothing wrong with the totally destroyed Tiger Moth, that Phillips had mistaken the lower performance resulting from taking off uphill for mechanical failure and to be at fault.

November 13, 1953

A USAF Republic F-84 Thunderjet stationed at Wethersfield near Braintree crashed into farmland near Epping killing the pilot Captain Thomas C Langstaff. The impact created a 20 feet deep crater in part of the Copt Hall Estate close to the present M25. The point of impact was a little south of that of the Blenheim early in the war.

February 20, 1954

It was the two weekend fliers of Gloster Meteor aircraft out of North Weald that suffered the next major incident.

On this Saturday a formation of three Meteor aircraft took off from North Weald flown by: - Flt. Lt. 3200088 Andrew Lang, aged 26 years, with 1,231 hours in total and 88 hours on the type. He was an RAF regular flying WK692 'F', an aircraft that was to suffer nose-wheel retraction problems.

Pilot Officer 2531294 Bryan John Lewis, aged 20 years, and with the RAFVR was flying in WK696.

The trio was made up by Pilot Officer Peter Michael Austin in a third Meteor.

After the three aircraft took off Lang reported that his nosewheel warning light showed that it may not be retracted. A further attempt at retraction appeared to be successful however and Lewis moved his aircraft in to make a visual inspection of the nosewheel. Unfortunately, the right wing of WK696 (Lewis) hit the tail of Lang's WK692.

The wreckage came down between Gravel Lane and Pudding Lane, Chigwell, 175 degrees, and 5 miles from North Weald. The local fire brigade were quickly on scene dealing with hydrants, but about one mile of hose was required to reach the fiercely blazing venue. The inquest was held in March.

The High Wood Goggles

A battered pair of *Mk VIII* flying goggles found hanging in a bush in a copse called High Wood to the west of Pudding Lane, Chigwell, during the mid-1980s by Mr Ellison, now of Waltham Abbey, cannot be connected to any specific pilot or aircraft.

Damage found to one section of the goggles might be attributed to the impact speed of the goggles with terra-firma. This is unlikely to have been less than the 120mph of terminal velocity, and perhaps greater. The goggles were broken but in one piece when found, having fallen apart through handling in the decade since finding.

Mk VIII flying goggles were issued to Royal Air Force fliers from the middle of the war onward, and there have been very few air crashes in the locality that might fit the incident. The closest, and therefore the most likely, was the fatal collision of two Meteor fighters from North Weald in 1954. The aircraft fell between Pudding Lane and Gravel Lane, some distance from High Wood. It is not known whether any goggles were ejected from the aircraft or lost from the wreckage.

They may indeed be no more than one of thousands of pairs passed down as mere playthings for children. The land-owner, Mr Padfield, was aware of the goggles discovery, he did not recall them as missing toys at the time they were found. The origin of these goggles, now with the Epping Forest District Museum, must therefore remain a mystery.

April 3, 1954

A North Weald based, 604 Squadron, Gloster Meteor T7 collided with one of a pair of 111 Squadron Meteor's east of the airfield. Both aircraft crashed.

The Meteor T7 piloted by F/O Peter Michael Austin and co-piloted by F/L E J R Downs was abandoned but Austin escaped too late for his parachute to deploy properly and he died. The aircraft crashed at Blackmore, Essex.

F/O W J Elles-Hill flying the other Meteor ejected safely and the aircraft crashed near Chipping Ongar. In 2001 parts believed from this airframe were recovered.

March 31, 1956

After only two years in "Civvie street", the DH 82A Tiger Moth registered from its original military identity, EM972, to G-ANPU on February 20, 1954 crashed on was written off near Stapleford on March 31, 1956.

June 30, 1956

Whilst attempting to land [presumably North Weald] Meteor F8 WB105 of 604 Squadron encountered the slipstream of another aircraft and its wing tip struck the ground. The damage was such that when the pilot, P/O J E Hutchinson, attempted a further landing the ailerons were found to be too badly damaged. The pilot ejected safely and the aircraft crashed at Matching Green.

September 2, 1956

On this Sunday, Miss Kathleen Pelly of Theydon Place, Hemnall Street, Epping was having tea in a different room from usual because of the cold weather as a Hawker Hunter F5, WPI34, of 41 squadron crashed into the front garden beside the window she would normally have occupied if the weather had been kinder.

Every outbuilding was damaged and the garden was spattered with clay and debris, but in the end it was considered that more actual damage was caused by sight seers than the crash.

The aircraft pilot Flying Officer Anthony Preston of Biggin Hill ejected from the Hunter and came down in top of a beech tree near the Wake Arms about three miles to the south. The police car that collected him brought Preston to the crash site just briefly, to satisfy him that the crash had not caused death or injury.

January 29, 1957

A Percival P.28 Proctor 1, G-AGZM, previously P6259 with the military, was wrecked in a crash near Stapleford on Tuesday January 28, 1957.

One of a batch of 222 Proctor's, the aircraft was owned by the Herts & Essex Flying Club but flown by a South African, Cornelius Derek Avis, aged 29, from Onslow Gardens, South Kensington.

The aircraft was seen flying at a height of 3-400 feet in the vicinity of Blackbush Farm. Farmworkers saw it turning slowly to the left, the nose dipped, it dived into the ground, bursting into flames, giving the onlookers no chance to save the pilot.

April 30, 1957

The accident to Hawker Hunter F6 XG203 'H' of 111 squadron in a crash landing at North Weald injured the pilot, Flying Officer 4147082 M. Thurley, aged 23. Thurley with 367hrs flight experience was involved in squadron aerobatics an the afternoon of April 30, 1957.

At 1524hrs Thurley landed XG203 at North Weald as No.5 in a stream landing. Unfortunately the aircraft bounced and the pilot applied engine power to correct this. The nose wheel collapsed, the Hunter then overshot the runway, cartwheeled and broke up in a cornfield. The pilot was involuntarily ejected, which was perhaps fortunate as the aircraft caught fire.

The subsequent enquiry decided that the crash was caused by pilot error compounded by the hump situated at the north eastern end of runway".

June 7, 1957

For the RAF's premier aerobatic team in the late fifties life included a continuous round of air shows and practice formations. Even the latter were not without dangers and there were casualties. A few days after returning from the 1957 Paris Air Show Hawker Hunter F6 XF525 was lost in an air to air collision with XE621 at 1539hrs on June 7, 1957. Of the two machines only XF525 was lost. The five aircraft 111 Squadron formation aerobatics practice sortie was only four minutes old when the two Hunter's collided.

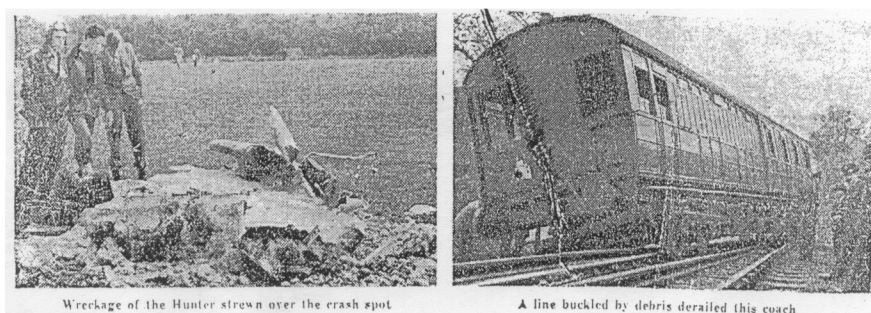
Hunter XE621, was flown by Flt. Lt. 582219 D R J Hall, a pilot with 1638 hours flying to his credit, XF525, was flown by F/O. D C Garratt who originated from Sussex.



Hawker Hunter XE621 in its post repair guise as the prototype FR10 variant

Hall, number two in an aerobatic flying loop in box formation, felt a judder and eased off engine power in response, thereby allowing the number 4, Garratt, to overtake. Hunter XE621, flown by Hall struck the starboard tail-plane of XF525 with its port wingtip.

F/O Garratt, 27 years old, and his crippled Hunter fell from the sky and crashed south of the airfield near the Epping to Ongar railway killing the pilot. This railway line was then operated by British Rail but later incorporated into the Central Line of the London Transport Underground system. A section of the debris from the exploding aircraft landed on the railway track and buckled it.



Wreckage of the Hunter strewn over the crash spot

A line buckled by debris derailed this coach

The line was still operating push-pull services using steam tank engines. In these a small locomotive drew or pushed carriages between stations without recourse to turning the engine around. In one direction the engine driver and the fireman worked together in the locomotive. In the other they were split, with the driver operating the combination from a special converted driving position in the leading carriage. The fireman remained in the locomotive to stoke the furnace. Driving from the front of the two-carriage push-pull, British Rail Engine Driver Arthur Green left Epping for Ongar at 1532hrs. Isolated from his fireman in the pushing locomotive, Green gripped hold of the controls as the train encountered the damaged length of track and careered off the track before coming to a halt after 100 yards. The first carriage toppled over, but of the twenty or so passengers only three suffered shock and were taken to hospital. Subsequently, Arthur Green was commended by the British Transport Commission for his prompt action.

A.R. Ewer,
T. - Ewer Hill, Stratford, Middlesex.
District Motive Power Superintendent
Telephone
MARYLAND 4500
Ext. 5390
Telegraphic Address
MOTIVE, RAILWAY, STRATFORD,
LONDON, E.15

Our Reference S.B.15/7390

Your Reference

BRITISH TRANSPORT COMMISSION



R.R. 22601/4
DISTRICT MOTIVE POWER SUPT.
EASTERN REGION
STRATFORD E.15

15th June, 1957.

Driver A.C. Green,
Motive Power Dept.,
Epping.

Dear Green,

Derailement of 3.32 p.m. Epping to Ongar Class "B" train
near North Weald: 7.6.57.

You were in charge of the 3.32 p.m. train ex Epping to Ongar when the leading coach in which you were travelling became derailed near North Weald on the 7th June.

I wish to thank you for the prompt action that you took in bringing the train to a stand as quickly as possible, and also for the action which you took after the train had stopped to see whether any of your passengers were hurt or in danger.

I notice that you carried straight on to North Weald to report and also arranged for your fireman to protect the train, and I am doubly appreciative of the action taken both by yourself and your fireman under extremely difficult conditions.

Yours very truly,

As the majority of the wreckage fell well clear of metalled roads the RAF declined to recover all of it. As a result, for decades, part of the battered remains of the Rolls-Royce Avon engine lay virtually undisturbed within the relative seclusion of Roughtally's Wood. There are suggestions that this section of turbine blades from the rear of the engine may have been jammed up in a tree and out of easy reach of the recovery crews. It was only later, possibly the famous hurricane winds of 1987, which dislodged it from its lofty perch. Eventually it was removed from the wood into the airfield museum collection for preservation.

Only slightly damaged, but with a loss of hydraulic power and controls, the second Hunter, XE621, managed to fly to the long runway at the civil airfield of Stansted and land safely. The pilot was collected from there and returned to North Weald. It would appear that the aircraft was withdrawn from service and only finally returned to the RAF following an extensive rebuild in the form of a Mark FR10.

Driver Green may have received a commendation, but all was not sweetness and light with the RAF. The surviving pilot, Flt. Lt. Hall, was subsequently held responsible for action leading to the accident in the Board of Enquiry.

July 30. 1957.

On July 30, 1957, another Hawker Hunter F6, XF510 attached to the Station Flight, was involved in a fatal crash at North Weald.

The Hunter was some 44 mins into its sortie, at 1407 hours, as the aircraft came into land after practice GCA approaches.

Squadron Leader L T Mersham with a total of 1978 hours appears to have undertaken an

incorrect fuel drill for Mk6 allowed engine to die at critical point on the airfield threshold. Although he ejected on impact, possibly involuntarily, he died.

May 28. 1958

Hiller UH12A helicopter G-APLA in crash at High Roding and written off. Owned by Fison -Airwork, the helicopter was being employed on crop spraying duties when it struck overhead cables and came down. This very short lived helicopter was only registered on February 14, 1958.

June 4. 1958.

A de Havilland Tiger Moth G-A??? owned and flown by Andrew Soper crashed at Stapleford on the evening of June 4 1958. Soper, a member of the Herts and Essex Flying Club flew from his home farm near Harlow to Stapleford to inspect an aircraft there he was considering buying.

After completing his business and socialising, with the evening drawing on, Soper went to fly his aircraft the short distance to his home. Getting into the rear seat of the Tiger Moth, Neville Morgan Browning assisted by swinging the prop, and he was off. Taking off at about 9.15pm the aircraft was seen to lift off but then unexpectedly return to the airfield at a height of 100 feet. Flying slowly, a number of those on the ground gained the impression that Soper was suffering engine trouble, the Moth went into a spin, plunged earthwards and burst into flames. The pilot was found dead in the rear cockpit, crushed by the weight of the Gipsy engine which lay on his legs.

Andrew John Soper aged 28 years came from Round House, New Hall Farm, Harlow. The son of W.J.Soper J.P. a local farmer/Magistrate he was married having two young children.

April 22. 1960

First, flight crash of the locally designed and manufactured Tawney Owl at Stapleford. (See aircraft manufacture entry).



In front of a crowd of 200, including BBC and ITV cameramen, the red and white aircraft piloted by Flt. Lt. Angus Macdonald, with Harry Radcliffe as observer, spent the morning in taxi trials. At midday, after five high speed runs, the plane took off and flew at a height of 50 feet from the airfield. After about a mile Macdonald is reported to have decided that the Tawney Owl was not going to fly any higher or faster and decided to put the aircraft down. Its subsequent damage, caused by over-turning, in the landing was mainly due to the ploughed nature of the field. It was subsequently dismantled and stored. It was last noted to be in the rafters of the Thurston Engineering workshops at Stondon near Chip-ping Ongar.

January 7. 1962

On the afternoon of Sunday January 7 1962 two men died in the crash of a de Havilland

Tiger Moth G-ANUE flying from Stapleford Tawney.

Dr. William Kirk Grey, aged 45, a Harley Street Specialist from Randolph Mews, London W9, arrived at Stapleford seeking the opportunity to fly in a Tiger Moth of the Herts and Essex Club. Having not flown that type before the deal was agreed, with one of the Club flying instructors to accompany him in a series of circuits and bumps. The instructor, Neville Jones, aged 42, from Well Lane, Galleywood, Chelmsford, Essex took the front seat and Grey the rear.

The pair had been flying around the airfield and vicinity some time when the aircraft was seen to plunge into a field at Bonds Farm. The cause of the accident was not arrived at with any degree of certainty, thoughts varying between a bird strike on one or both of the pilots and a stall. Reports of bird feathers being seen surrounding the Tiger Moth immediately prior to the crash were discounted when no point of impact or feathers were found in the wreck. This DH 82 Tiger Moth had seen previous service as a trainer with the military as T7247, being registered onto civil marks as G-ANUE on October 22, 1954.

June 11 1962.

The sole remaining Bristol Bulldog fighter, K2227/G-ABBB, was damaged in a minor mishap at an RAFA Air Display at North Weald on Whit Monday June 11 1962.

The Bristol Company Chief Test Pilot, Godfrey Auty, was undertaking the flying when the incident occurred. Scheduled to fly as the 4th. item in the display before some 35,000 people, technical difficulties resulted in the ten minute slot being delayed until 4.10pm., and it becoming item 12.

Auty had completed the display and landed when the mishap occurred. During a taxi run across the airfield the aircraft ground looped onto its nose.



Afterwards a reticent Auty did not give the visiting press questioners any reason for damaging the valuable aircraft although harsh use of brakes in a cross-wind was the probable cause.

The Bulldog was found to have suffered little damage in its nose over and soon returned to the air. It was finally destroyed in an accident on September 13 1964

In spite of the eventual total loss of this aircraft in the 1964 crash, in 1994 the twisted remains of this aircraft were brought together from a variety of dispersed sites and - after lying at the RAF Museum restoration facility at Cardington, Bedfordshire, for many years - it was finally rebuilt. It is now on static display at the RAF Museum Hendon.

October 27, 1964

Hughes 300-269B G-ABSL, the first uprated B model on the British register, crashed at Fairlop on this date.

September 7. 1966

North Weald has tended to see greater activity by members of the Air Training Corps than Stapleford, but it was at the latter location that 19 years old ATC Cadet Scammell was involved in a crash in a Forney F1A, G-ASBC, owned by Thurston Aviation but oper-

ated by the Herts & Essex Aero Club.

Michael Paul Scammell of 261 Beehive Lane, Chelmsford had progressed to flying solo by September 7 1966 and had 25 hours flight experience. Carrying out a forced landing after engine failure, or forced landing practice, at Stapleford the Forney hit a tree and crashed heavily into a field of stubble about a mile from the airfield by Great Wood.

A tractor driver from Stapleford Hall Farm working the adjoining field, Gordon Parker, aged 34, saw that the aircraft was down and burning and immediately went to help. He managed to pull the youth clear of the blaze and help was sought.

Scammell was rushed to St.Margarets Hospital with seriously ill with severe burns. Transferred in turn to Mount Vernon, Northwood, Middlesex and then the RAF Halton Hospital he died at the latter on Monday September 12.

March 4. 1967

A 1960 registered Piper PA22-150 Tri-Pacer, G-ARAE, previously on the Dutch register as PH-RAC, crashed near Stapleford Aerodrome on the afternoon of Saturday March 4, 1967.



● The crumpled Tri-Pacer (164). ABOVE: Pilot Jack Garrett.

(171)

The 44-year-old pilot, Jack Garrett from Shelley, was a member of the Herts & Essex Aero Club at Stapleford and also the manager of Ongar Motors and Transport Ltd.

Whilst Garrett was bringing the four seat Tri-Pacer into land at the airfield his engine failed at 800 feet, allowing him just enough time to report his predicament to the tower as he set down in a field behind Stapleford Abbots Church.

Although safely down, someone had recently dug a hole for a pond in the path of the Tri-Pacer, the wheels caught the edge of it and the aircraft tipped over onto its nose, crumpling the nose, front wheel and the wings. Garrett got safely from the wreck and met the fire crash crew as they sped to the crash site.

April 24. 1969

Four people died in a mid-air collision between a red Forney F1A Aircoupe, G-AROP, and a grey Auster 5, J1S Autocrat, G-AMVN, over Fyfield, Ongar, on April 24, 1969. As no one survived the crash, the Air Accidents investigation Branch (AAIB) had to surmise what had happened from the reports of witnesses on the ground and the wreckage that was found lying some 30 feet apart. Two of the four fatalities were found, still strapped in their seats, within the wrecked Forney, the occupants of the Auster were thrown clear.

The 1961 registered Forney, was owned by Stapleford based Thurston Aviation Ltd., having previously been registered from US markings, and was being flown on the fateful day by Mr. Brian L.R. Wright, aged 27, from Harold Hill, Essex, who had a passenger Martin Harris, 25, from Brentwood with him. The 1952 registered Auster had a far more varied past than the Forney. Built with a code number 2104, the high winged monoplane first appeared on the Irish register as EI-ACO. In September 1949 it was transferred to the British register as G-ALUE. In that guise it was written off in an accident on September 20,

1952, being then re-registered as VP- KKG, it was converted during repair from its original J/1 specification to a J/1S, and being put back on the British registration of G-AMVN almost immediately. At the time of the crash it was owned, and flown, by Herbert Ralph Montefiore, aged 44, from West Horndon. He also had one passenger with him, his 80 year old widowed mother Daisy. Both of them planned to go to live in Australia that June. All the dead knew each other; the three men worked at Howard Rotovators at West Horndon. The AAIB concluded that the two aircraft had met over Fyfield by prior arrangement, having flown off from different airfields, the Auster from a strip at Fyfield Hall, the Air-coupe from Stapleford, but without any pre-flight briefing, or plan relating to what the pair would do when they met up. There did seem to be some loose plan for the passenger in the Forney to photograph the passenger in the Auster during the meet. The Auster was flying south with the Forney on its left side, which was the wrong side for it to undertake photography as the sun was beyond the Auster.

The pilot of the Forney, Brian Wright, elected to cross to the other side of the Auster to provide his passenger, Harris, with a better view. Rather than undertake this manoeuvre by passing behind and under the Auster, whereby both pilots or their passengers would have a view of the other machine, he chose to pass over it, thereby losing sight of the other aircraft under the nose of his own machine as he did so, and effectively flying in the area screened from the pilot of the Auster by its high wings.



The result of this was that the nose wheel of the Forney smashed into the Auster's cabin, due either to turbulence or gusting effecting either aircraft. The pair of aircraft, originally locked together, broke apart as they plummeted to the ground. The fault lay with both pilots for neglecting to make plans prior to the flight, but mainly with Mr. Wright for undertaking the fatal manoeuvre.

September 7, 1969

The Royal Air Force gave up the active use of North Weald in 1958, when the last squadron (111) moved out. The airfield was finally closed in 1964, although the Royal Navy took it over for a while in 1968.

As a result of the military withdrawal various other activities -moved in, amongst these is gliding by the Essex Gliding Club.

On September 7, 1969 a one year old Schleicher type ASK13 glider, BGA1510, then worth about £2,000, was being launched by a car tow for a first solo by the young pilot. As the glider attained a height of about 600 feet the tow cable snapped. The glider turned to its starboard, in a turn that became ever steeper until it developed into a spin from

which no recovery was possible in the available height.

The inexperienced pilot, 16 years old, Alastair Hobbs from Braintree was seriously injured, and taken to nearby St. Margaret's Hospital.

January 3. 1973

Piper PA31 Navajo 300, G-AZTL, crashed and was written off near Stapleford on the evening of Wednesday January 3.

The Pilot, 43 years old Peter Smith from Upminster, was employed by Thurston Aviation. Smith managed to escape from the blazing aircraft after it hit a tree near the airfield.

Previously N66SOL on the United States register, the Navajo had been British Registered in April 1972.

July 4. 1976

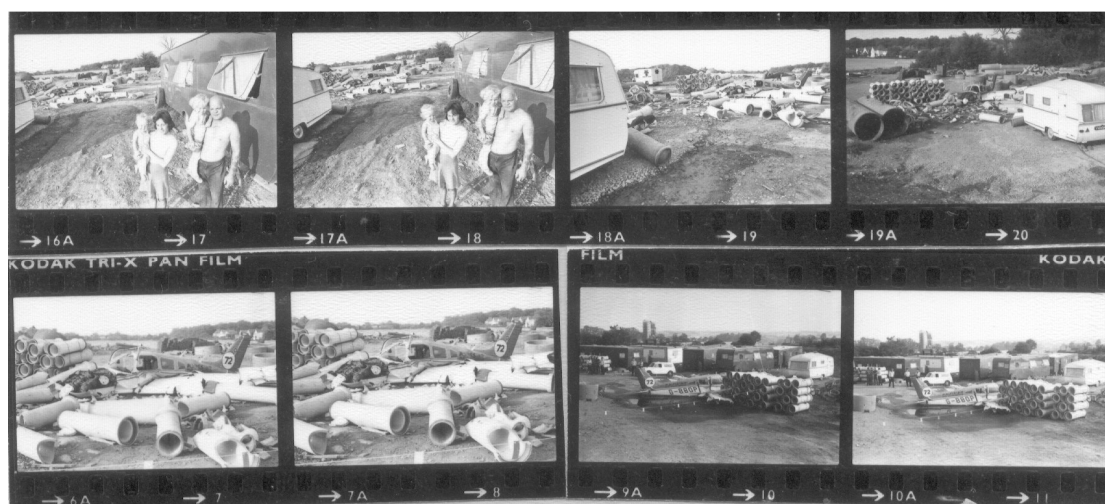
On this date a Piper PA28R-200-2 registered G-BBOP was preparing to land at North Weald with three persons on board after a short trip from Saffron Walden. Earlier that day it had flown to Saffron from Cornwall to drop off one of its four passengers for a St. John's Ambulance presentation.

During a descending turn to line up with the runway for final approach, the two year old aircraft collided with an eighty two foot high radio mast and crashed in amongst the caravan accommodation and works for the new M11 London-Cambridge motorway on the western edge of the airfield. Little damage was done to works items on the ground and no injuries occurred.

The two that died in the crash included the pilot, Ron Wingfield, a retired RAF pilot from St. Austell in the West Country. Once a Hurricane pilot he had left the service in 1973 and was aged 55 years at the time of the crash. The second fatality was to his elder brother Ray Wingfield from Colchester, then aged 64 years. The surviving occupant of the crash was a female family friend that had gone along for the ride. Daphna Aloni from Edgeware had been staying with her family at the Wingfield's West Country home. Her age was given variously as 24 and 27 years.

It was agreed that the Piper was making too low an approach to the airfield, but following the correct line. No radio contact was taking place with the Piper, the usual glider pilots frequency being different from that the powered aircraft might have been on. Furthermore it was not expected to land at the airfield.

The Piper G-BBOP was listed in an enthusiasts magazine as newly registered in January 1974, presumably having been new late the previous year. It was registered to Peter Clifford Aviation Ltd. At the time of the crash it was carrying the markings for "Plastestrip PVC Extrusions, London & St. Austell". Additional markings were for its use as a St. John Ambulance Association air ambulance and a race number of 72. Both of these featured on the fin.



March 3. 1981

A Piper PA28-140 Cherokee, G-AVWB, one of a number of Piper aircraft registered in a batch in October 1967, flying out of Stapleford Tawney crashed in a ploughed field not far from Pudding Lane, Chigwell on the afternoon of Tuesday March 3, 1981, only ten minutes after taking off.

The pilot and owner of the Piper, 40 year old Harry Murphy from London Road, Abridge, died in the crash. His passenger Gary Morris from Harlow was taken to Whipps Cross Intensive Care Unit with serious injuries. Both men worked for Rank Xerox at Loughton.

Witnesses to the accident, mainly farm workers in adjacent fields, saw the Piper bank over a field, climb into a tight loop over a farm and then crash into the field.

Although the angle of the aircraft striking the ground was fairly shallow the aircraft broke into a number of sections in the resultant impact. Police attending the crash site found the pilot already dead, a post mortem subsequently identifies a causal factor as drink.

July 23, 1985

A Robinson R22 helicopter, G-BKXH, crashed on take off from Stapleford on July 23, and was severely damaged as a result. The wreck was under rebuild in Berkshire some years later but this work was abandoned in 1988.

December 10. 1986

On Saturday December 10, 1986 a Piper PA38-112 Tomahawk, G-BLKX, of the Panshanger School of Flying was flying over Walthamstow at about 3,000 feet. The two-seat trainer with a man and woman on board was almost unnoticed as it came down from the west, still under control, and make an approach on the extensive playing fields to the rear of the London Borough of Waltham Forest Town Hall and Waltham Forest College.

The light aircraft hit the grass and appeared to bounce up again once or twice before attempting, in apparent desperation, to take to flight again as it neared housing at the eastern end of the field. The attempt failed. The aircraft skimmed over rooftops, clouting the odd television aerial and at least one chimney pot before it dived into the rear garden of a house in St. John's Road, Walthamstow. It came to rest against the rear wall of industrial premises in Clifford Road, this being the back wall of the house garden also.

In spite of the damage to the airframe, it was registered as 'BLKX on July 2, 1984 from an earlier Danish identity of OY-BRS, the remains of the aircraft remained in being with the owners until June 1992.

May 6. 1987

From 1960 the old army camp situated at Lippitts Hill was taken over by the Metropolitan Police. Although used briefly in mid-1967, it was not until ten years later that the site became a regular operational helipad for police helicopter operations. Eventually, in November 1980, a full time police helicopter Air Support Unit (the first in the United Kingdom) initially based on a Bell 222 registered G-META.

Seven years later the original, August 1980 registered, Bell was still in police service at Lippitts Hill, but now in company with two others of its ilk, G-METB (which had already suffered an accident at Hatfield) and G-METC.

On Wednesday May 6, 1987 at 1335 hours the Bell 222, G-META, took off on patrol from the heli-pad for a normal patrol of London. The occupants of the helicopter were:

Captain Michael John BARRY, 42, pilot. PC Terry WORTS, 53, front observer, PC Brian DONOVAN, 36, rear observer with WPC's Debra WOOLLEY, 27, and Rae Denise WALES, as rear seat passengers. The two female officers were on flight experience training from the communications branch at New Scotland Yard.

At 1445 hours, whilst flying at the normal patrol height of 1,000 feet at 100 knots airspeed

just to the north of Greenwich Royal Naval College the pilot noticed that a No.1 engine power turbine fell to 40% Np, recovered to 100% and then fell to zero. All other indications appeared normal .

As a precaution the pilot elected to return to Lippitts Hill, some 4 to 5 minutes' flight time away. Two minutes later an increase in intercom noise was evident. The noise was traced to the microphones of the occupants of the rear seats, and was evidently an ominous background rumbling coming from the area of the engines above their heads. By the time the Bell and its five occupants was about half a mile south of base the noise was very evident even without the enhancement of the microphones.

The topography of the ground below was unsuitable for an intentional forced landing so the helicopter continued towards the landing pad at Lippitts Hill. At a speed of 40 knots (50mph) and radio altimeter indicated height of 50 feet, they were crossing the boundary fence as an explosion ripped apart No.1 engine. The resultant debris peppered the surroundings, causing damage to No.2 engine and sections of the airframe. To the sound of the low rotor speed warning the helicopter thumped down on the grass just short of the helipad and rolled to halt, exactly on the H of the pad.

The damaged tail boom of G-META lay discarded beside the No.2 hanger at Lippitts Hill in 1993-4, finally being donated to the police historical collection situated at Waltham Abbey police station in June 1994 [now with Epping Forest District Museum].

The crew, all largely uninjured in spite of the hard landing, evacuated from the left side of the Bell as Captain Barry remained behind to shut down the systems and successfully dealt with a small fire that had broken out in the devastated engine bay.

Besides the two wrecked engines and a multitude of debris peppered panels in the exterior and cabin of the helicopter G-META had landed with such force as to severely distort the rear boom just aft of the engine bay. A problem that soon arose was the under insurance of the hull, an oversight which resulted in a lack of finance for either an immediate rebuild or a replacement machine. In the event, over a four year period the charges met by the hiring of stand in helicopters would have purchased at least one more helicopter.

The Bell spent the majority of the years in the second hangar at Lippitts Hill awaiting a decision on its fate. At one time it was intended that the remains would serve as a 'gate guardian' for the camp. Eventually, and much against sensible thought in view of performance limitations the type faced under a newly introduced Police Air Operators Certificate [PAOC], it was rebuilt and rejoined the flight line in the spring of 1991. A factor that tended to support those who argued against the rebuild was a constant stream of complaints of vibration in the aircraft. In spite of a variety of 'fixes', these continued into 1992, when finally the bugs were cleared.

1988

A Bell 206L LongRanger, G-OLDN, crashed in the West Essex area in 1988. The incident did not lead to a write-off of the airframe and it was re-flown. No details of the accident are known.

August 5, 1990

In the first of a spate of incidents at Stapleford, a Piper PA32RT- 300 Lance 11, G-BYBB, abandoned its take off from the Essex airfield and crashed 200 yards into an adjacent field on Sunday August 5.

The occupants were Philip Antino from Gidea Park, the pilot, Kay Stephenson from South Woodford and Jaynor Little from Brentwood.

The report on the crash of the locally owned and operated aircraft stated that it was badly damaged, probably a write off. The owners remain BB Aviation Ltd, Stapleford.

August 9, 1990

Only four days later, a well known warbird owned by The Fighter Collection at Duxford, North American PSI Mustang N51JJ 'ISG4', made a visit to Stapleford on Thursday August 9, piloted by Stephen Grey.

When it first arrived, the Mustang landed normally and taxied up to the fuel facilities opposite the Aeromega hanger and shut down its engine. On a subsequent short flight from the airfield, supposedly to display it to the workers on the airfield, it appears that the pilot forgot to lower his wheels and skidded to an expensive halt on the Stapleford grass. Although the damage was relatively slight, the Mustang was to be seen having necessary repairs to its underside at Duxford months later.

August 11, 1990

This disastrous week in August was rounded off by the worst of three incidents on Saturday August 11. A Wassmer Jodel D120A, G-BHNC, undertaking "touch n' go" landings at Stapleford also ended up in a field after a mishap.

Francis G Miskelly, a West London Based consultant neurologist surgeon, local flying club member and the owner of the Jodel since about 1985 was at the controls with David Simpson from Luton, Bedfordshire as his passenger.

On impact from a height of about 60 feet the Jodel broke into three sections. Both occupants received severe injuries that were treated at St. Margaret's Hospital, Epping.

April 11, 1991

"The Squadron", one of the more active aviation heritage preservation groups sited at North Weald took on a Nieuport 24, N153JS, along with other Great War replica's for the 1991 flying season.

The replica French fighter, worth around £25,000 was undertaking rehearsals for a future display programme on the evening of Thursday April 11 when it inexplicably crashed onto the airfield.

A key figure at the RAF Museum, Hendon, the pilot Tony Harold, 47, from Kane End, High Wycombe took off in the Nieuport at 1815hrs at the same time as a Fokker Triplane of "The Squadron" collection flown by Christopher Jesson.

During the subsequent routines, the pilot appears to have misjudged his speed and entered a banking climb too steeply, stalled and slid backwards some 150 feet into a crash on the airfield. An amateur video of the tragic final moments of the flight was shown to the subsequent Coroners Jury. No faults were found with the American registered aircraft and the cause was put down to pilot error.

August 7, 1992

North American SNJ-7 Texan, registered in the United Kingdom as G-BRVG but wearing a US colour scheme, was involved in a minor incident on this Friday at North Weald. The aircraft, although registered to Early Birds Ltd., based at Staverton, Glos., at the time was a regular sight at Stapleford and North Weald airfields. The supposed minor incident was in fact far more serious than reported. The port wing was so badly damaged – crushed back to the main spar – that it was a write-off.

August 18, 1992

A yellow Reims Cessna F152 II G-BGBP of Stapleford Flying Club was reportedly involved in a minor incident at Stapleford.

This was another instance of the public domain story being somewhat less than the truth. The occupants were spared injury but the damage to the airframe – wings, engine area, and fuselage – was severe enough for it to be written off.

February 28, 1994

Stapleford based Luton LA4A Minor, G-ASXJ [PFA.801], suffered a port main undercarriage weld failure and was pitched onto its nose.

March 6, 1994

A recently purchased, 1959 registered, Taylor JT.1 Monoplane, G-APRT, was making its first flight in the hands of its new owner from Birmingham to Kent on Sunday March 6,

1994. In 1993 this aircraft had been registered to 3 P Leigh.

The aircraft set off south in company with a Piper Cub flown by the pilots father, tracking down the line of the M1 and then turning east towards Stapleford where it was intended to turn south again along the line of the M11 towards Kent.

At about one o'clock, as the monoplane turned south near the junction of the M11 and the M25 serious problems arose with the Arden engine. The pilot selected a field situated on the opposite side of the M11 to the one time RAF Chigwell, crossed over Roding Lane and set the aircraft down on a southerly heading. After rolling for a number of yards the port wheel dug into the soft ground and collapsed, swinging the aircraft around about 90 degrees to the left and onto its nose. The undercarriage and propeller were smashed, but there were no serious injuries involved.

The accompanying Piper carried on to Kent, the pilot returning three hours later to recover the Taylor on a low loader.

The local police were informed of the crash just before 13.15hrs, and police were sent to assist the pilot in keeping the upended aircraft secure from the attentions of any locals with sticky fingers. In fact the input from locals was far more positive than that, tea and sandwiches soon being proffered to the pilot.

April 3, 1994

Although the actual incident that gained extensive media interest took place in eastern Essex, the following report is included as it relates to an interrupted flight that commenced and ended at North Weald.

Pilot Tom Moloney, 31, and his younger brother, 28 year old bachelor Des, set off in Toms newly acquired ex-RAF two seat Jet Provost 3A jet.,- trainer, G-BVEG/XN629 114911, on a flight from North Weald on Sunday April 3. The brothers were from Surrey but visiting the airfield in conjunction with an Aeromart fair being held there. Tom's Fair Oaks based pilot equipment shop, Transair (UK) Ltd, were exhibiting at the Aeromart. Although not a pilot himself, Des was a regular right hand seat passenger and, fortunately as it turned out, familiar with many aspects of aviation, a familiarity which extended to modelling items for past Transair catalogues.

As the 25-year-old Jet Provost flew in the vicinity of Colchester, Tom flew a number of acrobatic manoeuvres, including a roll, at 3,000 feet. It was when repeating the roll, and upside down, that Tom saw his securely strapped in brother rise from the cockpit floor and smash through the right hand section of the sliding cockpit canopy Perspex and out of sight. The cockpit area was gripped by a howling draught which disorientated the pilot for some seconds, before he turned and circled the area where he thought Des had unexpectedly left the aircraft, Tom vainly seeking the comforting sight of a parachute. He did not find it. Setting off back on a westerly heading with a heavy heart, at that point it seemed certain that the incident had resulted in his brother's untimely death. Mortified, Tom brought the Jet Provost into a landing at a busy North Weald still unaware of his brother's fate. Shortly afterwards he received good news from Colchester, Des was alive! In accordance with the demilitarisation regulations, the ejector seat had not been armed and capable of firing its occupant from the aircraft in the approved manner. It was insecurely fixed into the aircraft and unknown to either of the crew able to follow the bidding of gravity with ease. After sliding upwards (actually downwards) and out of the cockpit by smashing through the canopy, as it was below 10,000 feet, the seat had automatically disengaged itself from Des. As it fell harmlessly to earth in a back garden in Colchester, having bounced off and damaged the roof tiles of a house Des was having further problems. His parachute failed to deploy properly, leaving him out of control and falling in a spiral far faster than was strictly good for his health. He landed on the grass verge outside a Sainsbury's food store at Tollgate, another part of Colchester. Although able to raise himself to his feet and release the parachute harness, he was whisked off to hospital and kept in for observation.

April 30, 1994

A September 1971 registered Reims-Cessna F.177RG Cardinal G-AZFP suffered partial undercarriage failure whilst attempting to land at Stapleford at 0920hrs on April 30, 1994. The retractable undercarriage type failed to obtain a "green", locked down, indication light for the front undercarriage leg in spite of a number of attempts to re-cycle the system. Upon landing, the front undercarriage collapsed resulting in the aircraft suffering a bent propeller and nose wheel door.

It was later announced by the CAA that the pilot had been unsuccessful in his attempts to lower and lock down the wheel primarily due to neglecting to pump the handle at least 40 times. Although this instruction was clearly marked on the pump, the pilot appears to have been sufficiently distracted not to read, or recall, it at the time.

July 7, 1994

An Aeromega operated Aerospatiale A5355F1, G-SASU, made a heavy landing at Stapleford on July 7, 1994 due to gearbox drive failure in the hover whilst at the refuelling point in front of the Aeromega hanger.

As a result of this incident the helicopter suffered minor damage to its skids, tail fin and rear rotor. Within a matter of days the machine was able to undertake a pre-planned foreign contract trip.

This helicopter was originally registered by McA]pine Helicopters of Hayes for use with the Surrey Police Air Support Unit in August 1989. Although replaced by another machine later that year it retained its personalised Surrey Police registration beyond ownership by McA]pine. Aeromega took delivery of the helicopter and used it on a number of contracts (including use as a back up aircraft for the Essex Police ASU at Boreham) until it was rebuilt as an AS355F2 and registered G-EPOL for sale to the Essex Police as their first owned aircraft.

September 4, 1994

The landing ground at Damyn's Hall, Upminster, is situated in very rural surroundings south of the main town close to the junction of Gerpins Lane with the Aveley Road. The site has a small airfield but this is better known locally as a microlight flying site rather than for operating larger examples of small aircraft.

Nonetheless, on Sunday September 4, 1994 a 1960 vintage two seat Rollason-Druine D62A Condor G-ARHZ attempting a landing at Damyn's Hall, undershot the grass runway causing damage to the main wing spar, undercarriage and propeller.

December 26, 1994

On Monday December 26, 1994 a Christmas period public holiday – 'Boxing Day' - a bright yellow Robin HR.10012100 Safari light aircraft, G-TCAR, crashed on approach for a landing at its home airfield, Stapleford. It had hit a pylon supporting a line of electric power cables running east to west two miles to north of the airfield and the M25 motorway and dived into a field killing all on board.

Owned by a syndicate of four people, under the name of Gibad Aviation Ltd, the Robin was returning from a trip to an air rally over Dover, Kent, in poor weather. It apparently went too low and clipped the pylon sited near to Stapleford Tawney church with disastrous consequences. Those on board were the pilot, 45 year old Brian Davies from Harold Hill, Romford, his girlfriend Jennifer Lane, aged 47, from Gidea Park, Romford, and her two sons Stuart, 25, and Stephen, 23. Mr Davies was an experienced pilot, he had held membership of the Stapleford Flying Club for about three years and had a share in the privately owned Robin 210.

One of the first police on scene was PC Paul Purkiss. Partly due to the lack of facilities during the holiday period, the area was sealed off overnight pending removal of the aircraft to Farnborough.

The result of a subsequent air accident enquiry concluded that the crash was primarily due to error on the part of the pilot in that some unknown cause had placed the aircraft in

contact with the high tension cables. The possibilities of outside forces, including poor visibility, were not excluded.

March 4, 1995

Another accident occurring out of area but included here because Of the flight plan intending a return to North Weald and an additional matter relating to the subject.

One man, Ewan English from Dereham, Norfolk, died and a second man, his 25 years old son Nicholas, was seriously injured after a restored Second World War North American Harvard IIA trainer, G-TEAC 1,68811 crashed whilst undertaking aerobatics at Woodham Walter near Maldon, Essex. Flown by the deceased, the aircraft was reported to have entered a spin during aerobatics and struck the ground on its belly in a fairly flat attitude which apparently resulted both in the survival of Nicholas and restricted degree of distortion to the airframe. Fortunately for the injured Nicholas, there was no fire.

Perhaps more importantly for the future health of operations from the airfield, with Anthony Hutton, 48 years old Ewan was co-founder director and supposed financial strength behind North Weald Flying Services. These were the operators of the flying group known as The Squadron as well as the organiser of the highly successful 'Aerofair' – a business and light Aviation show held on the airfield on alternate odd years.

March 12, 1995

Eight days after the tragic death of Ewan English a fifteen Year Old Cessna 152 of Stapleford Flying Club, registered G-BHYX, suffered a minor incident at its home airfield.

May 8, 1995

A resident Piper PA28R-200 Cherokee Arrow 11 G-RONG suffered a minor accident at Stapleford on May 8, 1995.

The Cherokee was registered in 1990 and in the ownership of a Mr. Griffiths.

June 16, 1995

An Agusta-Bell AB206B JetRanger III registered G-HRAY to Hecray Limited at Southend, and operated by Aeromega Helicopters at Stapleford, suffered extensive damage when forced to land in a field near Stapleford following engine failure.

The damage, including extensive distortion to the engine and gearbox bay, resulted in repairs to the cabin roof and replacement of the tail boom prior to a complete respray. To place this incident in perspective, similar damage of a this extent to other such helicopters might often result in the airframe being written off.

May 27, 1996

Piper PA-28-140 [28R-7235294], registered G-ORDN, was damaged on landing at Stapleford. The registration of the aircraft was cancelled by the CAA on April 18, 1997.

September 9, 1996

A pilot who cheated death in a plane crash at Havering Atte-Bower on the evening of Monday September 9, 1996 was arrested on suspicion of smuggling cocaine.

At around 5.20pm, farmers Fred and Mark Smoothy were at work on Home Farm, North Road when they heard the crash of the Cessna 150J aircraft in a nearby field of straw stubble. They found the white, gold and orange aircraft lying upside down with the front wheel torn away and its back broken. The machine had apparently attempted to land in the field, broken it front wheel and flipped over. It was believed that the intended airfield stop was to be nearby Stapleford. The pilot was standing beside the machine with a severe cut head. He was taken to the house and an ambulance called. He was taken off the Oldchurch Hospital, Romford for treatment.

The police arrived and found a package thought to be cocaine in the wreck. The police later went to the hospital and arrested the pilot.

The Cessna, registered G-BOTY in 1988 was last registered to J D Bingham and normal-

ly based at Doncaster. The news reports of the time claimed that the arrested pilot came from Manchester.

September 12, 1997

A BEAGLE Pup owned by Skysport, G-AXDU taking off from North Weald suffered engine failure shortly after becoming airborne. The pilot swung the light aircraft into a 360 degree turn to put the aircraft down back on the airfield.

September 26, 1997

A 55 years old female pilot took off in a Founier RF-4 G-???? from North Weald and immediately upon becoming airborne the wings folded and the motorised glider crashed into the ground near the motorway. It almost immediately burst into flames and the woman died. It is thought that she had forgotten to ensure that the folding wings were locked into place.

August 17, 1998

Piper PA28R-200 G-MEAH made a heavy landing at Stapleford after a local flight. Damage to fuselage, wing flaps and propeller.

April 19, 2000

A fatal accident at North Weald involved a collision between Cessna F150J G-INGR and a Yak Aerostar RA02030. The collision occurred at 1621hrs 2 nm north of the airfield, destroyed both aircraft and killed three persons. Both came down east of the M11 at Foster Street.

July 3, 2000

Cessna 152, G-BOTB was wrecked by fire after a mishap on the runway at Stapleford. At 1045hrs the woman pilot landed the Cessna on the runway at Stapleford. The landing included three bounces and as a result the nose wheel collapsed and caught fire. The pilot vacated the aircraft and a fire crew arrived but the Cessna was destroyed by fire.

July 22, 2000

A 1978 Gulfstream AA-5B G-BFXX was flying out of Stapleford with the pilot accompanied by an instructor as a precaution. Although trained the pilot had not flown for some five months.

On return to the airfield some problems were experienced with management of the engine and as a result there was some damage to the propeller and nose landing gear.

July 25, 2001

A Piper PA-28-200 G-FULL made a wheels up landing at Stapleford due to undercarriage problems. Damage to engine, propeller and underside of fuselage.

September 9, 2001

A 1971 Piper PA-28R-200-2, G-AZOG flown by a 39 years old pilot was landing on the grass Runway 28 at Stapleford after a flight from Southend. It crossed the threshold of the tarmac runway at speed and nose oleo damage, cracking, found later was blamed on this.

September 20, 2001 Piper PA-34-200-2 Seneca, G-ELBC single crew out of Stapleford Airfield, Essex suffered right main landing gear detached, right propeller and right wing damaged, right engine shock loaded

The accident occurred during circuit flying carried out by a student under instruction. The student's total flying experience on all aircraft types was 140 hours and he had accumulated 2.7 hours flying on the PA-34-200. The aircraft was operating from Stapleford's Runway 04L, a 1,120 metre long grass runway that was dry at the time of the accident.

The weather was good.

The student flew two circuits. Both landing touchdowns were described as positive, but not heavy. During the take-off roll following the second landing the right main landing gear collapsed. The crew aborted the take-off and the aircraft slid off the right side of the runway before coming to rest. Both crew members, who were wearing lap and diagonal seat belts, vacated the aircraft via the normal right overwing exit without injury. There was no fire.

Examination found that the right propeller and right flap had suffered ground contact damage and the right wing had distorted, causing rippling of its upper and lower skins in places. The right main landing gear was found structurally detached from the aircraft, with both forward and aft attachment fittings fractured.

December 31, 2001

Piper PA-34-200-2, G-ELBC suffered minor damage to its nosecone at Stapleford.

The aircraft was being used for a training flight with an instructor and student pilot aboard. When, after take-off, the landing gear was selected up, the 'Gear in Transit/Unsafe' light remained 'on'. After selecting the gear to 'down' again, the instructor observed that the main landing gear indicated 'down and locked' but there was no nose gear indication. The view in the external mirror showed that the nose gear was approximately half way down.

Having exhausted all alternative procedures to lower the nose landing gear, without success, the instructor elected to return to the airfield and asked the student to move to a rear seat in order to move the centre of gravity rearwards. During the downwind leg he feathered one propeller and, when on short finals, and confident of landing on the runway, he feathered the other. A flapless landing was made, to keep the nose as high as possible after landing and the pilot was able to keep the nose off the ground until the aircraft was travelling at about 20 kt. When the nose sank onto the grass runway, the underside of the nosecone suffered minor damage but the propellers were undamaged. The occupants left the aircraft without further incident.

Examination by the operator's maintenance personnel revealed that the roller on the steering arm of the nose-leg had been subjected to a lateral overload against the steering shoe and had jumped out of its track. Its attachment bolt had also been bent. As a result, the nosewheel steering mechanism had failed to centre and when the landing gear retracted, the mechanism jammed, preventing the nose gear from either retracting or extending.

Further enquiries by the maintenance organisation revealed that whilst being towed by a tractor, the aircraft's steering limits had inadvertently been exceeded. The maintenance organisation has subsequently increased the visibility of the steering limit marks on the fuselage nose to make it easier for tug drivers to judge the turning limits of the aircraft during ground handling.

February, 2003

BAC Jet Provost/Strikemaster reported to have crashed into the hedge on the south boundary of North Weald airfield.

September 4, 2005

The pilot of Cessna 310 G-VDIR reported that whilst preparing to land at North Weald Aerodrome to take on fuel, he became aware that he did not have a 'three greens' undercarriage indication in the cockpit. Air Traffic Control subsequently confirmed that the main landing gear did not appear to be fully extended. The pilot embarked on a period of circling in the local area whilst he attempted to extend the gear fully, both by cycling the retraction system electrically and by using the manual crank mechanism. These attempts were abandoned after about 30 minutes, when an electrical burning smell became apparent and the gear had still failed to lock down correctly. Subsequently, a gentle touchdown was accomplished on the grass adjoining the runway with the gear in a partially extended condition, following which the gear collapsed and the aircraft subsided onto its fuselage.

After sliding a short distance, it came to rest and the pilot disembarked. The aircraft was examined subsequently by an insurance assessor who reported that, after the aircraft had been lifted and appropriately supported, he was able manually to extend and lock down all three landing gears. However, deformations of the various rods and cranks which made up the electrically actuated system, caused by the gear collapsing after touchdown, prevented him from determining the cause of the original malfunction.

March 26, 2006

Extra 300, G-OFFO and Extra 300, G-ZEXL flying 15 miles NW of North Weald. The pilots of two aircraft were carrying out formation flying training. A deep echelon right manoeuvre was being flown when the upper aircraft initiated a turn to the right. The propeller of the lower aircraft contacted the underside of the right wing tip of the upper aircraft penetrating the structure through the full depth. Both aircraft remained in a safe flying condition and precautionary landings were made at North Weald.

June 3, 2010

Diamond Aircraft Industries DA42 Twin Star, G-SLCT at Stapleford Airfield, Essex
Despite cycling the landing gear several times, the right main gear remained in the retracted position and the pilot landed the aircraft on the nose and left main landing gear. The pilot and passenger were uninjured, but the aircraft was extensively damaged. The investigation established that the right landing gear jammed in the wheel well as a result of the failure of a trunnion, which connected the landing gear damper to the wheel trailing arm. The failure was caused by stress corrosion cracking. Three safety recommendations were made to the aircraft manufacturer.

July 3, 2011

During the Air-Britain Fly-In day the BEAGLE Pup G-AXPB took off from the airfield main runway in a southerly direction. Soon after taking off the pilot called in difficulties to ATC and went down. It cleared the golf course and the M11 Motorway and landed on grass in a paddock off Forest Glade. The nosewheel collapsed. No serious damage and no injury. Pup was reported to have gone in on the Kiora Golf Course but eventually found by an EC120 helicopter from the airfield. Incident attended by three fire engines [+ one on M11], one fire rescue, one ambulance, one ambulance car, three police cars and the Essex Air ambulance.

2/1/2012

THREE men were taken to hospital after one aeroplane crash-landed and another caught fire at two airfields in the district.

In the first incident, which happened at 2.20pm yesterday (Monday), a plane crash-landed at Stapleford Flying Club in Stapleford Tawney, injuring two men.

Paramedics and a team from the Herts Air Ambulance treated the men at the scene before taking them to Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow.

An ambulance service spokesman said they suffered minor injuries.

Five hours later, at 7.20pm, a small plane caught fire in a separate incident at North Weald Airfield.

An ambulance service spokesman said: "A man who we believe to be in his 40s was slightly injured and following assessments by the ambulance crews at the scene, he was taken to Princess Alexandra Hospital for further care."

[Click here to follow the Epping Forest Guardia](#)

Sadly on Monday evening David Green (Jetblu) was very seriously injured in a ground fire aboard his C421 aircraft at North Weald Airfield. David is in a critical condition in hospital, he has got through 7 hours of surgery yesterday, but faces more today. David has a young family, it is asked that respect for their privacy is given at this difficult time.

Firefighters were called to a twin engine aircraft on fire on the runway of North Weald Airfield. Crews used foam and dry powder to extinguish the fire by 20:06hrs. One man aged 48 years was seriously injured and suffered burns. The casualty was placed in the care of the Ambulance Service

[Details/Images](#)

Incident No:103

Date:02-01-2012

Time:19:22

Details:Aircraft fire

Address:North Weald Airfield, North Weald

Attendance:1 x Epping, 1 x Ongar, 2 x Stansted (Foam)

