



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

MAAS 5/80

27 October 1980

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING ROYAL AIR FORCE HUNTER FGA MK 9 XK151

Date: 12 February 1980

Parent Airfield: RAF Lossiemouth, Morayshire, Scotland

Place of Accident: Isle of Skye

Crew: One (Pilot)

Casualties: One killed (Pilot)

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Bad weather at the parent airfield had delayed the start of the flying programme and the pilot of XK151, a single-seat Hunter, eventually took off to check the weather conditions in the low flying areas normally used for training. During the next 50 minutes the pilot transmitted to the parent airfield a series of reports which indicated a considerable variation in the weather over Scotland; some areas were clear but others were experiencing low cloud, poor visibility and rain. The last report received was from the West coast where there was a good deal of layered cloud. The cloud base and visibility deteriorated southwards and, in the vicinity of the Isle of Skye where the aircraft crashed, conditions were worse than those required for safe visual flight.
2. A number of witnesses on Skye saw or heard a jet aircraft flying at low level followed by a dull thud. A search party found the remains of the aircraft later that day. The Hunter had struck ground, at 1050 ft above mean sea level, about 25 ft below the summit of a hill, on the southern part of Skye. Wreckage was found scattered over a wide area.

CAUSE

3. At the moment of impact the aircraft had been flying in a virtually straight and level attitude with a high power setting on the engine. There was no evidence of a technical fault and it appears that the pilot was in full control of the aircraft until it hit the ground. The visibility in the area varied widely and it is likely that the pilot encountered patches of very poor visibility while flying by visual reference. He may have tried to escape these conditions by starting a gentle climb towards a gap in the clouds. Unfortunately, by a small margin of 25 feet he failed to clear some high ground which was probably obscured by cloud.

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