



# MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

## Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

MAAS 9/80  
22 December 1980

### AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING ROYAL AIR FORCE HARRIER GR3 XW765

Date: 12 March 1980  
Parent Airfield: Royal Air Force Gutersloh  
Place of Accident:  $2\frac{3}{4}$  miles SSE Lampeter, Wales  
Crew: One  
Casualties: Nil

#### CIRCUMSTANCES

1. A Harrier GR3 had been detached from its parent airfield and was operating from RAF Wittering, Northants. During a low flying sortie in Wales, the pilot saw a large brown bird in front of his aircraft. He had no time to react, the bird struck the windscreen and the engine began to make an unusual noise. The pilot immediately climbed and checked his engine instruments; there was a marked loss of thrust and the engine RPM had decreased although the throttle had not been moved.
2. The Harrier gained some 1,200 feet in its climb and, just before it reached the apex, the pilot jettisoned his external fuel tanks over open fields. He correctly diagnosed that the engine had surged, which required that it be shut down and relit using the manual fuel control system. This he did; but there was insufficient time available for power to be restored before the aircraft crashed in open farmland. The pilot ejected only two seconds before impact but was uninjured; there were no civilian casualties.

#### CAUSE

3. The Harrier's engine had ingested a bird; analysis of the remains revealed that it was probably a buzzard. These birds weigh on average some 2lbs. Although the bird caused no significant mechanical damage, its ingestion created a disturbance to the airflow through the engine, causing it to surge. Although the pilot carried out the correct actions, in the 45 seconds between the birdstrike and ejection he was unable to relight the engine in time for it to produce sufficient thrust to maintain flight.

#### SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

4. The aircraft was destroyed. Compensation has been paid for the damage arising from the accident.

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