

Aircraft type and registration: Piper Seneca 220/T PH-TWI (light twin engined fixed wing aircraft)

Year of Manufacture: 1982

Date and time (GMT): 1 April 1985 at 0917 hrs

Location: Farnborough, Kent

Type of flight: Private (pleasure)

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — 2

Injuries: Crew — 1 slight Passengers — 1 slight, 1 serious

Nature of damage: Damage to nose, fuselage, and both engines

Commander's Licence: Commercial Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 30 years

Commander's total flying experience: 710 hours (of which 50 were on type)

Information Source: AIB Field Investigation.

The aircraft departed from Schiphol for Biggin Hill in good weather with the pilot and two passengers aboard. It climbed to Flight Level 80 on an IFR flight plan, where it cruised clear of cloud and in good visibility. The flight was uneventful and the Seneca was cleared to descend about 30 miles before Detling VOR. It crossed Detling at 2500 ft and set course for Biggin Hill maintaining 2500 ft. When at about 4 miles from Biggin Hill, the left engine started to surge. The pilot switched on the electrical fuel pump and the engine picked up but failed again after about a minute. He feathered the left propeller and noticed that both fuel gauges were reading just above zero. As he continued towards the field the right engine rpm started to fluctuate but, unlike the left engine, selection of the electrical pump did not restore power.

The pilot realized that a forced landing was inevitable and so he selected a large field that was orientated into wind and attempted to land in it. Unfortunately the aircraft was too low and it touched down 30 yards before the boundary hedge of the selected field. The aircraft came to rest with the nose and engines embedded in the hedge. There was no fire.

Neither of the front seat occupants had worn the upper torso restraint harness that was provided. However the pilot, who was only slightly injured, managed to escape through the front door. The remaining occupants were helped from the aircraft by the safety services.

Examination of the aircraft revealed no pre-existing defects that could have caused the accident. The fuel tanks were undamaged and a total of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an imperial gallon of fuel was drained from the fuel system.

The pilot stated that he thought he had sufficient fuel for the flight and he did not consider that he had a fuel problem until the left engine rpm started to fluctuate.