

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199800793**

**Glaser-Dirks Flugzeugbau GmbH
DG-400**

15 March 1998

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NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at www.atsb.gov.au.

Occurrence Number: 199800793 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: 56km W Mittagong, (ALA)
State: NSW **Inv Category:** 4
Date: Sunday 15 March 1998
Time: 1645 hours **Time Zone** ESuT
Highest Injury Level: None

Aircraft Manufacturer: Glaser-Dirks Flugzeugbau GmbH
Aircraft Model: DG-400
Aircraft Registration: VH-XJC **Serial Number:**
Type of Operation: Non-commercial Pleasure/Travel
Damage to Aircraft: Substantial
Departure Point: Gulgong NSW
Departure Time: 1300 ESuT
Destination: Camden NSW

Crew Details:

Role	Class of Licence	Hours on	
		Type	Hours Total
Pilot-In-Command	ATPL	84.0	10500

Approved for Release: Wednesday, June 24, 1998

The pilot of a motorised glider declared an inflight emergency to Flight Service, advising that he was above cloud, south-west of Camden, with 50 minutes fuel endurance. The aircraft was not equipped with a transponder but carried a Global Positioning System. An alert phase was declared and, following liaison with Sydney Approach, the aircraft was located by primary radar returns. The alert phase was later upgraded to a distress phase when it was apparent that the aircraft would shortly run out of fuel while still above thick cloud. Communications with the aircraft ceased until a 'Careflight' helicopter finally made contact with the pilot, who indicated that the aircraft had run out of fuel and was gliding. The 'Careflight' pilot subsequently reported that the glider had landed, and the pilot was uninjured.

The glider pilot later reported that he had planned to fly from Gulgong to Camden. The weather forecast indicated that the weather on the coast was poor, with extensive low cloud. However, by his own observation, the weather was fine to the south of Gulgong. The aircraft was winch launched to a height of 1,500 ft at Gulgong before departing to the south with an almost full fuel tank (22 litres maximum), with the pilot intending to divert to Bathurst if necessary. The weather south of Bathurst continued to improve, but low cloud cover extended to the east towards the coast. By the time he had thermalled to 9,500 ft the glider pilot said he was about 80 km west of Camden and some 10 km west of the line of cloud.

After contacting Camden tower for the current weather situation, the pilot assessed that he could continue in accordance with the Visual Flight Rules and land at Camden. After gliding down to 6,500 ft, the motor was started and he continued towards Camden, above cloud. However, further contact with Camden tower indicated that the weather had deteriorated and there was now almost total cloud cover. The pilot contacted Sydney Centre for a clearance into controlled airspace and held for some time about 20 km west of Camden to assess the weather. As there was no improvement, he was authorised to climb to 10,000 ft so that he could then glide to the west, beyond the cloud line, into suitable outlanding country.

At 10,000 ft the engine stopped when the fuel was exhausted. However, the engine could not be retracted by normal or emergency methods, severely restricting the glide performance of the aircraft. Unable to now reach the end of the cloud line, and descending into wispy cloud, the pilot finally found a hole in the cloud and spiralled down to land in a small paddock. After touchdown the pilot had to groundloop the glider to avoid colliding with a fence, resulting in damage to the landing gear.

The pilot subsequently reported that after checking and re-crimping the electrical wiring for the engine retract motor, the engine retracted normally.

