HERNE BAY AIRSHOW CRASH: QUICK-WITTED SPECTATORS DASH INTO SEA TO SAVE PILOT

News / Events / Festivals



Quick-witted spectators saved the life of a pilot after his light aircraft crashed into the sea while taking part in an air show.

The open-cockpit plane flipped onto its back after coming down in shallow water a short distance from the beach at the Herne Bay air show in Kent.

Eyewitnesses described around ten members of the public dashing into the water where they quickly righted the single-engine D31 Turbulent and hauled the pilot to safety.

The RNLI, police, fire service and air ambulance were all on the scene shortly after the crash, which took place at around 3.30pm.

Aviation enthusiast Richard Burgess, who was watching the display from the beach, said: “The engine sounded very thick and unhappy and I suddenly realised he was flying below the level I was standing.

The aircraft was quickly righted

Image © Richard Burgess

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“The wheels dug into the water and the plane just flipped.

“The pilot was under the water and that’s when the spectators rushed out and flipped it back over.

“His face looked pretty smashed up and bloody – it must have hit the dash board.”

Displays at the airshow, which also featured the Red Arrows and Eurofighter Typhoon, were suspended following the crash.

The event, which includes 47 aircraft in 22 display teams, attracts thousands of spectators each year.

A spokesman for Kent Police said: "At 3.36pm on Sunday 14 August Kent Police received a call stating that a light air craft had come down into the sea near Sea View Road in Herne Bay.

"Officers are at the scene with partner agencies including the South East Coast Ambulance Service (Secamb), HM Coastguard and The Royal National Lifeboat Institution. The pilot is being assessed by Secamb at the scene.

"The Air Accidents Investigation Branch has been informed."

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