

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Rans S6-ES Coyote II, G-BYOT	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Jabiru 2.2 piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	2000	
Date & Time (UTC):	18 July 2008 at 1920 hrs	
Location:	Swaffham Priory Farm, Cambridgeshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Damage to nose landing gear and propeller	
Commander's Licence:	National Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	55 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	85 hours (of which 14 were on type) Last 90 days - 14 hours Last 28 days - 13 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

Whilst on a flight from Sutton Meadows airfield, Cambridgeshire, the pilot found himself in worsening weather conditions with reducing visibility. He became disorientated and lost, so he carried out a successful precautionary landing in a field. Having established his position, he planned a return flight and took off, but became lost again. The pilot then made a second successful precautionary landing, before re-calculating his position and planning a further route, this time to Newmarket Heath airfield, Cambridgeshire. After taking off again, the pilot found himself in worsening weather conditions and with limited fuel. A third precautionary landing was made into a field, but on landing the nose gear collapsed. The pilot had only previously conducted day VFR flights and did not have any navigation aids or

a functioning radio in the aircraft, so he was reliant on visual navigation, map, compass and stop watch.

History of the flight

The pilot had recently completed about six hours of familiarisation training in the Rans S6. He had already completed some circuit work and his intention was to conduct a local flight in the vicinity of the Sutton Meadows airfield, Cambridgeshire. Prior to the flight he had checked the weather conditions by referring to the BBC weather forecast and calling RAF Wattisham, which declared a wind from the south west at 11kt, a visibility of 30 km and mostly cloudy. The pilot's observation at Sutton Meadows was a wind from 240° at 10 kt, 15 km visibility with overcast cloud having a cloud base of

2,000 ft and a QNH of 1010 mb and falling. There had been some recent rain but this had cleared. The pilot took off at about 1700 hrs without incident and climbed to 2,000 ft above the airfield before heading south.

On approaching Willingham, Cambridgeshire, the pilot observed a reducing cloud base. He turned the aircraft at Willingham, but during this manoeuvre it started to rain heavily and the visibility reduced. The pilot rolled out on his intended heading, but due to the reduced visibility he became disorientated but was able to continue flying on his planned heading. After continuing in straight and level flight for an hour and 20 minutes he found that he was now unsure of his position. The aircraft was not equipped with any navigation aids and the radio was unserviceable, so the pilot was reliant on visual navigation and use of a map, compass and stop watch. Having decided that he was now totally lost, the pilot located a suitable field and carried out a successful precautionary landing.

The pilot calculated his position and found that he was in a field just north of Swaffham, Norfolk. He decided that he was now able to continue the flight and planned to return to Sutton Meadows. He took off from the field and, after about 40 minutes of flight, he became lost again, so he conducted another successful precautionary landing in a field. He re-calculated his position as now being in a field at Eriswell to the west of Thetford, Norfolk. His next plan was to continue with the flight and then to land at Newmarket Heath airfield, Suffolk, after which he would continue the flight back to Sutton Meadows.

The pilot took off from this second field but he flew straight into worsening weather conditions. He then realised he only had about 6 litres of fuel left so he started to select fields for a third precautionary landing. The

majority of the selected fields contained crops, which only became visible during the final approach. On two occasions, due to the crops, the pilot aborted the approach and selected another field. Eventually the pilot selected a field containing a flax seed crop and this time landed. On landing the nose landing gear collapsed, causing the propeller to strike the ground before the aircraft finally came to rest. There was no fire and the uninjured pilot exited the aircraft normally.

An aftercast was obtained from the Met Office for the day of the accident. At 1800 hrs the UK was within a broad warm sector with areas of rain and drizzle affecting East Anglia. Between 1730 hrs and 2030 hrs the area flown through by G-BYOT was affected by a region of moderate precipitation moving to the east. This region of precipitation caused a reduction in visibility to between 1,900 m and 2,400 m. The cloud, during the rain showers that occurred in this period, was reported as being scattered or broken with a cloud base as low as 600 ft amsl, but in general the cloud was reported as being broken and varying between 1,600 ft amsl and 5,000 ft amsl.

The pilot, in a full and frank statement, admitted that he should not have flown out of the circuit that day, due to the prevailing weather conditions. He also commented that the majority of his decisions that day were errors of judgement. During his training the pilot had never conducted any instrument flying, with all his flying being conducted in day VFR conditions.