

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-32-300, G-BAXJ	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming IO-540-K1A5 piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1970	
Date & Time (UTC):	25 March 2007 at 1325 hrs	
Location:	Old Buckenham Airfield, Norfolk	
Type of Flight:	Aerial Work	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - Nil
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Landing gear destroyed, propeller blades bent, damage to the wings and fuselage	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	62 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	2,418 hours (of which 1,000 were on type) Last 90 days - 43 hours Last 28 days - 22 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and inspection by an insurance loss adjustor	

Synopsis

Commencing a descent after a parachute drop, the pilot became aware, at 500 ft, that the engine had failed. Lacking the height to make it to the airfield, he decided to land in an undershoot field where the impact resulted in substantial damage to the aircraft.

History of the flight

Following a parachute drop the pilot commenced a descent to land on Runway 07. The descent was uneventful and the approach and landing checks were completed. At about 500 feet the pilot applied a small increase of the throttle and became aware that the engine was not responding and had failed. He changed fuel

tanks and checked that the auxiliary pumps were still selected ON (part of the approach and landing checks) but there was no response from the engine. He retracted the first stage of flap and thought that he might be able to land on the runway but realising that he did not have sufficient height, he elected to land in an undershoot field. Unfortunately, the intended touch-down area was traversed by a ditch. The pilot raised the aircraft's nose and cleared the ditch but, because the airspeed was low, the aircraft impacted the ground heavily on the other side. The ground was of a heavy clay-type soil and the aircraft came to a halt very rapidly, having collapsed all three landing gear legs.

The accident site was quickly attended by the airfield's fire crew but there was no fire. The pilot asked the fire crew to check the aircraft's fuel state and they found that there was fuel present in both wing tanks. The fuel state was low and the aircraft would have required refuelling prior to the next flight but, in the pilot's estimation, there was a total of approximately 30 litres in the two tanks.

At no time during the aircraft's descent or approach did the pilot notice that the engine had failed; there had been no detectable coughing or spluttering.

Engineering examination

During the recovery of the aircraft an engineer noted that there was fuel present in both tanks, that there was oil

in the engine and that the engine appeared to be free to rotate. An insurance loss adjustor inspected the aircraft some days after it had been removed from the accident site and he confirmed that there was fuel in both tanks, oil in the engine and that the engine was free to turn. He saw no evidence of a major engine mechanical failure or major engine oil loss. It was not apparent what had caused the loss of power.

Icing

The engine fitted to this aircraft has a fuel injection system which, for the weather conditions on the day, would not have been affected by icing.