

Piper PA-23-250, G-ZSFT, 1 July 1996

AAIB Bulletin No: 8/96 Ref: EW/G96/07/01 Category: 1.2

Aircraft Type and Registration: Piper PA-23-250, G-ZSFT

No & Type of Engines: 2 Lycoming IO-540-C4B5 piston engines

Year of Manufacture: 1979

Date & Time (UTC): 1 July 1996 at 1707 hrs

Location: Southampton Eastleigh Airport

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 1

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: Left propeller scrapped. Left engine shock loaded

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 34 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 2,686 hours (of which 345 hours were on type)

Last 90 days - 102 hours

Last 28 days - 50 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and enquiries by the AAIB

The pilot arrived at Bournemouth with a companion for some planned flying. He intended to fly to Southampton where he would collect three other friends, fly to Cherbourg and then back to Bournemouth; he submitted flight plans for the cross channel flights. After a normal pre-flight external check which revealed G-ZSFT to be fully serviceable, the pilot carried out an uneventful flight to Southampton. The weather was good with a surface wind of 260°/12kt. There was no indication of any engine abnormality during take off, cruise or landing. After a short break at Southampton to complete administration and meet his friends, the pilot started his normal pre-flight checks. During these, he noticed that the left propeller had sustained some damage. His assessment of the damage was that the tip of one blade was bent to a length of 2 inches and offset 1/2 inch and the other blade had two nicks each approximately 1/3 inch deep and 1/3 inch wide. However, the pilot considered that this damage would not preclude flight. He noted no vibration after start or during his power checks, including a full power check prior to take off. The flight to Cherbourg was

uneventful and after landing, the engines were shut down and the pilot completed some administration for his return journey. He carried out another inspection of the left propeller and noted no additional damage. Accompanied by his friends, he then flew back to Bournemouth.

That evening, a company engineer recognised the extent of the damage and enquiries were initiated to identify the possible source of the damage. The pilot considered that it was probably caused while taxiing at Southampton; the next day, on the taxi-way that G-ZSFT had used, a light cover was found broken. Although the pilot considered that this may have been the source of the propeller damage, ATC considered that the broken light cover could also have been caused by grass cutting which was in operation that day. Regardless of where the damage occurred, the pilot subsequently acknowledged his unwise decision to fly the aircraft on two further flights without engineering advice.