

No: 8/90

Ref: EW/G90/06/07

Category: 1c

Aircraft Type and Registration: Piper PA-28-151, G-BELP

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming O-320-E3D piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1976

Date and Time (UTC): 10 June 1990 at 1420 hrs

Location: Coll (Ballard), The Hebrides, Scotland

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 3

Injuries: Crew - 1 (minor) Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: Major structural damage consistent with slow speed, nose-down impact

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence with IMC and Night ratings

Commander's Age: 44 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 203 hours (of which 33 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft, on private-hire, had been flown from Newcastle to Mull. Because the operator demanded that the aircraft be flown for a minimum of 4 hours per day, and the intended flight to Mull and back took only 4-5 hours over the planned two day period, the hirer (the pilot) agreed to carry out some excursion flying from Mull to Coll and/or Tiree during his stay. To this end, he made a serious attempt to brief for this proposed flight, but was considerably frustrated by sometimes incorrect and mostly inadequate data published in the appropriate documents. The most significant of the omissions was the fact that the runway at Coll has approximately a 1½% up-slope and the threshold to the (into wind) runway 29 is preceded by some rocky hills. Furthermore the airfield is located on a grassy slope within a hollow and is surrounded by fences. None of this information was imparted to the pilot by either the documents or in telephone conversation with various local authorities.

The weather was fully VMC and the flight to Coll took 30 minutes. From the overhead position, the airfield looked neat and level and, although the windsock was obviously not serviceable, the pilot judged from the sea state that the wind was from approximately 320° at 10-12 knots, suggesting the use of runway 29. Because of the rocky outcrops very close to the threshold, the final approach was rather steep and the aircraft skidded after touchdown and made light contact with the fence at the end of the runway, sustaining only very superficial damage. The nosewheel fairing had cracked and there was an

indentation, 5 cm long and 1 cm deep, some 20 cm from the left wingtip. The remainder of the airframe and the propeller were untouched. The pilot attributes the skid to the fact that, although the grass at the middle section of the runway was short and dry, at each end it was long and wet.

The pilot decided to test-fly the aircraft and familiarise himself with the airfield, bearing in mind that he had used only 400 m for the take-off at Mull, when the aircraft was more loaded with fuel, and the runway at Coll was 434 m long. He carried out three take-offs, using both runway 29 and 11, and selected 29 for his eventual departure as it was into wind and offered 50 m of grass stopway beyond the fence.

The wind had backed and strengthened to about 310°/10-15 kt and, having loaded aboard his three passengers (approximately 350 lb), the aircraft took off in the 'short field configuration', using the full runway length available. The stall warning was not heard but, a few seconds after lift-off, there was a slight thud and the aircraft started to bank 15° to the left. The pilot, keeping his eyes on the flight instruments and maintaining full engine power, was unable to correct this using aileron and so applied full right rudder and added one stage of flap. The aircraft completed a 180° turn and struck a wire fence, bordering a road beside the airfield, before impacting the ground in a 30° nose-down attitude. All the safety harnesses withstood the impact and the occupants left the aircraft through the main door. There was no fire.

The pilot has since stated that the left stabilator had been distorted and had jammed and that, although he could not explain it, the ailerons appeared to have jammed also.