

Piper PA-30, G-ASRH

AAIB Bulletin No: 1/2002	Ref: EW/G2001/05/14	Category: 1.3
Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-30, G-ASRH	
No & Type of Engines:	2 Lycoming IO-320-B1A piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1964	
Date & Time (UTC):	11 May 2001 at 1100 hrs	
Location:	12 nm west of Blackpool, in the sea	
Type of Flight:	Private (Ferry flight)	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Destroyed (submerged)	
Commander's Licence:	Commercial Pilots Licence	
Commander's Age:	56 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	8,595 hours (of which 1,175 were on type) Last 90 days - 102 hours Last 28 days - 34 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquiries by AAIB	

The aircraft's last recorded flight was on 10 June 1997 and its Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) expired on 13 March 1999. In order to have its C of A (private category) renewed the aircraft had to be flown to a maintenance organisation in Blackpool. For this ferry flight to be approved the aircraft had to be issued with a permit to fly. Engineers from the Blackpool based company travelled to the Isle of Man to carry out the extensive engineering work required to prepare the aircraft for flight and for the issue of its permit. Work was carried out on both engines and included

checks on cylinder compression, magneto timing, oil levels and condition, fuel system purging, and battery replacement. Engine ground runs were then carried out and as a result of poor engine performance the left engine No 3 cylinder was replaced. Eventually, on 9 May 2001, the aircraft was cleared for 'one flight only to Blackpool direct' with the landing gear extended.

On 11 May 2001 the pilot gave the aircraft a full pre-flight inspection, started the engines and was cleared to taxi for a departure from runway 08. Power checks, including checks of the propeller constant speed units (CSUs) were carried out at the holding point. The aircraft departed at 0915 hrs making a left turn to clear to the north of the airfield. The aircraft was then flown to a position near the coast for checks to be carried out on the aircraft's handling qualities, its systems and engines. The weather was fine with a surface wind of 070°/11 kt, CAVOK, temperature 16°C, dewpoint 09°C and a QNH 1021 mb.

Satisfied that the aircraft was performing normally the pilot set course for Blackpool at an altitude of 2000 feet. The flight progressed normally until the aircraft was approximately 12 nm west of Blackpool. At this point (0950 hrs) the left engine began to gradually lose power. The necessary checks were completed but power could not be restored so the pilot decided to feather the left propeller and shutdown the engine. The pilot advised the Blackpool radar controller, who was providing him with a Radar Information Service (RIS) at the time, that he had a problem with his left engine but did not wish to declare an emergency as he was able to maintain altitude. Three minutes later, at 0953 hrs, the pilot declared an emergency as his left engine was shut down and his right engine was now losing power. Checklist actions and systems analysis again failed to restore power.

Committed to a ditching the pilot carried out all the necessary checks paying particular attention to survival equipment and emergency exits. During the descent he donned his life jacket and placed a second jacket on the seat beside him. The radar controller initiated emergency action and informed the Warton radar controller of the situation.

Seconds before making contact with the sea the pilot unlatched the cabin door / emergency exit and again confirmed that both engines were secure and propellers feathered. He reported that impact (carried out with flaps retracted and gear up) with the sea was 'remarkably light with the aircraft settling slightly nose down in the water with the fuselage and wings intact and above the surface'. The pilot exited the aircraft, inflated both life jackets and walked along the wing. The aircraft remained afloat for 3 to 4 minutes at which time the pilot entered the water and was clear of the aircraft before it finally submerged.

The Warton radar controller had noted the aircraft's last displayed radar position and vectored an airborne helicopter that located the wreckage and the pilot in the water. By 1024 hrs, 15 minutes from entering the water, the pilot was rescued by a fast rescue craft from a rig standby vessel. The pilot was unharmed but was later flown to a mainland hospital as a precaution.

Further investigation as to the cause of the total power loss could not be carried out as the wreckage was not recovered from the sea.