

Piper PA-25-235 Pawnee D, G-BEII

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INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-25-235 Pawnee D, G-BEII
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-540-B2C5 piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	1976
Date & Time (UTC):	5 March 2000 at 1430 hrs
Location:	Eggborough, South of Selby, N Yorks
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew 1 - Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew None - Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Loss of tailwheel assembly
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	N/A
Commander's Flying Experience:	780 hours (of which 380 are in gliders) Last 90 days - N/A Last 28 days - N/A

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by gliding club

G-BEII had returned from its Annual Inspection on Friday 3 March and on the following day completed some 15 to 20 aerotows. After about 10 tows on Sunday 5 March the pilot of the glider being towed saw the tailwheel assembly drop away from the tug aircraft and fall towards the earth. This occurred at 3,500 feet and the tug pilot was unaware of the loss until he landed on the runway, when he heard a scraping sound after landing. As G-BEII slowed, it appeared that the noise was coming from the rear of the aircraft. The pilot thought that the tailwheel tyre was flat so he taxied carefully and was surprised to find that the tyre, wheel and fork assembly were all missing. The missing parts have not been found.

In the PA25 Pawnee aircraft, the tailwheel design is very similar to that in a PA18 Super Cub. The tailwheel itself is held in a fork assembly that allows the wheel to castor under taxiing conditions. This castoring fork is secured to its stationary fitting by a vertical spindle with, at its lower end, a castellated nut and split pin. With an inflated tyre in place, the nut and split pin would not normally be visible.

The Annual Inspection had not shown that any work was necessary in the area of the tailwheel other than servicing of the wheel itself, which would be performed without removing the fork. There is no ready explanation for this occurrence but the possibilities exist that, at some previous maintenance input, the split pin had been inadvertently left out during re-assembly or that, at a later time, the split pin had been deliberately removed.

