

## ACCIDENT

<b>Aircraft Type and Registration:</b>	Europa, G-RICS	
<b>No &amp; Type of Engines:</b>	1 Subaru EA81 piston engine	
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	1997	
<b>Date &amp; Time (UTC):</b>	10 May 2008 at 1710 hrs	
<b>Location:</b>	Wellcross Farm, Horsham, West Sussex	
<b>Type of Flight:</b>	Private	
<b>Persons on Board:</b>	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
<b>Injuries:</b>	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
<b>Nature of Damage:</b>	Broken undercarriage leg and propeller strike	
<b>Commander's Licence:</b>	National Private Pilot's Licence	
<b>Commander's Age:</b>	62 years	
<b>Commander's Flying Experience:</b>	250 hours (of which 130 were on type) Last 90 days - 4 hours Last 28 days - 4 hours	
<b>Information Source:</b>	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

## Synopsis

The aircraft touched down well beyond the threshold on a short grass strip. During the landing roll the pilot lost directional control and the aircraft went into a ditch.

## History of the flight

The aircraft was built in 1998 from a kit, and originally had a mono-wheel undercarriage; later that year it was modified to have a conventional tricycle undercarriage in a tail-wheel configuration. The aircraft was described by experienced pilots who had flown it as 'being an aircraft which needed careful handling on the ground, particularly at speeds below 40 kt.'

On 10 May 2008 the pilot flew the aircraft from Old Sarum, Salisbury, and joined the circuit pattern

for Runway 22 at Wellcross Farm. Runway 22 was 650 m long by 40 m wide and its surface was short grass. The runway was on a hill, with its highest point being approximately the runway midpoint. The weather conditions were described as good with a light and variable wind.

The aircraft was positioned onto its final approach and the pilot noted that the airspeed was 10 kt faster than the normal approach speed and that the approach path was also steeper than usual. He selected full flap and reduced the power to idle, but was still unable to touch down where he intended, so he accepted a landing point further down the runway. As he flared the aircraft to land the airspeed was still between 5 and 10 kt fast and

the aircraft floated for some distance before touching down; it then bounced and became airborne again. The aircraft finally landed with what the pilot estimated was about 200 m remaining, and he applied the brakes. The aircraft yawed to the right then rapidly to the left. The pilot was unable to control the aircraft's direction and it slid into a drainage ditch at approximately 10 kt. The aircraft's undercarriage and propeller were damaged.

The pilot considered that the cause of the accident was his unstable approach and touching down beyond his normal touchdown point with a higher than normal airspeed. He also considered that the high temperatures and a light tailwind may have been contributory factors.

#### **Comment**

CAA Safety Sense Leaflet No 1 (*'Good Airmanship Guide'*) states that a good landing is the result of a good

approach. If the approach is poor, the pilot should make an early decision and go-around. Pilots should plan to touch down at the correct speed, close to the runway threshold, and should go around if not solidly 'on' in the first third of the runway.

A tail-wheel undercarriage configuration is generally more difficult to control on the ground than a conventional tricycle undercarriage configuration, because the center of mass is located behind the front landing gear. It seems that, in this case, the pilot lost directional control whilst attempting to stop the aircraft in less than his normal stopping distance.