

Extra EA 300, G-IIZI

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Aircraft Type and Registration: Extra EA 300, G-IIZI

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming AEIO-540-L1B5 piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1992

Date & Time (UTC): 16 April 2000 at 1400 hrs

Location: 5 miles south of Yeovil, Somerset

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 - Passengers - 1

Injuries: Crew - None - Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: Canopy detached. Minor additional damage to G-IIZI and to accompanying aircraft

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 38 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 589 hours (of which 85 were on type)

Last 90 days - 10 hours

Last 28 days - 4 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft had taken off from Henstridge and was being flown at approximately 6,000 feet and 110 kt some 5 nm south of Yeovil, with another aeroplane in close formation to starboard. The pilot states that the aircraft was in a moderate 'wings level' sideslip to the left (that is, with the relative wind from the left) when suddenly, and without warning, the canopy detached. The pilot and his passenger had been flying for some 50 minutes and had previously executed a similar manoeuvre at least once, turning through at least 180°. The pilot recalls that, at the point the canopy detached, he was using between one quarter and one third right rudder.

After the canopy detached the aircraft remained controllable, although the pilot had difficulty seeing the instruments. He could, however, discern the horizon and initiated a descent, at minimum airspeed, and turned towards Yeovil, the nearest airfield. The passenger, in the front seat, was able to shelter from the slipstream by ducking down behind the coaming and the pilot was able to land on the westerly runway at Yeovil without further incident.

The canopy on this aircraft is hinged on the right-hand side and, after landing, the pilot found that the right-hand rail of the canopy frame had remained attached at its hinges, with a few jagged pieces of perspex. The left-hand side of the canopy frame, which carries the three latches, had broken away, with most of the perspex bubble. The pilot of the aeroplane in formation reported that the canopy had disintegrated "like an ejection seat" and he had heard a muffled thud as debris hit his aircraft. Later inspection showed minor damage to one propeller blade, a landing gear leg and the tailplane of this accompanying aircraft.

The pilot of G-IIZI comments that he cannot say with certainty what happened. Neither his passenger nor he received any injury. As the hinged side of the canopy frame remained attached to the aircraft, and there was no perspex debris in the aircraft, he comments that it seems likely that the canopy opened. He further comments that, as the canopy has three latches, it is unlikely that there was a material failure and the only conclusion left is that somehow the canopy was inadvertently unlatched. It has been confirmed by the aircraft manufacturer that, since the start of production of the various models of Extra 300, the manufacturer has not been made aware of any structural failure of the canopy or the latching mechanism.