

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-28-140 Cherokee, G-KATS
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-320-E2A piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	1972
Date & Time (UTC):	27 July 2012 at 1145 hrs
Location:	Eastbach (Spence) Airfield, near Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - 1 (minor) Passengers - 1 (minor)
Nature of Damage:	The aircraft was destroyed by fire
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	51 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	544 hours (of which 242 were on type) Last 90 days - 37 hours Last 28 days - 16 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

Synopsis

Whilst landing on a grass strip, the aircraft bounced and floated before touching down again. The pilot judged that there was insufficient distance in which to stop safely and abandoned the landing. During the go-around, the aircraft struck a hedge at the far end of the strip and crashed in the field beyond. The aircraft was destroyed by fire, while its occupants suffered minor injuries.

History of the flight

The aircraft took off from Ledbury at 1130 hrs for the short flight to Eastbach (Spence) Airfield. Conditions were fine, with a light wind of about 5 kt from the north-west. The pilot intended landing on grass Runway 19, which was 470 m long with an upward slope. At the end of the short flight, which was

uneventful, the pilot flew a preliminary circuit to check the wind and the presence of obstacles. The wind sock indicated calm conditions and trees were seen on the approach to the runway.

The pilot reported that the approach appeared normal and was flown at 55 kt IAS, with full flap set. However, the touchdown was heavy and the aircraft bounced and floated for a distance, before touching down again. The pilot judged that the aircraft would not stop before the hedge at the end of the runway and decided to abandon the landing. He applied full power and retracted one stage of flap. During the go-around, the aircraft struck the top of the hedge.

The left wing was torn off and the remainder of the aircraft continued into the field beyond, coming to rest on its left side. It immediately caught fire, with flames entering the cabin. Although the cabin door (on the right side of the fuselage) was successfully unlatched, the occupants were unable to reach up to open it due to the attitude of the aircraft. The pilot, therefore, kicked the windscreen transparency out, helped his passenger out through the gap and then vacated the aircraft himself, before alerting the emergency services by mobile telephone. The pilot and his passenger sustained minor injuries but the aircraft was destroyed by the fire.

The pilot thought that the trees near the strip had caused him to approach steeper than he otherwise would, which contributed to a misjudged flare and the heavy landing. Although the windsock indicated calm conditions, it was also likely that any wind there may have been would have been a tailwind. He observed that the failure to clear the hedge was ultimately due to a slightly late decision to go-around.