

Jabiru SK, G-BXAO

AAIB Bulletin No: 7/98 Ref: EW/G98/05/02 Category: 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Jabiru SK, G-BXAO

No & Type of Engines: 1 Jabiru Aircraft PTY 2200A piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1997

Date & Time (UTC): 3 May 1998 at 1350 hrs

Location: Nr Ledicot, Hereford & Worcester

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 - Passengers - 1

Injuries: Crew - Minor - Passengers - Minor

Nature of Damage: Beyond economic repair

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 60 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 633 hours (of which 9 were on type)
Last 90 days - 21 hours
Last 28 days - 16 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and telephone enquiries by the AAIB

After take off from Shobdon the right hand side of the top engine cowl became loose and lifted off its seating, remaining attached by the left side pin and clip. As it lifted it caught the propeller, causing minor damage to the leading edge of the tip. The flapping cowl restricted the pilot's view and caused significant drag, affecting the control of the aircraft. It was not possible to climb and the aircraft remained at about 100 feet on the extended runway centreline. The pilot transmitted that he was going to make a left circuit, but as the turn started, the left wing dropped and the aircraft appeared to stall, crashing into an orchard containing young apple trees. The pilot of a following Robinson R22 witnessed the accident, landed in an adjoining field and after running to the aircraft turned off the battery master switch and fuel cock. Despite considerable damage to the fuselage both occupants sustained relatively minor injuries and were able to walk from the aircraft when the ambulance arrived.

The engine top cowl is a one-piece construction, secured on either side by an overcentre latch to which an 'R' clip is then fitted as a safety device. The cowl had been opened before flight and, although the latch had been found closed with the clip fitted after the accident, there is a strong possibility that the latch had not been engaged over the corresponding attachment on the bottom cowl. It was reported that in this configuration the top cowl can appear to be flush when given a cursory inspection, but is in fact insecure.

The prevalence of this type of accident has caused the manufacturer to produce a modification designed to prevent the cowl from opening in this event. The modification became available shortly before this accident and will initially be offered to kit builders. The UK distributor intends to notify other owners through the PFA, and to give additional publicity to the need for careful attention to the security of these latches during the pre-flight inspection by an article in their Newsletter.