

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Taylorcraft F-22, G-BVOX	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-235-L2C piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1991	
Date & Time (UTC):	3 July 2010 at 0945 hrs	
Location:	Orchard Farm Airstrip, Sittingbourne, Kent	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Substantial	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	50 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	325 hours (of which 246 were on type) Last 90 days - 14 hours Last 28 days - 6 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

Whilst landing at a farm strip the aircraft departed the runway and collided with a hedge. The pilot and passenger were uninjured but the aircraft was substantially damaged.

History of the flight

The 600 m long grass runway, orientated 120°/300°, slopes upwards in the runway 12 direction. There are trees, approximately 7 m tall, at the start of runway direction 30 and a hedge and overhead power line at the start of runway direction 12. The terrain surrounding the farm strip includes a small but steep valley perpendicular to the approach to runway direction 12, which is noted for causing unpredictable turbulence when the wind is blowing from a northerly to westerly direction. There

was no windsock. The pilot had made five landings at the farm strip over four previous visits.

The wind was from 280° at 10 kt and the pilot had intended to land into wind on runway direction 30 but decided, due to the trees at the threshold and the downslope of the runway, to reposition for a landing on runway direction 12. During the approach, the aircraft drifted left and he corrected this by increasing power and crabbing to the right to regain the intended approach path. The aircraft then drifted to the right of the runway during the flare. He partially corrected so the touchdown was on the runway but the aircraft was not aligned with the runway direction and he was unable to prevent it departing to the left and colliding with a hedge.

Discussion

The pilot made a decision to accept a tailwind to take advantage of the upslope and clearer approach of runway direction 12. However, the local variations in wind strength and direction appear to have been greater than he anticipated leading to the loss of control. In this case, accepting a tailwind instead of a headwind meant a 40% increase in groundspeed at touchdown.

The pilot candidly commented that flying to farm strips requires a great deal more preparation and thought

than licensed airfields. In particular the interaction between the prevailing weather conditions and the local landscape needs to be carefully considered during planning and execution phases of the flight.

The CAA Safety Sense Leaflet, Number 12, *Strip Flying*, contains useful information and guidance on operating from small unlicensed strips