

Aircraft type and registration:	Piper PA 44-180 (Seminole), G-BGSG (light twin engine fixed wing aircraft)
Year of manufacture:	1979
Date and time (GMT):	24 September 1983 at 0923 hrs
Location:	Southampton Airport
Type of flight:	Private
Persons on board:	Crew — 1 Passengers — 1
Injuries:	Crew — Nil Passengers — Nil
Nature of damage:	Damage to front nose cone and nose wheel
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	47 years
Commander's total flying experience:	481 hours (of which 132 hours were on type)

The aircraft took off in the early morning from Halfpenny Green Aerodrome for a flight to Southampton. Although the outside of the windscreen had been cleaned during the pre-flight checks, some moisture had returned by the time that the aircraft was ready for departure but the pilot believed this would clear during the take-off. During the take-off run the aircraft veered off the left side of the runway but the pilot decided to continue as he believed there were no obstructions on that part of the aerodrome. During the rotation an impact was felt on the nosewheel. The pilot was able to establish when airborne that the nose gear had successfully retracted but although two circuits of the aerodrome were made, it proved impossible to identify any object which might have been struck.

The aircraft continued to its destination at Southampton Airport but on approaching the aerodrome the pilot discovered that the nose gear would not lower even after the emergency system had been used. This was confirmed by visual inspection when the aircraft flew past the control tower. The pilot decided to fly over the Isle of Wight in order to use up excess fuel and he then returned to carry out a landing on the main gear only on the grass alongside runway 03. Just before touchdown he stopped both engines thereby reducing the extent of the damage as the aircraft subsided onto its nose section.

It was later discovered that impact between the nose gear and the cover on one of the aerodrome lights at Halfpenny Green had sheared the oil pipe union on the nose gear cylinder.