

Pitts S-1S, G-IIIX

AAIB Bulletin No: 7/99 Ref: EW/G99/05/26 Category: 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Pitts S-1S, G-IIIX

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming O-360-A4A piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1969

Date & Time (UTC): 7 May 1999 at 1500 hrs

Location: Derby Airfield, Derbyshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 - Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - None - Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Airframe damage including crack in top right main spar

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence with FAA Instrument Rating

Commander's Age: 41 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 763 hours (of which 44 were on type)

Last 90 days - 21 hours

Last 28 days - 21 hours

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

The pilot was flying from Brighton Airfield via Derby to Welshpool Airfield. Prior to flight, he had checked the forecast weather for his route. This indicated a surface wind of 140°/10 kt, visibility of 5,000 metres and lowest cloud base of 3,000 feet agl reducing to 1,500 feet agl in showers. En-route, the pilot encountered rapidly deteriorating weather. With the cloud base reduced to an estimated 500 feet agl and in heavy rain, he decided to divert to Derby Airfield.

On initial contact with Derby Radio, the radio operator could see and hear the aircraft and transmitted advisory headings to enable the pilot to acquire the airfield visually. Once he did so, the pilot positioned G-IIIX for a landing on Runway 23. This is a grass runway, with a displaced threshold due to trees on the approach, and a Landing Distance Available (LDA) of 341 metres. The surface wind was 200°/7 kt and it was raining heavily. The pilot made a go-around from his first approach and carried out a left-hand circuit for another approach. On touchdown, he quickly realised that his braking appeared ineffective and, anticipating an overrun, he switched off the magnetos; because of the poor weather, he had decided not to initiate another go-around. The

aircraft entered the undergrowth at the end of the runway, the tail lifted and G-IIIIX slowly toppled onto its back. The pilot evacuated from the aircraft without difficulty.

External observers at the airfield considered that the aircraft landed well past the threshold of the runway. The pilot later stated that he should have planned and flown his approach to use the runway undershoot to extend his landing run.