

No: 5/85

Ref: EW/G85/03/04

Aircraft type and registration: Reims Cessna FR 172J G-BCTK (light single engined fixed wing aircraft)

Year of Manufacture: 1975

Date and time (GMT): 25 March 1985 at 1800 hrs

Location: St Ives, Cornwall

Type of flight: Private (pleasure)

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — 1

Injuries: Crew — None Passengers — None

Nature of damage: Extensive to engine, propeller, tail, fuselage, wings, and nose wheel

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 39 years

Commander's total flying experience: 343 hours (of which 56 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by pilot.

The aircraft was just completing a flight from the Isles of Scilly to a landing strip near St Ives when, after letting down from 1500 ft to approximately 500 ft and when on base leg, the engine failed. The pilot immediately changed heading direct to the landing strip, but found it necessary to raise the aircraft's nose to clear some trees on to the south-west corner of the airfield. As a result of speed loss from this manoeuvre the aircraft stalled when about 25 feet above the runway. It struck the ground tail first before pitching over onto its back. There was no fire. The pilot reported that at the time of the accident 150 lbs of fuel were on board the aircraft.

Subsequent investigation by the pilot into the cause of the engine failure revealed a significant quantity of water in the fuel lines to the engine, and evidence of water in the left fuel tank.

Prior to this flight the pilot reported the aircraft had been parked, with both tanks approximately half full, on a slope with the right wing lowermost. During this time an imbalance in the tank fuel quantities had arisen by, he considered, fuel transference through the tanks vent system.

Due to weight considerations the pilot elected not to refill the depleted tank, knowing that there would be sufficient fuel on board for the intended flight. In retrospect, he considers that there was insufficient fuel in the depleted tank to carry out a satisfactory pre-flight water drain check.