

No: 8/92

Ref: EW/G92/05/27

Category: 3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Thruster T300, G-MTZD

No & Type of Engines: 1 Rotax 532 piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1989

Date & Time (UTC): 25 May 1992 at 1445 hrs

Location: Popham Airfield, Hampshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 1

Injuries: Crew - Minor Passengers - Serious

Nature of Damage: Thruster - broken wing, propeller and right mainwheel
ARV Super 2 - shattered canopy, crushed leading edges on both wings, dented engine cowling
Robin DR200/120 - Minor dent in leading edge of right wing tip

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence (Aeroplane Group D)

Commander's Age: 44 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 37 hours (all on type)
Last 90 days - 5 hours
Last 28 days - 2 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot plus site visit by AAIB Inspector

The weather at Popham was fine and sunny. The surface wind was southerly at about 12 kt mean speed but with frequent stronger gusts. Visibility was good and there was scattered cumulus cloud well above circuit height. The pilot, who was a member of the group which owned the Thruster, had acquired his licence about four months before the accident.

The pilot and his passenger commenced take-off from Popham's grass runway 08. Just after the aircraft took off, a crosswind gust lifted the right wing and the aircraft turned towards a line of parked aircraft on the left side of the runway. Although the pilot attempted to correct the undemanded roll and yaw, he was unable to prevent the Thruster from striking an ARV Super 2 and a Robin that were unoccupied and parked in their normal tie-down positions. The pilot sustained a bruised lip but his passenger was seriously injured and hospitalised for several days.

An eye-witness reported that the aircraft reached a height of about 30 feet after take-off before it banked steeply to the left and lost height in a left turn. The witness also saw a lot of wing-rocking and noted that the wind was "changing direction all the time".

There were two long, parallel tracks in the turf leading from the near the northern edge of the runway to the crash position; there was also grass lodged in the Thruster's left wingtip. The ground marks were undoubtedly made by the left wingtip and landing gear, and showed that the aircraft had been on the ground but out of control for at least the last 50 metres of its flight. The damage to all three aircraft indicated that the Thruster had been sliding sideways to its right when it hit the parked aircraft with sufficient force to collapse its right wing and to move the ARV backwards through about 5 metres. The ARV had been untied before impact and its pilot, who was standing near the tail when he saw the impending crash, was able to get clear of the area.

The southern boundary of Popham airfield is the A303 road. On the other side of the road there is extensive mature woodland which gives the runway some protection from southerly winds. Shortly after the accident, it was noted that the windsock near the centre of the airfield about 25 metres from the woodland was indicating a light wind whereas another windsock, by the threshold of runway 08 and about 100 metres from the woodland, was at the same time indicating a much stronger wind from the south.

Prior to the accident, the local Thruster club had suspended training flights because of the gusty, southerly wind. According to the club CFI, the Thruster's crosswind limit is 13 kt.