

**No:** 9/88

**Ref:** EW/G88/03/14

**Category:** 1c

**Aircraft Type and Registration:** Piper PA-30 Twin Comanche, G-AWBT

**No & Type of Engines:** 2 Lycoming IO-320-B1A piston engines

**Year of Manufacture:** 1967

**Date and Time (UTC):** 10 March 1988 at 1819 hrs

**Location:** Humberside Airport, South Humberside

**Type of Flight:** Private (pleasure)

**Persons on Board:** Crew -2                      Passengers -2

**Injuries:** Crew -None                      Passengers -None

**Nature of Damage:** Damage to propellers and underside of fuselage

**Commander's Licence:** Private Pilot's Licence (UK) and Air Transport Pilot's Licence (USA)

**Commander's Age:** 47 years

**Commander's Total Flying Experience:** 10,792 hours (of which 105 were on type)

**Information Source:** Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquiries by AAIB

The aircraft was due to arrive from Rotterdam on a VFR flight plan two minutes after nightfall. On first contact with Humberside ATC the pilot was given the weather and elected to land on runway 27. This runway was unlit and not available for night operations. At 1816 hrs the aerodrome/approach controller informed the pilot that it was now night and instructed him to land on runway 21, whereupon the pilot stated that he had a fuel fault and wished to land on runway 27. The controller then cleared him to make an emergency landing on runway 27. A special weather report made at 1820 hrs gave a surface wind of 270°/10 kts.

After the aircraft touched down the right main landing gear leg folded up. The occupants were able to leave the aircraft without assistance.

When the aircraft was inspected after the accident it was found that the right main gear side stay would not move overcentre to make a geometric lock necessary to lock the leg in the down position. In his report the pilot stated that he had a green landing gear down indication in the cockpit before the landing. The engineer who examined the aircraft after the accident could not be certain from the adjustment of the down microswitch that this switch could not have been made with the side stay unlocked, although, if it had been correctly adjusted it could not. The engineer also examined the fuel tanks and reported that the outboard tanks contained only enough fuel to wet the bottom of the tanks. The inner tanks had about three quarters of an inch of fuel depth in places but wrinkles in the tank bag were showing on the surface of the fuel.

The information given by the pilot in his accident report form was incomplete. Accordingly, he was asked to provide evidence of the aircraft fuel load and further information about the fuel fault that he reported to ATC. He has now stated, without supporting evidence, that he left Humberside for Rotterdam with full fuel tanks and that, on departure from Rotterdam, he had sufficient fuel for the flight to Humberside with 15 gallons in reserve. However, as he approached Humberside he began "to treat the fuel gauges with suspicion". He chose to land on the out-of-use runway rather than risk a possible hold and ILS approach to the runway in use but he did not pass this explanation to ATC. There was, however, no other traffic approaching Humberside at the time and there appears to be no reason why the pilot should not have flown a visual circuit and landing on the runway in use.

The pilot provided a second explanation for his decision to land on runway 27 rather than runway 21. He said "This landing started with our departure take-off..... the undercarriage retraction seemed to lack the smooth "clunk" I normally expected, yet nothing to raise any suspicious thoughts of trouble". He also implied that his choice was influenced by the fact that there was no crosswind on runway 27. However, he also stated that he believed his choice to be to the advantage of the airport because if he had landed on runway 21 he would have blocked the active runway.