

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Europa XS, G-KDCC	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 912 ULS piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	2007	
Date & Time (UTC):	23 October 2010 at 1130 hrs	
Location:	Private airstrip, Swards Hall Farm, Dunmow, Essex	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Damage to wings, propeller and fuselage	
Commander's Licence:	National Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	72 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	387 hours (of which 35 were on type) Last 90 days - None Last 28 days - None	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and subsequent AAIB enquiries	

Synopsis

On landing, the aircraft overran the runway and collided with a fence, sustaining damage. The pilot's lack of recent experience and his interaction with a passenger who was also a qualified pilot were identified as possible causes. His decisions to adopt a new landing technique and to land with a downwind component may also have contributed to the accident.

History of the flight

The aircraft was kept at a private airstrip near the owner's home. It had been repaired following a previous heavy landing, and immediately before the accident flight, a Light Aircraft Association (LAA) inspector carried out a check flight during which it performed satisfactorily.

The owner then wished to fly, but because he was not in recent practice (his last flight had been in April 2010), the inspector suggested he should take an experienced Europa pilot with him as a passenger, and he did so. The passenger was a qualified pilot, but not an instructor.

The weather was benign with good visibility and a light south-easterly wind. The pilot chose Runway 22 (approximately 500 metres long with a grass surface and a downhill gradient of 1:300) for takeoff, as the wind favoured it. After a flight lasting 20-30 minutes, the aircraft returned to the airstrip to land, and following a discussion with his passenger, the pilot chose Runway 04 for landing.

The pilot stated that previously he had found that closing the throttle just before the threshold and flaring for landing with one hand on the throttle, ready 'to arrest or retard any excess sinking' was a successful technique. He also reported that he had been told the throttle should not be closed for landing, and that the landing should be carried out with power applied. He reported that he employed this latter technique for the landing, and it resulted in too fast a landing speed.

When it became apparent that the landing was not going well, the passenger suggested a go-around. The pilot applied power but the aircraft impacted a fence at the end of the runway.

An eyewitness stated that he observed the approach, landing, and accident, and that he saw several pilot-induced oscillations on the approach.

Landing technique

The aircraft Owner's Manual stated:

'Smoothly reduce power over the threshold to flare and touch down at 45-50 kts (depending on weight) in a two point attitude (mainwheel and tail wheel together).'

Reporting of the accident

The pilot did not report the accident, although one witness stated that he was advised that he must do

so because the accident was serious. The AAIB was informed of the accident by a third party on 12 July 2011 and contacted the pilot, who then provided details.

Date of the accident

The pilot reported that the accident occurred on 13 November 2010. However, police logs showed that on 23 October 2010 officers had attended an accident to G-KDCC at the airstrip, the circumstances of which matched those reported. The aircraft insurance broker reported that the pilot telephoned the broker on 25 October 2010, stating that the aircraft had been involved in an accident and cancelling his policy. Accordingly, the AAIB records that the accident occurred on 23 October 2010.

Discussion

Several factors may have combined to cause this accident, including the interaction between pilot and passenger, the technique used by the pilot, the pilot's lack of recent experience on type, and the pilot's decision to land uphill but with a tailwind component. The Owner's Manual did not clarify whether to close the throttle or maintain some power during the landing.

Because the pilot had not completed three takeoffs and landings within the preceding 90 days, he should have flown either solo or with an instructor. An instructor may have been able to intervene appropriately to prevent the accident.