

**AAIB Bulletin No: 6/95**

**Ref: EW/G95/04/12**

**Category: 1.3**

**Aircraft Type and Registration:** Pitts S-1C Special, G-BUAW

**No & Type of Engines:** 1 Lycoming O-320 piston engine

**Year of Manufacture:** 1977

**Date & Time (UTC):** 16 April 1995 at 1840 hrs

**Location:** Norwich Airport

**Type of Flight:** Private

**Persons on Board:** Crew - 1                      Passengers - None

**Injuries:** Crew - None                      Passengers - N/A

**Nature of Damage:** Substantial damage to the entire aircraft

**Commander's Licence:** Private Pilot's Licence with Night Rating

**Commander's Age:** 48 years

**Commander's Flying Experience:** 840 hours (of which 86 were on type)  
Last 90 days - 5 hours  
Last 28 days - 3 hours

**Information Source:** Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft had just had inspection and fault rectification work completed resulting in the renewal of its permit to fly. The work included renewal of the brake discs and the tail leaf spring, as well as engine work and the addition of a carburettor air intake with filter. The pilot had then carried out ground engine runs and taxi trials, which were satisfactory. About one hour later he boarded the aircraft to fly it from Norwich back to Swanton Morley where it was based.

The wind was 360°/2 kt and during the taxi to the active Runway 09 the pilot had difficulty in keeping the aircraft within the confines of the taxiway, whilst zigzagging in order to allow forward visibility. He also states that, during the take-off roll, he overcorrected for some swing to the left as the tail lifted and, consequently, became airborne well to the right of the centreline. The climb out was normal and he levelled the aircraft into the cruise at 1,500 feet and set 2,450 RPM.

Three or four miles west southwest of Norwich, he noticed that the engine oil pressure had dropped from the normal 85 psi to about 45 psi and, a few moments later, to 40 psi, the lower limit of the gauged 'amber' sector. Although there appeared to be no physical indications of an oil leak, there was smoke and fumes in the cockpit, which the pilot cleared by opening the hood to the first notch. He then transmitted a 'MAYDAY' and requested a return to Norwich.

ATC cleared the aircraft to make a straight-in approach to Runway 09 and the pilot, maintaining 2,450 RPM, climbed gently to 1,800 feet where, at gliding distance from the runway he closed the throttle and made a glide approach to a gentle three point touchdown 200 to 300 metres past the threshold. He had already placed his feet on the rudders so as to cover the brake pedals, but the aircraft suddenly began to swing left and right and then to rock such that the right wing made contact with the runway. The aircraft then slewed to the left, breaking off the landing gear, and came to rest on the left side of the runway.

There was no fire and the pilot left the aircraft whilst the Emergency Services blanketed the area with foam to cover spilt fuel from the aircraft's damaged tank drains.

In a comprehensive report the pilot/owner could suggest no explanation for the low engine oil pressure, no leaks being apparent in post-accident examination. He thought it possible that the smoke and fumes in the cockpit emanated from oil spillage having occurred during maintenance. He reported that the aircraft had always been 'twitchy' in directional control on the ground. Since it was his normal practice to 'cover' the toe brakes during the landing manoeuvre, inadvertent or excessive braking in combination with the recently renewed brake disks may have accounted for the ground loop.