

AAIB Bulletin No: 7/95

Ref: EW/G95/04/06

Category: 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Morane Saulnier Rallye 150ST, G-BECD

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming O-320-E2A piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1976

Date & Time (UTC): 8 April 1995 at 1830 hrs

Location: Top Farm, Tadlow, Hertfordshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 1

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: Substantial to nose and main landing gear, propeller, engine cowling and underside of fuselage with shock loading to engine; damage beyond economic repair

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

Commander's Age: 43 years

Commander's Flying Experience: Approx 430 hours (of which approx 60 were on type)
Last 90 days - 6 hours
Last 28 days - 6 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The pilot was carrying out a normal 'short field' approach to grass Runway 33 at Top Farm. The runway, which is 380 metres long and 15 metres wide, was dry and the surface of short grass was firm. The weather was fine with a light northwesterly breeze, however, at the time of the approach the sun was setting and the haze layer was reducing visibility into sun to an estimated 4 km.

The pilot flared the aircraft with a view to touching down at the beginning of the runway. The main landing gear however contacted the surface in a field several metres before the threshold and 5 metres before a farm track and ridge surrounding the airfield. The aircraft bounced momentarily before the nose landing gear struck the ridge. On impact the nose gear collapsed and the aircraft slewed to the right before coming to rest approximately 25 metres from its initial touchdown point. The pilot and passenger, who were both wearing full safety harnesses, were uninjured.

The pilot reported that he had misjudged the final approach, which was flown in failing light conditions, due to lack of visual cues. The large flat freshly rolled featureless field on short finals, which had no trees or hedges, did not provide him with enough visual cues for height reference in the later stages of his approach.