

Piper PA-32-300, G-BADO

AAIB Bulletin No: 2/2001

Ref: EW/G2000/11/12 - Category: 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Piper PA-32-300, G-BADO

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming IO-540-K1A5 piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1971

Date & Time (UTC): 27 November 2000 at 1700 hrs

Location: Meppershall Airfield, Bedfordshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 - Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - None - Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Damaged beyond economic repair

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 51 years

Commander's Flying Experience 461 hours (of which 230 were on type)
Last 90 days - 22 hours
Last 28 days - 0 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft had been flown to Meppershall on 28 October for an annual inspection and new avionics installation. The pilot went to the airstrip on 25 November to collect it but it was not ready. While there, he did take the opportunity to check the runway condition; it was firm underfoot and he estimated the TORA to be 740 yards, about half the run he had calculated he would require.

When he returned to the strip, at about 1430 hrs on 27 November, the aircraft was ready and a ground run had been carried out. The pilot did a preflight check and started the engine. Almost immediately there was a considerable amount of smoke in the cockpit. He shutdown the engine and vacated the aircraft. The source of the smoke was traced to a trapped cable which was repaired.

By the time the repair had been completed it was night however, although the runway was unlit, the pilot decided that it would be safe to take off using the illumination from the aircraft landing light. At about 1715 hrs, he backtracked and lined up on Runway 20; the grass surface was wet and the

wind was 180°/10 kt; there was no other significant weather. He turned down the cockpit lighting and applied full power.

Although the pilot thought he was on the centreline, the aircraft was deviating to the left. The left wing tip struck the hedge to the left of the runway. The tip tank was ruptured and a fire started in the hedge. The left wing was torn off and the aircraft inverted before coming to rest in the road on the far side of the hedge.

The pilot selected the master switch off and vacated the aircraft through the windscreen; the door had jammed closed. He had been wearing lap and diagonal upper torso restraint and was uninjured in the accident.

In a full and frank report the pilot opined that the accident was caused by his attempt to take off at night from an unlit runway in an aircraft with only a single centre light.