

Europa, G-BWON, 6 February 1998

AAIB Bulletin No: 4/98 Ref: EW/G98/02/02 Category: 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Europa, G-BWON
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 912 piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	1997
Date & Time (UTC):	6 February 1998 at 1530 hrs
Location:	White Waltham Airfield, Berkshire
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 - Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - None - Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Crack in one propeller blade and small crack in cowling
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	65 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	423 hours (of which 15 were on type) Last 90 days - 7 hours Last 28 days - 7 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft was being operated from White Waltham, which has grass runways, on a local flight. The owner of the aircraft was in the left-hand seat and in the right-hand seat was a second pilot. The flight was for general flying practice.

The runway in use was 21, with a wind velocity of 205° at 12 kt. The owner comments that a normal powered approach was flown and that the aircraft touched down normally, some 70 yards from the runway threshold. The brakes were not applied and the aircraft ran normally for about 50 yards, when the landing gear retracted. The aircraft slid for a further 50 yards and yawed to the left just before coming to rest on the left-hand side of the runway. The owner shut down the aircraft systems and both occupants safely evacuated the aircraft.

The Europa is fitted with a large retractable main wheel on the fuselage centreline, a steerable tail wheel coupled to the rudder pedals and outriggers mounted on the wings. The main wheel

ismounted in a swinging arm arrangement and the wheel is retractedand extended by movement of the landing gear retraction lever. This lever moves in a slot, with detents at each end and thereis a safety latch at the extended position to ensure that theretractation lever will remain in the 'extended' detent.

The owner recalls lowering the landing gear but, with candour,could not later be sure that he had checked that the safety latchhad properly engaged. Given the bumpiness of this grass runway,he considered that it was possible that the safety latch had notfully engaged and that successive bumps had taken the main landinggear out of its 'over-centre' position and then pushed it upwardsto its retracted position.

This accident is similar to a previous Europa mishap at Kemblein January 1997 (AAIB Bulletin 3/97), where the landing gear hadbeen lowered but neither occupant could recall having checkedthat the safety latch had properly engaged. In discussing thataccident, the pilot-in-command had commented that the accidentserved as a reminder to check that a landing gear is not onlyselected down but also checked as indicating its locked down condition.