

No: 10/88

Ref: EW/G88/04/19

Category: 1c

Aircraft Type and Registration: Luton Minor LA4A, G-AWMN

No & Type of Engines: 1 Volkswagen 1800 piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1968

Date and Time (UTC): 1 April 1988 at 1205 hours

Location: near Gravesend, Kent

Type of Flight: Private (pleasure)

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Substantial to wings, fuselage and fin

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

Commander's Age: 24 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 146 hours (of which 12 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the Pilot and AAIB telephone enquiries of pilot

After conducting pre-flight checks on the aircraft the pilot took off from Rochester airfield bound for Stapleford airfield. Approximately 20 minutes into the flight while cruising at a height of about 1250 feet agl the engine totally lost power. The pilot had not been aware of any prior indications of a problem. He considered that the only area available for a forced landing was a nearby ploughed field, given an inherently poor aircraft glide performance.

At about 300 feet agl the engine started spasmodically to produce power, but this was not sufficient to arrest the descent. The approach to the field was over an area of housing and the aircraft touched down between one-half and one-third of the way along the field. Touchdown was normal, but the ground was very wet and soft and the wheels dug in as the aircraft slowed and it pitched forward onto its back. The pilot's harness, which included full upper torso restraint, held and, after releasing it, the pilot exited the aircraft without great difficulty. He was uninjured.

The pilot believed that contamination in the fuel causing blockage of the carburettor may have caused the loss of power. The aircraft was reportedly normally refuelled with Mogas from a jerry can via a muslin type filter. The pilot was unaware of a need on this type of aircraft to check for water contamination by conducting fuel system drain checks, and it was not known when such checks had last been conducted on G-AWMN. Reportedly this type of aircraft normally is not fitted with tank drains suitable for routine pre-flight operation, but is provided with a screwed drain plug on the gascolator.