

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Staaken Z-21A Flitzer, G-ERTI
No & Type of Engines:	1 Volkswagen 2180 piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	2009 (Serial no: PFA 223-14166)
Date & Time (UTC):	26 July 2012 at 1400 hrs
Location:	Newnham, near Baldock, Hertfordshire
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Damage to the wings, fin, propeller and landing gear
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	55 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	129 hours (of which 6 were on type) Last 90 days - 5 hours Last 28 days - 1 hour
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

Synopsis

The aircraft drifted to the side of the airstrip during takeoff and, after it was airborne, a mainwheel struck an adjacent earth bank. The aircraft crashed and came to rest inverted, although the pilot was uninjured.

Description of the event

The aircraft was taking off from a private grass airstrip which was 750 m long, 15 m wide and orientated east-west. The weather was fine, although conditions were hot and humid. The surface wind was reported to be light and variable but mainly from the east, and occasionally increasing in strength with the effects of strong thermal activity. Using the easterly direction for takeoff, the pilot had completed a short flight an hour earlier without difficulty.

As the pilot raised the tail of the aircraft early in the takeoff and gained an improved forward view, he realised that the aircraft had drifted to the left of the strip and was heading towards a track running alongside. His attempts to steer the aircraft back to the centre of the strip were unsuccessful and he considered aborting the takeoff. However, as the aircraft's brakes were intended for taxiing purposes only and the aircraft was close to becoming airborne, the pilot elected to continue the takeoff. As the aircraft became airborne it drifted further left, towards an earth bank adjacent to the track. The left mainwheel was believed to have struck the bank, after which the aircraft tumbled and came to rest inverted.

The pilot, who was wearing a six-point harness, was uninjured. He made the aircraft safe and vacated it. He thought that an increased crosswind at a critical stage during the takeoff had contributed to the accident, possibly exacerbated by local funnelling effects.