

No: 10/91

Ref: EW/G91/08/09

Category: 1c

**Aircraft Type and Registration:** Sopwith Pup, G-EBKY

**No & Type of Engines:** 1 Le Rhone 80 piston engine

**Year of Manufacture:** 1916

**Date & Time (UTC):** 4 August 1991 at 1340 hrs

**Location:** Old Warden Aerodrome, Bedfordshire.

**Type of Flight:** Display

**Persons on Board:** Crew - 1 Passengers - None

**Injuries:** Crew - None Passengers - N/A

**Nature of Damage:** Damage to engine cowling, left upper mainplane and fuselage left side. Minor engine and propeller damage

**Commander's Licence:** Commercial Pilot's Licence

**Commander's Age:** 59 years

**Commander's Flying Experience:** 12,816 hours (of which 3 were on type)

**Information Source:** Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and AAIB inquiries

The aircraft took off from Old Warden Aerodrome for a display. After climbing to 300 feet agl and turning left the pilot commenced a pass along Runway 22, achieving straight and level flight at 100 feet agl and 85-90 mph part way along the run. Without any apparent warning the engine cowling departed the aircraft with a loud report. The pilot closed the petrol lever and established a glide. The propeller continued to rotate and the pilot then attempted to restore power, but without response. It is reported that at very low engine rpm it can take a number of seconds for the fuel flow to re-establish with the type of fuel system fitted to the Sopwith Pup. Being very low, the pilot shut the petrol and air levers and selected a field immediately beyond the airfield boundary for a forced landing. The aircraft was landed without further damage and the pilot evacuated without injury.

The one piece circular cowling incorporates a groove that fits into a slot in the fuselage and is retained by a cable layed in the groove and tensioned by eyebolts. The cause of the detachment was not established but it was noted that satisfactory retention relies on a relatively high cable tension. The owner has reported that there was a similar case of cowling detachment in 1923, and has added four angled lugs to this and similar aircraft to act as standby cowling retainers.