

No: 7/92

Ref: EW/G92/05/24

Category: 1c

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Auster 5 Alpha, G-APTU	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-290-3 piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1959	
Date & Time (UTC):	26 May 1992 at 0945 hrs	
Location:	RAF Henlow, Bedfordshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 2	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Broken propeller and engine cowling plus engine shock loaded	
Commander's Licence:	Commercial Pilot's Licence with Instrument and Instructor ratings	
Commander's Age:	34 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	1,191 hours (of which 25 were on type) Last 90 days - 171 hours Last 28 days - 69 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot plus telephone enquiries to the other pilot involved	

The commander (an instructor) was conducting a final check on a private pilot converting to type. The converting pilot had acquired some 88 hours on Chipmunks about 20 years ago but most of his recent flying experience had been gained on tricycle aircraft at Sywell. He had recently joined the group which owned the Auster and had about three hours on type which represented his recent tailwheel experience.

On completion of the after start checks, the pilot taxied towards the threshold of runway 03. Before reaching it the instructor took control and demonstrated the art of ground manoeuvring without the use of heel brakes. The instructor then brought the aircraft to a halt facing into wind (parallel to the runway). In this position the grass runway was to their left and the aircraft was to the right of the line of white marks inset into the ground which delineated the right hand side of the runway. The instructor then handed control to the converting pilot for him to complete the engine power and pre-take-off checks.

After completing the checks the handling pilot transmitted on the radio that he was ready for departure. He mistakenly addressed the call to Sywell but he was cleared to line-up and depart at his discretion. Without taxiing to the runway, the pilot applied full power and forward stick to commence the take-off roll. The commander has stated that he immediately made the pilot aware that he was not on the runway and that the pilot responded by closing the throttle and pushing the stick further forward. The sudden application of forward stick was apparently sufficient to cause the tail to rear up and for the propeller to strike the ground.

According to the converting pilot, in a moment of confusion he mentally transposed the runway edge markers at Henlow with the runway centreline markings at Sywell. (Sywell, where the pilot had done most of his recent flying, also has a grass runway 03 and there the runway is obvious because there is longer grass on either side of it. At Henlow the entire grass airfield is cut to a short length and there are no centreline markings on the runway). He had assumed that the instructor had stopped the aircraft on the right half of the runway and, although he thought this a rather odd thing to do, there were no other aircraft in or around the Henlow circuit and so he did not feel the need to question his instructor. On being made aware of his error, just as he was about to apply aft stick to take-off, he reversed his intended control application and applied forward stick at the same time as he closed the throttle.