Reims Cessna F172M Skyhawk, G-BAZT

AAIB Bulletin No: 5/2003	**Ref: EW/G2003/01/12**	**Category: 1.3**
Aircraft Type and Registration:	Reims Cessna F172M Skyhawk, G-BAZT	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-320-E2D piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1973	
Date & Time (UTC):	16 January 2003 at 1350 hrs	
Location:	Exeter Airport	
Type of Flight:	Training	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Bent propeller	
Commander's Licence:	Student pilot	
Commander's Age:	35 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	24 hours (of which 24 were on type)	
	Last 90 days - 18 hours	
	Last 28 days - 1 hour	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

The pilot had successfully completed a solo navigation exercise and was returning to Exeter Airport, his original point of departure. The approach to Runway 26 and the subsequent touchdown were reported as perfectly normal by the pilot and by ATC who had witnessed the landing. A few seconds later however, during the subsequent landing roll, the aircraft suddenly veered to the left and departed off the side of the runway. It crossed the adjacent grass area and continued forwards until the nose wheel sank into mud, causing the propeller to strike the ground and stall the engine.

The runway was dry and the surface wind at the time was light, giving only a slight crosswind. A subsequent engineering check of the aircraft revealed no faults that might have contributed to the accident.

The pilot commented that he normally flies with his feet covering the brake portion of the rudder pedals and that whilst keeping the aircraft straight on the runway using the rudder, it is possible that he might have inadvertently applied the left brake. He stated that once the aircraft had veered off to the left he was concerned that if he applied too much opposite control the aircraft might have ground looped; therefore he thought it safer to continue towards the grass. The pilot realised that the grass area was muddy and decided to let the aircraft slow down without using the brakes in case it resulted in the nose wheel 'digging-in' and the aircraft turning over. Unfortunately before the aircraft had stopped, the nose wheel sank into a soft area of ground resulting in the propeller strike.