

Reims Cessna F172N, G-MALK

AAIB Bulletin No: 9/97 Ref: EW/G97/07/16 Category: 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Reims Cessna F172N, G-MALK
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-320-H2AD piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	1979
Date & Time (UTC):	23 July 1997 at 1150 hrs
Location:	Near Lochgilphead, Strathclyde
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 - Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - Minor - Passenger - Minor
Nature of Damage:	Extensive
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	47 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	142 hours (of which 36 were on type) Last 90 days - 7 hours Last 28 days - 3 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft was on a VFR flight from Edinburgh Airport to Isle of Skye Broadford Aerodrome, with alternate landing sites at Oban North Connel and Glenforsa Mull. The pilot stated that he had assessed the general weather situation from television broadcasts and from a daily newspaper chart. This was backed up by receipt of the automated telephone TAF and METAR reports for Glasgow, Tiree and Stornoway airfields. No observations were available from the destination or alternate landing airfields, and the pilot did not have reference to Metforms 214 (Spot Wind chart) and 215 (Low Level Weather chart) for general conditions. The pilot was of the opinion that the weather conditions, although not ideal, did not preclude VFR flight along the planned route.

The aircraft took off at 1050 hrs, intending to route via the River Clyde to the north of Glasgow Airport, then over the Isle of Bute, Craignure, Glenforsa and Mallaig. The flight progressed normally past CLYDE reporting point. A change of route to the south was then required to avoid the high ground to the west of Dunoon which was covered with cloud. The aircraft routed over the middle of the Isle of Bute, then along Loch Fyne towards Lochgilphead. While approaching the town, the pilot perceived that the weather conditions were deteriorating with a very low cloud base and

poor visibility. He elected to make a 180° turn to retrace his route. However, on completion of the turn, the weather conditions also appeared poor in that direction. A decision was made to carry out a precautionary landing to the north of Lochgilphead. No MAYDAY or PAN call was made as the pilot was concentrating on flying the aircraft and finding a suitable landing site. The pilot manoeuvred the aircraft around the chosen field, assessed the surface wind as southerly, and chose an apparently suitable landing area in that direction. He positioned the aircraft on a curving final approach at 60 kt with full flap selected. However, the aircraft floated further than was intended and touched down well into the field. Heavy braking was applied but this did not decelerate the aircraft sufficiently to prevent it colliding with a wire fence at the southern boundary of the field and a stone wall beyond.

The pilot and his wife sustained minor injuries but were able to vacate the aircraft unaided by the normal means. Assistance was summoned by subsequent use of the aircraft radio, as the pilot's hand-held transceiver had been damaged in the impact.

Subsequent examination of the landing field revealed that it sloped downhill for the first third, followed by a slight upward gradient before sloping down again towards the end. From the air, the field appeared to be level. The field length was approximately 400 metres, with the touchdown point being assessed as 100 metres into the field.

An aftercast from the Meteorological Office indicated that, at the time of the accident, there was an area of low pressure centred to the west of Scotland with a trough of low pressure extending eastwards across Scotland. The weather was occasional rain and drizzle with hill fog patches, with a visibility generally 15 to 20 km, with local deteriorations to 3 to 5 km. There was scattered cloud base 800 feet to 1,200 feet amsl, with a broken/overcast layer base 2,000 to 3,000 feet. The surface wind was from 200° at 7 kt, with the 2,000 feet wind being from 220° at 10 kt. Some shelter was probably afforded from the south and southwest in the Lochgilphead area as Campbeltown Airfield, some 40 nm to the south, was reporting a visibility of 3,000 metres in fog patches at the time of the accident.

The pilot assessed the underlying cause of the accident to be his failure to abort the flight when it became necessary to deviate from the planned route in order to remain VFR. This led to flight into marginal weather and ultimately necessitated a precautionary landing.