

ACCIDENT

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| Aircraft Type and Registration: | Auster J5K Aiglet Trainer, G-AMMS | |
| No & Type of Engines: | 1 Blackburn Cirrus Major III piston engine | |
| Year of Manufacture: | 1951 (Serial no: 2745) | |
| Date & Time (UTC): | 6 October 2013 at 1100 hrs | |
| Location: | Watchford Farm, near Honiton, Devon | |
| Type of Flight: | Private | |
| Persons on Board: | Crew - 1 | Passengers - 1 |
| Injuries: | Crew - None | Passengers - None |
| Nature of Damage: | Damage to left elevator, tailplane and fuselage | |
| Commander's Licence: | Private Pilot's Licence | |
| Commander's Age: | 66 years | |
| Commander's Flying Experience: | 7,772 hours (of which 21 were on type) Last 90 days - 10 hours Last 28 days - 1 hour | |
| Information Source: | Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot | |

Synopsis

The aircraft was taking off from a 400 m grass strip which was wet and soft. The pilot felt that the aircraft was having difficulty leaving the ground and abandoned the takeoff. He believes a combination of factors then led to the aircraft sliding sideways at slow speed into a fence beyond the end of the runway before coming to a halt.

History of the flight

The aircraft was departing Watchford Farm on Runway 23, which has a length of 400 m; the wind was westerly at 5 kt. The aircraft had been fuelled to full and the pilot and a passenger were on board, making the aircraft some 50 kg below maximum takeoff weight. The normal pre-departure power checks were completed satisfactorily. The pilot noted that the grass had been cut short on the runways and taxiways, but the surface was soft and damp after previous rain.

Takeoff flap was selected, full power applied and, as the aircraft commenced its takeoff roll, the pilot noted that full static engine rpm was achieved. He lifted the tail and the aircraft accelerated normally; however, as he applied back pressure to lift off at a speed of 55-60 kt, it became airborne but immediately sank back onto the ground. Whilst the aircraft appeared to continue accelerating, it lifted off again but "seemed reluctant to stay airborne". Since it was approaching the end of the mown runway, the pilot decided to abandon the takeoff, closing the throttle and applying the brakes. As it travelled towards the boundary

fence the pilot tried to turn the aircraft away but it now skidded sideways and ran into the wire-and-post fence side-on but at slow speed.

The pilot shut down the engine and he and his passenger vacated the aircraft. They initially thought that there had been no damage, however closer inspection showed damage to the left tailplane and rear fuselage caused by contact with a fence post.

Conclusions

The pilot cites several reasons for the aircraft failing to become airborne and its subsequent failure to stop. He states that he had previously operated out of Watchford Farm but in an Auster 6A, which has a longer wingspan and therefore a lower wing loading. This, coupled with a relatively high takeoff weight and light wind conditions, probably accounted for a longer ground run than he was expecting. In retrospect, he believes that he would have become airborne if he had continued the takeoff but, at the time, abandoning it seemed the safest course of action.

Once the decision to abort had been made, he believes that a combination of damp grass on the runway and overrun area and a downslope, led to the aircraft failing to stop.