

No: 11/89

Ref: EW/G89/07/20

Category: 1a

**Aircraft Type
and Registration:**

Boeing B17G Flying Fortress, F-BEEA

No & Type of Engines:

4 Wright R 1820-97 Cyclone piston engines

Year of Manufacture:

1945

Date and Time (UTC):

25 July 1989 at 1330 hrs

Location:

Field north of runway 21/03 at RAF Binbrook, Lincolnshire

Type of Flight:

Aerial work

Persons on Board:

Crew - 10 Passengers - None

Injuries:

Crew - 2 (serious) Passengers - N/A
 3 (minor)

Nature of Damage:

Aircraft destroyed by impact and subsequent ground fire

Commander's Licence:

Commercial Pilot's Licence with Instrument Rating

Commander's Age:

55 years

**Commander's Total
Flying Experience:**

11,179 hours (of which 2,131 were on type)

Information Source:

Aircraft Accident Report Form and additional AAIB enquiries

The aircraft was owned by a French government department and was being operated by a film company. The commander and co-pilot had flown together frequently for some ten years, and had undertaken previous flights for the purpose of filming. The aircraft had taxied from the dispersal area and lined up for take-off on the left side of runway 21. Another French registered Boeing B17 had lined up to the right and rear of F-BEEA. As power was applied at the start of the take-off roll, the commander stated that everything had seemed normal. However, after about 100 yards, a slight swing to the left developed, which the commander (who was the handling pilot) corrected by partially retarding the power on engines Nos. 3 and 4, and by the use of rudder. Full power was then re-applied on all engines, but the aircraft started to swing to the right. The pilot throttled back engines Nos. 1 and 2, together with the application of rudder, but these actions were not immediately effective. The aircraft did not resume a straight course until it was on the grass to the right of the runway. Knowing that the B17 had been operated from grass runways, the commander elected to continue with the take-off. However, after some 4-500 yards the aircraft swung further to the right, by which time the speed was 90-95 mph. The commander then became aware that the aircraft's path was obstructed by a tree and a pile of gravel. The left wing tip then struck the tree and the No 4 propeller struck the gravel. The aircraft yawed to the right, crossed a hollow in the ground and landed in a cornfield beyond. The

fuselage broke into two sections aft of the bomb bay, and a ground fire started immediately. The commander, who was uninjured, assisted some of the passengers to evacuate the aircraft through the break in the fuselage. The first fire tender arrived on the scene promptly, by which time all the occupants were out of the aircraft, the aircraft however was destroyed by the fire. The commander reported that the wind at the time of the accident had been 150°/5 kts.

The commander was subsequently unable to provide any explanation for the accident, although he suggested that the No 1 engine turbo-compressor may have been "cutting in and out." He also considered that the right wheel brake may not have been completely free.

One eye witness, an engineer who was familiar with B17 aircraft, saw smoke emanating from the area of the No 3 engine at the start of the take-off roll. This led him to venture the opinion that this engine may have over-boosted and then suffered a power loss, thus causing the sequential left and right swings.