

No: 2/84

Ref: EW/G83/08/20

Aircraft type and registration:	Piper PA31-350 Chieftain G-NITE (light twin engine fixed wing aircraft)	
Year of manufacture:	1978	
Date and time (GMT):	26 August 1983 at 0615 hrs	
Location:	Dublin Airport	
Type of flight:	Charter	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 1
Injuries:	Crew – Nil	Passengers – Nil
Nature of damage:	Drag-loading of undercarriage induced severe structural damage to wings; deflection of Stbd engine mounts	
Commander's Licence:	Commercial	
Commander's Age:	33 years	
Commander's total flying experience:	2851 hours (of which 412 hours were on type)	

The aircraft, on a flight from Luton to Dublin, had 'held' for some 75 minutes in the early morning awaiting an increase in Runway Visual Range (R.V.R.) to allow approach and landing. The cloud-base was at 4000 feet (seven-eighths), but there were low level fog patches. When the R.V.R. had improved to 1100 metres, the pilot requested radar vectoring for an I.L.S. approach, but when downwind was able to see the runway (R.W. 23, 2286 metres), approach and V.A.S.I. lights. He therefore decided to make a visual approach.

However, during the late stage of approach, after selecting 'land' flap the pilot suddenly lost all external visual reference and initiated an overshoot.

Unfortunately, during his transition to instruments, the aircraft's descent was not arrested and undercarriage contact was made with the grassed undershoot area before the aircraft climbed away.

Upon selecting undercarriage 'up' the 'unlocked' light would not extinguish, so the pilot re-selected gear-down and observed that no green 'locked-down' indication was showing for the port main gear. After flying past the tower to allow inspection of his undercarriage, the pilot was advised that the R.V.R. had again deteriorated and he decided to divert to Ronaldsway Airfield, Isle of Man, where a safe landing was made, with no gear collapse.

The CAA Flight Operations Inspectorate have looked into the accident and have established from Dublin approach radar that final approach was initiated from a height of 1500 feet a.g.l. with an average descent rate of 1200 ft/min compared with the normal descent rate of 600 ft/min for a 3° glideslope approach.