Piper PA-28-140, G-BCGT, 21 April 1996

AAIB Bulletin No: 7/96 Ref: EW/G96/04/19Category: 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Piper PA-28-140, G-BCGT

No & Type of Engines:1 Lycoming O-320-E3D piston engine

Year of Manufacture:1968

Date & Time (UTC):21 April 1996 at 1250 hrs

Location: Earls Colne Airfield, Colchester, Essex

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 3

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: Substantial to tailplane and left wing

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence with IMC and Night Ratings

Commander's Age:45 years

Commander's Flying Experience:206 hours (of which 27 were on type)

Last 90 days - 6 hours

Last 28 days - 4 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft departed Earls Colne airfield from grass Runway 24close to its maximum authorised takeoff weight (MTOW) with thepilot and three passengers on board. The weather at the timewas fine with good visibility, a temperature of 15°C anda surface wind of 180°/10 kt.

The pilot reported that full power was applied and the aircraftaccelerated to 70 kt before rotation. The aircraft was then turnedto the left into wind but almost immediately it banked to theleft and descended, causing the tailplane to contact a tree onthe airfield boundary. The pilot then closed the throttle andlanded straight ahead. The pilot and passengers vacated the aircraftwithout injury.

Other accounts of the event suggest that the aircraft became airborneat a much slower speed and was manoeuvred to the left immediatelythe landing gear was clear of the ground. Being close to itsmaximum takeoff weight and on the "wrong side of the dragcurve" the aircraft failed to accelerate and descended inthe turn making contact with the ground.

The pilot considers that the accident was caused when he allowedthe aircraft to become airborne in a gust and was unable to accelerateto the correct airspeed.