

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Beagle B121 Series 1 Pup, G-AZSW	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Continental Motors Corporation O-200-A piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1969	
Date & Time (UTC):	3 September 2006 at 1453 hrs	
Location:	Sandown Beach, Isle of Wight	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Damage to nose landing gear and propeller engine cowling, immersion in salt water	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	68 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	5,029 hours Last 90 days - 19 hours Last 28 days - 10 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and subsequent telephone enquiries made by the AAIB	

Synopsis

After taking part in an air race, as the pilot slowed the aircraft to join others preparing to land, the aircraft's engine progressively lost power. This resulted in the aircraft ditching in shallow water just offshore from Sandown Beach.

History of the flight

The pilot had just taken part in the Royal Aero Club's 'Schneider Trophy Air Race'. In preparation to rejoin the circuit at Bembridge Airfield on the Isle of Wight, he enriched the mixture, throttled back and pitched up to slow the aircraft, when the engine progressively lost power. At this point, the weather had just started to close in and the aircraft was at an altitude of around 500 ft to

600 ft, over the sea, just offshore at Sandown. The pilot reported that he selected the fuel pump, changed fuel tanks and pulled the carburettor heat control, but this did not restore power on. He then decided to abandon any further attempt to restart the engine and to carry out a precautionary landing on the beach at Sandown. However, realising that breakwaters positioned across the beach precluded this, he decided instead to put down on the shallow water just offshore. A successful ditching was made, with the aircraft floating initially before drifting to the beach. The pilot was wearing a full harness, was uninjured and vacated the aircraft through the left side door.

In his report to the AAIB, the pilot stated that the right fuel tank was selected when the power loss occurred. The contents of this tank were low but, in his judgement, adequate, and he reported that there was some 60 kg of fuel on board the aircraft at the time.

Examination of the aircraft by a maintenance organisation failed to reveal any obvious reason for the engine failure. The pilot has offered several possible reasons for the failure, including unporting of the fuel offtake in the tank as the aircraft pitched up, rich cut due

to the abrupt mixture enrichment with a hot engine and going from full to low power too quickly. However, carburettor icing would seem the most likely reason, given the following SYNOP¹ report for St Catherine's on the Isle of Wight at 1450 hrs:

Temperature 18.8°C, Dew point 18°C
(a relative humidity of 95%)

These conditions would have been conducive to the formation of severe carburettor icing at any power.

Footnote

¹ A maritime meteorological report from a land or ship based observing station.