

AAIB Bulletin No: 2/95

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Category: 1.3

**Aircraft Type and Registration:** Piper PA-30 Twin Commanche, G-BOAN

**No & Type of Engines:** 2 Lycoming O-320-B2C piston engines

**Year of Manufacture:** 1966

**Date & Time (UTC):** 15 December 1994 at 1705 hrs

**Location:** Broadbury, near Okehampton, Devon

**Type of Flight:** Private

**Persons on Board:** Crew - 1 Passengers - 2

**Injuries:** Crew - Serious Passengers - 1 Serious  
1 Minor

**Nature of Damage:** Aircraft destroyed

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

**Commander's Age:** 48 years

**Commander's Flying Experience:** 1,111 hours (of which 691 were on type)  
Last 90 days - 19 hours  
Last 28 days - 6 hours

**Information Source:** Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft was on a flight from Jersey, Channel Islands to a farm strip at Sheepwash some 10 miles to the north west of Okehampton, Devon. The pilot had obtained a meteorological forecast which indicated that it would probably be possible to land at Sheepwash. The weather at Exeter was forecast to be suitable for landing and so Exeter was nominated as the alternate on the VFR flight plan filed by the pilot. The aircraft took off at 1615 hrs and the flight proceeded without incident to the Exeter area where the pilot obtained a weather actual from Exeter Airport which confirmed that he could land there if he was unable to get into Sheepwash. The pilot informed Exeter ATC that he was descending towards Sheepwash and would land at Exeter if he could not get in to Sheepwash. He was passed the Regional QNH and advised that descent below the Minimum Safe Altitude of 3,100 feet was at his discretion. On reaching the Sheepwash area, the pilot descended to 1,500 feet on the QNH. The weather observed by the pilot at this time was scattered cloud both above and below the aircraft with some mist patches forming on the ground. It was dark. While attempting to locate the runway lights at Sheepwash, which is at an elevation of 275 feet, the pilot failed to notice that he was gradually descending and the aircraft struck the ground at an elevation of 915 feet some six miles to the south of Sheepwash in an area devoid of ground lights. The aircraft struck the ground in a relatively level attitude and all occupants survived the impact. There was no fire.

In a very frank and helpful report, the pilot acknowledged that given the weather conditions, he should have made the decision to divert to Exeter when he initially failed to locate Sheepwash.