ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Scheibe SF25C Falke, G-BPZU
No & Type of Engines:	1 Limbach L 2000-EA1 piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	1989
Date & Time (UTC):	29 May 2012 at 1730 hrs
Location:	Field near Droke Lane, East Dean, Chichester
Type of Flight:	Private (Training)
Persons on Board:	Crew - 2 Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Extensive, aircraft beyond economic repair
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	61 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	2,900 hours (of which 145 were on type) Last 90 days - 10 hours Last 28 days - 4 hours
Information Source:	AAIB investigation

Synopsis

During field landing practice, the aircraft approached a field with considerable upslope. At approximately 50 ft agl the instructor took control and executed a go-around, but the aircraft struck trees at the far end of the field.

History of the flight

The aircraft was being flown by two members of a gliding club. The instructor was an experienced glider and motor-glider instructor; the student was an experienced glider pilot and instructor. They had spent two days running a gliding course together at the club, and when the course finished set off on the flight to carry out the student's annual field landing training exercises.

The instructor reported clear skies, good visibility, and a south-westerly sea breeze at approximately 10 kt. The temperature was around 22°C. He had flown the aircraft during the day and reported it was performing normally. He had also carried out a briefing on field landings, which the student attended. The aircraft was loaded with an appropriate quantity of fuel to ensure it was operated below the relevant limiting weights.

Following an uneventful departure, the instructor flew the aircraft into an area near Droke Lane, Chichester, at approximately 2,000 ft amsl. He then reduced power to simulate a glider entering sink, and handed control to the student. Around this time, the student commented on the paucity of suitable fields in the area, but the

instructor pointed some out and the exercise continued. The student flew a circuit leading to an approach to a field with a firm smooth surface containing crop approximately 10-20 cm high. The field had a pronounced upslope in the direction of landing, which was towards the north-west. There were trees at the far end up to 15 m tall.

At approximately 50 ft agl, and with the aircraft satisfactorily positioned for a landing in the first part of the field, the instructor took control and applied power to go around. He pitched the nose up to maintain a speed of 50-55 kt, controlling the pitch attitude carefully to achieve this speed so as to avoid being led astray by illusory effects of the local horizon. However, he observed that the aircraft's climb performance was approximately equal to the upslope of the field.

The student suggested a turn to the left towards lower ground, but the instructor was concerned that a turn at low speed might result in a spin, and elected to continue straight ahead towards the trees at the far end of the field. Approaching the trees, the instructor realised that the aircraft would not clear them, and manoeuvred to fly between two tall trees.

The aircraft clipped a tree and fell to the ground in an area of dense brambles and brush beyond the tree line. It was substantially damaged in the process. Examination of the impact site suggested that the vegetation may have assisted in decelerating the aircraft gently.

The aircraft came to rest upright, the instructor switched off the fuel and master switch, and both occupants, who had been wearing four-point harnesses, vacated the aircraft with only bruises. Neither occupant had a mobile telephone with him, and, lacking means of communication, they walked to nearby houses to find help.

The instructor commented that factors leading to the accident may have included:

- Possible slight fatigue at the end of a busy two days flying in hot weather
- A late awareness of the degree of upslope in the chosen field and the proximity of the trees
- The ambient temperature, which reduced the engine and aircraft performance
- The absence of headwind and possibly other wind effects at low height
- The late stage at which he took control and executed the go-around

He added that in future, he would take a mobile telephone with him when flying.

Obstacles in the go-around may render fields, which are suitable for field landings in gliders, unsuitable for field landing practice in motor-gliders.