

No: 11/91

Ref: EW/G91/09/05

Category: 1c

Aircraft Type and Registration: Piper PA-28-140 Cherokee, G-AFML
No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming O-320-E2A piston engine
Year of Manufacture: 1976
Date & Time (UTC): 8 September 1991 at 1300 hrs
Location: Dunkeswell Aerodrome, Devon
Type of Flight: Private
Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 2
Injuries: Crew - Minor Passengers - Minor
Nature of Damage: The aircraft was damaged beyond repair. In addition minor damage was caused to the roof of a hay barn.
Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age: 65 years
Commander's Flying Experience: 111 hours (of which 15 were on type)
Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot, enquiries with an engineering company and the Meteorological Office.

After completing the power and pre-departure checks, the pilot taxied to line-up on runway 05, opened the throttle and commenced the take-off run. At about 55 mph the pilot raised the nose and the aircraft became airborne at approximately 65 mph. However, the pilot then noticed that the aircraft was tending to overpitch somewhat and so he eased the control column forward and adjusted the elevator trim accordingly. The airspeed did not increase, but stabilised at 65 mph, and the aircraft would not climb, although the engine appeared to be running normally. The pilot stated that he could not lower the nose to increase the airspeed because of a hedge which lay ahead, just below the aircraft's flight path. The aircraft continued momentarily in this low-level flight condition before the right landing gear struck the roof of a hay barn. The pilot immediately closed the throttle and landed the aircraft in the surrounding field. However, as the aircraft decelerated towards another hedge at the edge of this field, the pilot applied full right rudder-pedal but failed to avoid the hedge. The pilot and his passengers were uninjured and were able to leave the cabin unaided before the aerodrome fire service arrived. There was no fire.

Subsequent inspection of the engine and its control systems found no faults that would have resulted in a loss of power.

At the time of the accident the aircraft was within its centre-of-gravity limits and near to its maximum take-off weight. A weather aftercast, for 1248 hrs, from a meteorological observation site near the airfield gave a wind of 140° at 7 kts, visibility 28 km, nil significant weather, 2 oktas at 2500 ft, temperature 19°C, dew-point 13°C. When the temperature and dew point were plotted on a carburettor-icing probability chart they fell within predicted 'moderate icing' conditions at cruise power and 'serious icing' at descent power.