

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-28-161 Cherokee Warrior II, G-BODC	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-320-D3G piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1988 (Serial No: 2816041)	
Date & Time (UTC):	27 December 2011 at 1420 hrs	
Location:	Micklefield, West Yorkshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 3
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Nose landing gearfolded back, left main landing gear sheared off, extensive damage to left wing and forward fuselage	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	63 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	388 hours (of which 380 were on type) Last 90 days - 6 hours Last 28 days - 1 hour	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

During a local sightseeing flight the engine lost power at about 1,100 feet. The pilot was not able to restore power and made a forced landing in a ploughed field, with extensive damage to the landing gear, forward fuselage and left wing.

History of the flight

The pilot had arranged to take three friends for a recreational flight around the Wetherby area, where they lived. The pilot reports that he was particularly careful in his pre-flight checks as one of the passengers had previous piloting experience and the two others were interested in taking flying lessons.

The engine start, the taxi and run-up checks were normal and the pilot took off from Runway 29, climbing to 1,000 feet and then to 1,500 feet. The pilot remained at this altitude while transiting to Wetherby, about five minutes away, where he reduced the power to 1,700-1,800 rpm and descended towards 1,000 feet for a better view placing the carburettor heat control in HOT.

The pilot reports that at about 1,100 feet he advanced the throttle lever, to bring the speed back to 2,300 rpm, but that each time he tried it the engine made what he described as "a sputtering sound". He proceeded to carry out 'Engine failure' checks as he had been taught

but without success and, at about 700 feet with the propeller 'windmilling' he set up for a forced landing, making a MAYDAY call to Leeds, who responded with wind speed and direction, and informing his passengers. The best field available appeared to be about a half-mile ahead and slightly to the right, a ploughed field near to the A1(M), with trees and telegraph wires at the near end. He was just able to reach the field, although the length of glide meant he was unable to deploy any flap, and touched down at high pitch attitude, with the stall warning sounding. He held the nose off as long as possible, to avoid a possible cartwheel on the muddy ground, but after some 70 to 80 yards the nosewheel touched down, bringing the aircraft to a sudden stop and folding back the nose leg. The left main landing gear sheared off and damaged the upper surface of the left wing and there was extensive further damage to the propeller, engine cowlings and forward fuselage. When the aircraft came to a halt all four occupants were able to exit in a calm manner and without injury.

The cause of the engine failure remained obscure when the aircraft was later examined at its maintenance facility, with no apparent mechanical defect. On the possibility that the cause of the power failure was carburettor ice, the pilot was confident that he had applied carburettor heat before reducing power to descend to 1,000 feet. However, he did later comment that in similar circumstances he would climb to, and maintain, a greater altitude (say 3,000 feet), giving him longer to diagnose and remedy any loss of power and to allow more options in the case of a forced landing. He further commented that what he believed had helped him in his emergency landing was that he had often practised this from the circuit, with glide approaches, and that these practice glide approaches had helped his judgement of height and distance in the real emergency.