

Aircraft type and registration: Piper PA28 140 Cherokee G-AYWE (light single engined fixed wing aircraft)

Year of Manufacture: 1970

Date and time (GMT): 13 August 1984 at 1429 hrs

Location: Wycombe Air Park

Type of flight: Private (pleasure)

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — 2

Injuries: Crew — None Passengers — None

Nature of damage: Damage to nose undercarriage, propeller, wings

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 45 years

Commander's total flying experience: 301 hours (of which 142 hours were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Pro-forma completed by the pilot.

The aircraft was based at Wycombe Air Park, and the owner/pilot was familiar with the airfield. The aircraft commenced its take-off along Runway 35 which is an uphill grass slope. Lift-off was normal, but as soon as the pilot attempted to climb, he realised that the tachometer was indicating 2300 rpm and the engine was failing to pick up; the aircraft started to settle tail first. After checking that the fuel and fuel pump were both ON, the pilot lowered the nose with the intention of landing straight ahead; he also turned the master switch OFF. As the nose lowered, the pilot observed a parked fire engine, with a man standing on top, directly in line with the runway in the overshoot area. (The fire appliance was fighting a stubble fire in the field adjacent to the airfield.) The pilot turned the aircraft to the left in order to avoid a collision but it became obvious, due to the height loss incurred during the turn, that the aircraft would not clear the hedge that bounded the perimeter track. The aircraft touched down on a heading 15° to the left of the runway centreline and with the application of braking the wheels skidded on the grass. Realising that he would not stop before the hedge, the pilot released the brakes, pushed the throttle open and continued towards the hedge. On reaching the perimeter road, he pulled back on the controls in an attempt to clear the hedge; however, the lower fuselage struck the top of the hedge and the aircraft came to rest in a field beyond. The pilot and passengers evacuated the aircraft without injury. The pilot kept everyone clear of the smoking wreckage until the arrival of the emergency services.

Subsequent investigation failed to reveal any defect in the engine or fuel system that could have accounted for the loss of take-off power. However, it was a hot day (in excess of 22°C) and although the hangar in which the aircraft was parked was said to be cool, some 30—40 minutes had elapsed before the aircraft commenced its take-off attempt. The fuel being used was Mogas and it is therefore possible that the fuel temperature had risen above 20°C value specified in the Civil Aviation Authority Airworthiness No 98, which lays down the requirements for the use of Mogas.

A log book entry dated 10 July 1980, one month before this accident, stated that the fuel system was examined following a loss of engine power. On that occasion no fault was found.