

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-28-181 Cherokee Archer III, G-CCHL	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-360-A4M piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1998	
Date & Time (UTC):	12 September 2004 at 1515 hrs	
Location:	Lydd Airport, Kent	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 2
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Skin panel damage on the underside of the fuselage and port wing	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	44 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	300 hours (of which 245 were on type) Last 90 days - 57 hours Last 28 days - 20 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

History of the flight

The pilot and two friends had flown to France from Lydd Airport in order to visit two rural landing sites before returning via Le Touquet to Lydd. The flights had been uneventful and the aircraft was positioned on long finals for Runway 22. The surface wind at Lydd was 240°/21 kt with some gusting and an element of crosswind from the right. The conditions were typical of the two previous landings made by the pilot that day.

Re-surfacing was being carried out on Runway 22 and the displaced threshold was marked by a barrier board across the runway, a short distance beyond which, were a row of cones also across the runway. The cones were the large type used in motorway maintenance. There were no PAPIs due to the resurfacing work and at about 2 nm from touchdown, the gusting wind was producing significant turbulence.

The pilot selected two stages of flap instead of the three normally used for landing and increased his approach speed from 75 kt to 80 kt in order to compensate for the gusts. He chose an aiming point on the runway sufficiently beyond the cones to allow for their obstruction but ensuring adequate landing distance remained. Once over the barrier board the pilot flared the aircraft and reduced power as normal but the wind speed seemed to drop and the aircraft sank rapidly, earlier than the pilot wanted. The aircraft appeared to become unstable and the pilot applied power which stabilised it and the aircraft touched down normally. After landing the pilot taxied the aircraft to its parking place.

Aircraft examination

The underside of the aircraft had struck the cones but the pilot and passengers were not aware of the impact and they did not see any signs of damage to the aircraft during the post-flight inspection. A person in the tower who had seen the incident reported it to the flying group and the damage was discovered on further examination of the aircraft.

Conclusion

The pilot considered that the sudden drop in wind had contributed to the rapid sink which caused the aircraft to undershoot the intended touch down point and contact the cones.