

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-23-160, G-APFV	
No & Type of Engines:	2 Lycoming 0-320-B3B piston engines	
Year of Manufacture:	1959	
Date & Time (UTC):	21 October 2009 at 1630 hrs	
Location:	Longside Airfield, near Peterhead, Aberdeenshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Propellers and engines damaged, flaps and fuselage underside abraded	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	53 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	2,591 hours (of which 320 were on type) Last 90 days - 31 hours Last 28 days - 14 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

The aircraft landed with its landing gear retracted.

cloud scattered between 600 and 800 ft with a base broken at 900 ft and overcast at 1,000 ft.

History of the flight

The aircraft had flown under instrument flight rules from Stavanger, Norway to Longside Airfield. The pilot stated that during its descent the aircraft entered cloud at 3,000 ft, becoming clear of cloud at 1,200 ft as it passed over Peterhead, from where the airfield was clearly visible. Local sunset was at 1647 hrs and the pilot described light conditions as "approaching dusk". He reported weather conditions "consistent with the reports at Aberdeen Airport". Weather reports for Aberdeen Airport at 1620 and 1650 hrs indicated wind from 130° at 20 gusting up to 31 kt, 4,000 m visibility,

The pilot delayed extending flap and landing gear until joining the circuit and recalled checking that the flaps were fully down before turning onto a right-hand base leg. He noted that the final approach to Runway 10 required "high power" to maintain the required approach angle. The landing gear warning horn sounded shortly before touchdown and the propeller tips struck the runway before the pilot was able to take corrective action.

The aircraft settled on its retracted landing gear, whose wheels protrude from their nacelles, and

stopped approximately 230 m beyond the point of the first propeller contact. The pilot turned off the fuel and electrical systems and vacated the aircraft without injury. He then reported the incident to Aberdeen ATC, confirming that there were no injuries and that no assistance was required from the emergency services.

Aerodrome information

Longside Airfield has a single tarmac landing strip approximately 490 m long that forms part of a disused runway at the former RAF Peterhead. There are no ground facilities for instrument approaches at the airfield and all approaches must be made under visual flight rules.

Discussion

The pilot commented that because the speed at which he normally extended the landing gear was higher than for flap, having established that the flap was extended he assumed that the landing gear was too. He listed as contributory factors to the accident his “recollection” of having selected the landing gear down and failure to confirm the landing gear position indicators on short final. It is possible that the meteorological conditions provided an additional distraction.

This is an example of what is sometimes referred to as “environmental capture”, in which an operator has not consciously checked their performance of a habitual or frequently exercised skill¹. Failure to do so may be affected by raised workload or stress².

Footnote

¹ R.D. Campbell, Michael Bagshaw, *Human performance and limitations in aviation*, third edition, pp113-116

² J.T. Reason, *Human error*, 2003, p107