

## ACCIDENT

<b>Aircraft Type and Registration:</b>	CZAW SportCruiser, G-OCRZ	
<b>No &amp; Type of Engines:</b>	1 Rotax 912 ULS piston engine	
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	2008 (Serial no: PFA 338-14668)	
<b>Date &amp; Time (UTC):</b>	13 April 2016 at 1225 hrs	
<b>Location:</b>	Firs Farm, Newbury, Berkshire	
<b>Type of Flight:</b>	Private	
<b>Persons on Board:</b>	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
<b>Injuries:</b>	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
<b>Nature of Damage:</b>	Nose leg detached, left main landing gear damaged and propeller destroyed	
<b>Commander's Licence:</b>	Light Aircraft Pilot's Licence	
<b>Commander's Age:</b>	76 years	
<b>Commander's Flying Experience:</b>	518 hours (of which 102 were on type) Last 90 days - 2 hours Last 28 days - 1 hour	
<b>Information Source:</b>	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

## Synopsis

The pilot misidentified the runway and flew an approach to an adjacent, visually distinct but uncultivated strip of rough ground. He realised his mistake on touchdown, when the nose leg collapsed and the propeller struck the ground. The aircraft came to a halt nose-down and left wing low but the pilot vacated without difficulty.

## History of the flight

The pilot returned to land at his home airstrip after a short, middle-of-the-day flight. He was very familiar with this airstrip, having operated from it for six years. Visibility was good and there was a light south-westerly breeze as he joined the circuit, intending to land on grass Runway 23. He lined-up his final approach on a yellowish coloured strip of land, which he identified as the runway, and touched down in an apparently "perfect" manner. However, the landing was made on a rough, uncultivated strip of ground adjacent to the south side of the runway which the pilot had mistaken for Runway 23.

The nose leg immediately collapsed and detached, and the propeller struck the ground. As the aircraft slowed, the left main landing gear collapsed and the aircraft came to a halt with its nose and left wing resting on the ground (Figure 1). The pilot turned the master switch OFF and vacated the aircraft without difficulty.



**Figure 1**

G-OCRZ after the landing accident

### **Pilot's comments**

The pilot was amazed that he had misidentified the runway in good weather and without any distraction. He noted the runway was a similar colour to the adjacent green crop on the north side, while the rough strip on the south side was a contrasting, yellowish colour, shaped like a runway. At first sight it looked like a runway, so, even though he had prior knowledge of its existence, he accepted it was the runway. During the circuit and approach the pilot concentrated on making a smooth landing and had no reason to query the strip for which he was aiming. He did not spot the real runway to the right of his approach path because he was not expecting to see it there; an error which he later recognised as confirmation bias<sup>1</sup>.

### **Safety action**

White markers are now in place to make the runway outline more obvious to approaching aircraft.

### **Similar accidents**

On 18 June 2015 an Auster J5F, G-AMZT, had an accident when it landed in a yellowish coloured crop adjacent to the runway at Bolt Head Airfield, Devon. Shortly afterwards, on 1 July 2015, a Europa, G-TAGR, did likewise at the same airfield. The accident report for G-TAGR contains a photograph showing how the cultivated strip to the right of the runway

### **Footnote**

<sup>1</sup> Confirmation bias is the selective processing of information to confirm a person's pre-existing beliefs. Hence, once the 'runway' was visually identified, the pilot subconsciously viewed the scene in a way that fitted this initial assumption and his tendency would have been to ignore, or not look for, any contradictory evidence.

created a stronger visual impression of being a landing surface than the runway itself. The AAIB reports for both accidents are on the AAIB's website. The URL for G-TAGR's report is: [https://assets.digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk/media/5616293ced915d39b9000009/Europa\\_G-TAGR\\_10-15.pdf](https://assets.digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk/media/5616293ced915d39b9000009/Europa_G-TAGR_10-15.pdf)