

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Mercury, G-MYUB
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 503 piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	1995 (Serial no: 1014-1194-7-W812)
Date & Time (UTC):	26 March 2017 at 1450 hrs
Location:	Otherton Airport, Staffordshire
Type of Flight:	Ground Run only
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - 1 (Serious) Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Damage to propeller
Commander's Licence:	National Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	42 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	33 hours Last 90 days - N/A Last 28 days - N/A
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

Synopsis

Whilst running the engine for the purpose of investigating a misfire, the aircraft jumped over a chock that had been placed in front of the nosewheel. Whilst retrieving the chock from close to the rear of the aircraft, the pilot was struck on his face by the still-turning propeller.

Circumstances of the accident

The pilot-owner was sitting in his aircraft, running the engine in order to investigate a misfire that had occurred in flight on the previous day. There was no intention to go flying and the wings had been removed from the trike. A chock had been placed in front of the nosewheel and the pilot had applied the footbrake. Although the pilot's recollection of the sequence of events is hazy, he believes he may have relaxed pressure on the brake pedal, causing the aircraft to move forward by about 10 feet. He immediately applied full brake pressure, reduced the engine to idle power and the aircraft stopped moving.

In his statement, the pilot admitted to a moment of "lack of focus", and became preoccupied with the fact that the nosewheel had jumped over the chock; he convinced himself that it was necessary to retrieve and put it back in position. He stepped out of the aircraft and, seeing the chock behind the aircraft, reached down to pick it up, at which point he was struck in the face by the propeller, sustaining a serious injury. The blow was severe enough to cause damage to the propeller. A person working on an aircraft parked nearby rendered first aid and the pilot was subsequently taken to hospital by air ambulance.

The pilot recognised that this was an avoidable accident, which could have been averted simply by turning the engine off or not being distracted by his perceived urgency to retrieve the chock. He additionally commented that he had not been wearing a helmet as he was not intending to fly; however he was convinced that, had he been wearing one, his injuries may have been less serious or even eliminated. The fact that he was not intending to fly may have contributed to a reduction of vigilance.

Although he was an inexperienced pilot, he had served for 13 years in the Royal Air Force working as groundcrew on airframes and propulsion, both in the hangar and on the dispersal areas. He was thus well aware of the dangers associated with running engines and he considered that, despite this level of experience, he still made a basic error.

This event serves as a stark reminder of the potentially lethal power of a propeller, even when attached to a small engine running at idle. Earlier in this Bulletin is a report of another propeller-inflicted injury, involving a Piper PA-28, G-BNSZ, which also underlines the need to treat propellers with respect at all times.