ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Ikarus C42 FB80, G-CICG
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 912-UL piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	2013 (Serial no: 1304-7259)
Date & Time (UTC):	18 April 2018 at 1345 hrs
Location:	Popham Airfield, Hampshire
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Right main landing gear leg detached
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	74 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	1,507 hours (of which 238 were on type) Last 90 days - 13 hours Last 28 days - 3 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquiries made by the AAIB

Synopsis

The aircraft struck a traffic cone when the pilot mistakenly tried to land on an area of rough ground at Chilbolton Airfield. After aborting the landing, the pilot proceeded to Popham Airfield, but the right main landing gear detached on touchdown and the aircraft ground-looped.

History of the flight

The pilot made an approach to the grass Runway 24 at Chilbolton, which is an un-manned airfield, after noting that the windsock indicated a strong crosswind from the east-southeast[1]. He adopted a 'crabbed' final approach, with the aircraft pointing to the left of the runway, and he focussed on maintaining the correct airspeed, monitoring the windsock and remaining clear of power lines situated close to the airfield boundary. While flaring to land, the pilot noticed a row of traffic cones on the grass ahead, so he aborted his landing and increased power but, as he did so he heard a "thump". He climbed away, assuming the aircraft had hit a cone which was intended to indicate the runway was unavailable, and he then diverted to Popham, his home airfield.

Footnote

[1] At 1345 hrs the surface wind recorded at Middle Wallop Airfield, situated approximately 5 nm west of Chilbolton, was from 130º at 14 kt.

Runway 21 was in use at Popham and the aircraft touched down on the left mainwheel first, due to a crosswind component of approximately 11 kt from the left. However, when the right mainwheel touched down, the gear leg separated at its airframe attachment points and the aircraft ground looped to the right, before coming to rest with the right wingtip touching the grass. After the pilot had shut down and vacated the aircraft, he realised that the main landing gear leg had detached, due to damage sustained when it struck the traffic cone at Chilbolton.

Following subsequent enquiries, the pilot discovered that the aircraft had hit and destroyed one of several traffic cones, placed to deter pilots from using a strip of rough ground to the left of Runway 24 at Chilbolton. The pilot regarded himself as familiar with Chilbolton, although he had not landed there for eight months, and he knew there was likely to be a contrast in colour between the runway and the rough ground to the side. Unfortunately, due to the ambient conditions, he was distracted, and he did not see the white markings by the runway threshold and misidentified the darker coloured strip of rough ground to be the runway.

Airfield information

Chilbolton is an unlicensed airfield but the operator tries to alert pilots to the presence of the adjacent rough ground in flight guides and on its website. The pilot was aware of the website but had not referred to it prior to this flight and he had not seen a photograph, recently added and labelled, to show pilots what to look for when landing on Runway 24[2] (Figure 1).
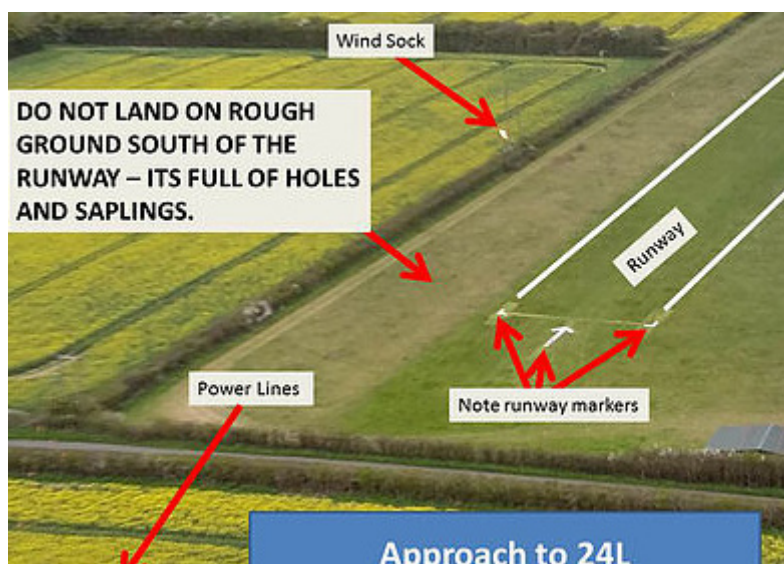

Figure 1

Illustration from the on-line brief for Chilbolton Airfield, highlighting the rough ground beside the runway. The illustrated white parallel lines do not represent ground markings

Footnote

2   The airfield's operator referred to Runway 24 as '*24L*', indicating that a left-hand circuit was required, to avoid noise sensitive areas. The operator has stated an intention to review its guidance material, having learnt that this designation infers there are parallel runways such as Runway 24 Left and Runway 24 Right.