

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-28RT-201 Arrow IV, N2943D	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming IO-360-C1C6 piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1979 (Serial no: 28R7918231)	
Date & Time (UTC):	25 May 2020 at 1216 hrs	
Location:	Enstone Aerodrome, Oxfordshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Damage to propeller, right step, left flap and underside of fuselage	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	67 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	578 hours (of which 101 were on type) Last 90 days - 3 hours Last 28 days - 0 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

Whilst on the downwind leg the pilot became distracted by a lower-level helicopter that appeared to be joining the circuit directly on the base leg. This led to an interruption in his pre-landing checks, before the landing gear would have been lowered. The landing gear remained retracted and the aircraft landed gear-up.

History of the flight

The pilot joined the downwind leg for Runway 26 North at Enstone Airfield, following a standard overhead join. No radio operator was on duty and blind calls were being made by circuit traffic on the Air/Ground frequency. A helicopter was flying circuits in the Runway 26 microlight circuit, which is lower and closer to the runway than the main circuit, and another aircraft had reported joining from the south. Whilst on the downwind leg, the pilot became distracted by a second, lower-level, helicopter that appeared to be joining the circuit directly on the base leg for Runway 26. The pilot of the second helicopter did not make any radio calls on the Air/Ground frequency and the pilot of N2943D was uncertain of its intentions. He stated that he thought it was during this period of distraction that he missed the check to lower the landing gear.

The second helicopter continued to fly to the south, away from the airfield, and descend. The remainder of the circuit and final approach were uneventful. As the pilot flared the aircraft

for landing, it continued to settle, and he realised that he had not lowered the landing gear. The aircraft came to rest on the grass surface of Runway 26 North. The pilot completed his shutdown checks and was able to make an unobstructed exit from the aircraft.

The pilot stated that he had not flown for some time due to poor weather and the Covid-19 restrictions, and was aware of his lack of recency. He had reviewed the aircraft checklists prior to the flight, which he had postponed once due to adverse weather.

Conclusion

The pilot considered that the cause of the accident was his distraction on the downwind leg, due to the helicopter traffic that appeared to be ahead of him in the circuit. This led to an interruption in his pre-landing checks, which were being conducted from memory and not from the written check-list. When the pre-landing checks were recommenced, he continued from the point that he thought he had reached, rather than starting again. He also stated that he had not carried out his usual 'Mixture/Prop/Wheels - Red/Blue/Green' memory check whilst on final approach.

The pilot had no recollection of the 'wheels up/low revs' warning buzzer during the base leg or final approach, but he did recall hearing it during the dead side descent, prior to joining the circuit.