

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Luscombe 8A Silvaire, G-AKVP	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Continental Motors Corp A65-8 piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1948 (Serial no: 5549)	
Date & Time (UTC):	19 April 2019 at 1225 hrs	
Location:	Baxterley Aerodrome, Warwickshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Aircraft destroyed	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	60 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	2,366 hours (of which 1,500 were on type) Last 90 days - 3 hours Last 28 days - 2 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

On takeoff from Baxterley Aerodrome, the aircraft climbed normally but drifted to the left of the intended takeoff track. The pilot attempted to turn to the right in order to avoid a tall tree, but the left wingtip struck the top branches causing the aircraft to enter a spin to the right. It struck the ground heavily, trapping the pilot who had to be released from the wreckage by the Fire Service.

History of the flight

The pilot had planned to carry out a flight from Baxterley Aerodrome in Warwickshire to Old Warden Airfield in Bedfordshire. He had operated from Baxterley for 15 years and was familiar with the trees on the southern side of the runways and at the western end. The weather was good with a light surface wind from 075° at less than 5 kt, CAVOK, OAT 22°C and QNH 1030 hPa. The pilot elected to depart from Runway 25, which is 450 m long by 15 m wide. Although the takeoff was downwind, the wind was light and the pilot considered it was compensated for by the downslope. The layout of the aerodrome is shown below as Figure 1.



Figure 1

Aerodrome plan showing the runway alignment and the tree struck by the aircraft's left wingtip

Following the normal pre-takeoff checks, which included the engine power checks, the aircraft was lined up some 50 m north-east of the beginning of Runway 25 along the Runway 24 extension. Full throttle was set, and the acceleration appeared normal with the aircraft becoming airborne at about the normal point on the runway. The climb was shallow as the aircraft accelerated to its climb speed of 70 mph during which it drifted to the left of the runway towards some trees. The pilot could see a tree which was on the left side of a gap in the trees at the end of the runway. He applied right bank but no rudder to avoid it, but the aircraft continued towards the top of the tree, which he thought it would clear by some 10 to 15 feet. It then became apparent that the aircraft may hit the tree and so the pilot applied a further 15° of bank to try and avoid it. The left wingtip struck the tops of the tree with a “bang” and, in seconds, the right wing dropped and the aircraft spun through 180°, impacting the surface of the field adjacent to the aerodrome.

Although the pilot was not seriously injured, which he thought was due to the energy absorption of the seat cushions and his harness, he was trapped in the wreckage by his leg which was beneath the instrument panel. He was unable to turn off the fuel but turned off all the other switches, including for the electrical system. The Fire Service arrived and were able to release him.

Analysis

The pilot considered that the aircraft performance had been normal, and he was aware of the trees to his left and those at the end of the runway. The slight tailwind component possibly reduced the angle of climb which reduced his normal vertical separation from the obstacles, which he could see and initially thought he would clear. When it became apparent that he would not clear them, his attempt to turn away to the right was not made early enough and the left wingtip contacted the upper branches.

Conclusion

The pilot concluded that an early decision to avoid an obstacle is better than waiting to see if the aircraft will clear it.