

## ACCIDENT

<b>Aircraft Type and Registration:</b>	Piper PA-28-181 Cherokee Archer III, G-BXTW	
<b>No &amp; Type of Engines:</b>	1 Lycoming O-360-A4M piston engine	
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	1998 (Serial no: 2843137)	
<b>Date &amp; Time (UTC):</b>	22 November 2018 at 1250 hrs	
<b>Location:</b>	Compton Abbas Airfield, Dorset	
<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>	Damage to right wing and tailplane	
<b>Commander's Licence:</b>	Private Pilot's Licence	
<b>Commander's Age:</b>	81 years	
<b>Commander's Flying Experience:</b>	3,165 hours (of which 3,100 were on type) Last 90 days - 5 hours Last 28 days - 2 hours	
<b>Information Source:</b>	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquires by the AAIB	

## Synopsis

On approach to Runway 08 at Compton Abbas Airfield the aircraft descended below and to the right of the normal approach path and collided with a tree. The pilot was able to correct the approach path and land normally. After the accident he was not able to identify any reason why he did not notice that the aircraft was not on the correct approach path.

## History of the flight

The pilot was flying back from Wolverhampton Halfpenny Green Airport in the West Midlands to Compton Abbas Airfield, Dorset where the aircraft was based; a route the pilot had flown many times. The pilot held a valid instrument rating (restricted)<sup>1</sup> and flew most of the route above cloud. He descended below the cloud, using a radar service, before joining left base for Runway 08 at Compton Abbas.

The pilot reported that he thought the approach was "normal" until he heard a bang and realised he had hit the top of trees located to the right and below the approach path. He applied power and left bank to return to the correct path. The aircraft landed normally. Damage was found to the leading edge and tip of the right wing, and to the tailplane (Figure 1).

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### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> An 'Instrument Rating (Restricted)' allows the holder to exercise the privileges of an instrument rating in UK airspace only. The holder must not fly IFR in Class A, B or C airspace and cannot takeoff or land in visibility less than 1,800 meters.



**Figure 1**

G-BXTW after the accident showing damage to right wing and tailplane

### **Meteorology**

The weather was described as hazy, with a cloud base between 1,500 ft and 2,000 ft and a light easterly breeze.

### **Airfield information**

Compton Abbas Airfield has an elevation of 811 ft. The terrain approaching Runway 08 slopes up from the north and west, which can give an unusual visual perspective on the approach. However, the accident pilot was familiar with this airfield and the visual picture on this approach.

The trees the aircraft struck are located to the right of the approach path (Figure 2). The airfield operator reported that aircraft normally clear these trees by approximately 100 ft to 150 ft and that they are located approximately 100 m to the right of the straight-in approach to Runway 08.



**Figure 2**

Compton Abbas Airfield (viewed from the east)

The aerodrome operator has asked the land owner to prune these trees to reduce the chance of a similar accident occurring again.

### **Personnel**

The pilot was experienced flying this aircraft into Compton Abbas having originally learnt to fly at the airfield and having flown there regularly for many years. However, he had flown less in the last year.

The pilot reported that some personal issues were on his mind and this may have distracted him on the approach.

### **Analysis**

The pilot allowed the aircraft to descend below and to the right of the normal approach path causing the aircraft to strike a tree. After the accident, he could not identify any reason why he did not notice he was not on the correct profile. He reflected that personal matters were on his mind and this may have distracted him on the approach.