

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Mainair Blade, G-CCZW	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 582-2V piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	2004 (Serial no: 1368-0904-7-W1163)	
Date & Time (UTC):	20 May 2018 at 1900 hrs	
Location:	Headon Airstrip, near Gamston, Nottinghamshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Minor damage to the left wing and to the pod/ trike unit	
Commander's Licence:	National Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	51 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	71 hours (of which 71 were on type) Last 90 days - 4 hours Last 28 days - 4 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and Airstrip details provided by the Airstrip owner	

Synopsis

While attempting to land from an offset approach, the pilot lost control, and the left wing struck a hedge which was adjacent to the runway.

History of the flight

At the end of a local flight, the pilot flew an offset approach to Runway 14 at Headon, to avoid a noise sensitive area downwind of the threshold. He aimed towards a point on the runway centreline, upwind of the threshold, and flew over the northern airstrip boundary on a heading of 170-180°, before initiating a left turn to line up with the runway. Although he initially judged that he had rolled out of the turn above the centreline, he soon realised that the aircraft was "skidding" right and was above a tall crop of rapeseed adjoining the southern edge of the runway. The pilot, therefore, made a correction to the left and the aircraft turned back towards the runway, where it landed heavily and then veered towards the boundary hedge. The left wingtip struck the hedge, causing the aircraft to spin around to the left before it stopped, at which point the pilot shut the engine down and he and his passenger vacated normally.

Most of the pilot's previous takeoffs and landings had taken place at Headon but he had not landed on Runway 14 until the previous day. The airstrip owner, who is also a flight

instructor, had indicated that the pilot had accumulated sufficient experience to fly the offset approach to Runway 14, which is intended to keep aircraft clear of obstacles and noise sensitive areas. With the flight instructor accompanying him, the pilot had completed two landings and then, on a later flight with a passenger, he had landed on Runway 14 a third time. However, prior to this third landing, he had gone around from his first two approaches, because he had not established his aircraft on the centreline before reaching the midpoint of the runway.

Following the accident, the pilot observed that he had been distracted by the tall crop to the right of the runway and that he felt restricted by it and by the tall boundary hedge to his left. He noted that the runway widens beyond the halfway point and the sight of this wider runway ahead influenced him when he made a “split second” decision to continue his approach. He believes that he probably tried to turn too tightly, to regain the runway, and that this may have caused the wing to stall, meaning he lost control prior to touchdown. As a result of this experience, the pilot believes he has become a more cautious aviator and he will be more inclined to go around from an approach, if he has any doubts concerning the outcome.

Airstrip information

Runway 14 at Headon is 540 m long and pilots are expected to avoid obstacles and nearby noise sensitive areas on the approach and consequently disregard the first 140 m of the runway when landing. The runway widens after its midpoint and there is an uphill slope towards the threshold of Runway 32.

In view of the local noise sensitive areas, the airstrip owner’s website recommended an offset approach to Runway 14, and highlighted the presence of trees along the northern boundary. A diagram on the website had superimposed numerals, which indicated a displaced threshold for use following a 40° offset approach (Figure 1), but a video on the website showed the approach which a microlight pilot should aim for. This suggested flying a track of 170°, so offset 30° left of the centreline, until just prior to crossing the boundary hedge, where aircraft should start turning left (towards 140°). The video showed an aircraft which touched down slightly beyond the midpoint of the runway.

The text accompanying the video stated:

‘...be very careful on this approach as there are obvious dangers of making a turn on to the centre line at low level and I think you will have to make a judgement yourself as to whether it is in your comfort zone or ability. The last thing we or you want is an accident. If you are not comfortable with it then either use a different runway if conditions allow or save the flight for another day. Anyone with less than maybe 100 hours then definitely don’t fly it.’



Figure 1

Part of the website diagram, with areas to avoid shown in red and with a blue line representing the suggested offset approach towards the superimposed '14' numerals. The numerals painted on the ground are in reality not as large and are nearer the northwestern end of the runway.

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Safety actions

The airstrip owner states that since this accident occurred, the trees on the northern boundary have been removed and the recommended approach has been modified to reduce the offset angle to 20° or less. The website is to be amended accordingly and a new video added in due course.

The field to the south of Runway 14 belongs to the airstrip owner and he only grows a rapeseed crop there every third year. In future he will ensure the crop close to the narrowest section of the runway does not reach a height that is likely to distract pilots.