

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Groppo Trail Mk 2, G-RJIT	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Sauer S 2400 UL piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	2017 (Serial no: LAA 372-15355)	
Date & Time (UTC):	2 August 2020 at 1430 hrs	
Location:	Roche Airfield, Cornwall	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - 1 (Minor)	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Damaged beyond repair	
Commander's Licence:	Light Aircraft Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	51 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	152 hours (of which 4 were on type) Last 90 days - 4 hours Last 28 days - 4 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquiries made by the AAIB	

Synopsis

The aircraft experienced a sudden loss of height from 30 ft agl during the approach to land at Roche Airfield. The aircraft landed heavily, short of the runway and rolled into a gate causing substantial damage. The pilot suffered a minor injury.

History of the flight

Four flights were undertaken on the day of the accident. The first two were type familiarisation flights with an LAA instructor. The third flight was solo to refuel the aircraft at Bodmin Airfield and the accident flight was the return to Roche Airfield.

The weather was dry with visibility in excess of 6 km, light cloud, a temperature of 17°C and a 13 kt wind from 280°. The pilot selected Runway 29, which is a 310 m long, 20 m wide grass strip with a slight up-slope. On the approach to Runway 29 is an 8-10 ft high hedge and a metal farm gate positioned approximately 60 ft from the threshold of the landing strip.

The pilot positioned the aircraft for the approach and configured the flaps for landing. At 30 ft agl and with the engine at idle, the pilot reported that the aircraft dropped sharply and he was unable to react in time to arrest the sudden loss of height. The aircraft struck the ground in a flat attitude with a ground speed of approximately 60 mph and rolled into the open gateway.

The left wing tip struck the gate, whilst the right wing was bent backwards by the impact with the gate-post and hedge. The landing gear, forward fuselage and wings absorbed most of the impact and sustained substantial damage (Figure 1). The pilot suffered a minor injury but was able to climb out of the aircraft unaided.



Figure 1

Final position of the aircraft showing significant damage to the fuselage and wings

Analysis

The pilot hadn't flown for approximately nine months prior to the accident because of poor weather over the winter period followed by the restrictions for public health due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He considered his lack of currency was a factor.

Although he was familiar with tailwheel aircraft, he only had four hours on type and additional familiarisation flights may have helped him to react quicker to the aircraft's sudden loss of height. The pilot had flown out of Roche Airfield for approximately two years but had only used Runway 29 a handful of times.