ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Czaw Sportcruiser, G-DVOY
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 912ULS piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	2010 (Serial no: LAA 338-14976)
Date & Time (UTC):	20 May 2023 at 1330 hrs
Location:	Bute Airfield, Isle of Bute, Scotland
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Left wing leading edge ruptured, nose leg detached, main undercarriage structurally compromised, and propeller and spinner destroyed
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	61 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	400 hours (of which 240 were on type) Last 90 days - 12 hours Last 28 days - 5 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further AAIB enquiries

Synopsis

The aircraft touched down long and fast onto a grass strip familiar to the pilot. The grass was long and also wet following a rain shower some minutes earlier. The pilot was unable to slow the aircraft with sufficient control to prevent the aircraft from colliding with the airfield boundary fence at the end of the grass strip.

History of the flight

As the aircraft approached the Isle of Bute, the pilot could see a localised rain shower over the destination unlicensed airfield. The pilot decided to continue the approach for an overhead join, having established that Runway 27 was favourable. On base, the pilot was "unable to visualise the airfield" for a few seconds and in particular the grass strip, which he could not distinguish from the rest of the airfield. The pilot turned onto final, using a mental image of the approach, based on previous flights to the airfield, to align the aircraft for where he knew the runway should be. The aircraft, in full flap landing configuration, was high as it passed over the threshold, but similar to the approaches the pilot previously made when giving himself additional clearance above trees that used to be on the approach to Runway 27.

The aircraft touched down with about 250 m of the 480 m runway remaining, at an airspeed of about 56 kt, approximately 10 kt more than the normal touchdown speed. The pilot

usually stopped the aircraft within 100 m of touchdown without having to brake so was not too concerned with landing long and fast; however, he quickly realised the aircraft was not slowing down as expected. He tried to brake but the aircraft skidded slightly to the right which he corrected back to the left. Further braking attempts were not enough to prevent the aircraft from colliding, at about 20 kt, with the airfield boundary fence on rough ground at the end of the grass strip. The pilot, realising he wasn't going to stop the aircraft in time, tightened his seat harness and loosened the canopy, and at the last moment, turned off the master and magneto switches. The nose leg detached as the aircraft went over the rough ground, before the left wing struck the fence as the aircraft came to a stop. Uninjured, the pilot turned off the remaining electrics and fuel, before exiting the aircraft.

Figure 1

Accident site (used with permission)

Once out of the aircraft, the pilot noticed that the runway grass was long, and "soaking wet" following the rain shower minutes earlier.

Pilot's comments

The pilot stated that his inability to distinguish the runway from the surrounding grass should have provided an indication of the length of the grass. He felt that "confirmation bias allowed him to make a poor decision to land with only 250 m of the runway left" instead of choosing to go around on the approach, realising "the clues were there to make a better decision".

CAA guidance

A series of Safety Sense (SS) Leaflets published by the CAA can be found on the CAA's website.[1] SS12 provides guidance on Strip Flying and includes assessing the site, and the challenges to be considered on the approach, advising to 'always go around early if in any doubt about the approach'. The Aerodrome Planning section of the Skyway Code[2] also contains useful guidance on these topics.

Footnote

1 Safety Sense Leaflets | Civil Aviation Authority (caa.co.uk) [accessed 16 October 2023].
2 CAP1535P Skyway Code V3.pdf (caa.co.uk) [accessed 16 November 2023].