

Accident

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Cessna 120, G-BRUN	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Continental O-200-A piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1946 (Serial no: 9294)	
Date & Time (UTC):	15 September 2023 at 1420 hrs	
Location:	Kittyhawk Aerodrome, Sussex	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 1
Injuries:	Crew – None	Passengers – None
Nature of Damage:	Engine shock loaded, wing and nose fuselage damaged	
Commander's Licence:	National Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	66 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	400 hours (of which 3 were on type) Last 90 days – 3 hours Last 28 days – 3 hours	
Information Source:	Enquiries made by the AAIB	

Synopsis

As the aircraft touched down it bounced, and the pilot initiated a go-around. Reacting to a concern raised by the passenger, the pilot pushed the control yoke forward which resulted in the aircraft touching down firmly at the edge of the runway where it contacted vegetation and rolled over.

History of the flight

The pilot, arrived at the airfield where he kept his aircraft with the intention of flying, but because of his own assessment of the weather conditions he initially decided not to fly. However, following a conversation with an acquaintance, who was an experienced pilot and instructor familiar with the airfield, he decided to fly with his acquaintance who accompanied him as his passenger and not as a flying instructor. The takeoff and departure was normal, but the pilot reported that it was “quite a thermally sort of day and he was being thrown around a bit”. Therefore, he decided to return to the airfield.

Unhappy with his approach to land at the airfield, he initiated a go-around. His passenger agreed with his decision. On his second approach, the passenger may have made a comment about the height which the pilot adjusted by aiming to land further down the runway. The aircraft touched down firmly and bounced, and the pilot initiated another go-around. While the aircraft nose rose quite steeply, the aircraft appeared to sink and drift rapidly off the centre line towards the edge of the runway. At this point the pilot believed

the passenger suggested “push forward” on the control yoke. The pilot responded and the aircraft touched down firmly, bounced and then contacted vegetation at the edge of the runway causing it to cartwheel over a nearby fence. The aircraft came to rest upside down.

Pilot’s analysis

The pilot considered there were several factors which led to the accident.

- He normally liked to take his time and prepare methodically for a flight. On this occasion, after having decided not to fly, his change of mind was spontaneous, and he did not prepare for the flight to his own satisfaction.
- He was unclear as to the role of the passenger, and perhaps overreacted to comments from him.
- He was still familiarising himself with G-BRUN which he had recently acquired and had only flown three hours, all under the supervision of another qualified instructor.
- All his hours as PIC had been in an aircraft with a stick rather than yoke control. He believed that the difference in feedback through the different type of controls caused him to over-control.

Passenger’s comments

The passenger reported that he was not acting in an instructional role during this flight. However, this did not preclude him from making comments or suggestions solely from a flight safety perspective. He considered that he was unlikely to have used the phrase “push forward” and would have said, in this situation, “nose down”. He was expecting the pilot to adjust the attitude to climb away or prevent a stall rather than what he considered to be a “coarse” input from the pilot.

The passenger also acknowledges that regardless of the suitability or not of the weather conditions, a decision to fly rests solely with the pilot in command and considers he would not have unduly influenced him to fly.

AAIB comment

The AAIB has previously reported on accidents and serious incidents where the role of an instructor flying as a passenger has not been clear. It is possible in this case that the pilot had a heightened sense of security because his passenger was an instructor and went ahead with the flight which he was not confident to undertake in the conditions.