

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Freeman CAN Jabiru SK, G-BYFC	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Jabiru Aircraft Pty 2200A piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1999	
Date & Time (UTC):	26 July 2008 at 1030 hrs	
Location:	Near High Fields, The Heywood, Diss, Norfolk	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Substantial, beyond economic repair	
Commander's Licence:	National Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	78 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	2,693 hours (of which 108 were on type) Last 90 days - 18 hours Last 28 days - 6 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

The pilot mis-identified his destination airstrip, and made an approach to another site. Immediately before touchdown, the aircraft sank and struck the ground sustaining substantial damage. The pilot identified that thermal activity, in the form of updraughts from the adjacent cornfield and corresponding down-draughts over the strip, may have accounted for the accident.

History of the flight

The pilot planned to fly from his base in Suffolk to a private strip, 600 metres long, approximately one mile west of Tibenham aerodrome in Norfolk. He had not previously visited the destination, but knew that it had a north/south grass runway. The weather was hot and fine with light winds, though there was '*considerable*

turbulence' during the flight. As usual, the pilot navigated using a 1:500000 aeronautical chart and traditional methods; he did not use a GPS. Arriving in the area north of Diss (and with his destination still two or three miles ahead of him), he saw a grass airstrip aligned north/south and joined the circuit to land in a southerly direction.

On final approach, the pilot selected full flap and reduced speed to 60 kt. The approach proceeded normally, and the pilot noticed that the speed as he crossed the boundary fence was 55 kt. Almost immediately that the pilot started the flare, he found that the aircraft "sank rapidly from a height of about eight feet" and struck the ground heavily, sustaining substantial damage. The left

main and nose landing gears collapsed and the left hand cockpit door opened. The aircraft slid along the ground for 130 metres before coming to rest, and the pilot exited the aircraft without difficulty. There was no fire.

In his report, the pilot stated “it was a hot summer’s day with little wind. The airstrip has trees lining both sides with a field of corn next to it. I can only assume that there was rising hot air from the cornfield and corresponding descending air onto the airstrip causing the rapid loss of height.”

Another pilot familiar with the strip had also experienced this phenomenon. The strip at which the pilot landed was approximately 300 metres long, and surrounded by trees.

CAA Safety Sense leaflet 5d ‘*VFR navigation*’ contains valuable advice for pilots. In the section ‘*Approaching your destination*’ it states:

*‘With your destination area in sight, do not put aside your chart until you have positively identified the **correct** aerodrome.’*

Significant landmarks, immediately adjacent to the pilot’s destination, would have assisted the pilot in identifying and correcting his navigational error.

CAA summary

The pilot mis-identified his destination airstrip and made an approach to another site. Immediately before touchdown, the aircraft sank and struck the ground sustaining substantial damage. The pilot identified that thermal activity, in the form of updraughts from the adjacent cornfield and corresponding down-draughts over the strip, may have accounted for the accident.