

CEA DR253B Regent, G-BYHP

AAIB Bulletin No: 9/2003	Ref: EW/G2003/06/15	Category: 1.3
Aircraft Type and Registration:	CEA DR253B Regent, G-BYHP	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-360-A3A piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1970	
Date & Time (UTC):	16 June 2003 at 1345 hrs	
Location:	Ashcroft, Cheshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Leading edge of port wing cracked	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	46 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	151 hours (of which 21 were on type)	
	Last 90 days - 11 hours	
	Last 28 days - 5 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further AAIB enquiries	

History of flight

The pilot and his passenger flew from Sywell to a privately owned and operated airfield at Ashcroft. The unlicensed airfield has two intersecting grass runways: Runway 09/27 and Runway 14/32. The runways had a mown width of about 8.5 metres with long grass on either side.

The pilot joined overhead and chose to land on Runway 32 which was into wind and the longer of the two strips. He stated that due to the narrowness of the mown area, he misjudged the first approach and so he went around. The pilot then made a second approach from which he landed, although he soon found the aircraft tracking down the left-hand side of the strip. He began to correct back towards the centre of the runway at which point a sign became apparent in the long grass to the left of the strip. He was unable to avoid the sign and it struck the left wing damaging the leading edge about 0.5 to 1 metre inboard from the tip.

The airfield layout

At its highest point the sign was approximately 1 metre above the ground. It contained take-off instructions for pilots using Runway 14 and had been positioned in such a way that it was visible to pilots whilst backtracking up Runway 32 prior to departure. In order to be clearly legible it had been placed approximately 3.4 metres, as measured by the airfield owner, from the edge of the strip. The

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wingspan of the aircraft, also measured by the airfield owner, was about 9 metres and the distance between the left main wheel and the centre of the impact point was 2.25 metres. Thus, using these measurements, in order to hit the post the aircraft's left main wheel must have been slightly over the edge of the mown strip at the point of impact. The pilot stated that in his opinion, whilst the aircraft had gone to the left of the runway centreline, it had remained on the mown strip throughout the landing.

Prior to departure the pilot had studied the airfield details in Pooleys Flight Guide and had noted the described runway width of 12 metres. Whilst it is clearly stated in the front of the guide that the information contained within should be "*used as a guide only*", the pilot was used to operating from a licenced airfield whose description in the guide was accurate. He had been somewhat surprised, therefore, by the narrowness of the runway when he had actually arrived at the airfield.

The CAA document "*Safety Standards for Unlicenced Airfields*" (CAP 428) provides guidance for operators of such airfields. Appendix B recommends that runways of length comparable to that of Runway 32 "*should be at least 18 metres wide*". It further recommends that no obstacles should exist within 30 metres of the runway centreline. Further advice to both pilots and operators can be found in the CAA's General Aviation Safety Sense leaflet "*Strip Sense*".

Comment

An unlicenced airfield does not have to meet the strict criteria applied to licensed airfields and so facility standards vary considerably. It is important therefore, that pilots using an unlicensed airfield appreciate that they are responsible for ensuring that their aircraft is capable of operating with an appropriate level of safety from the unlicensed airfield and that they exercise due caution, especially in the manoeuvring area. Equally, it would be wise for the owners and operators of an unlicensed airfield or strip to adhere to the guidance contained within CAP 428.

Pilots should remember that if on arrival conditions appear unsuitable for either their aircraft or their personal level of experience, then a diversion to more suitable airfield should be made.