

AAIB Bulletin No: 9/94

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Category: 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Pitts S-2B, G-STUB

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming AEIO-540-D4A5 piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1989

Date & Time (UTC): 3 July 1994 at 1530 hrs

Location: Bradfield, Berkshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - Minor Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Generalised substantial damage

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 70 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 1,111 hours (of which 14 were on type)
Last 90 days - 14 hours
Last 28 days - 12 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The pilot had shared an aerobatic aircraft for a number of years and it had been the group practice to refuel and check the oil after each session, so as to ensure that the next pilot always had sufficient for an aerobatic detail. On the 30 June, the pilot carried out two sorties and had planned to return later that day for a third detail, so he did not refuel as usual. In the event, he did not return as planned.

On the day of the accident the pilot returned and checked the aircraft for flight, including the fuel state, no other pilot having flown the aircraft in the intervening period. Following a short session of aerobatics over Greenham Common Airfield, whilst returning to White Waltham at an altitude of about 1,500 feet, the pilot noted a slightly high exhaust gas temperature, followed shortly after by engine hesitation. The engine then cleared, but almost immediately the hesitation re-occurred. The pilot called White Waltham to advise of his problem, and within a few seconds the engine lost power completely. An emergency was declared and the pilot began to seek a suitable field but found that most of the fields in the area were small and obstructed at ground level, leaving a choice of only two possible fields. The more suitable of these was chosen and an approach and landing carried out in a westerly direction, this appearing to afford the lowest ground speed. When choosing the field, the pilot knew from its colour

that it was not grass, but during the approach it became apparent that the crop was standing rape. The aircraft touched down in the rape, which was some 1.5 metres high, and almost immediately turned over onto its back, causing substantial damage. The cockpit area remained essentially intact and the pilot suffered only minor injuries, but he required the assistance of local residents to complete his evacuation of the aircraft.

The pilot attributes the accident to his failure to ensure that there was sufficient fuel for the flight. He believes that he was misled by the tail down attitude of the aircraft on the ground, which caused the fuel gauges to over-read.