

VPM M16 Tandem Trainer, G-YROW

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| AAIB Bulletin No: 10/2003 | Ref: EW/G2003/04/30 | Category: 2.3 |
| Aircraft Type and Registration: | VPM M16 Tandem Trainer, G-YROW | |
| No & Type of Engines: | 1 Rotax 912 ULS piston engine | |
| Year of Manufacture: | 2002 | |
| Date & Time (UTC): | 24 April 2003 at 0915 hrs | |
| Location: | Pirbright Barracks, Surrey | |
| Type of Flight: | Private | |
| Persons on Board: | Crew - 1 | Passengers - 1 |
| Injuries: | Crew - 1 (Serious) | Passengers - 1 (Minor) |
| Nature of Damage: | Damage to rotor blades and undercarriage | |
| Commander's Licence: | Private Pilot's Licence | |
| Commander's Age: | 36 years | |
| Commander's Flying Experience: | 1,775 hours (of which 27 were on type) | |
| | Last 90 days - 10 hours | |
| | Last 28 days - 10 hours | |
| Information Source: | Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot | |

The flight was planned as a short local cross country departing from Pirbright, Surrey with the pilot, his passenger and a full load of fuel on board. This gyroplane has a tandem seat configuration. The take-off site was a parade ground from which the pilot had flown out successfully on his own two days earlier. The weather conditions for this flight were good with light winds.

Before takeoff the pilot pre-rotated the rotor to approximately 250 RPM and released the brakes. The takeoff was performed into wind along the length of the parade ground. The gyroplane appeared to accelerate normally and lift into the air. The pilot then continued to accelerate whilst remaining close to the surface and, when he was some three-quarters of the way along the parade ground, initiated a climb. Ahead there was a single storey building and, further on, some large trees. He felt that the gyroplane was not climbing and accelerating as well as he had expected so he decided to make a precautionary landing on a nearby running track. This required a 90° turn to the left and, as the track was close by, a reduction in airspeed. Looking more closely at the track he noticed that there were various obstructions and fences around it. He therefore decided to turn further to the left, to head opposite to the direction of takeoff, and land, downwind, on some playing fields. By this time the airspeed was too low and the pilot applied power in order to be able to reach the playing fields. The gyroplane continued to descend and struck the roof of a low building short of the intended landing area. The rotors were damaged and the gyroplane sank rapidly towards the ground, rolling onto its side on impact. The pilot, who received facial cuts and rib injuries in the accident, was wearing a helmet and lap-strap and the passenger, who suffered bruising, wore a full four point harness.

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The pilot, having considered afterwards the circumstances of the accident, observed that he had relied overmuch on the previous successful takeoff from the same area and had not fully considered that he now had full fuel and two persons on board. Following on from that, when he discovered the performance was not as he expected, he had allowed the speed to become too slow without having sufficient clear area into which to descend and accelerate again.