

Auster J5V Series 160 Autocar, G-APUW

AAIB Bulletin No: 12/2003	Ref: EW/G2003/08/52	Category: 1.3
INCIDENT		
Aircraft Type and Registration:	Auster J5V Series 160 Autocar, G-APUW	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-320-B2B piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1959	
Date & Time (UTC):	31 August 2003 at 1100 hrs	
Location:	Langham Airfield, Colchester, Essex	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Third party damage to a cornfield	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	68 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	1,200 hours (of which 1,050 were on type)	
	Last 90 days - 19 hours	
	Last 28 days - 8 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

After releasing a glider at 3,000 feet, the aircraft, with the tow rope attached, descended rapidly to circuit height in order to land without delay as the passenger was a member of the glider retrieval team. As the aircraft approached grass Runway 24 (600 metres long), the pilot became aware of 11 kV electric power cables crossing a cornfield in the undershoot. He did not wish to make an excessively high approach because of the short runway length available and lack of headwind. A colleague, monitoring the approach from the ground, called on the radio that the towrope was clear, however, the pilot felt the rope hit the cables as the aircraft passed over them. The pilot was able to continue and make a normal landing but the severed power cables ignited the crop in the cornfield. The pilot reported that just as the radio call was made, he sank approximately 20 feet in a down draught and this, combined with a recent increase in length to the towrope, may have accounted for the cablestrike.