

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Pioneer 300, G-DEWY
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 912 ULS piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	2005 (Serial no: PFA 330-14292)
Date & Time (UTC):	16 August 2014 at 1810 hrs
Location:	Churt, Surrey
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - 1 (Serious) Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Severe airframe damage
Commander's Licence:	Light Aircraft Pilot Licence
Commander's Age:	81 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	2,200 hours (of which 66 were on type) Last 90 days - 13 hours Last 28 days - 6 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

Synopsis

The aircraft suffered an engine failure whilst it was positioning to land, flying over a wooded area. The aircraft hit the trees and the pilot sustained serious injuries. The reason for the engine failure was not positively determined.

History of the flight

After an uneventful flight from Old Sarum, the pilot carried out his joining checks for Frensham Airfield, during which he selected the fuel tank that was indicating it had the most fuel, to feed the engine. The weather conditions were good with moderate winds.

The local procedures at Frensham require joining aircraft to overfly the airfield at 600 ft agl before landing, to check for horses, and to give riders time to vacate the strip. The pilot complied with this procedure and, having determined there were no horses, he flew a second circuit intending to land. During the base leg, at 400 ft, the aircraft experienced some turbulence whilst flying over a wooded area, and the engine stopped. The pilot recalls turning directly for the airfield, checking his fuel pump was on and selecting the other fuel tank, whilst adjusting to the best glide speed of 55 kt. The next recollection the pilot has was that the aircraft stopped abruptly in the tree tops and fell to the ground inverted.

The pilot was discovered some time later but, because of the location of the accident, it was several hours before paramedics were able to cut him free from the aircraft. His injuries were categorised as severe.

The pilot checked the gascolator after the accident and found it to be clear of debris. He considered the engine failure was probably caused by an unreliable fuel sender, or fuel gauge, leading the engine to be starved of fuel. His calculations showed that 24 litres should have been available in his other fuel tank, which would be enough for more than an hour of flight.

Comment

The emergency procedures section of the aircraft flight manual contains the following warning:

'The engine installed in the Pioneer 300 is not certified and can fail at any time. Never fly over areas on to which a safe landing cannot be made in the event of an engine failure. On cross country flights, continually update safe landing fields as the journey progresses.'