

No: 2/91

Ref: EW/G90/12/08

Category: 1b

Aircraft Type

and Registration: Cessna 310P, G-FLIX

No & Type of Engines: 2 Continental IO-470-VO piston engines

Year of Manufacture: 1969

Date and Time (UTC): 4 December 1990 at 1115 hrs

Location: Newbury Racecourse, Berkshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Severe damage to main landing gear and fuselage. Aircraft damaged beyond economic repair

Commander's Licence: Commercial Pilot's Licence with Instructor rating

Commander's Age: 36 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 2,060 hours (of which 110 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further investigations by AAIB

The pilot was engaged on a VFR flight from Lydd to Newbury racecourse. Before the flight he had spoken directly to Newbury to obtain details of the runway and authority to land.

On arriving at Newbury the pilot found that the wind was light, visibility was good except for haze, which reduced it into sun, and there was some broken stratus cloud at 1200 to 1500 feet. He overflew the racecourse at 1,000 feet agl heading south-west and saw a long mown grass strip within the oval of the racetrack, which he took to be the runway. He turned and overflew again in the opposite direction at between 500 and 700 feet agl, noting this time that the windsock showed the wind to be calm. He then turned left to fly a left-hand circuit to land in an easterly direction.

The approach and landing were normal but, just after he applied the brakes, he saw a drainage ditch 6 to 7 feet wide and overgrown with grass across his landing path. He attempted to go-around but the main landing gear struck the eastern edge of the ditch and detached. The aircraft came to rest some 100 to 150 metres beyond the ditch. The main cabin door was jammed by fuselage distortion and the pilot left the aircraft through the emergency window exit.

Newbury racecourse management said later that the normal briefing for arriving pilots is for them to land on the strip marked near the railway line and adjacent to the windsock, this location lying outside and north-east of the race track. They described how they had recently considered repositioning the landing strip to an area enclosed by the race track. A drainage ditch lay diagonally across the proposed new strip, and it was intended that a culvert should be built over this ditch. They had sought the advice of the CAA about the suitability of the proposed new strip and, to prepare it for viewing, had mown the grass along its intended length. The normal strip had not been mown recently because of the slow rate of growth of the grass during the dry summer weather.

The AAIB viewed Newbury from the air at the same time of day and in weather conditions similar to those prevailing at the time of the accident. From 1,000 feet agl the windsock was clearly visible, the runway markers of the normal landing strip could just be made out but the strip itself could not be distinguished from the surrounding grass area. The rectangular area of mown grass enclosed by the race track outlining the proposed new landing strip stood out clearly, and the drainage ditch cutting diagonally across it could also be seen clearly. An approach to land on the new strip was flown down to 500 feet agl and the ditch could again be seen clearly from that height on the approach.

Since the accident white crosses have been laid out at each end of the proposed new landing strip.