

**ACCIDENT**

<b>Aircraft Type and Registration:</b>	Ikarus C42, G-FLYM	
<b>No &amp; Type of Engines:</b>	1 Rotax 912ULS piston engine	
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	2007 (Serial no: 0707-6903)	
<b>Date &amp; Time (UTC):</b>	29 May 2017 at 1550 hrs	
<b>Location:</b>	Near Castlewellan, Co Down	
<b>Type of Flight:</b>	Private	
<b>Persons on Board:</b>	Crew - 1	Passengers - 1
<b>Injuries:</b>	Crew - None	Passengers - None
<b>Nature of Damage:</b>	Damaged beyond economic repair	
<b>Commander's Licence:</b>	National Private Pilot's Licence	
<b>Commander's Age:</b>	56 years	
<b>Commander's Flying Experience:</b>	46 hours (all on type) Last 90 days - 30 hours Last 28 days - 3 hours	
<b>Information Source:</b>	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquiries by the AAIB	

**Synopsis**

On the return leg to the airfield the pilot was caught out by rising terrain and a lowering cloudbase. He could not see a field in which to carry out an emergency landing so he landed in the tops of trees.

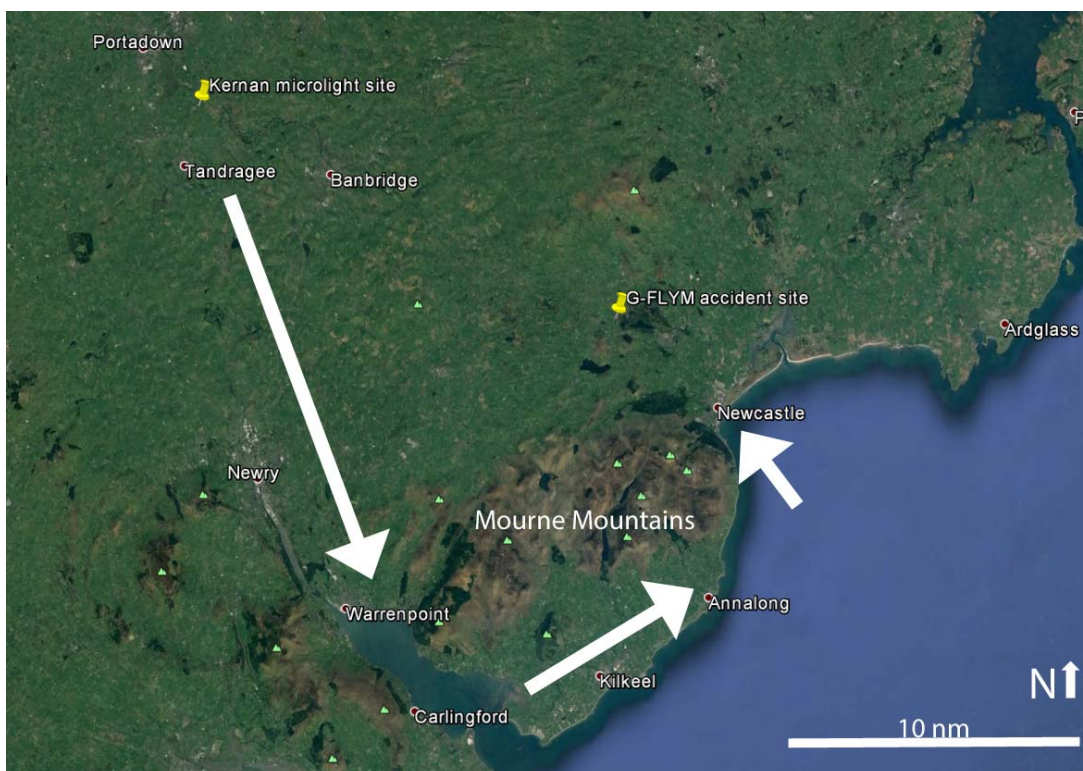
**History of the flight**

The pilot had obtained his National Private Pilot's Licence in the month before the accident. All his training had been on the Ikarus C42 microlight aircraft from Kernan microlight site near Tandragee, Co Armagh. He was planning a flight with one passenger around the Mourne Mountains about 19 nm to the south-east. The cloudbase was about 1,100 to 1,200 ft aal and the visibility 7 to 10 km with light wind. The 275 m paved runway was at an elevation of 65 ft amsl. Before he departed an instructor advised him to stay in "the local area".

The pilot took off from Runway 18 and then headed south towards Newry and Warren Point (Figure 1). He reported that approaching Warren Point, which is almost at sea-level, the cloud base was just above 1,000 ft and it continued to be so as he flew round the south of the Mourne Mountains. During his return flight via Newcastle he encountered rising ground, lowering cloud and reduced visibility in the area of Castlewellan. He decided that his best course of action was to land in a field. He knew that the C42 could be landed in a short distance and was prepared to trailer the aircraft back if the field was too small for

takeoff. However, he could not see a field and instead he carried out an emergency landing into trees on the top of a hill. The aircraft sustained significant damage but he and his passenger were uninjured.

The accident site was located about 1.5 nm north-west of Castlewellan where the terrain rises to 750 ft amsl.



**Figure 1**

Approximate route flown from Kernan microlight site to the accident site  
(underlying image © Google Earth)

### Pilot's comments

The pilot stated that he was caught out by the rising terrain and lowering cloud, and that this was due to his inexperience. When the instructor advised him to stay in the local area, he interpreted this area to include up to Newry which was 13 nm south of Kernan. He did not think he was doing anything risky by going beyond this distance because when he reached Newry the cloudbase was still above 1,000 ft.

Another instructor at Kernan was asked how they would interpret the term 'local area' and they said about 4 to 5 nm from the airfield.

### Analysis

The instructor who advised the pilot before the flight probably wanted him to stay within a few miles of the airfield due to the low cloudbase. However, the pilot considered that it was safe to fly further than this as long as the cloudbase remained above 1,000 ft. He had

probably not realised that he was heading towards terrain that was as high as 750 ft on his return leg from Newry. It is noted that, even when travelling at a typical C42 cruise speed of 85 kt, the 'situation ahead' can change rapidly and low cloud can hide the tops of hills.