Piper PA-18-150 (Modified), G-BJIV

AAIB Bulletin No: 2/2001

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Aircraft Type and Registration:	Piper PA-18-150 (Modified), G-BJIV
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming 0-360-A3A piston engine
Year of Manufacture:	1965
Date & Time (UTC):	23 August 2000 at 1845 hrs
Location:	Winds Farm, Thorne, near Doncaster, Yorkshire
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 - Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - None - Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Aircraft inverted. Aircraft broke 3 conductors and a wooden pole
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	63 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	2,359 hours (of which 670 were on type) Last 90 days - 37 hours Last 28 days - 28 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The pilot of the glider tug was flying to a stubble field at Winds Farm, Thorne where a glider had landed on a flight from the gliding club at Plockton, near Kyle of Lochalsh, Scotland. The intention was to aerotow the glider back to Plockton. The pilot of the glider had informed the gliding competition control that the field was suitable and that the farmer had given his permission for the tug to land. He did not mention any obstructions and later confirmed he was not aware of the wires, which the tug struck on landing. The tug pilot, on arrival from the north, carried out a low speed left hand orbit to confirm that the field was suitable and to check for obstructions. The weather at the field was a light easterly wind with good visibility, high cloud and no precipitation. The rectangular field had a stubble surface and was orientated east west and about 300 metres long. On the western end a road ran north south with telegraph wires running along both sides. The pilot assessed that there was adequate distance available to clear the wires and make a safe landing.

The aircraft was flown downwind at approximately 60 mph and the pre landing checks were carried out and the first stage of flap was lowered. On final approach the pilot lowered landing flap and set

up the approach to clear the wires and land about one third of the distance into the field. Just as the pilot was about to flare the aircraft he saw in front of him a single strand feeder cable stretched from left to right, which he had not seen during his reconnaissance orbit. He was unable to avoid hitting the cable, which he thought struck the landing gear. The cable stretched at first and the aircraft pitched down banking to the right. As the cable broke the aircraft's right wing and propeller hit the ground causing the engine to stop and the aircraft to somersault onto its back.

The pilot and passenger were unhurt and, having isolated the fuel and magnetos, they both vacated the aircraft through the normal exit on their right. The glider pilot alerted the emergency services who attended the scene.

The pilot concluded that during his assessment of the site he had not seen the wires, which were difficult to detect, although he thought it might have been possible to see them if he had he searched at a lower height. A more thorough search for obstacles by the glider pilot and use of the radio communications, if available to the pilots, would have provided a method of drawing attention to any obstructions, which might have been a hazard to the tug as it landed.