

AAIU Report No. 1998/ 013
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Aircraft Type and Registration: Pitts S2AE, G-PITS

No. and Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming IO-360-CIE6

Aircraft Serial Number: PFA 009/11/001

Year of Manufacture: 1985

Date and Time (UTC): 25 January 1998, 1130 hrs

Location: Weston Aerodrome, Co Kildare

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: 1

Injuries: Nil

Nature of Damage: Substantial damage to aircraft

Commanders Licence: Commercial Pilots Licence

Commanders Age: 30 years

Commanders Flying Experience:

Total	582 hrs
Total on type	130 hrs
Total last 90 days	12 hrs
Total last 28 days	6 hrs

Information Source: Pilot's Report and AAIU Field Investigation

Synopsis

The pilot had landed on Runway 07, at Weston Aerodrome, at the end of his second local flight of the day. He turned the aircraft on the runway, and was backtracking, on the runway, to the aircraft parking area. The runway is tarmac and is 890 metres long and 15 metres wide. Given the restricted forward view in this aircraft type, the pilot zig-zagged while taxiing, in order to ensure that the runway was clear in front of him.

Due to the busy nature of the airfield at weekends, such as the Saturday morning in question, the pilot conducted the backtracking in an expeditious manner.

During one of the zig-zag manoeuvres, the right main wheel departed the tarmac surface and entered soft ground. This caused the aircraft to ground loop, off the runway, about the right hand main wheel. In the ground loop, the left wing tip struck the ground.

Damage to the Aircraft

During the ground loop the left lower wing tip and its aileron was damaged by ground contact. The left main wheel suffered damaged to its brake unit and a support strut. The tail wheel was knocked off the aircraft, and considerable damage was caused to the structure of the rear fuselage, particularly on the right hand side.

Visibility from the Aircraft

When this aircraft type is flown solo, as it was on this occasion, it is flown from the rear cockpit seat, due to centre of gravity restrictions. Visibility forward from this seat is poor, but particularly so when the aircraft is taxiing, due to the tail down attitude associated with tail wheel aircraft such as the Pitts.

Wind Direction

The wind at the time of the incident was 090° to 100° at 11 to 12 kts, but with occasional gusts to 21 to 23 kts. This wind from the tail quarter would reduce directional control of the aircraft.

Other Information

This aircraft type has a very small fin and rudder, with a short distance between the main and tail wheels. This results in relatively poor directional stability while taxiing.