

AAIU Report No. 2000/009
AAIU File No. 2000/0013
Published: 02/08/2000

Aircraft Type and Registration:	CFM Shadow, EI-CMF
No. and Type of Engines:	One, Rotax 582
Aircraft Serial Number:	050
Year of Manufacture:	1996
Date and Time (UTC):	27 February 2000, 1815 hours
Location:	Dunmore, Co. Galway
Type of Flight:	Private
Persons on Board:	Crew – One Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew – Minor Passengers – N/A
Nature of Damage:	Aircraft Destroyed
Commanders Licence:	USA FAA, Licence (Private Pilot)
Commanders Age:	34 Years
Commanders Flying Experience:	200 hours, all types
Information Source	AAIU Field Investigation

1 History of the Flight

The pilot, who was also operating in his capacity as the designated aircraft inspector for the Society of Amateur Aircraft Constructors (SAAC), carried out a detailed technical inspection of the aircraft throughout the afternoon prior to the flight. The aircraft was structurally sound, its engine, flight controls and systems were in satisfactory condition and he signed out the requisite paperwork to that effect. The purpose of this inspection was for the issuing of the aircraft's Permit to Fly. This was to be issued by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) on receipt of the completed paperwork from the SAAC inspector. The owners had purchased this prior-owned aircraft in October 1999.

Following the inspection at the co-owners workshop facility, the aircraft was de-rigged, this took 20 minutes, and taken by trailer some 4 miles to a level grass field of some 700 yards in length at Dunmore, Co. Galway. Here it was re-rigged again and prepared for flight by the pilot/engineer. Earlier in the afternoon the pilot sought weather information from Connaught International Airport and was satisfied with the report he received.

It was the pilot's intention to carry out one circuit from this field to flight test the aircraft for the purpose of the issue of the Permit. Take-off was just after 1800 hours into a light south-westerly wind. The orientation of the field is from east to west. Once airborne, the pilot commenced his circuit and lost sight of the airfield. He carried out a further two or three more circuits to regain sight of the airfield. Once sighted, he made one final low pass to confirm his position and commenced his final approach to land. With full flaps set, airspeed at 60 MPH and throttle closed, the pilot lined up with the field and flew into one of four large ash trees, about 35 feet high, on the airfield boundary. On impact the aircraft spun into the ground and disintegrated, with the exception of the cabin pod structure. In this instance, the intact cabin structure may have prevented serious injury or loss of life. The pilot quickly freed himself from the cockpit and walked away unaided. There was no fire. The accident was witnessed by the two co-owners. The flight lasted about 12 minutes.

On 27 February 2000, the "end of VFR", as reported by Connaught International Airport, was 1807 hours. The airport is about 16 miles from Dunmore.

1.1 Other Information

In a full and forthright debrief the pilot described the circumstances of the accident. This was his first flight in the aircraft. He did not hold a Night Rating on any aircraft. He thought "that he had adequate light for the job to do one circuit". However, the more disorientated he got after takeoff the more the light faded, and the presence of two nearby cumulo-nimbus clouds added to the fading light. So much so, he recalled, that he did not see the tree tops on his landing approach, which he subsequently struck.

Prior to take off one of the co-owners expressed his concern to the pilot about it being " a little dark". However, the pilot decided to proceed with the flight in the failing light. After the accident, the owner witnessed the pilot walking from the aircraft "much to his amazement", he later recalled.

The owners got local medical assistance for the pilot and he was subsequently transferred to University College Hospital in Galway city for a comprehensive medical examination and treatment. He was discharged by the hospital later that same night.

This report does not sustain any Safety Recommendations.



The scene of the accident photographed the following day showing the wreckage of the aircraft and the ash trees in the background.