



Accident to the PIPER - PA-32-300 registered G-KNOW

on 3 July 2019

at Le Touquet Côte d'Opale aerodrome (Pas-de-Calais)

⁽¹⁾ Unless otherwise stated, all times given in this report are in local time.

Time	Around 11:15 ⁽¹⁾
Operator	Private
Type of flight	Cross-country
Persons on board	Pilot and three passengers
Consequences and damage	Aircraft heavily damaged
This is a courtesy translation by the BEA of the Final Report on the Safety Investigation published in June 2020. As accurate as the translation may be, the original text in French is the work of reference.	

Bounced landing, damage to nose gear

1 - HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is based mainly on the statements of the pilot and the controller and the radio communication recordings.

⁽²⁾ All communications are in English.

The pilot, who was accompanied by three passengers, took off from Lydd aerodrome (United Kingdom) bound for Le Touquet aerodrome.

⁽³⁾ Paved runway measuring 1,850 m by 40 m. The landing distance available is 1,700 m.

On arrival, he contacted the tower controller, who authorised him⁽²⁾ to perform a straight-in approach to runway 13⁽³⁾. When the pilot announced that he was on final 8 NM from the runway, the controller indicated that he was number three in line for landing⁽⁴⁾.

⁽⁴⁾ The pilot correctly read back the landing sequence number.

When the aircraft was 2 NM away on final, the controller advised the pilot that he was now number two behind an aircraft on short final and that he should expect to receive a late landing clearance. He informed the pilot that the wind was blowing from 050° at 14 kt, with gusts of up to 22 kt.

The pilot indicated that he had the aircraft in front of him in sight.

When the latter, a Piper PA-28, moved off the runway, the G-KNOW was on short final and the controller cleared the pilot to land.

Moments later, the plane hit the runway hard. After three bounces, the nose gear collapsed and the aircraft came to a stop on the left-hand edge of the runway.

2 - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Aircraft information

The Piper PA-32-300 was fitted with fixed landing gear.

The aircraft flight manual recommends an airspeed of 80 knots and a flap configuration of 40° for landing. However, it is specified that the landing speed and flap position must be adjusted according to the runway surface, the wind and the aircraft load.

The flaps can be extended at 10, 25 or 40°.

The maximum demonstrated crosswind component for landing is 17 kt, including gusts⁽⁵⁾.

2.2 Pilot information

The pilot, a 59-year-old British national, had held a private pilot licence for aeroplanes since June 2018. He had logged 134 flight hours, including 44 hours on G-KNOW⁽⁶⁾ and nine in the previous three months, all on this plane.

2.3 Tower controller's statement

The controller indicated that the two aircraft ahead of G-KNOW cleared the runway directly via taxiway T2 without having to make a U turn.

He stated that he had asked the pilot of PA-28, who was directly in front of G-KNOW, to clear the runway quickly by taking the first right via T2.

After PA-28 had cleared the runway, he cleared the pilot of G-KNOW to land. The latter, who was on very short final, did not read back.

The controller saw G-KNOW adopt a nose-down trajectory and touch down on the runway nose gear first. The nose gear fairing then broke off and the aircraft bounced back up once to a height of five to six metres. On the second bounce, the nose gear collapsed. The aircraft then bounced a third time and finally came to rest on the left-hand side of the runway.

Lastly, the controller explained that he had not sensed any particular stress in the pilot's voice up until the accident.

2.4 Pilot's statement

The pilot explained that, on final approach, he prepared the aircraft for landing by setting the flaps to the second notch and maintained an airspeed of 85 kt.

He indicated that he was given his first clearance⁽⁷⁾ to land when he was 2 NM from the threshold. But a few moments later, he saw a plane taxiing towards him on the runway. He was not immediately able to determine whether this plane, which was halfway down the runway, was in its take-off or landing phase.

He then wondered if he was indeed on final into runway 13 or instead heading in the opposite direction. He quickly dispelled any doubt and continued his approach into runway 13.

⁽⁵⁾ This maximum component was used for certification but is not considered to be the absolute limit.

⁽⁶⁾ He was the owner.

⁽⁷⁾ According to the radio communication recordings, the pilot had not yet received clearance to land.

Focusing his attention on the aircraft, he observed it taxi up the entire runway and then complete a U-turn and resume its taxiing, this time in the same direction as G-KNOW.

Not understanding the situation and seeing the runway still occupied, the pilot wondered if it might not be better to go around. Despite his doubts, he decided to continue his landing.

The aircraft on the ground continued taxiing and finally cleared the runway half way down via taxiway T2. After clearing the runway, the pilot was cleared to land a second time.

While his attention was still focused on the aircraft that had just cleared the runway, G-KNOW hit the ground very hard. He said he had been focused on the other aircraft at the expense of his own trajectory management.

3 - CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are solely based on the information which came to the knowledge of the BEA during the investigation. They are not intended to apportion blame or liability.

Scenario

On final approach, the pilot, who was in third position in the landing sequence, was focused on the movement of the aircraft ahead of him. His misconception of these movements led him to consider the possibility of a go-around on final approach. However, he did not ask the controller for assistance in clarifying the situation and decided to continue the approach.

When he was cleared for landing on very short final, he was still focused on the aircraft on the ground that had just cleared the runway. He did not flare and the nose gear hit the runway hard. This was followed by a series of bounces during which the nose gear collapsed.

Contributing factors

The following factors may have contributed to the failure to flare:

- The pilot's attention, which was focused on the movements of the aircraft on the ground to the detriment of his trajectory management.
- The pilot's decision not to go around despite his concerns about the occupation of the runway.