Aviation Safety Investigation Report 198901569

Drifter

5 February 1989

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Investigations commenced on or before 30 June 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the CEO of the Bureau in accordance with Part 2A of the Air Navigation Act 1920.

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NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at www.atsb.gov.au.

This accident was not subject to an on site investigation.

Occurrence Number: 198901569 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: Penfield VIC
Date: 5 February 1989 **Time:** 1945
Highest Injury Level: Nil
Injuries:

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	0	0	1	1
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	0	0	0	0
Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**

Aircraft Details: Drifter
Registration: AUF 25-280
Serial Number: 250280
Operation Type: Sport Aviation
Damage Level: Substantial
Departure Point: Penfield VIC
Departure Time: 1800
Destination: Penfield VIC

Approved for Release: 5 April 1989

Circumstances:

At the completion of a local flight, the pilot was about 300 feet above the ground on final approach, when the aircraft experienced a substantial power loss. He positioned the aircraft for a forced landing in a nearby paddock. However, the engine then returned to normal operation and a decision was made to continue to the strip. Shortly after power was applied to overshoot from the paddock, the engine again lost power. During the subsequent attempt to position for touchdown the aircraft stalled and struck the ground heavily. An on-site examination by the operator and the pilot established that there was only one litre of fuel left in the tank. There were no faults apparent with the engine and it was evident that the power loss was the result of fuel exhaustion. It was not possible for the pilot to visually check the fuel tank contents in flight, and he considered that the fuel quantity gauge was unreliable. Although the pilot was experienced on the type, this particular aircraft had an engine fitted with twin carburettors. The fuel consumption rate was higher than that for the single carburettor models. The pilot had attempted to establish a fuel consumption rate prior to DEPARTURE but the figure that he calculated and planned upon was incorrect. The pilot also advised that, in hindsight, his decision making processes on the day were probably adversely affected. He was preoccupied with a personal problem, and also realised after DEPARTURE that he had neglected to wear sufficient clothing for the flight. This resulted in him getting quite cold as the flight progressed.

Significant Factors:

The following factors were considered relevant to the development of the accident

1. Although experienced on the aircraft type, the pilot was not experienced on this particular model which was fitted with twin carburettors.

2. The fuel consumption rate calculated by the pilot was incorrect. This resulted in less than adequate fuel being carried for the proposed flight.

3. The engine failed as a result of fuel exhaustion.

4. During the subsequent forced landing attempt the engine briefly regained power, and the pilot elected to continue the flight.

5. The engine failed again, and the aircraft stalled during the subsequent manoeuvring close to the ground.