

My friend Learned about Flying from that..



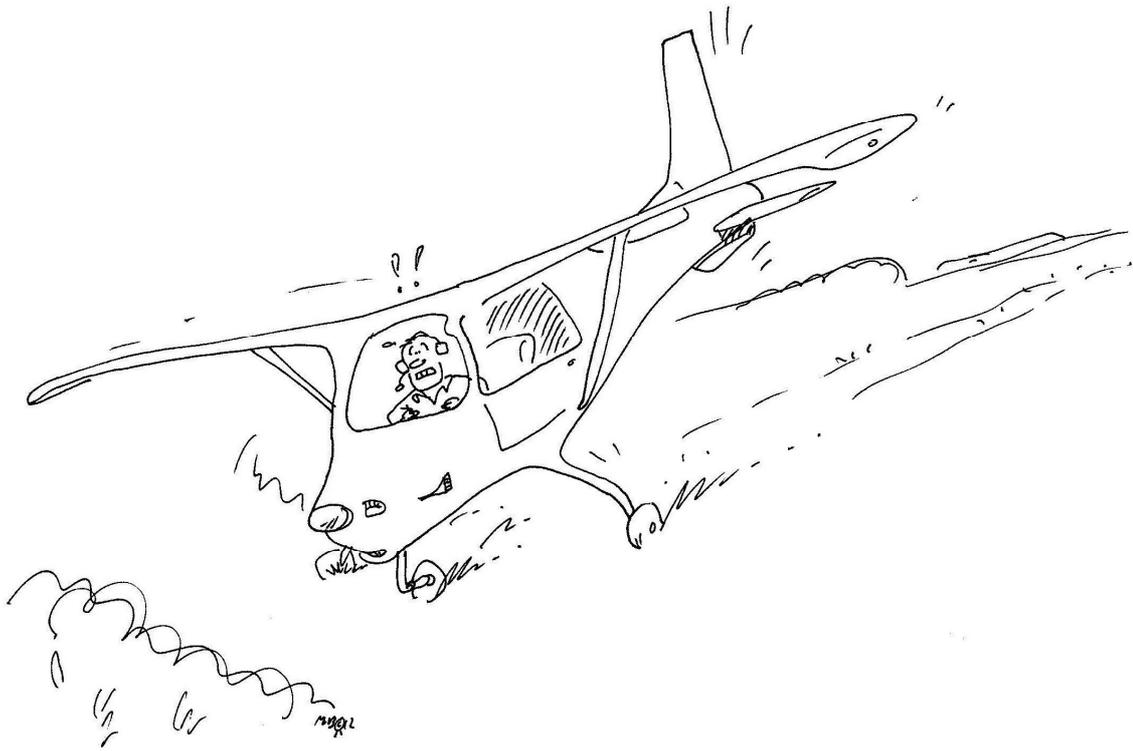
An experienced pilot recently had a gentle reminder that you never stop learning!

A friend of mine sold his homebuilt aircraft and I agreed to do a bit of training with the new owner who had not flown the type before. I had always admired the machine in question, a fast strong efficient composite airframe that was beautifully constructed to the highest standards. It was also stuffed with avionics including a Mode 'S' transponder, new 8.33 FM immune radio and a glass cockpit which had integrated GPS and a terrain database – quite a package for a light aircraft. I had done a little flying in it in the past and thought, 'no problem' I can get this new owner sorted in no time; by all accounts he was not a beginner and had 'traded up' from a more basic machine which he had already sold on. My friend dropped the aircraft off one evening in a bit of a rush – I'd hoped to a circuit or 2 with him for my own benefit, but it was not to be.. *'You'll be fine.. I have to go, I'm late, she's paid for and he has her insured, so you just need to do a quick few circuits with him and that'll be that; sorry, must rush.. he wants to operate her out of a 350m strip, so maybe do a few short field landings with him just to be sure he's happy before he takes her.. Bye..'*

I was in a bit of a hurry myself, but thought, nice plane, nice evening, I should really do a couple of circuits on my own before the new owner comes looking to be taught how to manage his shiny new aeroplane. 350m is tight but do-able, the aircraft had until recently lived on a 400m strip without any problem. I hopped in and spent a few minutes sorting myself out with the slightly unusual controls and the glass cockpit..that was going to have to wait for another day to have all its secrets revealed.

Once airborne I had a quick feel of the controls and did a stall, no surprises - once the speed eventually dropped off.. I started playing with the GPS groundspeed to check the wind on finals and lined myself up with the 600m strip I operated from. First touch and go was OK and for the next I reckoned I could simulate a 350m strip by using 2 hedges adjacent the strip which would leave me about 100m of an over-run. I cut the second circuit a bit short to save time.. Slightly high on finals my second approach ended up a bit fast, only 10 kts or so, but I was on top of it, early full flap, idle and lots of slip, stuff the nose down to increase speed and drag, aim short and then wash the speed off in the round out.... or so I thought.. The plane seemed to accelerate in ground effect, everything was out, flaps, crossed controls, throttle idle, but on it went; it just did not want to slow down.. I reached my imaginary threshold at the first hedge, but the plane was still in no mood to stop flying.. Half way along the imaginary 350m strip the plane touched, 'Thank God' I thought and started braking, but it seemed like the brakes were not working.. the second hedge was approaching and I suddenly realised this was going to be ugly, the brakes were next to useless on the grass and I was still

moving along far too quickly. The second hedge went past and now less with less than 100m remaining and a stream off the end of the strip it was far too late to go around. I switched off the magnetos and steered into the longer grass off the side of the strip before the end and gritted my teeth... I stopped before the end, just off the edge, with a sickening lurch as the small wheels went into a rut.



I was lucky, I'd only done only minor damage; however, some more serious damage to my pride. I had been careless and overconfident. A few sheepish phone calls later I discovered the aircraft was not in fact insured at all.. I came close to paying a big price. Nothing new here, but sometimes we need to remind ourselves of the old chestnuts.. Don't assume, don't get complacent, don't cut corners, if the approach is not right go around, runway behind you is useless.