

## Gazelle SA 342, F-GFDG, 26 October 1999

**AAIB Bulletin No: 4/2000**      **Ref: EW/G99/10/25**      **Category: 2.3**

**Aircraft Type and Registration:** Gazelle SA 342, F-GFDG

**No & Type of Engines:** 1 Astazou turboshaft engines

**Year of Manufacture:** 1975

**Date & Time (UTC):** 26 October 1999 at 1620 hrs

**Location:** Bristol Airport

**Type of Flight:** Private

**Persons on Board:** Crew - 1 - Passengers - 1

**Injuries:** Crew - None - Passengers - None

**Nature of Damage:** Superficial damage to all 3 main rotor blades Both engine cowlings damaged beyond repair

**Commander's Licence:** Private Pilot's Licence (helicopters)

**Commander's Age:** 50 years

**Commander's Flying Experience:** 8,000 hours (of which 2,500 were on type)

Last 90 days - 89 hours

Last 28 days - 30 hours

**Information Source:** Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The helicopter was approaching Bristol Airport having taken off from a private site at Nailsea. The pilot planned to approach downwind before turning into the westerly wind of about 8 kt. As he began the turn, at a height of about 150 feet agl, the pilot heard a very loud bang and felt severe vibration through the airframe. The severity of the vibration reduced and the pilot heard another loud bang. He transmitted a 'Pan Pan' call and made an emergency landing on the grass adjacent to taxiway 'Golf'.

After the helicopter had been shutdown inspection revealed superficial damage to all three main rotor blades, including tearing of the leading edge protective strip. It was also apparent that both engine cowlings were missing and these were later located on and near the runway. The pilot reports that the forward locking device had failed, although the helicopter had been flown for three hours since it's last pre-flight inspection. The pilot's initial reaction to the loud bang was that he

thought the helicopter had struck a bird, but there was no evidence of this on the subsequent inspection.