

No: 4/84

INCIDENT

Ref: EW/G84/03/03

Aircraft type and registration: Cessna 172H G-AXBH (light single engined fixed wing aircraft)

Year of manufacture: 1968

Date and time (GMT): 11 March 1984 at 1510 hrs

Location: Coldharbour Farm, Willingham, Cambridgeshire

Type of flight: Private

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — Nil

Injuries: Crew — Nil Passengers — N/A

Nature of damage: Negligible damage to aircraft. Three Electricity Board power cables severed

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: Over 18 years

Commander's total flying experience: 422 hours (of which 308 hours were on type)

The aircraft had made a flight from a grass strip at Kingston, Cambridgeshire, to the Coldharbour Farm landing strip, Willingham. The weather at the time was fine, with a surface wind of about 230°/10 knots. The landing strip at Coldharbour Farm is orientated 02/20 and is 640 metres in length. There are two lines of electric power cables sited near the landing area. One line runs parallel to runway 20 on the right hand side. The second line traverses the extended centre-line of runway 20, at right angles, about 73 metres from the threshold. The cables are supported on poles spaced at 70 metre intervals, and their height above ground level is between 5 and 6 metres. Each cable transmits 11,000 volts. The final approach area to runway 20 is ploughed ground, and the transverse power cables are dark in colour.

On the day of the incident the pilot made a visual right hand approach to runway 20. During the final stages of the approach the aircraft struck the power lines and severed the cables. The pilot did not feel the impact, the aircraft's flight path was unaltered, and a normal landing was completed. At the time of the impact the aircraft was heading into sun.

In his report the pilot states that he was accustomed to flying from fairly short grass landing strips, that it was his habit to aim to touch down close to the threshold, and he therefore may have flown a low approach. Against the background of the ploughed undershoot and heading into sun he did not see the power cables. It is calculated that, at the point of impact, the aircraft was positioned on a 4½° flight path from the runway threshold, and it is fortunate that this incident did not result in more serious consequences.