

Aircraft type and registration: Britten Norman Trislander BN2-A Mk III-1 G-BCCU

No & Type of engines: 3 Lycoming O-540 piston engines

Year of Manufacture: 1974

Date and time (UTC): 1 September 1986 at 0550 hrs

Location: The North Sea 40 nm east northeast of Clacton

Type of flight: Commercial — Freight

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — None

Injuries: Crew — None Passengers — N/A

Nature of damage: Substantial damage to landing gear and left engine mounting

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 34 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 2427 hours (of which 580 were on type)

Information Source: AIB Field Investigation

After an uneventful rest period of 64 hours which included 2 hours sleep in the late afternoon prior to the accident, the pilot reported for duty at Stansted at about midnight. His planned task was to deliver newspapers to Amsterdam and return to Stansted. The pilot was to be the sole occupant of the aircraft on both sectors and there was to be no return freight. He obtained a meteorological forecast for his intended route which indicated clear conditions and a light westerly wind. The aircraft took-off at 0030 hrs and following an uneventful flight to Amsterdam under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR), landed at 0145 hrs. After supervising the unloading of freight and refuelling his aircraft, the pilot slept for 2 hours in a room provided by his company at the airport. He awoke at 0430 hrs and took-off at 0500 hrs for a Visual Flight Rules (VFR) flight to Stansted at 1000 feet in full daylight.

The pilot reported that he felt well rested and the flight proceeded without incident. Prevailing conditions were such that carburettor icing was a possibility. Consequently, the pilot applied carburettor heat periodically as a precaution against the loss of engine power. About half way along his planned route, the pilot reported that he fell asleep for a short period. On waking, he re-focused his attention on flying the aircraft and the next thing that he was aware of was a bump which awoke him from a further period of sleep. His hand was on the control wheel and the aircraft was in trim. He eased back on the control wheel and checked all three sets of engine instruments which indicated that the engines were performing satisfactorily. When the aircraft was climbing through 200 feet, the pilot re-checked the engine indications and noticed that the manifold pressures on all three engines were indicating 2 ins Hg less than that which had been set in the cruise. He therefore selected carburettor heat and the manifold pressures increased to a value slightly above that required for the cruise. The aircraft was by now flying at 1000 feet and on

checking for external damage, the pilot observed that the right landing gear had detached from the aircraft. He therefore concluded that he had hit the sea.

The aircraft continued to climb to 2000 feet and, on crossing the coast, the pilot contacted Stansted Air Traffic Control and reported that he had an undercarriage problem. On arrival at Stansted, the pilot requested a visual inspection of the aircraft which indicated that the left and nose landing gears appeared normal. Following advice from his company the pilot elected to hold in the Stansted area while burning-off all the remaining fuel in the right wing tanks and reducing that in the left. During this time, the Stansted emergency services were at Aircraft Accident Imminent status. At 0800 hrs the aircraft landed on the duty runway. On touchdown, all three propellers were selected to feather and the magnetos were switched off. The aircraft came to rest on the runway centre line after slewing through 90 degrees and the uninjured pilot vacated the flight deck without difficulty. The emergency services were in position within seconds but were not required. The aircraft suffered very little damage as a result of the landing and there was no fire.