

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Robinson R44 Raven, G-GDOV	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-540-F1B5 piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	2005	
Date & Time (UTC):	16 May 2011 at 1443 hrs	
Location:	Gidleigh Park Hotel, Chagford, Devon	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - 1 (Minor)	Passengers - 1 (Minor)
Nature of Damage:	Aircraft destroyed	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	72 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	667 hours (of which 70 were on type) Last 90 days - 13 hours Last 28 days - 4 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

Whilst attempting to hover to an adjacent landing position at a private landing site, the helicopter veered to the left where it struck a tree and rolled over.

History of the flight

The pilot made a local flight to land in the grounds of a hotel, which did not have a helipad. Helicopters had previously landed in a large, tree-bounded grass field located to the east of the property. Part of this field was used as a sports area and at the western side of the field was an intersecting gravel path. Further to the west of the gravel path was a smaller grassed clearing bounded on the opposite side by a riverbed.

The pilot had not landed at the hotel before and about

ten days prior to the accident had spoken with hotel staff about landing information. The pilot stated that he had been advised to land on the grass either to the east or west of the gravel path.

The flight was uneventful but during touchdown the pilot and passenger felt a bump and heard a noise. The pilot commented that the touchdown had been gentle and in a level attitude but he had become concerned and so decided to reposition the helicopter. However, as he lifted into the hover, the helicopter started to rock from side to side. It then veered to the left where it struck a tree before rolling onto its right side. The pilot and passenger sustained minor injuries and exited the helicopter through the front canopy, which had

broken. The helicopter was damaged beyond economic repair. Subsequent inspection by the pilot identified that there were a number of small rocks near to where he had touched down and he later stated that he thought the grass in that area “was at least 10 inches long”. He considered that that he may have struck one of the rocks with a skid during the repositioning manoeuvre.

Discussion

Prior to the accident, the hotel had emailed the pilot a diagram identifying where he may land. The landing area was identified as being to the east of the gravel path and not the west. The email was delivered to the pilot’s ‘spam’ email folder and so he did not become aware of it until after the accident. The email also advised that the

helipad was not clearly marked. The pilot later stated that he considered the area indicated on the diagram as being unsuitable for landing due to its slope.

The British Helicopter Association has published comprehensive guidance on the subject of setting up an unlicensed helicopter landing site. This includes information on the touchdown and lift-off areas recommending, among others, that they are level and free from obstacles or debris. CAA Safety Sense Leaflet 17, ‘*Helicopter Airmanship*’ provides further advice to pilots when landing at private sites, recommending that under certain circumstances, a site visit from the ground should be considered.

BULLETIN CORRECTION

AAIB File:

EW/G2011/05/08

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Robinson R44 Raven, G-GDOV

Date & Time (UTC):

16 May 2011 at 1443 hrs

Location:

Gidleigh Park Hotel, Chagford, Devon

Information Source:

Aircraft Accident Report Form

AAIB Bulletin No 8/2011, page 43 refers

In this report it was incorrectly stated that the helicopter had rolled onto its left side. The report should have reflected that the helicopter had rolled onto its **right** side.

The online version of this report was corrected on 3 January 2013 and the correction published in the February 2013 Bulletin.