

Southdown International Raven X, G-MNJT

AAIB Bulletin No: 11/2003	Ref: EW/G2003/07/09	Category: 1.4
Aircraft Type and Registration:	Southdown International Raven X, G-MNJT	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 447 piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1985	
Date & Time (UTC):	11 July 2003 at 1058 hrs	
Location:	East of Exford at Stone Cross, Devon	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - 1 serious	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Extensive	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence (Group D)	
Commander's Age:	76 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	885 hours (of which 620 were on type)	
	Last 90 days - 34 hours	
	Last 28 days - 21 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

The pilot had intended to fly from a microlight airstrip at Ilfracombe in Devon to his home airfield at Plaistows Farm, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Prior to an unhurried takeoff he carried out a pre-flight inspection of the aircraft and started the engine for a six minute 'warm-up'. Three full-power checks were completed satisfactorily.

After takeoff, the pilot flew for 20 miles at about 1,800 feet agl with the throttle set to produce 5,900 RPM and he reported that "everything sounded and felt smooth". The engine then stopped quite suddenly without any warning or rough running. The pilot twice attempted to restart the engine using the manual engine 'pull' starter without success, and so concentrated on selecting a suitable field for a forced landing whilst achieving the best glide attitude. During the past 18 years he had experienced previous similar emergencies and had landed safely, and so was not unduly alarmed.

However, on this occasion he was over Exmoor, an area of relatively hostile terrain with small steep hills and valleys with wooded areas. Nevertheless, from his height of around 1,800 feet agl he felt he could reach a stubble field which he had selected as a suitable landing site. In the event, a more rapid height loss than anticipated led to the realisation on short finals that the aircraft would not clear the upwind boundary hedge of the field. He was concerned that if the landing gear fouled the hedge, the aircraft could arrive in the field inverted, and this forced him to abandon the target landing site and accept a landing into a copse of trees to his left of the planned landing area.

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The aircraft struck the trees and fell through the branches to the ground; G-MNJT sustained extensive damage and the pilot received serious injuries. The crash was witnessed from the ground and, following release of his harness, the pilot was rescued from the wreckage and transported to hospital by air ambulance.

After the accident, a significant quantity of fuel remained on board the aircraft and the reason for the sudden engine stoppage has yet to be established.