

SA341G Gazelle 1, G-BAGL

AAIB Bulletin No: 1/2004	Ref: EW/G2003/07/22	Category: 2.3
Aircraft Type and Registration:	SA341G Gazelle 1, G-BAGL	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Turbomeca Astazou IIIA turboshaft engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1973	
Date & Time (UTC):	21 July 2003 at 1132 hrs	
Location:	Street Farm, Street, Essex	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Damage to cabin front canopy and lower frame, left and right windshields, main rotor blades, main rotor head, tail boom assembly and left and right lateral fins	
Commander's Licence:	FAA Commercial Pilot's Licence (Helicopters) with Instructor's Rating	
Commander's Age:	47 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	685 hours (of which 69 were on type)	
	Last 90 days - 125 hours	
	Last 28 days - 45 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

History of the flight

The aircraft was departing from a private helicopter site, which the pilot had flown into earlier that morning, to fly to Wymeswold in Leicestershire. The landing site consisted of a field measuring approximately 230 yards (east-west) by 170 yards (north-south), bordered by a mixture of fencing, hedges and trees to the north and south. On the western side of the field was a set of three power cables, suspended at a height of approximately 30 feet, running north-south and immediately beyond were some farm buildings.

In good weather and with a surface wind from the south-south-west of 12 to 15 kt, the pilot planned to depart to the south-west to avoid the farm buildings and remain clear of Stansted Airport, which was three nm to the north-west. As the aircraft climbed away from a low hover and transitioned into forward flight on a westerly heading it struck the power cables with its front canopy. The aircraft

started to pitch forward and the pilot responded by applying aft cyclic and pulling up on the collective. In the process, the main rotor blades struck the tips of the left and right lateral fins and the fairing at the aft end of the tail cone, where it joins the fenestron fin, severing one of the hydraulic pipes serving the fenestron controls. The pilot also reported that the power cables snapped. He was able to retain control of the aircraft and flew it south for about 100 metres, away from the farm buildings, before turning left and manoeuvring to land in a field immediately to the north of the landing site without further incident and under normal control. The pilot shut the aircraft down and exited out of the right front door, uninjured

The pilot commented that the poles supporting the power cables were obscured by trees in full leaf and that the cables, which were at the same height as each other in a horizontal arrangement, were green in colour and difficult to see. Notwithstanding that, he realised that if he had included an assessment of the obstacles in the direction of his intended take-off path during his pre-flight walkround the incident would have been avoided.

It is probable that it was more difficult for the pilot to see the power cables once he was airborne because they were suspended at the same level, rather than one above the other, and were set against the background of the farm buildings.