

No: 6/90

Ref: EW/G90/03/08

Category: 1c

Aircraft Type and Registration: Reims Cessna F172N, G-BHNT

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming O-320-H2AD piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1980

Date and Time (UTC): 4 March 1990 at 1515 hrs

Location: In sea off Whiterocks, Portrush, County Antrim

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - 1 (minor) Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Aircraft lost in sea

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 41 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 826 hours (of which approximately 500 hours were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft had taken-off from Belfast Aldergrove airport and was flying at low altitude just off the coast between Portrush and Mullaghmore. Close to the Giants Causeway, the engine suffered a loss of power. The pilot performed the usual engine failure checks including application of carburettor heat but was unable to regain sufficient power to maintain height. He transmitted a MAYDAY message and attempted to force-land on the Strand beach at Portrush. Reaching under the seat for his life-jacket he found that it had been moved into the rear luggage compartment.

With about half a mile to run to the beach, the pilot was unable to prevent the aircraft from ditching. The aircraft nose pitched downwards into the water and the cockpit immediately started to take in water. The pilot then moved to the rear of the aircraft to collect and don the life-jacket. Observing that the water was now up to the level of the front seats he moved forward again, opened the door and evacuated the aircraft which submerged completely a few minutes later.

Swimming towards the beach, the pilot found that the coldness of the water made it difficult to breath but estimates that, 35 to 45 minutes later, he had reached about 5 metres off the shore where bystanders assisted him. Although uninjured he was treated in hospital for hypothermia.

Despite efforts by an amateur diving club, no significant parts of the aircraft have been recovered.