

Aircraft Type and Registration: Robinson R22 Mariner, G-BPPC
Date & Time (UTC): 23 February 1992 at 1045 hrs
Location: Heyside, Royton, Oldham, Lancashire
Information Source: AAIB Field Investigation

Resumé

At 1030 hrs the pilot made contact with Barton radio and advised them that he was "north of their zone travelling east along the M61". This was a courtesy call and no further transmissions were received by Barton or any other ATC unit. At approximately 1043 hrs several witnesses saw the helicopter flying east at about 500 feet to 800 feet in the vicinity of Oldham Edge. A couple, walking in the area, spotted the helicopter and used their video camera to film its progress. The aircraft was seen by them to be flying normally, under control, in a gentle left hand turn, with the engine sounding normal.

Witnesses positioned further along the flight path stated that, as the helicopter approached them, it appeared to be at a height of approximately 400 feet. One witness stated that the note from the engine then appeared to change becoming somewhat laboured "like a car being in the wrong gear". Another witness described the sound from the engine as "fading down". The helicopter was then seen to yaw to the left between 30° and 40° then yaw right and pitch nose up. Coincident with this manoeuvre was the abrupt cessation of noise from the engine. The aircraft then rolled to the left with the rotor blades rotating very slowly. The helicopter rapidly adopted a heading the reverse of its original in a slight nose down attitude with 30° left bank. The rotor blades were then seen to stop rotating. One witness described them as forming "an 'L' shape with one blade lying flat and the other pointing straight up". Witnesses described the helicopter as then falling vertically with no noise and the rotor blades stationary.

The helicopter crashed in marsh land in an upright position, slightly nose down with approximately 30° left bank. The helicopter was totally destroyed in the impact and there was no subsequent fire. The emergency services were on the scene within five minutes, however, the pilot and passenger who were still restrained by their lap and diagonal harnesses had sustained fatal injuries.

Safety Recommendations (Not published in AAIB Bulletin 5/92)

The following Safety Recommendations were forwarded on 10 June 1992 to the CAA and the JAA and for the information of the FAA:

92-26 Existing certification criteria in relation to pilot intervention times following loss of power should be re-appraised when formulating JAR 27. Revised requirements should be based upon the results of current research into pilot intervention times. The relevancy of the guidance material contained in the existing Appendix to BCAR Section G2-8 should also be considered for inclusion in future requirements.

92-27 Publicity material should be forwarded to all owners and operators of light helicopters emphasising the following safety points:

- a. The crucial importance of fully lowering the collective pitch lever without delay as soon as power loss occurs.
- b. The need for continual practice of engine failure emergency procedures.
- c. A recommended 'recency' check by a qualified helicopter flying instructor for a pilot who has not flown a light helicopter within the previous 28 days.