



descended through the wires before he cushioned the final impact with collective pitch. Examination of the two aircraft showed that the collision had been between a single main rotor blade on each helicopter and that there had been a relative bank angle between them of some 30°. The impact on G-AXKO had been 7 inches from the blade tip and had damaged the blade skin and spar; on G-HSKY the outboard 16 inches of blade (approximately 10% of rotor radius) had separated, and the resulting vibration had caused partial structural failure of the tail rotor boom attachment. As G-HSKY passed across the hop field the tail rotor assembly and ventral fin had been detached from the aircraft by wire strikes, and the aircraft had rotated through 180° before coming to rest.

When the accident occurred, G-AXKO was selected to the London FIS frequency and G-HSKY was in contact with Gatwick Approach Control. The collision occurred 19 nm from Gatwick, some 6 nm east of the Gatwick TMA, in an area for which Gatwick ATC have no specific responsibility. Both aircraft were transponding Mode A Code 4321. The secondary radar returns available to Gatwick ATC are received at the Heathrow head, some 36 nm from the area of the collision and Heathrow had not received returns from either aircraft. Gatwick ATC stated that they do not encourage training traffic from Redhill to maintain contact with Gatwick Approach when in the FIR because complete traffic information cannot be given to aircraft at relatively low altitude outside the TMA.