

No: 4/92

Ref: EW/G92/01/05

Category: 1c

Aircraft Type and Registration: Cessna FR172E Reims Rocket, G-AVXX

No & Type of Engines: 1 Continental IO-360-D piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1967

Date & Time (UTC): 11 January 1992 at 1145 hrs

Location: Clough Head, St Johns in the Vale, Cumbria

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 3

Injuries: Crew - Minor Passengers - 2 minor

Nature of Damage: Aircraft damaged beyond economic repair

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence with IMC and Night ratings

Commander's Age: 41 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 188 hours (of which 17 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and subsequent enquiries by AAIB.

The aircraft took off from Newcastle Airport at approximately 1044 hrs with four people on board, for a flight to Carlisle Airport. The intended routing was not direct, but was left flexible, travelling south and west from Newcastle towards Kirby Stephen, then west towards the Lake District, thence to Carlisle. Prior to departure, the pilot obtained weather information from the Newcastle Airport briefing facility, which included perusal of the Met Form 214 (Upper Winds) and Form 215 (Fixed Time Forecast Chart). The flight proceeded uneventfully, in visual contact with the ground, until the aircraft approached the town of Keswick. By this time, the cloud base had reduced to approximately 1000 feet agl. Rather than continue north, and being aware of the presence of high ground in the vicinity, the pilot elected to turn onto an easterly heading, and follow the A66 road along the valley towards Penrith. After a short time, the cloud base reduced further, and the pilot decided to commence a climb to safety altitude, along what he considered to be a safe track. Whilst still climbing in cloud, the aircraft hit high ground, near the top of Clough Head, at an elevation of approximately 2200 feet amsl. The aircraft bounced on initial impact, and came to rest inverted. There was no fire and all four occupants quickly vacated the wreckage.

As the wreckage was situated in a very remote location, and despite their injuries, all four occupants undertook a two hour journey down the hill side to seek assistance.

Subsequent inspection of the Met data, and an aftercast for the Keswick area, indicated that visibility was forecast to be generally over 10 km, but falling to 3-5 km in drizzle, with scattered Statocumulus cloud to the east of the area, base 2000 feet, increasing to broken cover to the west with a base of 1500-2000 feet, with occasional scattered/broken Stratus cloud base 800-1000 feet. Occasional rain/drizzle was also forecast, along with hill fog patches. The forecast freezing level was around 8000 feet.

Forecast upper winds at 2000 and 5000 feet were 290°/20 kt and 300°/15 kt respectively.

The pilot commented that prior to initiation of the final climb on an easterly heading, he had not noticed any appreciable drift, and that this misjudgement resulted in deviation from the planned track. He also considered that the nature of the terrain in this area may have had a marked effect on forecast wind conditions.