

No: 2/90

Ref: EW/C1141

Category: 2b

**Aircraft Type and Registration:** Bell 206B Jetranger III, G-SHBB

**No & Type of Engines:** 1 Allison 250-C20B turboshaft

**Year of Manufacture:** 1977

**Date and Time (UTC):** 18 December 1989 at 1207 hrs

**Location:** 2 miles east of Biggin Hill Aerodrome, Kent

**Type of Flight:** Public Transport (Charter)

**Persons on Board:** Crew - 1                      Passengers - 4

**Injuries:** Crew - 1 (Fatal)                      Passengers - 4 (Fatal)

**Nature of Damage:** Aircraft destroyed

**Commander's Licence:** Commercial Pilot's Licence Helicopters

**Commander's Age:** 27 years

**Commander's Total Flying Experience:** 500 hours approximately (of which 210 were on type)

**Information Source:** AAIB Field Investigation

### History of the Flight

The helicopter had been chartered as one of four to convey a party of twelve passengers from Biggin Hill to Folkestone racecourse. It was fuelled to 52 US gallons from a small bowser in its hangar on the south side of the airfield. With other preparations and a preflight inspection completed, the commander air-taxied the helicopter to the apron in front of the control tower and parked outside the executive terminal, where the passengers had assembled. The passengers were embarked and the helicopter took-off at 1204 hrs, having been cleared by ATC to depart to the east under VFR. The commander radioed that he would rendezvous with one of the other helicopters in the area of Sevenoaks and ATC instructed him to report when in the Sevenoaks area. At 1207:02 hrs the commander reported to ATC that he was unable to maintain VMC and was returning to the airfield, and this message was acknowledged by ATC. No further radio transmission was received from the helicopter. The aerodrome controller, realising that the helicopter was not in sight, called it at 1209 hrs but received no reply, and shortly afterwards he received notification of the crash from Sevenoaks Police.

A routine meteorological observation made at Biggin Hill (600 ft amsl) at 1150 hrs recorded the following weather:

Wind: 150°/15 kts. Visibility: 10 kilometers. Weather: Recent rain.  
Cloud: 3 oktas Stratus at 600 feet (aal), 6 oktas Stratocumulus at 3000 feet.  
Temperature: +8.8°C, Dewpoint: +8°C. QNH 982 mb.

Reports from other observers and pilots indicated that the weather to the south east of the airfield was somewhat worse than the airfield observations but that improved conditions appeared to exist to the north east.

### **Site and Wreckage Examination**

The helicopter crashed into a wood on the west side of a small valley. The trees at the impact point grew generally 25-30 ft high, from a ground level of 480 ft amsl. The surface was of heavy wet earth and chalk, and the terrain locally sloped upwards to the west at approximately 15°. Site and wreckage examination indicated that the aircraft had contacted the trees while heading approximately 310° M, generally level in roll and pitched nose up, and descending at a steep angle to the horizontal at a high rate. After the main rotor blades had chopped a number of tree boughs and trunks, the fuselage impacted the ground. The main part of the wreckage came to rest approximately 70 ft further on. The helicopter suffered very extensive break-up in the impact and all of the occupants were killed. There was no fire. After on-site examination, the wreckage was removed to the AAIB Farnborough for detailed examination.

The Chief Inspector of Air Accidents has ordered a Formal Investigation into this accident.