

AS350B Ecureuil, G-NUTY

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Aircraft Type and Registration: AS350B Ecureuil, G-NUTY

No & Type of Engines: 1 Turbomeca Arriel 1B turboshaft engine

Year of Manufacture: 1982

Date & Time (UTC): 18 June 2000 at 1515 hrs

Location: 2 nm north-east of Porthmadog, Gwynedd

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 2 - Passengers - 1

Injuries: Crew - None - Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Superficial damage to windscreen, OAT probe, cabin roof and main rotor gearbox cowling

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 51 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 11,000 hours (of which 345 were on type)

Last 90 days - 134 hours

Last 28 days - 63 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The pilot was carrying out a filming task at low level along the Glaslyn River approximately 2 nm north east of Porthmadog, North Wales. An exemption from the low flying rule, Rule 5 (1) (e), Rules of the Air Regulations 1996, had been obtained for the flight from the CAA. The helicopter was being flown above the line of the river at a height of 50 to 60 feet above the surface of the water, and level with the tops of the trees on either bank.

The pilot sighted two wires immediately in front of the helicopter and initiated a climb to avoid hitting them. The helicopter struck the wires. The point of contact was half way up the windscreen, with the wires then sliding back, breaking the OAT probe. There was a flash of sparks and a smell of ozone.

Although the helicopter appeared to handle normally, the pilot made an immediate precautionary landing in a field on the south side of the woods that lined the left river bank and carried out a

normal shutdown. Inspection of the helicopter revealed superficial surface scratching to the windscreens, cabin roof and main gearbox cowling. There appeared to have been no contact with any of the dynamic components of the main rotor mast. This was attributed to the helicopter having been in a nose-up attitude and climbing at the point of impact. This tensioned and held the wires firmly on top of the airframe where they slid backwards until they broke on contact with the left-hand hydraulic jack actuator arm, which showed superficial signs of contact.

The two wires had been 11 KV electricity wires made of copper, supported on poles, which carried the wires to the south bank of the river. The poles were located in the trees and the wires spanned the river for approximately 200 yards with the north bank pole about 120 feet up the hillside, also hidden in the trees well back from the river bank.

The pilot had chosen that point on the river in order to achieve a particular shot because of the increasing width of the river, apparent lack of obstructions, dwellings or people. He had not seen the wires or the supporting poles because they were hidden in the trees.