



# MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

## Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

27/83

7 November 19

MILITARY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT SUMMARY  
PUBLISHED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING ROYAL AIR FORCE GAZELLE HT3 XX374

Date: 20 April 1983  
Parent Airfield: RAF Shawbury, Salop  
Place of Accident: 2 nm ENE Summit of Snowdon  
Crew: 2  
Casualties: 2 Fatal

5/76787  
623-7461 656.7.08  
GB MD) PR  
15/11/83

### Circumstances

1. On the morning of 20 April 1983, Gazelle XX374 was being flown on a dual sortie comprising a medium and low level navigation exercise from Shawbury to Snowdonia followed by instruction in mountain flying. The crew for this sortie consisted of an RAF Qualified Helicopter Instructor (QHI) and a Brunei student who was preparing for the start of a helicopter instructor course.

2. The transit to the mountain area was completed uneventfully in clear, calm weather, and the pilot made several routine calls reporting his position in Snowdonia and advising that the flight was proceeding normally. During this time, the aircraft was seen in the vicinity of 2 trains on the Snowdon Mountain Railway before it circled the summit of Snowdon. The aircraft then departed the summit in an easterly direction and descended into Cwm Dyli where it turned and hover-taxied alongside the Miner's Track. During this slow flight, which was carried out level with the track, but displaced a few yards to one side, the student instructor waved to observers on the ground. The aircraft, with the RAF QHI in control, then came to a hover just in front of a party of school children and their teachers. It remained in this position for some 10 - 15 seconds before it turned and accelerated away in a descent over Llyn Teyrn. When approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile away eyewitnesses saw the aircraft pull up into an ever-steepening climb, almost reaching the vertical, before it executed a wing-over to reverse the direction of flight. On completion of this manoeuvre, the aircraft rejoined the Miner's Track and flew towards the school party at high speed in a gentle descending turn. The aircraft passed very low over the party then, when some 70 feet beyond them, part of the aircraft

hit the ground. Control of the aircraft was lost and it proceeded to bounce along the track on its side before it left the track and fell down the valley slope; the aircraft eventually disintegrated when it collided with a large boulder.

3. Assistance was quickly to hand from one of the school teachers and an off-duty RAF serviceman, but both crew members had suffered fatal injuries. There was no fire in the wreckage, and there were no other casualties.

#### Cause

4. Eyewitnesses' evidence as to the manoeuvres flown immediately prior to the accident and subsequent examination of the wreckage suggested that the aircraft itself was serviceable and performing normally up to the time of impact. It was concluded that the RAF instructor had carried out an impromptu and unauthorised low flypast for the benefit of the school party on the track and, probably because of an optical illusion caused by a spur of rock just beyond the party position, he had misjudged his recovery to the extent that the aircraft had struck the ground.

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