

The very capable Bell 407



Hawker Pacific will be exhibiting Gisborne Helicopter's Bell 407 at the Aviation Week Conferences in July. KiwiFlyer recently spoke to owner Peter Moore about the work he does with the aircraft and his opinions of it after three months of operation. It is more than fair to say that Peter is delighted with his purchase.

FORMED IN 2001 by pilot Peter Moore, Gisborne Helicopters provides helicopter services for clients primarily in the East Coast and Hawkes Bay areas. Currently operating MD500, Robinson R44, and the Bell 407, they have also in the past operated AS350BA and Lama helicopters. Peter readily declares the 407 to be his favourite, claiming "it does everything better with ease". The company's range of services includes spraying, heavy precision lifting, frost control, fire control, passenger transport and more, all tasks for which the 407 has proved very capable.

Acquiring HNY

Peter purchased his 407, ZK-HNY, in March 2009, using it to replace both the AS350BA and Lama that he previously had on line. The 407 had originally been imported into New Zealand and operated by Nokomai Helicopters in Southland. Prior to that the aircraft had been used for corporate transport in South Africa and then in Australia as a Westpac Rescue machine.

Equipped with a hook, wire cutters, Simplex spray gear, TracMap GPS, a sliding door, removable corporate interior, and an Aeronautical Accessories floor, the 407 provides the versatility required for all of Gisborne Helicopters varied operations. It also has its own fire bucket, a specially enlarged version of one the company already had. A FADEC system is standard and offers the added security of knowing what pilots before you have done to the aircraft.

Flying and Operating a 407

Gisborne Helicopters undertake a lot of hook work and Peter comments that he really knows it's been a big day lifting on the occasions he has been in the AS350. Not so in the 407 which he says has been

a lot less fatiguing; "You can sit there with your shoulder harnesses on long-lining all day without getting tired." A regular job for Gisborne Helicopters has been to place poles between wires spaced just 1m apart, work that the 407 is ideal for. In Peter's words; "It sits there like a Lama and has very smooth hover stability which makes precision lifting a much easier task."



Gisborne Helicopter's Bell 407 on a pole replacement task. This helicopter will be on display at Aviation Industry Conference Week.



The 407 office. Extras include additional radios and a TracMap GPS system.

Gisborne Helicopters pilots have found the 407 "does everything it says on paper with ease". Peter considers the 1200kg hook load to be a very genuine capability; "With a little bit of wind on the nose, we can lift max all up weight and cruise with 80% torque easily. It also copes very well in poor conditions and higher winds. One of our recent pole replacement jobs in the

407 would have been postponed previously. The 407 just kept on going and our crews were very happy to work underneath it."

"We've also used it to lift some timber off a walkway which was essentially the same job as we did a year ago in the Lama. With just a tiny bit of wind on the nose,

the 407 lifted more, with higher reserves, quicker than the Lama managed." Peter adds that; "We reckon that if we were operating them side by side, the 407 would probably give the Lama a good curry up."

"Another recent job involved lifting a 1.15 tonne hut for DOC up above 4000 feet on a warm day. We had 10kts on the nose and only needed 75% power. We've also placed a 700kg bridge down in bush and had to hold it still while bolts were fitted. Because you can see the whole site picture under the machine very easily, jobs like this are no problem at all."

With a corporate leather interior that can easily be swapped in or out, the 407 also gets its fair share of passenger transport work. Peter had

wondered whether passengers would be comfortable in the rear facing seats but has found that they don't mind at all. He says that anyone who thinks this might be an issue would be mistaken, as passenger feedback has been excellent.

With only a few months of operation, it is too early for Peter to comment on 407 maintenance, however if the maintenance experience is anything like the flying experience, he will be more than happy.

For more information

Peter Moore declares the 407 to be the best helicopter he has ever flown. To talk to him about his experiences or any of the services Gisborne Helicopters offer, phone 027 444 8964 or email: enquiries@gisbornehelicopters.co.nz.

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