



AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

SI/761/1032

Publication of this report is authorised by the Secretary under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulations 283 (1)

LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Lake Powlathanga, Queensland	Height a.m.s.l. 1000 feet	Date 7.9.76	Time (Local) 1230 hours	Zone EST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Cessna 172G	Registration VH-WKC	Certificate of Airworthiness Expired on 29.6.75
Certificate of Registration issued to R. M. Douglas 125 Towers Street, Charters Towers, Queensland	Operator G. T. West 6 Mexican Street, Charters Towers, Queensland	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed Other property damaged Nil
Defects discovered Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Lost or intended departure point Balfe's Creek	Time of departure 1225 hours	Next point of intended landing Charters Towers	Purpose of flight Local Flying	Class of operation Private
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4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
Gordon Talbot WEST	Pilot	43	Private	400	744	Fatal

5. OTHER PERSONS (All passengers and persons injured on ground)

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
John Edwin JENSEN	Passenger	Fatal	William Allan McCOLL	Passenger	Minor
Kevin John MARONEY	Passenger	Fatal			

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

Shortly after 0630 hours a number of persons, including the pilot and the three passengers, gathered at the home of a Charters Towers resident where each consumed a quantity of beer. Some time later the four men left the home and, after purchasing a further quantity of beer, proceeded by motor vehicle to the aerodrome. All four consumed beer during the journey.

The aircraft departed from the Charters Towers aerodrome at approximately 1115 hours and, after flying over an area to the east and north-east, it proceeded towards Balfe's Creek, some 40 kilometres south-west of Charters Towers, where it landed at about 1210 hours. Some 15 minutes later, the four occupants re-boarded the aircraft and it took off towards the north-east. It then made a gradual right turn and, when last observed by a resident of Balfe's Creek, it was at a height of some 200 to 300 feet heading towards the nearby Lake Powlathanga. At about 1515 hours the surviving passenger was found by chance by a local resident on the shore of the lake. The passenger has stated that, shortly after arriving over the lake, the engine stopped, the aircraft descended on to the water, cartwheeled and came to rest in an inverted position. The aircraft wreckage was in water 1.3 metres deep. The passenger remained supported on the wreckage for about two hours before he waded to the shore.

The Certificate of Airworthiness had expired and had not been renewed because of an administrative oversight but there is no evidence to suggest that the aircraft had not been maintained in accordance with specified requirements.

The pilot did not establish radio communications with any ground station during the two flights nor was he required to do so. The weather was fine and there was no cloud.

Detailed examination of the wreckage did not reveal evidence of any malfunction or mechanical failure which could have contributed to the accident and there was adequate fuel on board the aircraft. The flaps were in the retracted position and the impact damage was not consistent with that which could be expected if a ditching had been attempted.

Pathological examinations of the deceased aircraft occupants indicated that the blood alcohol level of the pilot was 0.261 grams per 100 millilitres and that of the two passengers was 0.135 and 0.236 grams per 100 millilitres respectively.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

It has not been possible to establish precisely the circumstances leading to this accident; it is evident however that the pilot operated the aircraft when his judgment and ability were significantly impaired by the consumption of alcohol.

Approved for publication

(R. H. Watts)
Delegate of the Secretary

Date 6.7.1977