



AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

AS/753/1017

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

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| 18.5 kilometres south of Wynyard, Tasmania | Height a.m.s.l. 1200 feet | Date 13.4.75 | Time (Local) 1500 hours | Zone EST |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------|

THE AIRCRAFT

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Type and Model Cessna U206F | Registration VH-PGJ |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 At approximately 1500 hours Eastern Standard Time on 13 April, 1975, a parachutist was drowned in a dam following a free fall descent 18.5 kilometres south of Wynyard, Tasmania.

3.2 The parachutist, Robert John Williamson, aged 25 years, was a member of the Tasmanian Parachute Club. He had previously made five static line and 31 free fall parachute descents and was a qualified parachute packer.

3.3 For this descent, Mr. Williamson was equipped with a back mounted 35 feet diameter T-10 main parachute, manufactured by the Switlick Parachute Company, attached to a T-10 type harness. The canopy of this parachute had been modified to provide a TU type aperture at the rear and this resulted in the parachutist being able to achieve a forward speed of about five knots during descent. The direction of airflow from the aperture could also be varied by the parachutist by means of two toggled lines and this enabled the canopy to be turned either to the right or left. Mr. Williamson was also equipped with a 24 feet diameter front mounted reserve parachute, an altimeter, helmet, gloves and goggles.

3.4 The dropping zone (DZ) used for the descent was a large open area of farmland and a DZ marker panel was laid out in this area. An irregular shaped dam, approximately 140 metres long and 60 metres wide, was located some 500 metres to the west of the marker.

3.5 At the time and place of the accident there was scattered cumulus cloud with a base about 2500 feet above ground level, the surface wind was calm and the visibility was approximately 30 kilometres. Above height of about 1000 feet, the wind was from the east.

3.6 Earlier in the day Mr. Williamson had made a free fall descent following which he remarked that his goggles had become fogged. It was suggested to him that wiping the inside of the goggles with soap and water would prevent this recurring. Subsequent to that descent he had repacked his main parachute in an aircraft hangar at Wynyard.

3.7 The descent which resulted in the accident was from Cessna U206F aircraft registered VH-PGJ. The aircraft was flown by John Leslie Waight, the holder of a private pilot licence, whose total flying experience amounted to 197 hours. Also on board the aircraft were parachutists Peter William Morgan, Duncan Hay, Leslie Frederick Mephan, Roger Wainwright Hardie and Robert John Williamson. Mr. Mephan was a Class B parachute instructor and was responsible for supervision of the operation.

3.8 The aircraft departed from Wynyard and, upon arrival over the DZ, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Hay and Mr. Mephan exited in turn at heights of 2500 feet, 3000 feet and 5000 feet respectively. They each landed on the DZ reasonably near the marker panel. The aircraft was then climbed further to about 6500 feet, at which height Mr. Hardie exited, followed some three seconds later by Mr. Williamson. Mr. Hardie subsequently landed some 200 metres north-west of the marker panel.

3.9 Mr. Williamson was seen to make a stable free fall descent followed by main canopy deployment at a height of about 2500 feet and, at this stage, he was to the east of the DZ marker panel. He then drifted in a westerly direction, facing west, and passed north of the marker panel without apparently making an attempt to turn the parachute towards the marker. As he continued descending and drifting to the west, he passed out of sight of persons at the DZ and, when he had not re-appeared after several minutes, efforts were made to locate him. It was found that he had alighted in the dam and, after considerable effort, he was pulled to the shore where successful attempts were made to revive him.

3. CONCLUSIONS (Cont'd)

3.10 Mr. Williamson's helmet, goggles and gloves were not on his body but the helmet and one glove were subsequently found in the dam. The other glove and the goggles were not recovered. The remainder of his equipment was still attached to his body. The reserve parachute had not been activated. The risers and rigging lines of the main parachute were wrapped around his body and his legs were firmly held together by the rigging lines. Examination of Mr. Williamson's equipment did not reveal evidence of any defect which might have contributed to the accident.

4. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that the parachutist, for reasons which have not been determined, did not control his descent so as to avoid landing on an unsuitable area.

Approved for
publication



(I.M. Leslie)
Delegate of the Secretary

Date

21.10.1975

DEFINITIONS

ACCIDENT - An occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft which takes place between the time any person boards the aircraft with the intention of flight until such time as all those persons have disembarked and in which

- (a) any person suffers death or serious injury as a result of being in or upon the aircraft or by direct contact with the aircraft or anything attached to the aircraft; or
- (b) the aircraft suffers substantial damage.

FATAL INJURY - Any injury which results in death within 30 days.

SERIOUS INJURY - Any injury other than a fatal injury which

- (a) requires hospitalisation for more than 48 hours, commencing within seven days from the date the injury was received; or
- (b) results in a fracture of any bone (except simple fractures of fingers, toes or nose); or
- (c) involves lacerations which cause severe haemorrhages, nerve, muscle or tendon damage; or
- (d) involves injury to any internal organ; or
- (e) involves second or third degree burns, or any burns affecting more than five percent of the body surface.

MINOR INJURY - Any injury other than as defined under "Fatal Injury" or "Serious Injury".

DESTROYED - Consumed by fire, demolished or damaged beyond repair.

SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE - Damage or structural failure which adversely affects the structural strength, performance or flight characteristics of the aircraft and which would normally require major repair or replacement of the affected component. The following types of damage are specifically excluded: engine failure, damage limited to an engine, bent fairings or cowlings, dented skin, small punctured holes in the skin or fabric, taxi-ing damage to propeller blades, damage to tyres, engine accessories, brakes, or wingtips.

MINOR DAMAGE - Damage other than as defined under "Destroyed" or "Substantial Damage".