



propeller struck the ground. The aircraft subsequently veered to the right of the center -line and came to rest on a patch of grass about four meters to the right of the runway center-line.

The passenger who was on the right front seat said that on opening the door, he saw a small fire on grass underneath the right side of the engine. He unsuccessfully tried to raise the aircraft fire extinguisher from its floor mounting position. The pilot unlatched the fire extinguisher to and operated it against the fire. However, the pilot as well the passengers and the eyewitnesses at the scene of the accident said that the air from the fire extinguisher did not extinguish the fire. It appeared to be ordinary air, which served to spread the fire. Frantic efforts were made to fight the fire using bottles of drinking water from inside the aircraft to no avail. A fire extinguisher that was brought in from a nearby Gemstone mine was found to be empty.

### **Injuries**

All the passengers and the pilot disembarked safely at the time when the fire was still confined to the grass underneath the engine. However, the fire subsequently spread to consume most of the aircraft.

### **Examination of the wreckage**

The aircraft came to rest on a patch of grass on the right hand side of the runway about 350 meters beyond the northern threshold. Propeller strike marks were found on its trail about 150 meters from its final resting position. Much of the fuselage and the front section had been consumed by fire. Both wings suffered severe fire damage at the inboard sections. Fire did not damage the tail plane and the rear fuselage section.

### **Fire**

A passenger in the front right seat first saw fire when he opened the door as soon as the aircraft came to rest. A passenger, who was in the back seat, said that she smelt something burning when the aircraft came to rest. Fire appeared to have been particularly intense underneath the engine. There was severe fire damage to the metal frames, some of which melted and fused under intense heat.

Fire appears to have started at around the location of the fuel drain plug. It is probable that the fuel pipeline leading to the drain plug may have been damaged in the accident sequence. Fuel would continue to flow if the fuel selector is left in the **ON** position. The hot exhaust may have emitted the sparks to ignite the fuel.

Given that it was an avgas fire, the use of water could only serve to spread it further.

### **Aerodrome information**

Kwitanda airstrip, elevation 1400 feet, has one runway 04/22 which is 600 meters long and 16 meters wide. The runway has a significant down slope at the end of runway 04 as well as loose stones. The surface is unpaved with scattered patches of grass. This private airstrip supports a Gem stone company. It is not licensed.

### **Meteorological conditions**

At the time of the accident the weather at Kwitanda was described as cloudy, with visibility over 10 km. The weather had no bearing on the accident.