

No: 11/92

Ref: EW/G92/08/01

Category: 1c

Aircraft Type and Registration: Beechcraft A36 Bonanza, G-SNOB

No & Type of Engines: 1 Continental IO-520-BA piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1977

Date & Time (UTC): 1 August 1992 at 1320 hrs

Location: White Waltham Airfield, Berkshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 2 Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - 1 minor Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Left wing partially torn off; right wing damaged; propeller blade broken; fuselage and cockpit largely undamaged

Commander's Licence: Basic Commercial Pilot's Licence with Instrument and Instructor ratings

Commander's Age: 28 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 4,500 hours (of which 2 were on type)
Last 90 days - 105 hours
Last 28 days - 36 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and additional enquiries

On the day of the accident the owner had re-fuelled the aircraft, which he had acquired two weeks previously, to full tanks and had checked the water drains in preparation for a planned flight from White Waltham to the Isle of Wight and return, in the company of his son and some clients. These flights, which were flown by the owner's son with the owner sitting in one of the rear seats, proceeded without incident. The owner believed that the outbound leg and the return leg, as far as Reading, were flown on the left tank with the right tank being selected for the Reading - White Waltham sector.

Upon return to White Waltham the owner was joined by an acquaintance, who was a flying instructor, and the aircraft was then flown to Benson for a practice ILS approach before returning to White Waltham where approximately four practice circuits were flown, after which it was decided to land for some lunch.

However, whilst on final approach to runway 25, at approximately 300 feet agl with full flap and landing gear extended, the engine suddenly lost power without warning. There were no unusual noises accompanying the power loss and the instructor, not realising what had happened and thinking that the the throttle had been closed, advised the owner to re-apply power. The owner replied that he had "not done anything" and the instructor thereupon took over control from the owner and "asked him to retract flaps to reduce drag".

The approach to runway 25 was over a built-up area and there were no suitable areas in which to attempt a forced landing. Speed was therefore maintained "until a normal roundout height above the roof tops", when the aircraft was held off as long as possible in an effort to clear the buildings. The aircraft successfully cleared the houses but, having passed over the last house, the right wing caught a tree in its back garden. This impact slewed the aircraft round and pitched it downwards into a group of small, thickly foliated, trees which cushioned the ground impact and rapidly brought the aircraft to a halt. Neither occupant suffered injury and they were able to evacuate the aircraft unaided.

The pilot reported that both fuel gauges were reading 'half-full' immediately prior to the accident, and he believed that the left tank had been selected.

The maintenance engineer who attended the aircraft after the accident reported the presence of fuel on the ground in the vicinity of the ruptured left fuel tank, but very little fuel was present in the right tank, although there was sufficient to allow fuel to be drawn off from this tank's water drain. Further investigation of the fuel system by the engineer revealed that:

Fuel was present at the fuselage drain point, but this drain also released some water.

No fuel was present in the fuel line from the firewall to the engine driven mechanical pump.

A very small quantity of fuel was present in the lines from the mechanical pump to the injector body.

Fuel was present in the line from the injector body to the flow divider.

The engine could be readily turned by hand, with no unusual sounds evident.