



apparent, however, that the leg-to-link lower pivot bolt was missing. Despite a search of the airfield, this bolt was not recovered. The bolt is normally secured with a castellated nut which is locked with a split pin. In the absence of these items, it was not possible to determine with certainty if the bolt withdrew as a result of the nut coming loose or whether the bolt itself had failed. It was reported that there was little sign of damage to the link attachment fitting at the axle.

The most recent maintenance on the aircraft, which was certificated in the Transport (Passenger) Category, were 150 hour and 50 hour checks carried out some 39 and 86 hours respectively prior to the accident.

After departing the aircraft from the preceding pilot (a flying instructor), a normal pre-flight inspection was carried out by the pilot and nothing untoward was noticed. However during take-off, just as the aircraft was becoming airborne, the pilot experienced a sharp drop of the left wing which was coincident with a bump and an audible thump. Thinking that he had run over a pothole, the pilot was about to report this to the control tower when they informed him that a wheel had fallen from the aircraft. The wing sustained that it was the left main wheel the pilot then spent some 2 hours of flying the aircraft, in order to burn off most of the aircraft's fuel load, during which time the airfield fire service spent time along the approach end of the grass runway. After making several practice approaches, the aircraft was landed with the fuel, magnetos and master switch turned off. The foam allowed the aircraft to slide easily over the grass such that almost no further damage was caused. Both crew members were able to exit the aircraft unaided.

After the aircraft had been removed from the runway, examination showed that the wheel, complete with axle and inner oleo strut, had detached from the fixed portion of the leg and had come into contact with the left flap, which had been partially deployed for the take-off. On this type of aircraft, the oleo strut is only retained by the anti-torque links opening fully, there being no internal stop. It was