



LIMITED OCCURRENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT – FINAL

Reference Number		CA18/2/3/10642					
Classification	Accident	Date	28 February 2026			Time	1045Z
Type of Operation	Private (Part 94)						
Location							
Place of Departure	Mthatha Aerodrome (FAUT), Eastern Cape Province		Place of Intended Landing	Port St. Johns Airfield (FAPJ), Eastern Cape Province			
Place of Occurrence	On a grass-covered terrain, 4.3 nautical miles (nm) east of Mthatha Central Business District						
GPS Co-ordinates	Latitude	31° 35' 40.42" S	Longitude	028° 52' 15.54" E	Elevation	2 652ft	
Aircraft Information							
Registration	ZU-CYG						
Make; Model; S/N	Socata MS-880B Rallye (Serial Number: 5206)						
Damage to Aircraft	Substantial			Total Aircraft Hours	1 221.79		
Pilot-in-command							
Licence Type	Private Pilot Licence (PPL)		Gender	Male		Age	69
Licence Valid	Yes	Total Hours	268.15	Total Hours on Type		242.0	
Total Hours 30 Days	4		Total Flying on Type Past 90 Days				4
People On-board	1+1	Injuries	0	Fatalities	0	Other (on ground)	0
What Happened							
On Saturday, 28 February 2026, a pilot and a passenger aboard a Socata MS-880B Rallye aircraft registered ZU-CYG took off from Mthatha Aerodrome (FAUT) to Port St. Johns Aerodrome, both in Eastern Cape province. The flight was conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC) by day and under the provisions of Part 94 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended. According to the pilot, he conducted a pre-flight inspection in the hangar at FAUT where the aircraft was parked; he did not note any anomalies. Thereafter, he refuelled the aircraft with approximately 94 litres (L) of Mogas (95 Octane), bringing the fuel tanks to full capacity. He then pulled the aircraft to the apron and contacted FAUT tower to request permission to start-up, which was granted. The aircraft started normally and the pilot taxied it to Runway (RWY) 32 holding point where an engine run was completed. At approximately 1030Z, the pilot contacted the tower and requested clearance for take-off, which was granted. The aircraft took off and made a right turn heading north-east towards Port St. Johns, whilst climbing to 3 000 feet (ft) above ground level (AGL). At 1045Z, approximately 15 minutes into the flight, the aircraft lost fuel pressure and, subsequently, lost engine power.							

The pilot troubleshooted the anomaly by activating the auxiliary electric fuel pump and adjusting the power settings, as well as by switching on the carburettor heat and adjusting the fuel air mixture. The engine improved briefly, but lost power again. The pilot thought of returning to FAUT; however, he noticed a rapid descent of the aircraft and, thus, decided to assess the surrounding area to execute a forced landing. He identified a field ahead of the flight path. The aircraft sustained damage to the nose landing gear strut, engine cowlings, firewall and main landing gear struts during the landing sequence on an uneven grass surface. The aircraft was substantially damaged. Both occupants were not injured.



Figure 1: The aircraft at the accident site. (Source: Pilot)

Post-accident Inspection

The engine was found intact, and no anomalies were identified that affected engine operation. A system inspection revealed damage to the carburettor that had broken off; this was attributed to the accident sequence. Further inspection did not reveal issues with the carburettor that could have resulted in a fuel flow restriction. There was also no water sediment found during the fuel tank inspection.



Figures 2 and 3: The bottom part of the engine showing carburettor mounting position (left); and the damaged carburettor after the accident (right).

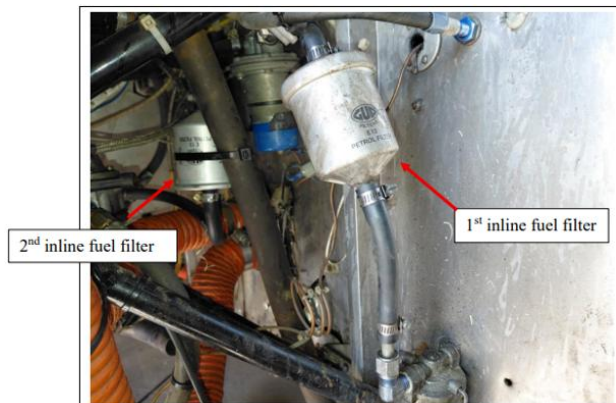


Figure 4: Fuel filters (gascolators).



Figure 5: A loose inlet fuel pipeline on the left fuel filter.

The engine was equipped with two inlet fuel filters (gascolator) labelled first inline fuel filter on the left side and second inline fuel filter on the right side. The left-side fuel filter (gascolator) had a loose clamp on the inlet fuel pipeline; the clamp could be easily moved, as indicated in Figure 5. Fuel was found in both fuel filters. The left-side fuel filter inspection revealed small “fine” fragments of rubber which were not significant enough to cause fuel flow interruption (see Figure 6).



Figure 6: Small fragments of rubber were found in the left-side fuel filter.



Figures 7 and 8: The fuel pump which was dismantled and tested.

Inspection and testing of the fuel pump found all diaphragms in good condition. Fuel system inspection found no anomalies that could have contributed to fuel transfer challenges.

Meteorological Conditions

FAUT 281200Z 29015KT 9999 SCT030 37/12 Q1002=

FAUT 281300Z 32018KT 9999 SCT030 37/11 Q1001=

The prevailing weather conditions were good at the time of the flight.

Aircraft Performance (Source: Owner Operating Manual)

The Socata "Rallye" is a single-engine, low-wing monoplane of all-metal construction, fitted with a fixed undercarriage. The MS880 is the original version, powered by a 100 horsepower (hp) Continental (Rolls Royce) O-200-A engine. The aeroplane features slats that normally open at low speed and close at a speed 30–40 kilometres per hour (km/h) higher than the stall speed.

Findings

Pilot

1. The pilot had a Private Pilot Licence (PPL) that was initially issued by the Regulator (SACAA) on 12 December 2016. The licence was reissued on 24 June 2025 with an expiry date of 30 June 2027.
2. The pilot had a Class 2 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 23 September 2025 with an expiry date of 31 October 2026. The pilot had no restrictions listed in his medical certificate. The medical certificate had lapsed at the time of the flight.
3. The pilot had a total of 268.15 hours of which 242.0 hours were accumulated on the aircraft type. The aircraft type was endorsed in his licence.

4. The pilot's quick response to the emergency, including the decision to assess the situation and conduct a forced landing, likely reduced the severity of the outcome and ensured the survival of them both despite landing on an uneven terrain which resulted in the aircraft being damaged.

Aircraft

5. The aircraft had an Authority-to-Fly (ATF) Certificate that was issued by the Regulator on 18 March 2025 with an expiry date of 30 April 2026.
6. The aircraft Certificate of Registration (C of R) was issued to the owner on 1 September 2008.
7. The aircraft's last 100-hour annual inspection was certified on 5 June 2025 at 181.4 total airframe hours after which a Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) was issued with an expiry date of 30 June 2026 or at 281.4 airframe hours, whichever comes first. The aircraft had a total of 190.9 airframe hours at the time of the accident; thus, it accumulated a total of 9.5 hours since the last annual inspection.
8. Maintenance of the aircraft was conducted by an approved person (AP) who had a valid Approved Person Certificate that was issued by the Regulator on 11 October 2023 with an expiry date of 10 October 2025. The aircraft was endorsed in the AP's operational specifications.
9. The aircraft was serviceable with no defects noted on any of its technical documentation at the time of the flight, and it was operated within the required Regulatory framework.

Environment

10. At the time of the flight, weather conditions were good with calm winds. The weather was not considered a contributing factor to loss of engine power.

Mission

11. The aircraft lost fuel pressure in-flight followed by engine power loss and was forced-landed on an uneven grass terrain which resulted in damage to the carburettor.
12. It was found that the clamp securing the fuel filter inlet fuel pipeline was loose; however, post-accident fuel system tests could not conclusively determine whether this resulted in an interrupted fuel flow during operation.

Probable Cause(s)

Unsuccessful forced landing on uneven terrain following loss of fuel pressure and subsequent engine power loss due to interrupted fuel flow likely caused by a loose clamp on the inlet fuel pipeline. Post-accident inspection could not conclusively determine the exact cause of fuel flow interruption.

Contributing Factor(s)

None.

Safety Action(s)
None.
Safety Message and/or Safety Recommendation/s
None.
About this Report
<i>The decision to conduct a limited investigation is based on factors including whether the cause is known and the evidence supporting the cause is clear, the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation and that will determine the scope of an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited investigation has been conducted, and the Accident and Incident Investigations Division (AIID) has relied on the information submitted by the affected person/s and organisation/s to compile this limited report. The report has been compiled using information supplied in the initial notification, as well as from follow-up desktop enquiries to bring awareness of potential safety issues to the industry in respect of this occurrence, as well as possible safety action/s that the industry might want to consider in preventing a recurrence of a similar occurrence.</i> <i>All times given in this report are Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC) and will be denoted by (Z). South African Standard Time is UTC plus 2 hours.</i>
Purpose
<i>In terms of Regulation 12.03.1 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011 and ICAO Annex 13, this report was compiled in the interest of the promotion of aviation safety and the reduction of the risk of aviation accidents or incidents and not to apportion blame or liability.</i>
Disclaimer
<i>This report is produced without prejudice to the rights of the AIID, which are reserved.</i>

This report is issued by:

**Accident and Incident Investigations Division
South African Civil Aviation Authority
Republic of South Africa**