

AAIB Bulletin No: 3/96

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INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration: Boeing 737-508, G-BVZH

No & Type of Engines: 2 CFM 56-3C1 turbofan engines

Year of Manufacture: 1991

Date & Time (UTC): 24 January 1996 at 0802 hrs

Location: London Heathrow Airport

Type of Flight: Public Transport

Persons on Board: Crew - N/A Passengers - N/A

Injuries: Crew - N/A Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Right wing tip damaged and navigation light broken

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 47 years

Commander's Flying Experience:
Last 90 days - 149 hours
Last 28 days - 43 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquiries by the AAIB.

At the conclusion of a flight from Leeds Bradford Airport, the aircraft landed at London Heathrow on Runway 09 Left and, after waiting for other aircraft to taxi clear, turned onto the inner taxiway and approached its parking stand, N78, from the west. With the commander in control, the aircraft was turned into the parking area on the nosewheel guide line and approached the parking position at less than 4 kt using the Stand Entry Guidance system which was illuminated. The crew observed that a mobile airstair belonging to another airline was parked on the marked clearway to the right of the parking area. This vehicle appeared to overlap the aircraft parking area by approximately 18 inches and it was considered by the crew that there was sufficient space remaining to continue. With the first officer observing the right wing tip clearance, the aircraft taxied onto the stand at an estimated 2 kt and collided with the top of the airstair.

Earlier that same morning at 0425 hrs, an aircraft was towed onto stand N78 and collided with the same airstair. The airport police were in attendance after this incident and were advised by the Apron

Safety Unit and by a representative of the airline which operated both the aircraft and the airstair, that the vehicle would be removed. However, despite the fact that the airstair was not in any way immobilised, it was left in this position until the second collision occurred.

Stand N78 was measured by the police attending the second incident as being 30.3 metres wide; the wingspan of the B737 is 28.88 metres resulting in a clearance of 71 centimetres between the wing tip and the edge of the clearway. However, the aircraft nose wheel guideline was found to be 5 centimetres to the right of the centre, further reducing wing tip clearance on this side to 66 centimetres.