Boeing 777-236, G-VIIU

AAIB Bulletin No: 7/2003	Ref: EW/G2003/02/09	Category: 1.1
Aircraft Type and Registration:	Boeing 777-236, G-VIIU	
No & Type of Engines:	2 GE90-85B turbofan engines	
Year of Manufacture:	1999	
Date & Time (UTC):	8 February 2003 at 0708 hrs	
Location:	London Heathrow Airport	
Type of Flight:	Public Transport	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 14	Passengers - 200
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Minor damage to left elevator trailing edge and left stabiliser skin	
Commander's Licence:	Airline Transport Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	53 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	17,885 hours (of which 2,000 were on type)	
	Last 90 days - 251 hours	
	Last 28 days - 110 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

The Boeing 777 aircraft operated a scheduled flight from Chicago, USA, to London Heathrow. After landing at Heathrow it was taxied to Stand W5 where it arrived some 15 minutes ahead of schedule. The Azimuth Guidance for Nose-In Stand (AGNIS) on the stand had not been switched on so the commander turned the aircraft onto the stand but did not pull fully forward. He advised Air Traffic Control (ATC) that the aircraft was not on the stand, in accordance with his company Flying Crew Orders. After a few minutes the AGNIS was switched on and he taxied forward some 10 to 12 metres to the correct parking position.

Later the same day G-VIIU was towed from W5 to TF1, and then again to Stand S3. A flight crew member carrying out a pre-flight inspection on the aircraft at S3, prior to a scheduled 1855 departure, noticed damage to the left elevator and stabiliser. The aircraft was inspected by an engineer and removed from service pending repair.

At 0705 hrs a Boeing 747-400 aircraft had been given clearance by ATC to tow from Block 123 through Block 96, which is adjacent to the W stands, to Stand X9. The tow crew were not advised of any potential obstruction en-route. The towed B747 arrived on Stand X9 at 0720 hrs. Later the same day the B747 operated a service to Narita Airport, Japan, where, after arrival, it was noticed that two static wicks were missing from the top of the left winglet. A subsequent engineering inspection discovered damage to the top of the winglet tip. The damage was relatively minor and the aircraft was able to remain in service. Both aircraft were operated by the same company and when

records were checked it was realised that the damage must have occurred through contact between them abeam Stand W5.

Flight recorder data and recorded ground movement radar showed that at 0708 hrs the two aircraft made contact, while each was moving forwards. Neither the flight crew nor the tow crew were aware of any contact between the aircraft. The upper surface of the port winglet of the B747 contacted the underside of the left horizontal stabiliser of the B777. Although there were several required walkround inspections of each aircraft in the intervening period, the damage was not detected for some hours as described previously.

At the time of the incident the visibility was in excess of 10,000 metres, weather conditions were dry with sunrise in 23 minutes, at 0731 hrs. The W stands were all occupied by aircraft. When ATC gave the tow crew their clearance they did not pass on the information about the position of the B777, nor would it have been possible for the crew to see the W5 stand markings from their position on the centreline of the taxiway, which has a slight camber. They did not observe that the B777 had not positioned fully forward on to the stand.