

Boeing 737-4Y0, G-OBMM

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Category: 1.1

INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Boeing 737-4Y0, G-OBMM	
No & Type of Engines:	2 CFM56-3C1 turbofan engines	
Year of Manufacture:	1991	
Date & Time (UTC):	1 August 2001 at 1915 hrs	
Location:	London Heathrow Airport	
Type of Flight:	Public Transport (Passenger)	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 7	Passengers - 85
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Wing tip light broken - minor damage	
Commander's Licence:	Airline Transport Pilots Licence	
Commander's Age:	28 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	4,262 hours (of which 2,543 were on type)	
	Last 90 days - 92 hours	
	Last 28 days - 57 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Following an uneventful flight from Edinburgh to London Heathrow, the aircraft landed on Runway 09L. The aircraft was taxied to Stand D58L from the east on the Inner Taxiway with No. 1 engine shut down as per the company procedures. The commander who was the handling pilot saw a marshaller's vehicle parked in the centre of the stand. As the aircraft moved closer, the vehicle was driven to the top of the stand by the marshaller who then got out and stood at the end of the stand centreline.

The commander flashed the taxi light as a signal to the marshaller that the commander had seen him and was preparing to taxi under his instructions. The marshaller commenced raising and

lowering his bats to signal 'continue straight ahead', which the commander did. As the cockpit passed abeam the stand centreline, the commander expected the marshaller to signal that the aircraft should be turned right onto the stand, but he continued to signal 'straight ahead'.

It became obvious that the marshaller was not going to signal the commander to turn right onto the stand so the commander commenced a right turn without guidance from the marshaller. At that point it was a later turn than the commander would have made had he not had the assistance of a marshaller. The marshaller continued to signal 'straight ahead'.

To the left of the stand were two large vehicles belonging to a catering company. Both were unattended and the nearest vehicle was parked facing the taxiway with the front wheels outside the stand edge markings but the rear wheels over the line by approximately six inches. The commander had noticed this as he turned onto the stand but assumed that the marshaller would provide him with signals to avoid the hazard.

The commander aligned the nose wheel with the centreline and continued to taxi onto the stand watching the marshaller for any further instructions. The marshaller continued to signal 'straight ahead'.

On two occasions during the final stages of the taxi onto the stand the commander looked out of the left window to assess the distance between the port wingtip and the vehicle. On both occasions he found judging the distance between them difficult due to the cockpit window distorting the view of the wingtip and the distance to the wingtip.

Approximately two thirds of the way onto the stand the commander felt a slight vibration and a noise consistent with the port wingtip contacting the side of the vehicle. The commander stopped the aircraft immediately shut down the remaining engine and asked the passengers to remain seated using the aircraft public address system. The marshaller who had also become aware of the contact, signalled the commander to stop (which he already had), and shut down the aircraft. He then ran to his vehicle and radioed for assistance.

A company engineer who was on the stand awaiting the arrival of the aircraft and had witnessed the whole event assisted the commander by becoming his contact on the ground until an airside operations vehicle arrived. The commander confirmed through his open cockpit window with his engineer that he could disembark the passengers onto the waiting coaches. The senior cabin attendant was instructed to lower the integral stairs and the passengers were disembarked. Later investigation revealed that the part of the vehicle contacted by the wingtip was outside the stand markings.

The commander concluded that his over-reliance and acceptance of the marshaller's signals to manoeuvre onto the stand, which the vehicle had partly infringed, had led to the incident. This combined with the difficulty in trying to judge the wingtip clearance distracted him from properly assessing how far to the left of the centreline the aircraft landing gear wheels were tracking. Added to this was the failure of the marshaller to provide proper signals.