

PILOTS REPORT ON AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT WZ900

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A normal approach was made for an arrested landing, the Observer Lieutenant Kennell, calling the I.A.S. in the normal Sea Venom deck landing manner. The last Airspeed call I heard from Lt. Kennell immediately before arrestor wire engagement was 117 knots.

The touchdown felt normal and the aircraft appeared to be lined up parallel to the centreline but slightly offset to Starboard.

A wire was engaged and initial retardation experienced but after what appeared to be approximately half wire pullout, retardation abruptly ceased and the aircraft rolled down the deck.

I immediately applied full power. I had no time to check the I.A.S. but as the aircraft left the Flight Deck and dropped the Port wing, I realised that I did not have flying speed so called "Eject" "Eject". As I attempted to level the wings, the Observer jettisoned the canopy and I had the impression that he ejected immediately afterwards. By this time I had succeeded in levelling the wings and ejected myself. I felt that the aircraft was just about to or had just struck the water as I ejected.

As I ejected I felt a sharp pain in the back and blow to my left foot.

Entry into the water took place feet first and very shortly after ejection and was quite violent, my face mask tearing off as I entered the water.

I inflated my Life Saving Waistcoat as I submerged and immediately came to the surface. I released my parachute harness and thought I was completely disentangled until the SAR helicopter appeared and the slipstream began to blow the parachute canopy away. I found myself being dragged by the parachute until I managed to untangle a single shroud line hooked about my neck and shoulder.

On first appearance of the SAR helicopter which was very soon after entry into the water, I disconnected my dinghy without inflating it and was picked up very shortly after clearing myself from the parachute.

At no time after ejection did I sight Lieutenant Kennell.

J. Dalh
Lieutenant. RAN.

STATEMENT BY MIRROR CONTROL OFFICER

(Para 15 of sheet 2 of A25)

The Mirror had been checked and was operating correctly when Venom 866 made a perfectly normal approach to the Deck. The aircraft engaged a wire and as it passed the Mirror spenson I looked aft for the next aircraft. Almost instantaneously I heard the sound of a wire rope parting and looked forward again. The hook was still down and the Pilot was applying full power. The aircraft had slowed considerably and as it went over the angle, banked to the left then levelled sinking rapidly. As the aircraft disappeared from view I observed the canopy come off. Following this I heard a loud pop but did not see any of the ejection sequence.

The aircraft drifted by a few seconds later. The cockpit had broken up completely and the front had been sheered off level with leading edges of the mainplanes. I spotted one of the crew immediately, paddling feebly with his Mae West inflated but never saw the other crew member. At this point the SAR helo arrived and one of the crew leapt into the water to give assistance. After this the scene was obscured by the spensons further aft.

A. Partridge

LIEUTENANT RAN.

STATEMENT BY SAR HELICOPTER PILOT

At 1500 I was in the Plane Guard position for the land-on of 3 Sea Venoms. My observer reported that the aircraft had 3 wheels and a hook. I observed what appeared to be a normal approach. As the aircraft hit the deck it seemed to slow up and then "bolt" with insufficient speed. I realised they would not get flying speed as they crossed the ships side and closed rapidly. The canopy left the aircraft just before it hit the water and the Aircrew ejected, as the aircraft started to break up on impact. There was a very slight time difference between ejections but I forget which was first. One did not get as high as the other. As I reached the wreckage it was passing down the ships side. There were lots of small pieces and I saw one Aircrew (Lt. DaCosta) floating upright and in apparent difficulties. I thought he was unconscious and his face was bleeding. As I closed him for winching I noticed the other Aircrew (Lt. Kennell) floating inverted and vertical amongst the wreckage with his parachute deployed. He was not moving and I closed him rapidly. At this stage he started to sink so I told the UC to jump in. Unfortunately by the time he hit the water the body was sinking rapidly without a struggle and the UC could not see him. We hovered there for a moment and as there was no sign of him returning to the surface, moved to the first sighted Aircrew who was floating with Mae West inflated. A successful winching was carried out and we returned to the UC who was by this stage sitting in a dinghy. I carried out a couple of orbits and as there was no sign of the second Aircrew and we were concerned with Lt. DaCosta's back injury returned to the ship.



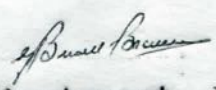
Lieutenant Commander. RAN.

STATEMENT BY SAR HELICOPTER OBSERVER

I was the SAR Observer in Wessex 826 during recovery of Venoms at 1500. Lt. DaCosta's aircraft made a normal approach and a good landing at approximately a three wire position. When the aircraft was abeam the Island I realised it was not going to stop and yelled "They're over". The aircraft slewed a couple of times while running up the deck before going over the port bow. The canopy ejected when the aircraft was about half way down the ship's side and one seat fired just prior to entry into the water. The second seat appeared to fire at about the same time as the major impact although it could have been fractionally sooner. The first seat to fire rose about 45' - 50' in the air and the parachute deployed and almost completely filled landing close ahead of the ship on the port bow. The second seat only rose about fifteen feet and I had the impression the parachute deployed but only partly filled. My recollection is not really clear but I believe the occupant landed in or in line with the splash made by the aircraft. The aircraft hit the water almost horizontal about 15 degree tail down with the nose pointing approximately thirty degrees starboard of the ship's head. I am not really sure which seat fired first but I think it was the Pilot's. The tail appeared to strike first and skidded along the water a short way before the major impact and break up and I believe the wing section tumbled at least once after impact.

As we ran in I saw the tail booms floating but did not see any sign apart from small pieces of wreckage of the remainder of the aircraft. During the run in I temporarily lost sight of the crew but as we commenced to come to the hover I saw one, (Lt. DaCosta) floating with an inflated Mae West. I could see Lt. Kennell floating face down in the water, out of his seat, legs almost straight with his feet about eighteen inches apart. His parachute, was submerged behind him and was open. As we came to the hover Lt. Kennell started to sink head first. At no time did I see him move or his legs kick. The transition to the hover had billowed Lt. DaCosta's parachute and blown him into the ship's wake. During the run in I had warned Leading Airman Burke, who was wearing the double lift harness to get ready but on realising Lt. Kennell was sinking I told him to jump in the water to try and either get hold of Lt. Kennell or get the winch line on to a parachute shroudline. By the time Leading Airman Burke surfaced Lt. Kennell had disappeared. My last sight of him was sinking rapidly about fifteen to twenty feet below the surface. I believe he was unconscious throughout. At this stage his helmet rose to the surface about twenty feet from Leading Airman Burke who was inflating his dinghy having been unable to see any signs of a survivor.

We then moved over to Lt. DaCosta who was bleeding from cuts on the face and not showing much sign of movement. He managed to grasp the strop and we winched him into the aircraft. After a short search of the area we winched Leading Airman Burke into the aircraft and returned to the ship with Lt. DaCosta who was showing signs of having injured his back and left leg.


Lieutenant. RAN.

STATEMENT BY SAR HELICOPTER AIRCREWMAN

The aircraft appeared to make a normal landing and then gave a lurch and simultaneously a piece of wire flew into the air, and although considerably slower than landing speed the aircraft continued along, then off, the Port side of the Flight Deck.

Just after leaving the deck the canopy came away and both the Pilot and the Observer ejected, one just after the other. One parachute opened fully and the other did not.

The S.A.R. then moved to where a man could be seen lying face down in the water. At this time I was told to jump and upon surfacing could see no sign of anyone near me except for a helmet about thirty yards away and the other occupant about 50 yards away with his Mae West inflated, and he appeared to be conscious. He was then winched by the strop into the aircraft and then after making a short search I was then winched into the S.A.R. whereupon we returned to the ship.

G. R. Burke.

G.R. BURKE.

STATEMENT BY PILOT OF SEA VENOM 872

I was pilot of Sea Venom 872 on Thursday 28th April and joined circuit behind Lt. DeCosta and Lt. Kennell in 866.

From the 180° turn position in the circuit I was watching 866, waiting for it to engage an arrester wire at which time I intended to make my finals call.

As 866 was well past No. 6 arrester wire I told Lt. Bersins (my observer) that 866 had belted. 866 then dropped off the angle port wing down. The wings then levelled and the altitude increased however the sink rate continued until the booms hit the water and the air craft pitched forward. Just after the splash I said to Lt. Bersins, "He's in" and I saw an ejection seat drogue chute deploying. The aircraft appeared to cartwheel through about 100° tail boom to port and struck with a large splash. I then saw the parachute main canopy almost deployed with considerable forward movement.

I then lost sight as I cleaned up my aircraft and carried out a tight orbit catching sight of the wreckage. I could only see one parachute in the water as the stern of the ship passed the wreckage.

As I was then at minimum fuel I landed.

Quain A. Smith

Lieutenant R.A.N.

STATEMENT BY OBSERVER OF SEA VENON 872

I was the observer in Sea Venon 872 directly behind 866 in the circuit. We were just starting to turn in at the 180° position when my pilot said that 866 was bolting. I looked across and saw 866 just as it was passing the end of the angled deck. It appeared to bank to port and then level its wings and strike the water in a pronounced nose-up attitude. The aircraft was then obscured by a large sheet of spray out of which emerged an ejection seat travelling at an angle forward of the impact point. My impression was that the ejection occurred at the exact moment of or a fraction of a second after the moment of impact. Shortly after this my view was obscured.



Lieutenant. RAN.

STATEMENT BY LIEUT. CDR. (FLYING)

Lt. DaCosta made an excellent approach and landing, engaging No. 2 wire on the centre line.

The aircraft decelerated until approximately 2/3rd pull out of wire when full power was applied.

I noticed at this time that the centre span of No. 2 wire was not across the deck or in the pulled out position.

The aircraft proceeded up the angle at full power slightly to Starboard of the centre line and went over the Port side in a port wing down attitude approximately opposite the catapult loading chocks.

The aircraft appeared to be level before crashing into the sea slightly ahead of the bows, I noticed one of the aircrew eject almost simultaneously with the crash.

My attention was then diverted by the necessity of clearing spectators off the Flight Deck in order to recover the other two aircraft of the flight.

I noticed what appeared to be two parachutes in the water near the wreckage as the wreckage cleared the stern and two persons in the water. On speaking to the SAR Helo I was informed that one was the pilot and the other was the U/C sailor from the Helo who had jumped into the water in an endeavour to recover the Observer who had been seen floating face downwards.


LIEUT. CDR. (FLYING)

STATEMENT BY FLIGHT DECK OFFICER.

Sea Venom WZ900 was the first of three Sea Venoms to land-on at 281500G. I observed it make a normal approach and engage No.2 arrester wire.

I was standing on the Flight Deck at the after end of the Island and, as the aircraft hook engaged the wire, I turned forward to move to Fly One.

I heard full power applied, turned toward the aircraft and saw it continue along the Flight Deck with the arrester hook down. Pieces of aircraft skin were scattered among the wires.

Just after the aircraft left the Flight Deck the canopy was jettisoned and the Pilot ejected. His parachute canopy was almost fully developed when I lost sight of it forward at slightly to Port of the bows. There appeared to be some flailing of the Pilots right leg.

I ran to the Port forward side of the Flight Deck and saw, amongst scattered wreckage, the Pilot, Mae West inflated and protective helmet on, in the water about twenty yards ahead of the Observer, who was laying face down, Mae West deflated and no protective helmet. I did not see the Observer eject.

LIEUT. CDR. R. A. N.
FLIGHT DECK OFFICER.

STATEMENT BY FLIGHT DECK ENGINEER OFFICER.

At 1500 hours Venom No. 366 made a normal approach to the arresters engaging No. 2 wire of No. 2 Arrester Unit extending it 106 feet along the deck. At this time the thimble of the Port main reeve came adrift from the Port knuckle. The centre span then parted at a point 2 feet on the inboard side of the Port knuckle. The knuckle together with the 2 feet of centre span went forward over the ships side, Starboard side forward. The Port main reeve end with the extended wire and the extended Starboard main reeve and attached centre span were flung over the Port and Starboard ships side respectively.

The pressure pulled was 660 p.s.i. as compared with the normal 730 p.s.i. and 106 feet of wire pulled, out of the 187 feet of total pull out.

As the main reeve came adrift from the knuckle, the aircraft continued along the angle deck under full power, the canopy being jettisoned on the aircrafts leaving the angle deck.

A splash above Flight Deck level followed and the aircraft floated past the Port side and appeared to be intact from the front of the cockpit aft.

No. 5 wire, the associated wire on No. 2 Unit, was immediately broken at the Port knuckle and laid clear of the deck in preparation for the landing of the remaining aircraft.

Immediate observation of the Port main reeve of No. 2 wire revealed deep scoring at the thimble, the circlips having slid down the main reeve wire. The circlips appeared to be in good condition.

The remainder of the centre span of No. 2 wire was undamaged up to a point approximately 5 feet from the Port thimble. Over the last 3 feet of this centre span, severe crippling had taken place, broken ends were splayed out and the fibre core was protruding.

A thorough check of wires, No. 2 Unit and No. 2 Arrester Control Room revealed no evidence of malfunction of equipment or maloperation by personnel. An inspection of all deck fittings showed a heavy indent in the after bowspring deck plate No. 3 wire Port.

The marks on deck indicate that the Port knuckle of No. 2 wire impinged severely on the deck some 15 feet 3 inches from the sheave and again on the rear fishplate of No. 3 wire bowspring.

On slow pull out No. 2 Unit is working satisfactorily.

G. D. [Signature]

STATEMENT BY FLIGHT DECK CAPTAIN.

On Thursday 28th April, 1966 at approximately 1500 Sea Venom aircraft WZ900 was the first of three Venoms to approach on finals.

The aircraft made a normal approach and made a very good landing, catching No.2 wire. The aircraft with wire attached proceeded as normal until the aircraft was on the after lift, then the arrester wire parted on the Port side and whipped back onto the flap section of the Port side of the aircraft, ripping this section off and dragging it onto the hook where it dropped off, being blown to the rear end of the Flight Deck. The arrester wire then pulled through the hook, at this stage the aircraft was forward of the lift and had decelerated considerably, the No.1 Director (IA.AH.Sutherland) had moved and had started to wave him back off the wire not apparently realising what had happened. The Pilot realising he did not have the wire any more, put on power but at this stage he would have had only about 60 feet in which to get enough power. The aircraft then left the Angle Deck and tilted Port wing down, the canopy left the aircraft, at this stage, I was on my way across the deck, half way across one of the Aircrow ejected and his parachute opened. On arriving at the Angle, there were two Aircrow in the water afloat, and another about 12 feet down with arms extended and body in a dive position his ejection seat was close to and aft of his position. The aircraft was badly broken up from the cockpit forward with quite a lot of wreckage in the near vicinity.

The SAR aircraft was over the crash position.

Arch

CHIEF AIRMAN,
FLIGHT DECK CAPTAIN.

STATEMENT BY ARRESTER PARTY OFFICER.

The following is an account of the events I witnessed concerning the loss of Sea Venom 866.

At 1500 on Thursday 28th April, I was closed up at my "landing on" station in the arrester sponson port side.

The above mentioned aircraft made what appeared to be a normal approach to the deck, and on touching down engaged number two arrester wire. After the aircraft had travelled about eighty feet along the deck I saw the wire part in the vicinity of the port knuckle. The section of the port main reeve that had been extended on pull out, whipped in the air and fell to the deck along the port side of the flight deck.

Almost simultaneously, I saw pieces of metal falling behind the tail of the aircraft and at this stage I noticed that the aircraft had become disengaged from the arrester wire.

The aircraft continued along the centre of the angle, accelerating, as the change of engine note indicated that full power had been applied. From the time I first noticed the break in the wire to the time when the engine power was increased the aircraft had travelled a distance of about 100 feet.

When the aircraft became airborne at the end of the angle, the left wing dipped sharply and it dropped over the ship's side and out of my sight.

Soon after I saw a splash of water off the port bow and noticed at the same time an object, which I have since assumed to be a drogue parachute, fall from about thirty feet above deck level and out of my sight.

I climbed out of the sponson onto the flight deck at this stage, and on turning outboard I saw the wreckage of the Venom float past, about twenty feet from the ship's side.

A yellow parachute canopy was floating amidst the wreckage, and aft of this was a flying helmet above the water.

I lost sight of the wreckage as it passed under the port after gun sponsons, but at no time did I discern any bodies floating in the vicinity of the wreckage.

The S.A.R. helicopter closed in above the wreckage when it was under the port after gun sponson, and I saw a crewman jump into the water near the parachute canopy. At this point I went to the position where the thimble of the port main reeve was lying and began clearing the broken wires from the deck.


Lieutenant.

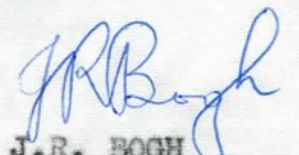
STATEMENT BY MEMBER OF ARRESTER PARTY.

This is an account of the events I witnessed on the afternoon of the 28th April, 1966, which resulted in the loss overboard of Sea Venom 866.

I was closed up at "Stations for landing on" in the arrester gear control sponson port side of the flight deck, when at 1500, Venom 866 made what appeared to me a normal approach for landing on and caught No.2 arrester wire which pulled out normally until the plane had passed about 45 feet forward of the position where I was standing in the sponson waiting to re-set the wire. When the aircraft reached this point, I saw the wire part and watched the frayed end whip back down the starboard side of the ship, and while watching this I heard the aircraft's engine revving up for a few seconds and on looking forward it had disappeared from the flight deck and not being able to see it airborne I then realised that it had ditched in the sea.

By this time the broken wire had stopped and was hanging over the starboard side of the ship a little aft of my position in the port sponson. I now looked over the port sponson and saw the tail portion of the Venom almost submerged directly opposite me and about fifteen feet from the ship's side, with the tail planes pointing aft. Another fifteen or twenty feet out from this wreckage I saw a figure in flying clothes and red and white flying helmet floating as though strapped in a chair, that is to say, it appeared to be in a sitting position submerged to about armpit level with the head forward with the face under water and the arms extended at the sides and an opened parachute which I think was either yellow or orange in colour was trailing in the water behind this person.

As I was watching this, the S.A.R. helicopter closed in just above the wreckage and I saw one of its crew jump from the aircraft into the water only a few feet from the crew member of the Venom and at this point I heard PO.ME. JACOBSON say "He's got him", and being of the same opinion myself I directed my attention to what was taking place on the flight deck. Lt.(E) White instructed me to go aft and look for the knuckle which was missing from the broken arrester wire, and while doing so I found two pieces of metal which I assumed came from the Venom, and I handed these to CPO (air) FINCH.


J.R. BOGH
M(E) O/N.38789.

STATEMENT BY ARRESTER PARRY PETTY OFFICER

On the day of the 28th April, I was in the port arrester sponson and witnessed the following incidents concerning the accident of Venom No.866.

On its final approach, it looked as though it was bearing slightly to starboard, it caught No.2 arrester wire correctly and slowed down its run until it was abreast of the Island where the wire came apart. I watched the wire on the starboard side drop over the edge of the flight deck, on looking back at the plane, I saw it disappear over the end of the flight deck and thought that it had got airborne till I saw a sheet of water and bits of aircraft being flung into the air. I then looked over the edge of the sponson into the water and saw the tail assembly of the Venom float past, sinking slowly. Followed by that, was either the pilot or navigator with his head dipped in the water and to me seemed to be sitting in a seat with his arms being in front of him. He seemed to me to be unconscious, his yellow parachute was floating behind him attached to his back. He also had his helmet on. A helicopter then hovered above him where a person jumped out into the water next to him. I then looked back at the broken wires and carried out the duties of breaking No.5 wire.

J. A. Colson

P.O.NR. JACOBSON