



# MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

15.

## Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

MAAS 8/81

15 July 1981

### AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING ROYAL AIR FORCE PHANTOM FG1 XV589

Date: 3 June 1980

Parent Airfield: RAF Leuchars, Fife,  
Scotland

Place of Accident: RAF Alconbury,  
Cambridgeshire

Crew: Pilot and Navigator

Casualties: Nil

#### CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Phantom FG1 XV589 had been detached from its parent airfield for training purposes and was flying a routine sortie from RAF Alconbury. The flight had proceeded as planned and the aircraft was being positioned for landing. As it reached a point about 350 ft above ground and lined up with the runway, the nose section radome was seen to open slightly, close, open again and then fold back on its hinge until it lay against the right hand side of the fuselage, facing backwards. This resulted in sudden asymmetric drag which caused the aircraft to roll and yaw to the right. The pilot tried to correct this without success. As the aircraft lost height and continued to roll out of control the pilot realised that abandonment was the only course remaining. He therefore ejected from the aircraft and the navigator followed almost immediately. Both members of the crew landed safely and virtually uninjured; the aircraft crashed in a field short of the runway and was destroyed.

#### CAUSE

2. The radome had been correctly closed and locked before flight. The locking device had been physically checked by groundcrew and the pilot, and nothing untoward was seen by qualified observers using binoculars from vantage points before the aircraft took off. The sortie included manoeuvres involving 'G' forces from 0-6 and, until the final approach, the radome remained closed.

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3. The locking device was recovered from the wreckage. There was no sign of structural failure or metal fatigue but there was seen to be a considerable amount of wear between the locking bolt and its receptacle, and some looseness in the handle used to open and close the radome. This was the result of frequent use over many years. Similar wear was found on a number of other aircraft and it was concluded that it would be possible for the radome to become unlocked in flight by a combination of acceleration of 'G' forces, aerodynamic loads and vibration.

#### SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

4. All Phantoms with a similar radome locking system have been inspected for excessive wear. The mechanism is being modified to provide a more secure locking device and engineering procedures have been amended to ensure regular inspection for wear and correct adjustment.

#### CLAIMS

5. The only claim received was from the owner of the field in which the aircraft crashed. This was for damage to wheat and barley and settlement was reached promptly.

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