



Ansett-ANA F27 Incident - Launceston Airport - 17 March 1965

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File photo F27 Fokker Friendship 200 VH-FNH

On 17 March 1965 the Ansett-ANA F27 Friendship, registered VH-FNH, departed Flinders Island for the 94-mile flight to Launceston Airport. On board was the Captain, Joseph Waxnian of Melbourne, First Officer E York of Melbourne, hostess Miss Raclene Hoffmann of Adelaide and nineteen passengers.

To avoid forecast turbulence over Mount Barrow and Mount Arthur, the aircraft remained at its cruising level until clear of the mountains before commencing the descent.

While the aircraft was descending in the Launceston circuit area, the crew experienced trouble with the pitch-lock mechanism on number 1 propeller and subsequently feathered the engine. Because of the late departure from the aircraft's cruising level the aircraft had achieved a high rate of descent, with 40 degrees of flap set but no increase in power of the remaining engine.

As the aircraft began to turn onto its final approach, the high rate of descent was arrested and when established on its final approach. The aircraft was slightly lower than would be expected.

Power was added to the remaining engine in an attempt to control the aircraft's approach profile and control the rate of descent. When the crew were unable to stabilise the aircraft's approach, a missed approach and overshoot was attempted, however, by this time the aircraft had dropped below the minimum control speed.



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When full power was applied to the number 2 engine the left wing dropped, probably because by now the aircraft was behind the drag curve. As a result, the wing struck the ground and the aircraft spun around through 180 degrees. Fuel tanks were ruptured and the friction of the aircraft resulted in the aircraft catching fire that was quickly extinguished by the airport's emergency service.



*Series of photos depicting the damaged aircraft
Courtesy of Bureau of Aircraft Accidents Archives collection*

Incredibly all 23 persons on board escaped, some with minor injuries while exiting the aircraft through the main door and emergency exit.

Captain Waxnian was admitted to the Launceston General Hospital suffering with shock and facial lacerations. Several passengers, First Officer York and hostess Hoffman received medical attention but did not require hospitalisation.

The Minister of Civil Aviation, Senator Henty, immediately announced a full inquiry led by the director of accident investigations, Mr Frank Yeend. Whether it was the sturdy construction of the aircraft, or the quick professional actions taken by the emergency service personnel that saved all on board, is the subject of conjecture. What is apparent from the preceding photos is the tremendous damaged sustained by the aircraft.



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Half the port wing was torn away, the fuselage was crumpled and both propellers were badly twisted. This together with the fire and foam damage was indicative of the impact forces sustained by the aircraft and the incredibly good fortune of all persons on board.

The damage sustained by the aircraft resulted in it being written-off and, rumour has it, the remains of the F27 were deposited on the Evandale tip. So ended the saga of Launceston's first commercial aircraft crash.

Some-time after this incident, all F27 aircraft single-engine approaches were flown with approach flap only set at 26.5 degrees, not the 40 degrees setting as was the case in this incident.