

SURVIVING A

# Crash Landing

***Editor's Note:** In August, Dresser-Rand's UK subsidiary, Dresser-Rand Company Ltd., completed the acquisition of certain assets of Peter Brotherhood Ltd., a company that specializes in the design and manufacture of steam turbines, reciprocating gas compressors, gas packaged combined heat and power systems (CHP), and gearboxes. This article describes events that occurred earlier this year, before the acquisition. (Investigation into these events is ongoing in an effort to determine the exact cause of the reduction in thrust on both engines that resulted in reduced fuel flow and power loss.)*

British Airways flight 038 from China to the UK had been routine.

Peter Brotherhood's Managing Director Stephen Fitzpatrick, and Sales and Marketing Director Stephen Wellburn, were returning from Beijing last January aboard the flight, no doubt discussing a contract they secured with a client in China – the single largest contract in Peter Brotherhood's history. As the jetliner approached Heathrow under control of the autopilot and automatic throttle system, senior first officer John Coward prepared to take manual control as the plane descended below 1,000 feet.

Suddenly, the 150-ton Boeing 777 lost power. "There was nothing from any of the engines, and the plane started to glide," is how Coward recounted the moment in an interview with BBC News.

"At first, I didn't think we'd clear the fence," he said. "As we landed, I braced myself for an enormous thud. But instead of one thud, there was a series of thuds as the plane bounced along the grass. Eventually, it shuddered to a halt. I was trying to stop the plane. I struggled to try and keep it in a straight line."

Fitzpatrick recalls feeling "a mighty bang, which I now know was the undercarriage being ripped away. There was no warning. The captain didn't shout 'Brace!' at all. Obviously, he was concentrating on doing what he had to do."

Fitzpatrick adds, "It went dark, and as we skidded along the ground I watched the portside engine slowly breakup."

All 136 passengers and 16 crewmembers survived. One person suffered a broken leg and others received minor injuries during the emergency evacuation.

The initial assessment from the investigating team was that the jetliner failed to respond to demands for extra thrust during its final descent. This lack of thrust meant that the speed of the aircraft decreased, and it came down on the grass short of the runway.

"It could have been a completely different outcome, not just for us but for the people on the ground," said Fitzpatrick. "There are houses right up to the perimeter, so it could have been a real disaster."

Mr. Coward was credited by his captain, Peter Burkill, for averting a major crash.

"I was only doing my job," Coward told BBC News. "The crew, the passengers, and everybody else acted heroically."

"Flying is all about teamwork and that is what we all displayed."