

Ling Kong Dismasting – Saturday 1st May 2004

Owner: John Kennedy
Vessel: 30ft Fibreglass Van de Stadt “Pion” built in 1988
Vessel Name: Ling Kong
Registration: 81645
Insurer: Club Marine

Background

This dismasting took place on Saturday 1st May on a voyage from Hillarys Yacht Club to Fremantle Sailing Club with three people aboard: the skipper/owner (John Kennedy) has 35 years sailing experience and both crew members (Jim Deeks and Bob O’Connor) are experienced hands.

There was a 15 to 20kt ESE wind and a 1.5 to 2 metre swell. Ling Kong was comfortably sailed with a single reef in the Mainsail and a partially furled Genoa.

What happened

At approx 1030 we had just rounded Fremantle North Mole Lighthouse and were in the Fremantle Harbour commercial shipping channel. The owner and one crew member were in the cockpit.

We were on port tack travelling at approx 6.5kts at 40 degrees (apparent) to a 17kt ESE wind and in the wake of a departing Rottneest Ferry when the mast collapsed over the starboard side. There was no pre-warning of this event – e.g. no noises or visible signs prior to the collapse. The cause was initially unknown, but was assumed to be a rigging failure - the mast was pointing downwards into the water with approx a 90 degree bend/break at about the location of the spreaders.

Onboard post-dismasting

Fortunately, there had been no personal injuries to the crew and the vessel and its crew were in no immediate danger – the seas were not large and we were being blown slowly offshore.

The motor was started immediately and left idling in neutral, ready to be used as necessary. Given the circumstances there was no cause for drastic action and we were able to plan how to get all the damaged gear aboard and ensure nothing was fouling the prop.

Initially the remains of the mast were held to the boat at its base by the in-mast cables and sail handling lines. There was no way of getting the mast and gear on board whilst these remained in place and, given it was totally impractical to individually remove these, they were cut with a hack-saw after securing the mast to the vessel with additional lines. It was then possible to pull the mast sufficiently on-board to allow the, undamaged, boom to be removed. Given the mast was in two pieces, we then were able to pull the entire structure onto the deck and remove the mainsail. The Genoa was partially furled on its foil, and hence was impossible to remove at sea. Thus, we simply lashed it to the lifelines.

Several craft stopped during this work to tender assistance, but we really didn't need outside assistance - it was just a matter of time to get things cleared. *NB: A power boat took some photos of Ling Kong at this stage and has promised to email them to the owner.*

After this work was completed, we motored to Fremantle Sailing Club, where the Harbour Master (Andrew Raven) advised us to tie-up at the VIP Jetty. We then proceeded to strip the boat of the broken gear - leaving it ashore for inspection.

Ashore

Viewing this gear it appears the port lower shroud has snapped close to the swage at the deck end. The port upper shroud (and all other rigging) was still sound. The mast appears to have bent and snapped at the spreaders when it lost the support of the lower shroud.

Initial inspection reveals the damage to be:

- Mast and Rigging
- Coachroof on port side of tabernacle fitting is cracked and tabernacle is possibly bent
- Top plate of the in-cabin mast compression post is buckled
- Foils for ProFurl furler bent and one snapped
- In-mast electrical wiring for navigation and deck lights, wind instruments and VHF aerial lead had to be cut.
- Tears in furling Genoa (minor - 10cm long where something must have poked into it) and Mainsail (40cm in luff where the mast broke at spreaders)
- Masthead VHF aerial broken
- Masthead Autohelm wind sensors mounting arm bent and sensor unit possibly damaged
- Starboard lifeline stanchions bent – deck requires inspection at stanchion bases

Contact was made with the emergency out of hours mobile phone number for Club Marine Insurance and the skipper/owner of Ling Kong was advised to get a quote for the repair work (with Taskers being mentioned) and submit an insurance claim on Monday 3rd May.