



continued drifting to the north and, as it approached Osmotherley, the crew started looking for a suitable landing site. None was immediately apparent and, as they were approaching the Teesside Special Rule Zone (SRZ), an attempt was made to contact Teesside Approach. This was not successful, however, shortly afterwards what appeared to be an ideal long field for landing was observed near Stainton Vale.

The long field was in line with the surface wind and bounded by trees at either end. A slow descent was initiated and, as the balloon crossed the upwind line of trees, the PUT made a positive pull on the rip line. The basket made a firm landing without bounce about one third of the distance into the length of the field and almost immediately began to drag along the ground. The dragging motion quickly became erratic and violent to such an extent that the commander and PUT were thrown out of the basket. The PUT maintained his hold of the rip line but was dragged across the ground until he was forced to release his hold. At the same moment the third crew member was thrown out of the basket and the balloon took off again. All three crew members sustained injuries during the accident sequence but the PUT managed to get to a nearby farm house and alert the emergency services.

Following the accident the unmanned balloon took off and drifted north for a further 3 nautical miles until it descended towards Newport, a suburban area to the north west of Middlesborough. On landing it struck a private house causing damage to roof tiles, telephone lines and a garden fence. There were no injuries to persons on the ground.

The commander reported that she had no clear explanation of what had gone wrong but she did recall that the surface wind in the landing area was significantly higher than that forecast.