

No: 12/92

Ref: EW/G92/08/26

Category: 5

Aircraft Type and Registration: Thunder AX10-180 S2 Hot Air Balloon, G-BTYF

No & Type of Engines: None

Year of Manufacture: 1991

Date & Time (UTC): 6 August 1992 at 1930 hrs

Location: Bourton, near Much Wenlock, Shropshire

Type of Flight: Public Transport

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 6

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - 1 serious

Nature of Damage: None

Commander's Licence: Commercial Pilot's Licence (Balloons)

Commander's Age: 41 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 285 hours (of which 13 were on type)
Last 90 days - 17 hours
Last 28 days - 5 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The commander obtained a specialised ballooning weather check from a private forecaster. The evening weather forecast was for fine and warm conditions with a surface wind of WNW average 5 kt "falling out" after 7pm local. The forecast for 1,000 feet indicated a gradient wind from the NW at 10-12 kt.

The balloon launched at 1930 hrs local, and the 60 minute flight proceeded uneventfully at about 2,000 feet until the commander prepared for landing. He noticed that the surface wind was stronger than forecast (estimated at 12 to 15 kt) and decided to execute a positive landing in a cut corn field to minimise the length of the final drag across the field. He briefed his passengers to stow their cameras, to grasp the basket's rope handles with both hands and to bend their knees.

After a positive touch down and a ground drag of at least 100 yards, one passenger had hurt her leg but the other five passengers were uninjured. The injured passenger was taken to hospital and discharged with a suspected sprain. Several days later she returned to the hospital where bone fractures were discovered.

The commander attributed the injury to the unforecast strength of the surface wind which necessitated a positive landing combined with the passenger's failure to bend her knees.

The passenger injured in this accident thought that the standard of passenger briefing that she had experienced could be improved, and communicated this to the Civil Aviation Authority. In addition, as a result of a previous accident, the AAIB made a safety recommendation to the CAA (number 92-38), that a requirement be introduced for a standard passenger briefing be given prior to and during every public transport flight, the content of which should be included in the operations manual for each company undertaking such operations. The CAA are currently taking action to ensure that adequate passenger briefings are given for each public transport flight.