No: 8/91 **Ref: EW/G91/05/08** **Category: 5**

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Cameron A-160 Hot Air Balloon, G-BPCN	
No & Type of Engines:	None	
Year of Manufacture:	1988	
Date & Time (UTC):	6 May 1991 at about 0750 hrs	
Location:	Closworth, near Yeovil, Somerset	
Type of Flight:	Public Transport	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 7
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - 1 (minor)
Nature of Damage:	None	
Commander's Licence:	Commercial Pilot's Licence (Balloons)	
Commander's Age:	41 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	126 hours (all on type)	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

The Hot Air Balloon was engaged on a pleasure flight which originated from a farm near Wheathill, Somerset. Prior to the flight the pilot had obtained a weather forecast from the Bristol Meteorological Office, which indicated surface winds northerly between 6 and 8 knots and a gradient wind north to northeasterly between 10 and 12 knots, increasing up to 12 knots at the surface and a gradient wind of 20 knots. The weather was fine.

The pilot reports that the first part of the flight proceeded normally and, after approximately 30 minutes flying time as was his normal practice, he briefed and rehearsed the passengers on the positions they should take prior to landing. This involves grasping a handhold and adopting a "knees bent" position to ensure that the head is below the level of the top rim of the basket. This briefing is repeated prior to the final approach to land.

Once clear of the built up area of Yeovil, the pilot descended the balloon to 500 feet agl and began looking for a suitable landing site. This proved difficult due to the large amount of arable farming in the area. At approximately 0740 hrs he identified a field about a mile ahead of the balloon. The field was situated in a north/south direction alongside a main road which went through a fairly deep cutting with a line of trees across the approach direction. The pilot hoped that, as the balloon descended,

ground effect would cause a left turn that would enable him to use the maximum field length. His contingency plan was to use the top of a large tree if the hoped for ground effect did not occur.

On the final approach it was apparent to the pilot that the surface wind was stronger than forecast and he opted to use the tree top to slow the forward momentum. Some 20 seconds before contact he called out to the passengers to "bend their knees". As anticipated the tree top reduced the forward momentum and the balloon swung through 30° putting it almost precisely in line with the maximum available field length. The landing technique preferred by the pilot is the "lay-down" technique which involves deliberately capsizing the basket on touch down. He reports that the touch down was firm, with little bounce followed by a drag of about 15 metres. As he called to the passengers to ensure that they were alright, he found that one male passenger was unconscious and lying with his head and shoulders on the grass, across the top rim of the basket.

The pilot immediately radioed the retrieve crew to telephone for an ambulance and then administered first aid. An ambulance arrived within 15 minutes and the passenger was transferred to hospital. There were no other injuries.