

AAIB Bulletin No: 12/94

Ref: EW/G94/10/14

Category: 3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Thunder and Colt 240-248, G-BVJL

No & Type of Engines: None present

Year of Manufacture: 1994

Date & Time (UTC): 10 October 1994 at 1730 hrs

Location: Kingswell End near Great Offley, Hertfordshire

Type of Flight: Public Transport

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 10

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - 1 Serious

Nature of Damage: None to balloon

Commander's Licence: Commercial Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: N/K

Commander's Flying Experience: 1,345 hours (of which 800 were on type)
Last 90 days - 45 hours
Last 28 days - 14 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The pilot obtained a Volmet weather forecast which indicated that the surface wind for his proposed flight would be 10 kt. The flight was uneventful until the balloon entered the Luton Control Zone and was instructed to fly 'not above 500 feet' rather than the 1,000 feet planned by the pilot. At this height the balloon tracked towards Luton and an area of arable land comprising recently ploughed fields. The pilot briefed the passengers on the landing procedures and selected an isolated stubble field for the landing. This field was not ideal in that it sloped away in the landing direction. The surface wind was 10 kt as forecast and the pilot elected to make a low approach through the upwind hedge in order to maximise the landing distance available. The balloon touched down initially some 15 feet past the hedge before rising to about 10 feet prior to its final landing some 90 feet into the field. The pilot considered that both touchdowns were normal and the basket initially remained upright after the final landing. However, despite the pilot's use of the rapid deflation system, the windage on the envelope caused the basket to topple onto its side. All the passengers had their backs to the direction of travel as briefed. None of the passengers reported any injury after landing but one woman subsequently attended hospital and was informed that she had sustained a fracture of her left fibula.