

# Thunder AX8-105 Balloon, G-BPZZ, 16 August 2002

<b>AAIB Bulletin No:</b> 11/2002	<b>Ref:</b> EW/G2002/08/28	<b>Category:</b> 3
<b>Aircraft Type and Registration:</b>	Thunder AX8-105 Balloon, G-BPZZ	
<b>No &amp; Type of Engines:</b>	No engines	
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	1989	
<b>Date &amp; Time (UTC):</b>	16 August 2002 at 1920 hrs	
<b>Location:</b>	Swepstone near Leicester	
<b>Type of Flight:</b>	Public Transport (Passenger)	
<b>Persons on Board:</b>	Crew - 1	Passengers - 3
<b>Injuries:</b>	Crew - None	Passengers - 1 (serious)
<b>Nature of Damage:</b>	None	
<b>Commander's Licence:</b>	Commercial Pilots Licence	
<b>Commander's Age:</b>	46 years	
<b>Commander's Flying Experience:</b>	1,432 hours (all on type)	
	Last 90 days - 19 hours	
	Last 28 days - 7 hours	
<b>Information Source:</b>	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and telephone enquiries.	

## The flight

The balloon had been engaged in an evening flight with the pilot and three passengers aboard. The pilot had obtained a weather forecast before take-off and this had indicated that the surface wind, of about 7 kt at the time of take-off, was expected to decrease to about 5 kt by dusk. After take-off, which had been preceded by a briefing to the passengers, the pilot's assessment of the balloon's groundspeed led him to believe that the forecast he had obtained accurately reflected the wind being experienced.

After about 45 minutes of flight, the pilot descended the balloon from its cruising altitude of 1,200 feet with the intention of landing. As they were descending, it became evident to the pilot that, contrary to the forecast, the wind-speed had increased and was about 10 to 12 kt. He informed the

passengers of this and repeated his earlier landing briefing, emphasising the procedure for a 'Drag' landing, where the basket slides across the ground for a short distance. The passengers were instructed to brace themselves against the padded front wall of the basket, facing forwards, whilst the pilot was to stand at the rear of the basket with a bracing line attaching him to the rear wall.

After some time, the pilot selected a long stubble field which lay along their track and made a low level approach into it, passing over some power cables which were at its boundary. The touchdown was deliberately made gentle, which had the effect of increasing the likely length of the landing slide.

As the basket was slowing, the pilot observed some farm machinery wheel track ruts, with a raised lip about 4 inches high, which crossed their line of slide, close ahead of them. The pilot pointed out this obstruction to the passengers and instructed them to remain holding on in the landing position. Just as the basket reached the tracks, the pilot saw one passenger start to turn towards him and, as the basket jolted and tipped when its front edge contacted the ruts, this passenger lost her footing and fell. As she appeared to have injured her ankle, she was taken, by ambulance, to the local hospital where the ankle was found to be fractured.