

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Cameron O-90, G-BYTW	
No & Type of Engines:	No Engines	
Year of Manufacture:	2000 (Serial no: 4747)	
Date & Time (UTC):	14 August 2022 at 0600 hrs	
Location:	Snetterton Racetrack east car park, London Road, Norwich	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 2	Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - 1 (Serious) 1 (None)	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Damage to a fence	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	65 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	242 hours (of which 242 were on type) Last 90 days - 3 hours Last 28 days - 2 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

As the balloon landed, its basket hit a wire fence. This resulted in a jolt in the basket during which the student pilot caught and twisted his foot in a restrainer mounting within the basket floor breaking his leg. The instructor and passenger were uninjured.

History of the flight

After a short flight with a student pilot and a passenger on board, at the point where there was 25% of the balloon gas supply left, the instructor selected a suitable landing site. During the descent the student noticed two obstacles at the chosen site, and so a landing site slightly further on was selected. This area was the car park of the Snetterton Racetrack complex and consisted of a grassed area with a low wire fence. The student fitted his pilot restraint and moved to the back of the basket and controlled the descent. He briefed the passenger and instructor to attain landing positions and stowed loose items. At about 10 ft agl, he noticed the balloon was gaining speed whilst descending but by this point he was committed to landing, so decided to use the fence to slow and stop the balloon. He then took up his landing position 90° to the direction of travel. The student used the rip line¹ for a count of two and moments later the basket contacted the fence. This jolted him

Footnote

¹ The rip line is used to open the circular fabric vent valve to release hot air and deflate the balloon.

forward in the basket and he felt his left foot move, catch and twist, stopping against the pilot restraint anchor point on the floor of the basket. He immediately realised that he had broken his leg. The instructor and passenger were uninjured. The balloon and basket were undamaged.

Instructor's comments

The instructor stated that during the approach he observed another balloon flying low over Snetterton about five minutes in front with an estimated speed of about 4 kt. He assumed his balloon was experiencing the same conditions and was travelling at roughly the same speed but has since realised that he was probably travelling slightly faster than he had anticipated.

The course of action taken by the student seemed sensible to the instructor. However, with hindsight, he believed that the use of the rip line as they crossed the fence, rather than before, would have brought the balloon to a stop to land safely just beyond the fence. He also considered that using a wire fence to arrest the balloon was likely to cause damage to property, the balloon and basket with increased risk of injury to the occupants.

He observed that the student could have positioned his foot away from the anchor point fitting in the basket. As a result, in future he will advise occupants in the balloon to ensure their feet are clear of fixtures and fittings on the basket floor when bracing for landing.