

AAIB Bulletin No: 10/94

Ref: EW/G94/08/07

Category: 3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Thunder AX9-120 S2 Hot Air Balloon, G-BTMN

No & Type of Engines: N/A

Year of Manufacture: 1991

Date & Time (UTC): 14 August 1994 at 0620 hrs

Location: Ripple, Kent

Type of Flight: Public Transport

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 5

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - 1 Minor

Nature of Damage: None to aircraft

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

Commander's Age: 31 years

Commander's Flying Experience: Approx 600 hours (of which approx 200 were on type)
Last 90 days - 30 hours
Last 28 days - 11 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The balloon had taken off from near Canterbury, Kent at 0530 hrs in calm wind conditions. The weather forecast obtained by the pilot at 0330 hrs indicated that the surface wind for landing would be variable at 5 kt. After takeoff the balloon drifted towards the east and, on approaching the coast, the pilot made a descent in preparation for landing. On nearing the ground he estimated the surface wind to be about 8 kt. After aborting two planned landings the pilot noticed that the surface wind was increasing as he neared the coast. The third approach to land took the balloon close to a milking shed containing cows so the pilot decided not to make a burn below 100 feet agl so as not to disturb the cows. This resulted in the balloon landing 10 metres short of the planned position at a higher rate of descent than anticipated on a 45° up slope. This, combined with a surface wind that was by now between 10 and 15 kt, resulted in the basket making heavy contact with the ground causing minor injury to one passenger.

The pilot attributed the cause of the accident to his decision not to burn below 100 feet in order to avoid the risk of disturbing the cows in the milking shed which could have led to a large insurance claim.