

INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Cameron A-210 Hot Air Balloon, G-BUHY
No & Type of Engines:	N/A
Year of Manufacture:	1992
Date & Time (UTC):	2 July 1994 at 2030 hrs
Location:	Sandridge Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire
Type of Flight:	Public Transport
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1 Passengers - 10
Injuries:	Crew - None Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	None to balloon
Commander's Licence:	Commercial Pilot's Licence (Balloons)
Commander's Age:	33 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	1,100 hours (of which 350 were on type) Last 90 days - 50 hours Last 28 days - 21 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

After takeoff from Hemel Hempstead, the pilot planned to use the forecast winds to fly to the east of the town and then north of St Albans before landing in open country. In the event that the low level winds did not allow him to follow this plan, the pilot intended to climb to a higher altitude and fly over St Albans before landing to the west of Hatfield. The duration of the flight was planned to be one hour and, in accordance with standard procedures, the balloon was carrying fuel for one and a half hours.

On reaching the eastern edge of Hemel Hempstead, after 20 minutes flying, the pilot descended to a lower level in order to exploit the expected south-westerly wind and fly to the north of St Albans. However, on reaching his planned height, he found that the wind was from the north west. He decided to maintain height as his resulting track would take him clear of a known sensitive area and also take him to the south of St Albans where there were suitable landing sites. During the next 15 minutes the wind backed to the west and the balloon tracked towards the sensitive area. In order to avoid the sensitive area the pilot increased altitude but as he was overflying it, the wind began to die.

The balloon had now been airborne for 55 minutes and the pilot began to look for a landing site. He identified two stubble fields in the sensitive area and a golf course immediately beyond in which he planned to land. This plan depended on the normal change of wind direction to the left with reducing height but this did not happen and the pilot was unable to reach the golf course. The balloon was flying very slowly over the stubble fields when the landowner arrived and made it very clear to the pilot that he was not to land on her property. The pilot pointed out that he wished to land immediately because he was running short of fuel and any further delay would compromise the safety of his aircraft. The balloon had by now been airborne for 1 hour 10 minutes. The landowner was however adamant and the pilot was forced to continue the flight while looking for a suitable landing site.

The balloon was now drifting over St Albans and the pilot identified a good landing site in a park that was directly on track. As the balloon approached the landing area the wind suddenly shifted through 90° and the pilot was faced with looking for another landing site. He realised that fuel was running very low and briefed his passengers for a possible emergency landing and instructed them to adopt their landing positions. The flight had now lasted 1 hour 35 minutes. As the balloon approached an open space on track, the liquid fuel in the tanks ran out and the pilot turned on all the burners to use the remaining vapour in the tanks in an attempt to maintain sufficient height to reach the open area before making a descent to land. However there was insufficient fuel remaining and the basket of the balloon struck a chimney pot on a house and a telephone wire before landing on a grass verge adjacent to some houses. There were no injuries and the balloon was undamaged.