

Aircraft Type and Registration: Cameron D-96 Airship, G-BEPZ

No & Type of Engines: 1 Volkswagen 126A piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1977

Date & Time (UTC): 8 January 1994 at 1010 hrs

Location: Savernake Forest near Marlborough, Wiltshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 2 Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: No significant damage as a result of the accident but destroyed during the recovery

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

Commander's Age: 46 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 1,286 hours (one on type)
Last 90 days - 7 hours
Last 28 days - 3 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

After lift-off of the airship the pilot initiated a shallow climb, followed by a right-hand turn, with the intention of staying at low level within the boundary of the launch site field. During the climb left rudder was applied to maintain the desired track, but the airship did not respond and continued in a right-hand turn towards the downwind boundary of the field. The pilot became aware that the airship was on a collision course with some large trees and, as the rudder appeared to be ineffective and there was insufficient space available in which to land safely, decided to climb in an attempt to avoid the obstacle. Despite the use of the double burner the airship struck a large branch and came to rest approximately 75 to 80 feet above the ground.

The pilot assessed that the cause of the accident was due to a steering failure, but due to the damage sustained by the airship during the subsequent recovery it was not possible to carry out a meaningful examination of the rudder system.