



Clouthopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

Hi Folks.

Welcome to your October edition of your favourite lighter than air Newsletter. Like me you are probably gearing up for the Annual One Man Meet in a couple of weeks in Tenbury Wells Worcestershire which is a new venue for us all. Preparations are well in hand for the event which being in a new location always has added interest.

I've just returned from the second annual Homebuilding meet held at Sackville Lodge, Riseley in Bedfordshire. Host Tim Wilkinson welcomes anyone (including me) who has an interest in Homebuilt balloons and a report on what happened over the weekend is included in this edition.



Good things come in small packages – in this case G-CIWZ Tim Wilkinson's Sackville 34

Here is what we have for you in this edition.

- The 2nd Annual Annex 1 Meet.
- Longleat Balloon Festival.
- Future Hopping decisions taken.
- Recent second-hand purchases.
- Homebuilt Bottom end.
- What's hot on the market right now.

Views on the newsletter to the email address below

Steve Roake- Editor,

Steve.roake33@gmail.com

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1, Ed Speak- Getting ready for the One Man Meet.

Like most of you I am busy preparing for the annual One Man Meet which is but a few weeks away in Tenbury Wells Worcestershire over the weekend of October 11-13th. Accommodation is booked, crew sorted and all that remained to be arranged was to get the balloon ready. This was done before the Sackville meet and it sailed through its C of A whilst there was an unusual advisory. I'm currently running Cameron H-34 G-BYNW whilst I decide where my future hopping choice comes from and although it's done some 83 hours total time, not a lot of it was free flown. At some stage the former "Energis" sponsored envelope was artwork removed and some of the image remains with quite a lot of glue remaining to the point where some of the panels stick together when it comes out of the bag. The always useful Chris Dunkley told me to go buy some Imperial Leather Talcum Powder and to get a brush and rub the talc into the glue which will assist with it not sticking so much. Not only that, I could end up with the best smelling envelope out there!

There was this sight at Sackville where three of us did exactly that and very useful it was as an exercise but unfortunately the weather wasn't hopper (legs) suitable with faster winds than I care for so I didn't get to shake it down. An evening tether is in order just to ensure all is well and having purchased some new pear-shaped carabiners from Cameron Balloons, these were fitted along with a new one for the crown line, which now sits in its very own bag for life. The Carabiners in particular are a great help especially when you have multiple lines connecting to one point as they spread the fixings nicely.

Subsequently following on from the above treatment, I took the opportunity to get the hopper out of the bag and was delighted that the talcum powder treatment seems to have done the business with no panels sticking together and as a plus point it's probably one of the nicest smelling old balloons I've ever come across. You never know with old envelopes what condition they are going to be in but this one is fine and will soldier on for a long time yet. Bring on the OMM!



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

2, Essential Extras – A carabiner with a difference

Why highlight a simple Carabiner as an example of an essential extra? The reason is actually twofold. In this particular instance the type of carabiner is a Cameron Balloons design, but its design is the important bit particularly when operated by a hopper. Not only does the carabiner support the load of the bottom end against the produced lift of the envelope, one key thing about Carabiners is the way that load is distributed about the number of them equally. Now if you think about most Quick link designed carabiners that we use on hoppers, they aren't very well designed generally. Straight sided, with 90-degree corners, they produce stress raisers in each corner which are most likely to either fail or wear out due to their design. I have seen some big balloon carabiners recently that you wouldn't want to fly with as the wear from abuse has rubbed away that important area of contact that the flying wires runs across in operation.



A Cu-9821-0001, or carabiner to you.



Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

What is clever in this design is the way those loadings are distributed. I'm an engineer by trade so have an ability to see such things that others may take for granted but let me point out a few things about this particular design I liked. Take the lower section in the picture. This is about 80% of a circle, and as you may well know loadings on a circular item are more evenly distributed than on a squared off design. The ability to move the item is easier resulting in less and more even wear over time. Then look towards the top section. With the carabiner fanning out in a pear shape there is greater section for the flying wires to run in and again with an arced curve no one section is subject to undue loads.

Now these items aren't cheap coming in at £14 each, but such are their Usefulness that I found on my O-31 that I've bought a set for the old H-34, and fitted to reduce the loadings and extend the life. Clever designs can be taken for granted, but in my forty-year career in engineering I've found that if the little things are taken care of then the bigger issues tend to have been sorted so that's why I'm highlighting them today as an essential extra. I doff my cap to whoever took the time and trouble to reinvent the lowly carabiner – a truly clever piece of design.

3, The Features Section. –

Exclusive Ballooning's fourth Longleat Sky safari

Very, very, rarely you have the culmination of a great venue, picture perfect flying conditions and a well-run event that just reminds you why you fly and all the attributes that go with that thought. Luckily for those of us in the UK this happened over the weekend of 13-15th September at the Elizabethan Prodigy House and estate of the Marquesses of Bath at Longleat in Wiltshire.

Set in an estate totalling 1000 acres the parkland landscape blends seamlessly with its surroundings and besides a safari park there is a natural bowl which is both sheltered and picturesque and perfect for holding a balloon event. Now in its fourth year at this venue, Andrew Holly and his team have created a format which both grows in popularity year on year and embraces the various parts of the festival in a manner that leaves the public very satisfied. If there was one failing with the

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Clouthopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

whole thing, it is that the traffic management outside the confines of the estate hasn't been sorted and is crying out for a one-way routing to ease the burden on the volume of associated vehicles. The local council's traffic management officers should implement something to assist a very well-run programme of events during the days.

Arriving to the site at an ungodly hour, you can't even imagine the splendour of the spectacle you are about to witness since there aren't any visual clues until you drive down the winding ash felt to the amphitheatre and see the balloons laid out awaiting the launch. This year's event had unprecedented weather with the cancellation of only one slot early in the programme.

On the Saturday morning I attended the weather was still in the bowl with a light draw wind across the fisherman's pond with a marked upper wind some one hundred and eighty degrees reversed and at a decent speed. From a hopping perspective this is one of those unique places where you want to loiter and bumble around the estate staying low for as long as possible taking in all the sights of a hundred plus launch process. One such person who did exactly that was John Tyrrell who flew his Cameron O-31 G-CKYX around three sides of the park, watched closely by myself and he ended up flying for 1hr 20mins remaining on site.



John Tyrrell in G-CKYX

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Clouthopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

Another exponent Kevin Tanner mentioned that he had flown 4 decent flights during the weekend in G-HOPR his Lindstrand 25A. A fair number of hoppers attended the event with tethered flight as well as free flying. Another item of interest was a Gefa FLug As105GD Hot air airship which also contributed to the lure to go.

Once the free flying spectacular had concluded, the second item of interest happened on a lawn adjacent to the main house. This was a series of tethering slots aimed at keeping the public engaged and one item of interest to us was the Lindstrand Tech series 1-31 G-HEAL which was subject to an auction the previous day and won by Michael Evans the owner of G-BPUB Cameron V-31.



G-HEAL Lind Tech Series 1-31.

Newsletter supported by





Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

Michael will have a dilemma on his hands as he has previously used his fixed air chair on the old envelope. He will either have to upgrade to a swivel style bottom end or get someone to fit turning vents to the new envelope which represented great value for money at the price it was won at with only one hour in the logbook.

After playing with his new envelope, G-BPUB had an airing on the manicured lawns of Longleat.

Before you knew it, time had whizzed around and it was the evening briefing and another launch slot. This time the concerns were that the winds were too light for balloons to safely cross the wildlife park so initially two balloons were sent up to check the conditions. Forgive the stray from the subject matter but my whole reason for going was to see Crispin Williams in a Gefa Flug hot air airship (G-NORG) and in the evening launch slot he majestically flew the craft around the crowd at about 500 feet as balloons ventured out of the bowl. This is a sight that I don't think has happened in the UK for at least 20 years. Some low level bimbuling over the crowds was achieved by Kevin Tanner in G-HOPR his Lindstrand 25A while Martin Mitchell tethered his Cameron O-31 in the upper launch site. It was truly one of those days that remind you why we all go ballooning – for all the right reasons.

Crispin later told me it was one of his finest flights ever in an airship which for a man who has flown a lot of hours in them is really saying something.

2nd Annual Annex 1 Balloon Meet

Tim Wilkinson welcomed one and all to the second annual event for Annex 1 balloon builders at his airfield Sackfield Lodge in Riseley Bedfordshire over the weekend of 6th-8th September. Following on from the first event, this year's meet was down on numbers but none the less still as enjoyable to be part of. I arrived on Friday afternoon having picked up the hopper en-route, with a plan to use the weekend as a shake down to the OMM in a few week's time. Friday evening wasn't flyable and I'd already taken time to set up camp in my tent avoiding some pretty strong winds by camping behind a hedge. Instead we decided to be sociable and five of us trooped off to a very nice local pub for dinner and a few beers. We weren't going to be too late to bed as briefing was scheduled for 06-00 the following morning.

Newsletter supported by





Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

This dually arrived in no time at all, but having slept really well as I seem to do every time I go camping, we arrived to hear what was the weather forecast and it appeared too brisk for my legs so we ended up doing a retrieve for Ken Lowry in his balloon. This was a lot of fun as it had been years since id retrieved for anyone and yet I was there when he landed. We returned to the airfield to refuel and do a breakfast en mass at the café at the garage at the end of the drive. Back to the balloon loft to watch Colin Butter cutting his new balloon. Andy Marshall was completing some modifications to his envelope to accept a camera mount and the day just melted into a blur of things being completed.

One small but useful task completed, was that Andy Marshall, lestin Leek and myself got the New (old) envelope out of its bag, attached the new carabiners id purchased from Cameron's, we then systematically went over every panel with the Imperial Leather Talcum powder applying it to areas where artwork had been removed but still had traces of glue. This tip had come from Chris Dunkley and I was delighted to subsequently find out later that he was spot on.

Come the afternoon briefing I was still convinced that my legs were not built for the weather that was predicted. I decided that cloudhopping was a task for another day. However, I did get to fly in a homebuilt York balloon which featured Silicon coated fabric, and the worlds loudest triangulated burner. A swift 20mins hop in an incredibly small basket with two grown men was very pleasant. We then returned to Sackville via a pub for a swift one, to a very sociable barbeque with all who attended.

During the day I did get to check out Tims latest design for a collapsible bottom end with a difference but that is detailed in the homebuilding section separately.

Sunday am arrived and with it still windspeeds that weren't to my liking. Being cautious I had decided once again that it would be better being on the ground wishing I were flying than the other way around.

However, Ron Griffin almost flew in his homebuilt hopper G-CKAI but at the last knockings decided against it as others charged off in a fast low level jet which licked across the open runway. Those who had flown in baskets spoke about stand-up landings and 18-20 knots at 500 feet as being the norm, a touch too quick for me as I'm not that brave.

It transpired that above the jet the winds calmed down again so the jet was definitely localised. Then upon returning to the club

Newsletter supported by





Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

house Tim cooked up a breakfast for all those who had stayed. Once again it was a great social event and good to see so many enthused about home building, I just can't see myself having the patience to do such a mammoth task as to build my own design.

Still, never say never as these things tend to grow upon you as time goes by. Many thanks for including me in the meet and to Tim Wilkinson for hosting.

VLOG

The second and latest Video log for discussion went out on Facebook recently where I questioned the merits of Cloudhopper burners and whether or not the manufacturers are giving us the right equipment for our type of flying. It seems to me, that for us just to get a scaled down version of a big burner isn't appropriate these days and with most burners weighing around 7-8kgs, perhaps the time is right for them to be superseded with something more tailored to our specific needs. I would advocate the starting point for something better would be the Bonnano power plus system which I feel could still be smaller. Hoppers are generally over supplied with burners and perhaps something less fierce would be more appropriate to our needs. As ever this topic is designed for you to have your say on the subject in question and then the results could potentially be fed back to the manufacturers who do read our stuff. So please engage and put your views forward. Thanks.

4, Homebuilding section – Tim Wilkinson's Latest collapsible basket

If ever there is a man who wants to constantly push back the boundaries of home-building, that man is Tim Wilkinson, who single handily seems intent to harness all the enthusiasm in the UK for Homebuilding and help others achieve their goals. Tim has built a number of collapsible baskets and is constantly refining his designs to incorporate things he has seen either at the Brian Bolland meet in Vermont or with ideas of his own on how to improve the product. This is his latest design. Doesn't look too much different at first glance in the first photo but clearly shows an attention to detail with straps which pull the sides tight diagonally.

However, it is hiding a neat trick which is more evident in the second photograph. Tim has addressed an issue sometimes

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Clouthopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

suffered by people with less athletic movement than most of us. Easier entry and exit from the basket.



Latest Tim Wilkinson Collapsible Basket

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Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

Here revealed is his solution to the problem. Simply put, a removable bar which locates on two spigots allows easier entry.



Once into the basket, the top rod is replaced in position and two adjustable cords pull up the tension and support the loadings. A very innovative solution to a problem for some and exactly the kind of thing I like to share in the homebuilding section.

Tim has built about five of these collapsible baskets now and besides the fact that they get lighter each time the quality of the finish seems to get better with each example as he perfects small incremental changes that he has come across along his travels and thinks he can utilise. He is happy to share his results and for this we thank him for suggesting ideas that may suffice for your needs.

Newsletter supported by





Clouthopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

5 Interesting Photos



G-BVZX Cameron H-34 is currently for sale.
Photo by Chris Monk.

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Clouthopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

6, New Allocations This Month / Changes of Ownership

Nothing new to report this month as it is getting towards the end of the flying season, it would be unusual for someone to take ownership of a new envelope around this time of year and most people are now focussed on placing orders with 2020 delivery dates. From that point of view, the lack of new stock isn't surprising.

7, Second Hand Balloons

I have purchased Mark Stelling's share of G-BYNW the Cameron H-34 with immediate effect. This will be my envelope until I decide which way I'm going with regard to the future. Michael Evans has purchased G-HEAL the Lindstrand Tech series 1-31 from Exclusive ballooning.



Chris monk has for sale G-BVZX a rare Cameron H-34 seen here on a recent airing. Plenty of interest in the envelope but it's being sold as a full kit. Chris Dobson has reduced the price of his Cameron

Newsletter supported by





Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019

O-31 G-ISOB to £4500, surely at this price it will sell (it's a bargain). Glenn Everett has two hopper envelopes for sale currently. G-OINN has done a bit of flying whilst G-XAIM hasn't and is near enough to being as good as new.

8, Manufacturer / Event News/ Industry News

Just a few weeks until the 36th annual OMM and if you've never been to one, they aren't exclusively for pilots. They are a place where you can learn about hoppers by probably the biggest individual gathering of like-minded souls in the UK. You may have an interest or an ambition to one day join us in flying this great craft, but the more you know about them the better placed you will be to achieve your dreams and aspirations. Tenbury Wells is the place, the weekend of 11-13th October is the dates, and The Cadmore Lakeside Hotel is the venue.

GPS postcode WR158TQ.

See you all there perhaps. Late entries to John Tyrrell or Wendy Rousell at Onemanmeet@btinternet.com .

7. Gallery Pages –

Your Editor's choice of New and unusual balloons. Some rarer models that haven't seen the light of day recently plus anything of great note. This actually gets harder each month as I flick through my library of shots for things I haven't shown in recent times. So, if you know of a hopper that hasn't seen the light of day in recent months and you have a fairly current photograph of it I'd like a copy please for future inclusion.

For example, G-BYNW my Cameron H-34 has some 83 hours in its logbook but back in the heyday of Flying Pictures most of its work was tethering so was quite prominent whilst earning its keep. What isn't known is that in all of its life it has only free flown for a total of 11 hours, so aerial photographs of it are quite rare. Therefore, when you see it in a photo, in this case with a basket underneath flown by Mark Stelling it is a rare treat.

Newsletter supported by





Clouthopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019



1999 vintage Cameron H-34 G-BYNW. Just passed her C of A
And attending this year's OMM.

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Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019



Sky didn't make many hoppers but the few they did were genuinely lovely. G-BXVP, Sky 31-24.

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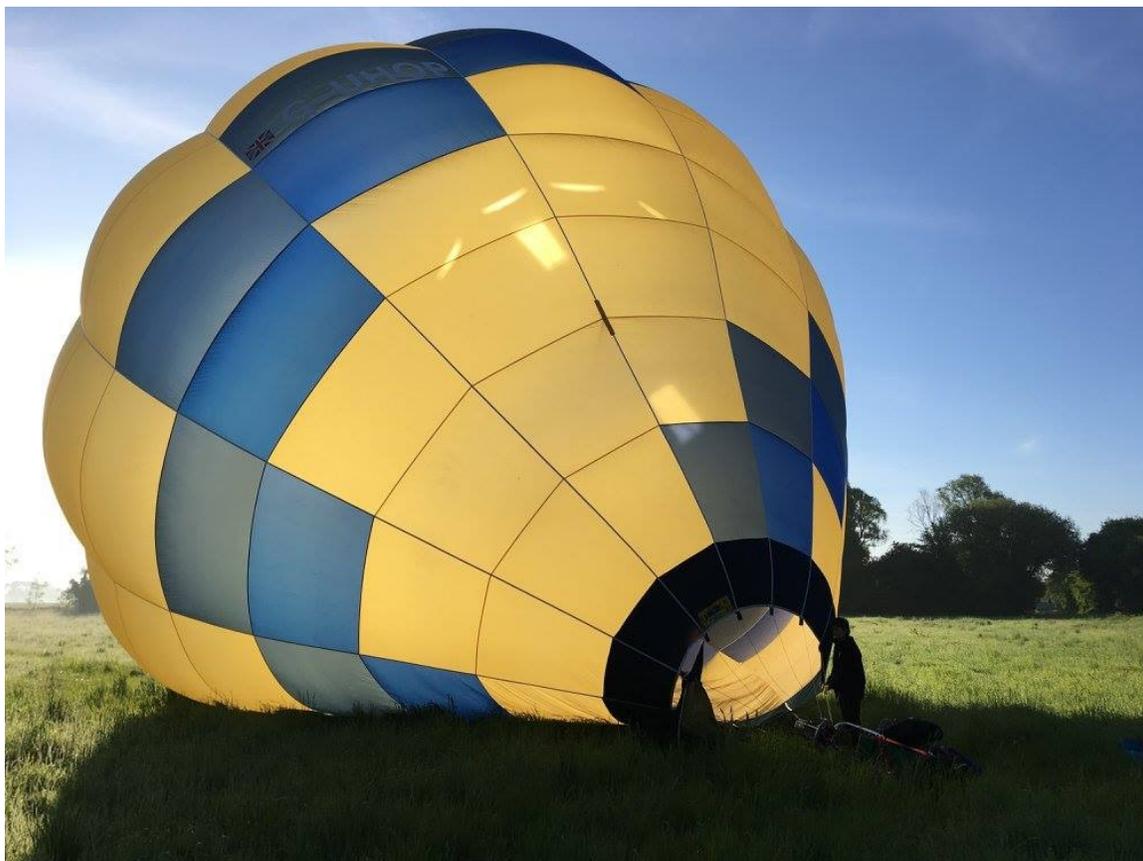




Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 118

October 2019



Let's hope for weather like this at the OMM.

Facebook membership continues to rise with the current level of 1328 (correct to the 23rd September), current and still rising. Let's hope this trend continues as the popularity of hopping embraces even more people.

All articles for inclusion in future issues will be gratefully received by your Editor. Please forward them to steve.roake33@gmail.com

Feedback good, bad or indifferent is always welcome.

Views aired by contributors may not be those of the Editor.

Safe and happy hopping! **Steve Roake.**

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Newsletter supported by

