

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

Welcome to your July edition(number 179), of the Newsletter.

Hello again folks, trust you are all well and enjoying life wherever I find you in the world.

July in the UK is a hot month or so it seems. Festival season is in full swing and whilst it has been very hot it has also been a bit windy too. I will give you a prime example this month with a lovely event (new to me) held in Swindon. Actually, one of the closest to me and very well run, More on Swindon later in the Newsletter.

Thanks to those who have supported me through generous donations, but I would encourage all of you to support my efforts if you have enjoyed reading this over a prolonged period. **www.buymeacoffee.com/cloudhoppers** is where you have a chance to donate towards the running costs of the site. Thanks in advance and please don't go ballistic, I wouldn't expect anyone to donate more than £12 a year or theoretically a pound an edition. As I said this is voluntary but financial assistance would lead to more options for the growth of the brand, and I guess after nearly 22 years it is a brand. Therefore, I would ask you to feel generous if you can afford to be and support me, and for those who will, many thanks in advance.

So here is what we have for you in edition number 179 of the Newsletter:

- Ed Speak – July , interesting month
- Swindon – the event that just didn't happen for me.
- John Ninomiya reports from Hoppermania 2026
- Chambley air passion 2026 Mini report.
- Fan repair update.
- Second hand balloons- price adjustments.
- Manufacturer News- John Tyrrell takes delivery of his new UM fan.
- Gallery- More Photos

Articles for inclusion are always welcome Anything for future inclusion to the usual email address please: steve.roake33@gmail.com many thanks in advance. Now please enjoy this edition of the world's only Hopper periodical brought to you with pleasure and kindness with all the most up to date information on our unique form of flying and longing for your support. I'm not after your wealth, just a small indication that all of my collective efforts over the years are still appreciated and that you enjoy the regular insights .Whilst some of you are generous, the majority still don't support me.

1,Ed Speak- July , an interesting month

Once again Hello everyone. July has been an interesting month for all the wrong reasons . Firstly, in terms of flying , I haven't done any this month , having visited the Swindon Balloon Festival with great expectations , but unfortunately the weather wasn't playing ball. I will return definitely next time but it was a shame not to be able to fly.

Secondly, the ongoing façade of my fan repair has progressed in theory. In practise there has been no progress, but this doesn't mean there isn't any movement. My home-made solution seems to be time limited and not progressing but those lovely guys at Cameron balloons have been able to help me out, so hopefully I will pick up the necessary items I need to be self-sufficient again will be there when I go on the Thursday before Bristol Balloon Fiesta. I also have a one panel repair going on my hopper envelope at the same time so it is fortuitous that both things can be achieved at the same time.

Finally, many thanks to Jess Siggers, who is also assisting me with arena access for the duration of the festival, which I love to visit but prefer not to fly.

Also, for your information, I've had an update from my mate Greg Winker who I am purchasing the last ever LBL hopper bottom end from. We are hopeful that delivery might be in September so should that happen, it would mean that my Cameron Millennium bottom end will become available for purchase second hand. Should you be interested in such a purchase (bearing in mind how infrequently these things become available for buying), then reach out to me to go on a waiting list for the item. It will get sold just as soon as we can facilitate the arrival of its replacement, which just happens to be my favourite bottom end and is the only thing I have ever regretted selling.

As you can see, whilst there hasn't been any flying this month for me , things are still developing and I can't tell you how keen I am to get my fan back in action , and want to acknowledge the generosity of Stuart Skinner in assisting me whilst I have been without mine. It is at times of struggle that you realise how helpful the balloon community really is.

Now enough of my ramblings and let's get into the Newsletter folks.

Regards to all, Steve Roake.

2.Feature Section

Swindon Balloon Festival

Last year I attended the Northampton Balloon Festival run in the smoothest of ways by Chris Freeman and Matt Rate. Whilst I had a lovely time there, I failed to fly due to my main blast valve leaking on me upon inflation. This as they say was lucky because it would have been a big deal should it have happened in the air. However, the "bones" of the event were very good and at a very reasonable £25 entry fee I thought it was a bargain and I had decided to return this year.

Looking into the lovely list of events these two were doing for 2026 I spotted a new one to me , at Lydiard Park in Swindon which in the big scheme of things could be classified as my local at only 64 miles from home. When I contacted Chris , and expressed interest in attending both Northampton and Swindon he said the entry fee would be £25. That's total not each!

We naturally agreed to enter and so on Friday 3rd of July just after I'd had my Porsche Mot'd, I set off to the venue at around 2pm. For me the journey couldn't have been simpler. I took the back roads from home to the M4 near Reading , cruised down the M4 to the most westerly junction for Swindon and then a simple 2 miles into the site, or so I thought. I arrived around 3-30 just at the point the organisers were changing the entrance opening and delightfully ended up in a dead end cul-de -sac on the adjoining housing estate. Luckily a local resident told me of the error of my ways, and then proceeded to Lydiard House entrance where co incidentally a worker just happened to be by the entrance as I rocked up. He very graciously opened the requisite gate for me to enter and we had arrived. Matt was on hand to indicate where he wanted me to pitch base camp for the weekend and so I got down to the basics of pitching tent , blowing up the airbed, and having a cup of tea. My crew for the weekend were Jim Findlay (refreshed from his exploits on a five-week Italy road trip) and girlfriend Anne from Denmark who was being blooded as crew.

CAMERON BALLOONS

SUPERLIGHT

O-31 HOPPER

'When less is more. Lightweight, practical yet engineered with the quality and reliability of Great British craftsmanship Cameron Balloons has been known for since 1971.'



Envelope only in Superlight ripstop nylon

- O-31 - 31,000cuft = 32kg



▲ SUPERLIGHT SWATCHES

Our O-31 Superlite Hopper is the most popular model, weighing in at only 32kg.

Our O-31 allows for greater flexibility when flying in warmer climates, or with increasing summer temperatures and at higher elevations, without overloading.

A great lightweight balloon for those adventurers who are not sure where their ballooning travels will next take them!

Our sought-after Neo Hopper Base Units, with two options available, can be paired with any of our hopper envelope range and customised to your requirements.

Contact the Cameron Balloons sales team for more information.....



sales@cameronballoons.co.uk | cameronballoons.co.uk | +44(0)117 9637216

© CAMERON BALLOONS Great British manufacturing since 1971

Advertisement

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

Having a VW van with all the toys, he soon staked out his territory for the weekend and we were set. Friday afternoon weather was a balmy sunny day in the late 20's Celsius, however associated with this was a strong wind. The site seemed to be a top of a hill and with no tree coverage, confidence in it not being flyable was very high. Briefing arrived all too soon and so ready to stand down for the evening I wasn't surprised when Chris told us that surface winds were 11 knots gusting 20 with slightly lower winds upstairs, 17kts at 500feet and 18kts at 1000ft. That was an easy scrub decision. The crowds weren't best pleased but having been told ballooning is subject to wind speeds couldn't argue especially at the very reasonable entry fee of £5 per adult. They would still get a basket nightglow with 19 participating teams and a couple of spirited tethers to prove why we weren't flying. The organisers very kindly provided food vouchers and so we went into the public area for dinner eventually deciding that oven baked pizza was the choice of the evening.

Saturday morning arrived with a pre-determined decision from the night before that we wouldn't get up as the likelihood of flying was zero. Briefing had been cancelled after I had gone to bed but by this stage I had stood the crew down and told them to enjoy the lie in. We didn't even bother to look at a met forecast as I knew wind speeds on the surface were due to be above 10 knots.

Having a motorhome in tow helps when it comes to breakfast. Jim's ability to rustle up a cooked breakfast is second to none and so we indulged in a fried delight which sustained me nicely. I had heard that around 40 balloons had booked into the event which is pretty positive considering they never flew the previous year and whilst flying wasn't possible quite a number had annual inspections conducted during the day.

Spending copious time with my bud Stuart Skinner (also a hopper exponent), was one way of enjoying the downtime between briefings whilst my crew went walking locally. I had no urging desire to leave the site and by early afternoon decided to set up the hopper along the crowd line and spent roughly three hours talking to the general public which included some paramotor pilots and also free fall parachutists (always good to understand another aviators point of view). Some of them had actually travelled up from the south coast. Evening briefing went as predicted with surface winds of higher than permitted limits and a sporty 20 knots at 1000feet.

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026



ALTITUDE INSURANCE

CONTACT DETAILS –

Laura Durcan
Altitude Insurance Ltd
(General Insurance Intermediary)
& Altitude Insurance Brokers Ltd
Telephone: 00353 (0)89 223 1051
Mobile: 0044 (0)7780 552494
Email: laura@altitudeinsuranceltd.com
Web: www.altitudeinsuranceltd.com

In respect of all European Domestic Business - Altitude Insurance Limited is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. CB1 Number: C183070. Registered in Ireland, No. 542264. Registered Address, Ground Floor, 71 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin, D02 P593, ROI.
In respect of all UK Domestic Business - Altitude Insurance Brokers Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Firm Reference Number, 978103. Registered in England and Wales, No. 14812603. Registered address, 116 Ardingly Drive, Goring-by-Sea, West Sussex, BN12 4TP, UK. Registered with Lloyd's of London as a Lloyd's Broker under Lloyd's number 1943. Managing Director - Laura Durcan.
Telephone: 00353 (0)89 2231051/ 0044 (0)7780 552494
Email: offices@altitudeinsuranceltd.com. Website: www.altitudeinsuranceltd.com



ALTITUDE INSURANCE LTD **ALTITUDE INSURANCE BROKERS LTD**

Since 2016, Altitude Insurance has been active in all aspects of general aviation insurance, on a worldwide basis, but we are specialists in hot air and gas balloon (tethered and free flight), airship and blimp insurance.

We are a proud family run business, owned and led by Director, Laura Durcan, who has over 20 years of insurance experience. Our team brings a variety of experience to every risk we place and, our core ethos of first-class customer service runs through everything that we do - Altitude was set up to offer a different kind of insurance intermediary experience in this ever changing and increasingly online and anonymous world, one where each customer is valued, provided with a uniquely personal experience, professional service and expert advice; always putting the customer first.

Ballooning isn't just our business; it is also our passion - our team includes a fully qualified PPL(BA)/ BPL holder, proudly flying our own branded balloons at events all over the world.

We have our own exclusive and tailor-made facility, with 2 AM Best A rated Insurers, for the placement of Hot Air and Gas Balloon, Airship and Blimp Insurance that no other broker has access to. This innovative capacity means that we are leaders in this extremely competitive market where traditional Insurers are demanding significant rate rises and restricting coverage.

We are able to provide both Direct and Reinsurance placements and, if required, arrange terms for all parts of the placement chain, for balloons based in most locations, worldwide.

We can offer: -

- Fully comprehensive Hull (if required) and Liability insurance coverage for Private, Aerial Work and Commercial Balloonists on hoppers, all the way up to 32 seat baskets
- Up to a 20.00% No Claims Bonus available
- No administration or documentation charges
- Want to fly more than 1 balloon at a time? 10 occasions per year included free of charge if you are a private balloonist
- No limit on the amounts of flights per year
- Cover for any Pilot as standard - subject to Terms and Conditions (available on request)
- Cover for flying in Europe as standard

Contact us today to start your insurance journey with Altitude.

Subject always to Insurer agreement on each individual risk, coverage cannot ever be confirmed without prior Insurer agreement. Coverage may be provided based on separate Third Party and Passenger Legal Liability Limits rather than a Combined Single Limit of Liability - this will be detailed in any quotation provided to you. Insurers reserve the right to amend their maximum coverage at any time.

Advertisement



Supports Cloudhopper News

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

Whilst non-flyable , once again a basket only Nightglow followed a spirited tether with a brand-new balloon. This evening was officially the end of proceedings and so they had a big firework display for the public.

Whilst Saturday evening was the end of official proceedings, Sunday morning came at Stupid o'clock, and with it another met briefing with the possibility of some flying. With Stuart Skinner also awake we surveyed the weather and I decided to let my crew Sleep in. There was a briefing which gave surface winds of 270 degrees at 6-11 knots , 500-foot winds of 12 knots and 2000-foot winds of 19knots. Clearly not the weather for trying to inflate a hopper but some regular balloons were up for a flight. In all eight craft came out of their bags with six free flying. Stuart had accepted a chance to go in a basket and reported back at 1000 feet they were achieving 22 knots. He also reported that Alan Turner had flown under them some 70 degrees variance with steerage. Eventually he landed near the services on the M4 at Membury.

Summing up my first experience of Swindon Balloon Festival . Whilst it is always disappointing not to do what you set out to do at an event, there were enough pointers about the event that makes me want to return next year and try again.

Matt and Chris were great hosts (thanks for all your efforts), and it's pretty local to me so why not.

Hoppermania 2026 by John Ninomiya

John Ninomiya is a seasoned Cloudhopper Pilot who has done over 1000hours in them. Teton Valley Balloon festival has been going for years and yet last year the organisers introduced a hopper only section which they called Hoppermania aimed directly at us. Here in his own words is his account of this year's event.

HopperMania 2026 at the Teton Valley Balloon Rally

Over the July 4th weekend, Cloudhopper pilots were welcomed for a second year to HopperMania, currently the only Cloudhopper event in the Western U.S. The event is part of the Teton Valley Balloon Rally, now in its 45th year. The event takes place in the town of Driggs, Idaho, on the western side of the scenic Teton



Supports Cloudhopper News

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

range in Idaho. The field was open for flying on three days of the four-day event, with a fourth day flyable at pilot's discretion. Conditions at landing were a bit brisker than usual for this rally, but the large open fields of the Teton Valley provided adequate room to run or be dragged. Balloonmeister and Cloudhopper pilot Margaret Rose Breffeilh did not damage her special Cloudhopper boots, to the relief of all.



Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

This year's event was attended by five hopper pilots, down from last year due to several unplanned vehicle- and paperwork-related absences. However, festival organizers remain committed to HopperMania as a part of the Teton Valley event.



The event provides full sponsorship to Cloudhopper pilots without the normal passenger-carrying obligation -- so the option of traveling sans basket is available. The event is invitational, but organizers are hoping to expand the number of spots available for Cloudhoppers and chariots in 2027.



Supports Cloudhopper News

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026



Thanks to John Ninomiya for sending in his report from the event . As you can see they don't need to be massive and I would encourage any of you to send me stuff for inclusion here in the magazine. Looked like the five musketeers had a lot of fun which is the object of the exercise after all .

As some stage in the future I would like to attend the event , it's just a load of logistical hassle to transport a hopper from the UK for such a thing. Perhaps I need to ask one of my close American buddies to help out lol- Ed.

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

Chambley Air Passion 2026

Towards the first two days of August I was contacted by Kevin Boon who had visited the Chambley Air Passion event. This ran from the 25th July until August 2nd with around 70 balloons attending . Apparently they flew every day with the exception of one. They flew every evening slot except the one previously mentioned, and in addition they flew morning flights on the 26th, 01, and 2nd of August. Kevin who is a keen photographer photographed three of the four hoppers that attended the event. The one which wasn't photographed belongs to Martin Mitchell.



Whilst all of the owners are not known , the first two hoppers are the Cameron O-31's of David Head G-CNCX, and G-CLVV which belongs to Stephen Williams. The unbranded example I am reliably told is the ex F-HEYC which is now converted to the French ultralight register and was once famously used in the iconic Landrover Freelander two advertisements under the expertise of Ian Ashpole ably assisted by Jo Bailey.

Whether or not the event carries on I guess depends upon how well the event was received by the paying public. I have no idea how well received the event actually was . Thanks to Kevin for contacting me and supplying the photographs for this magazine.

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

3, New Balloons.

Surprisingly, by the end of July , we have two known new hoppers, one of which has just gone onto the UK register . G-CNDU was registered on the 31st July as a Cameron O-31 to Spirit Balloons of Bristol(probably Alien Scheme and will be at Bristol Fiesta). As I previously said it is very unusual to go so long without a new hopper so this one is welcome.

The second is for Andrew Clement from Australia who has just received VH-ABU . This is a lovely Ultramagic H-42 c/n 42/26 . Weighing in at 53kgs the balloon is very attractive with external streamers.



Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026



Andrew says VH-ABU is a tribute to his dad's old balloon

I think it's about time Cameron's replaced G-CJWY their current demonstrator envelope. It is nearly nine years old. Any more information I receive I will relay to you guys and girls as and when I get it.

4, Second Hand stock

The continued offloading of unused hoppers continues unabated. I frequently hear of other stock becoming available, but it appears that not much is actually changing hands either due to this economic uncertainty or overpricing in the current marketplace. The thing is, I personally can't see an end to the current situation so owners who no longer use their hoppers have either to hang on to the value they perceive in their kits or reduce to sell.

A swift perusal of the regular balloon for sale sites shows the following. On Zebedee list there are five complete hoppers for sale currently. The pick of the crop is Roger Kunnerts Viva 42 system (G-BYRK) which is simply superb value at £5000. There are a couple of slow movers which in my opinion are simply overpriced and this is reflected in their lack of movement.

In the envelope section the pick of the bunch is Per Lesser's Cameron Z-42 which has simply one-hour total time. Whilst heavy (being fully hyperlast), £7000 for a new envelope is fantastic value compared to the price of a new one particularly if you are seeking greater lift capacity.

Over at Balloons4sale.eu, there are four complete hoppers for sale. Three we have featured on here previously plus PH-HOT a Z-42 which features a basket. I would suggest the price is prohibitive but it's only my opinion. In the envelope only section, PH-HOT is available separately should you be interested.

Any new stock that you want to move on, you can supply me details for inclusion in future editions of the Newsletter, all I ask is that you support me via the buy me a coffee option if it sells using this medium.

5, Homebuilding

A quiet month this month with no known new builds or no particular progress on projects that are ongoing.

This doesn't mean they have stalled, it just means I have no updated information on them at this time.

6, Manufacturing News

Towards the end of the month I was contacted by John Tyrrell who had just taken delivery of one of the first two new build Ultramagic 3hp inflation fans. So, I hear you say what's so interesting about that? Everything ! These are the first new builds without the legendary Honda push rod engines. The Honda engine is no longer available so manufacturers are looking elsewhere for alternative supplies of engines. In the case of Ultramagic, their choice for a 3hp engine is a supplier called Sakawa. Whilst I have no experience of this brand, their engines appear reasonably cheap to purchase (in comparison to my Honda GX100 , they are typically about one third of the equivalent price).

The whole reason for the delay in publishing this newsletter was that John informed me he would be testing his new fan over the first weekend of August so I thought it would be pertinent to await his opinion of the new product and share his views with you .

However, this will now have to be held over until next month at the earliest as John has been unwell and couldn't get out and do his product testing as planned . We wish him a speedy recovery.

He did however tell me of the purchase price for the fan . It is direct from Ultramagic £1330 plus vat and delivery costs. What those costs are I would hate to think as recently I ordered two rubber bungs at a total cost of £5 and after UPS delivery I was charged £27-50 (and they were a light item).

It is good to see the first new fan in years and with Honda engines no longer being supplied it will be interesting to see what Cameron Balloons has to offer moving forward. Thanks to John for his information.

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026



Frontal view is very similar to the older version except now a two bladed propeller rather than the previous three .

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026



As you can see from behind, the shape of the motor is completely different .

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

7, Gallery

This section is your editors' chance to find interesting photographs either from his own collection or from stuff submitted for the newsletter, or alternatively something that featured on the Cloudhoppers Facebook page during the month.



Is it time for a new Cameron Demo Hopper ? G-CJWY is an old friend of mine with its replacement in the background .

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026



David Head doing his thing in Chambley

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 179

July 2026

8, And Finally

Just another plug about **buymeacoffee.com/Cloudhoppers**. Your support will go a long way to supporting ambitions I have for the site and the Newsletter. If in the past I have assisted you with either a valuation or with finding your new envelope, please remember the value I added to your quest to find your forever gem. Any contribution will be gratefully received and trust me, everything received will go back into the site, so please be generous within limits (no more than £12 for a year), or potentially a pound a copy. So, few of you have contributed so far and yet loads of you state how much you enjoy the read.

Here we are at the end of July 2026 with the number of people subscribing still growing. We now find the subscription numbers to the Facebook page reaching over 4731 and still rising monthly. This is a great achievement with sustained growth as we navigate our 22nd year of publicity for Cloudhoppers across the worldwide community.

All are welcome but, **I would emphasize that content is strictly on hoppers and Duo-chariots and not “general ballooning” and if we find those pesky adverts for constant Tee-Shirts, the publishers will be banned and anyone who “veer’s away” from the few rules we have, will be also treated the same way and their account will be deleted .**

Please send all submissions for future editions to Steve.roake33@gmail.com

© Cloudhoppers.org Newsletter Number 179

July 2026



Supports Cloudhopper News