



Welcome People,

Another month passes by, and with it hopefully better stable weather with which we can all partake in some flying. Edition seven of the newsletter is here for you and I hope you find it a welcome addition to your monthly reading habits. Without further hesitation, let's get into the heart of this month's offerings!



John Hilditch will tell you his own tale to keep you on the edge of your seat, or rather what happens when it splits at an event at 1000ft and how to get over the problem and carry on regardless thanks to his friends .Jpeg by Nikki Byrne/Kev McLaughlin.

Content

In this edition we have for you details on:

1. Ed Speak- Explanation as to why more photo content is being applied.
2. Essential Extras - Again there is nothing for consideration. Should you wish for an item to be considered for the essential items section please submit it to me.
3. The features section.
 - 2nd Annual Cloudhoppers.org/ BHBC Solo Meet review
 - Janet Folkes and G-BHOJ Colt 14A
 - The Quest for the Green Ice Six continues.
 - Holy Cow! The new hopper stateside.
 - John Hilditch's Solo tale ...stay seated!
4. Updates on the website. - NONE!
5. More sightings on the gallery pages for the website.
6. Manufacturer Updates/ News/ Event Details.

Ed Speak- By Steve Roake

Glorious May has arrived, and with it a chance to talk about flying factually and not in theory terms as is normally the case over the winter months.

I have decided that because the newsletter in PDF format is so small in total size when sent out via the email format, the potential is there to include bigger and more plentiful jpegs of events and balloons covered. I hope you enjoy further the enhancement of the "twaddle" that I write with more shots, and whilst events take place, the more jpegs that come in for consideration for placement in the newsletter, the greater the coverage and more importantly the better the viewpoints being

less one dimensional. I have received a good selection of shots from the Solo meet including some interesting angles of view, that have enabled me to giving you a fullest representation of what the flavour of the event was.

Features This month

Black Horse Balloon Club / Cloudhoppers.org Solo Meet No 2

Following on from the relative success of the first hopper event last Easter held in the BHBC area, I got around over the winter months to talking to Ted Moore about doing a second event. Being a hopper man himself, local land relations officer for the BHBC and Commercial operator, he is "Mr. Buckinghamshire" when it comes to ballooning and definitely a must for the planning of a second event. Seconded from the club and potentially a future hopper pilot, Graham Philpot (cloudhopper list member), was also drafted in bringing great organizational skills to the event. The three of us got together to organize the event which now featured a website of its own www.solomeet.wanadoo.co.uk amongst some new features to enhance the desires of people who would be attending. The event was to run over the first may bank holiday weekend with flights scheduled from a number of alternating launch sites throughout the weekend. Being associated with the BHBC and being hosted once again in their region, it was agreed to allow bigger balloons into the event if they showed the "spirit of one person flying", i.e. solo flying with two further additions in two duo chariots.

Another enhancement for year two was the utilization of the Black Horse Pub Launch site in Great Missenden for camping

of teams with Caravans / Tents, very handy being close to the refueling site.

Two further "firsts" for the event saw the use of a dedicated event phone line for the met forecasting and details of which launch site was to be used for each slot. The second addition was the factory support of the event with Ultramagic Balloons bringing two examples to the event, one directly from the factory in Spain and a second machine from a client in Scotland.



The event's first slot for flying was on the Saturday morning at Quainton in Bucks, east of Aylesbury and the home of a railway museum and teams assembled around 06-30 for the briefing and Breakfast(Tea/Coffee/ Bacon Rolls) provided by the previously mentioned Lovely ladies and the flying commenced with a 6-7 knot southerly jaunt. The beauty of this particular venue is that flying

is possible through 360 degrees with reasonable distances available before any need to be concerned regarding airspace/land owner issues.

A total of nine hoppers or duo chariots flew from the site including the Spanish demonstrator Ultramagic Solo. Most headed after the Hare balloon G-BXUH flown by Helen Vaughan who landed around Haddenham Airfield some 12km from the takeoff point and just before the winds swiftly picked up.

Seen below is the Ultramagic Solo Demonstrator flown by List member Paul Dickenson .EC-IPP is an H-31 C/N 004 and caught in the brilliant sunlight by Nikki Byrne /kev McLaughlin. This welcome addition came to the UK specifically to take part in our event and goes on to conduct a substantial UK tour to the various UK clubs as part of the Ultramagic UK promotion.



EC-IPP Ultramagic Solo 25



Here Steve Humphreys flies his Colt 21A G-BSIG from Quainton.
(Jpeg by Ian Comley).



Kevin Tanner prepares to go from Quainton (photo by Ian Comley), shortly followed by Andy Austin in his Sky 25-16 G-BZSL again photographed by Ian Comley.



No reported problems from the first slot led to encouragement towards the rest of the event and whilst work prevented your

editor from joining in the fun, numerous e-mails to me spelt out the fun I was missing out on. List member Tim Ward teamed up with John Hilditch and son for the weekend to assist and share flying of John's ex Lindstrand Demo liveried 25A an example of the usefulness of the cloudhopper list and spirit of co-operation that exists on it. Saturday pm delivered a frontal system which had been predicted and no flying was possible but Met master Ted suggested a good slot would be possible for Sunday am.



(Fine Jpeg of Lenny Vaughan chasing Ted Moore by Andy Mac).

Once again work precluded yours truly from joining in the fun but this time the hoppers and duo chariots flew this time following

Ted Moore with Lenny Vaughan who had taken over flying duties from Helen, deemed eventually closest to the Hare Balloon.

We the organizers had decided that during the weekend we would try to tether some balloons for the public and a chance to get some older hoppers out of their bags from The Black Horse pub site, however from a hopper point of view the only one to make an appearance was G-BHOJ Janet folkes Green Ice which was displayed by Tom and John Hilditch. Lenny Vaughan took the opportunity to Air three Budweiser Special shaped Can balloons all around 80-90,000 cu ft and there was a lay out of two ex commercial rides balloons being donated to the BPG museum . The wind proved too brisk for hoppers which was a shame as Neil Ivison had brought two specifically for this part of the event and having finally arrived I had the Virgin Cola Roziere hopper ready for an inflation.

The evening's weather forecast had predicted a gradual drop in the wind speed and right on time the wind began to dissipate. The direction proving unsuitable for a launch from Great Missenden, at Ted's suggestion we all moved north for better take off point bearing in mind a southerly track was currently likely. The local club also had some members keen to fly with us and so we all launched around 7pm from Stone Bucks. As you can see from the varied perspectives offered, quite a mass launch ensued.

So from left to right second balloon is the Ultramagic hopper, sixth is Kevin tanners Lindstrand, then Sarah lyth's duo chariot side by side with Vic Hylands similar machine, and finally John Hilditchoh and me in the Orange Colt 31A(late as usual). (Jpeg by Roland Benbrook).



Hoppers and duo chariots "mingle" with regular club balloons. The following shot shows Vic Hylands 1989 vintage Thunder and Colt Ax6-56 Duo chariot G-BPSJ. Next to him is the Remax Hopper from Scotland G-BZPY flown by Tim Revell (UK sales dealer).



Interestingly Both Ultramagic hoppers landed in the same field, radioing to their retrieves that they were at Kimble Wick which helped me with map reading as I flew past them!(Again Nikki Byrne / Kev McLaughlin got the shots).



Andy Mac catches your editor in G-BSDV his Colt 31A actually playing with the rest of the gang Sunday night flying from Stone!

A beautiful flight ensued with visibility plus 20kms and 8.2knots shown on the GPS at 1800ft. Personally I flew for 45mins achieving 4.6nm using 28ltrs of Propane finding a beautifully manicured field to land in at Askett near Princes Risborough with surface winds below 3 knots on arrival.



Some More general photographic shots from Roland Benbrook (above) and Sandy Mitchell (below) at the Sunday pm Launch. A very reasonable crowd watched the ascending aeronauts.



Many thanks again to all those who contributed to the coverage of this event and to Graham Philpot and Ted Moore for conducting the event and dealing with refueling etc and all the other things we take for granted. The remaining slots disappeared and so we were left with three out of a possible five flown. This event will return next year bigger and with your help better, but with a date selected so not to clash with other events we hope for a greater turn out.

Janet Folkes and G-BHOJ

Janet is the lovely lady we were introduced to in last month's newsletter at Kelmarsh Hall, and having joined she introduced herself to the list as requested. However, more information regarding this lady has sprung to light, and armed with this info I thought I'd give you all an update on Janet and her hopper and hopper records!

Malcolm White advises that Janet holds one world record in the AX category and that's the altitude record in AX-2 G-BHOJ with 2,293m achieved in Spain on the 28th Jan 1995.

Janet also holds the AM-3 records for altitude, distance and duration (and, by default, the remaining female records up to AM-15) in G-BXEP a Lindstrand LBL-14M Roziere.

I suspect that Janet has a few stories that she can relate to us including one one regarding windshear experienced at 5000ft! G-BHOJ one of her two hoppers (the other being a 17), whilst categorised as a 12 is in fact 14,000 cubic feet after all.

Apparently it takes 23litres of gas to brim it full! Janet adds: the flying wires got replaced after the film shoot. They were originally Kevlar for lightweight. They kept burning through them! Kevlar is not good long term (UV etc) either so they replaced them when the hoppers came back so Per Lindstrand told me.

For the record - this is cloud hopper 2. It is engraved on the front metal pieces. I think the serial number is 80 and it is officially a Colt 12A though in practise it is 14,000cuft. I am pretty sure it is made from polyester designed to cope with the conditions in Mexico City. So now we all know!

The Quest for the Green Ice six...continues

Since I started this "mission" to get to the bottom of the tale of the Green Ice hoppers, so far three have been tracked down. As you all know, Janet Folkes has one and flies it, a second one is with the BBML and was displayed at Kelmarsh Hall, and a third is in a Museum in Newbury Berkshire (photo evidence will be obtained soon). However, the continued debate has now spun into various theories. Robin Batchelor has another Bottom end, so two of those are accounted for, but I have had complimentary opinions from the following folks.

Mark (stumpy) Stelling seems to think another envelope is with Ian Ashpole, who took it to the One Man meet some ten years ago. Anyone agree?

Ian Chadwick adds: "Green Ice" - I believe that two of the envelopes were very badly damaged in Mexico and may have been dumped there. If they did come back, maybe the damaged BBML example is one of them? I am sure that 6 were built because they expected to destroy some out there.

I recall that the pilots who did "Green Ice" were given one each sometime after they got back. Graham Elson certainly got one - but I thought that that was G-BHOJ? (Ties in with Janet's Purchase), Ian Ashpole had one, and I thought that Robin (Batchelor) too and perhaps Colin Prescott?

Perhaps people who know these folks well can verify if the remainder are still in existence and what condition they are in. The quest continues.....!

Holy Cow - A New Hopper for David Tanzer in America



This beautiful New Lindstrand hopper is the "Holy Cow "!

Belonging to David Tanzer from Vermont who writes:
Hello folks. Well, after waiting for what seemed like an eternity, I have finally made my first flights in my new hopper, now officially christened (with Strafford Organic Creamery milk) "Holy Cow!" She was a joy to fly and I was very fortunate to have two beautiful mornings on which to practice aerostation. My good friends Mitch Loiselle and Sean Greenwood joined me for the flight, which launched out of my back yard and flew south into beautiful Addison County, Vermont. I have now flown 3 of the 5 hours required to complete my experimental test period, and the balloon performed wonderfully well. I am presently flying with an 18 gallon (68 L) tank, which is a nice luxury. I flew for 1 hour 35 mins. today, and the ambient temperature was approximately 60° F (16° C). The balloon ran at approximately 170° F (77° C). I burned a total of 9.9 gallons (37 L).



David is obviously enjoying his experiences with the "Holy one", I was unaware that you needed to do a number of hours to certify under the "Experimental Category", and liked the christening with milk bitseems appropriate!



He appears to be enjoying himself (see above jpeg. All photos are direct from David).

John Hilditches -Seat of the pants Solo Experience

Our good friend John Hilditch from Sussex joined us at the Solo meet a couple of weeks ago .All went well until an unexpected occurrence took place .I'll let John explain.

"The balloon (Lindstrand 25A Cloudhopper) was rigged & no apparent defect at all in the seat. I took off & all was well although early on I turned to check the fuel gauge mirror & practice an emergency pilot light out. At this point I was aware that the front edge of the seat was not behind my knees but had appeared to have moved towards my buttocks. It felt that the seat had folded itself up which is what it had done. On examination afterwards the marine ply had cracked exactly at the half way horizontal point & had formed an inverted equilateral triangle with the leading edge digging into the backs of my legs. This was still supported obviously by the bottom strap & although initially disconcerting once I had place both hands beneath the seat & pulled up it was clear what had happened & the rest of the flight was enjoyed although most uncomfortable.

Thanks once again to Vic Hyland who landed alongside me at Aylesbury/Thame Aerodrome & whose crew were able to make an exact marine ply replacement once back at the Black Horse.

On examining the seat cover there was a line of dirt/mud/clay residue along the line of the crack. It occurs to me that this break in the marine ply may have been caused on a previous flight. Although I have only had one fast/heavy landing (out of Bristol two years ago) I would not have thought this would have caused this. In fact it does look like the seat may have come down hard

on an edge of a wall although this is somewhat of a mystery. The other explanation is that a crack appeared on the bottom piece of ply & having formed a ridge had picked up dirt & my added weight in the last year had added to the stress & the remaining ply fractured as I moved my weight to adjust the mirror.

I guess whilst this was not an accident as such, does this need to be reported? I think I will speak with Lindstrand but has anybody else either experienced this or can provide an explanation?"



Seen here is the offending item, with replacement made from locally "sourced spares". (Jpeg by John Hilditch).

Gallery Pages- Photo's of Recent Hoppers sent in to me.



Brand New Lindstrand 31A c/n 1076 for Roman Mohr of Corsham Wiltshire (another person to chase for membership?) and ,Pauline Baker with appropriate feet for a recent "Splash and Dash" in EI-DJZ.



Curtis Pack Supplied the above shot of Bret Shirley getting some action time with his new home built hopper. I'm told the Para motor guys enjoyed flying with someone who was actually slower than them!

Manufacturer Updates / News / Event details

Dan Nachbar advises that by the May 15th sign up date for the Amherst XLTA gathering on June 2nd-4th ,15 aircraft have so far signed up with aircraft coming from Florida to Maine and from as far west as Tennessee. More information at their dedicated website at <http://www.xlta.org/events.html>.

I'm looking forward to receiving please a number of reports on this event for a feature next month.

One Man Meet information in advance, obviously with details to be confirmed nearer the date, I have had communication from event organiser Phil Dunnington confirming that this year's OMM will be staged in the Peak District of the UK over the weekend of 13-15th October. Details and entry forms will be available nearer the time.

Membership of the cloudhoppers list is still growing (thank you). We currently stand at 186 members and looking towards the 200barrier. Please pass on invitations to anyone you know who has the slightest interest in hoppers and Duo chariots because we want to be the most fulfilling entity for this medium worldwide ,and believe me "Worldwide" is what we are. Latest amongst recruits and a very welcome addition is Mark Lockwood who is located in Dubai! I bet mark can recount a few exploits to us about hopping. If anyone has a problem with getting prospective members signed up then naturally ask them to contact me directly at Steve.roake@ntlworld.com .and finally this monthErnie

from San Diego sent in his personal writing on crewing for a hopper pilot in this case John Ninomiya .many thanks.

Crewing for Cloudhoppers

Crewing for a Cloudhopper or other basketless balloon can be quite different from crewing for a traditional basket balloon, even a small one. As one of the most experienced Hopper crew in the USA, and a Hopper pilot to boot, I thought I would share some of sometimes hard-earned experienced with those of you who are new to the degondolized society, and with those who have been around, and are open to other ideas.

Background

I first learned to crew and fly Hoppers in Del Mar, California, near San Diego, during the summer of 1991, on a 19,000 ft³ Cavis Airsports balloon that was owned by Fred Barnes, internationally famed hot air balloon pilot and builder, and then began crewing for John Ninomiya when he bought his first Hopper, a 21,000 ft³ Thunder & Colt balloon named Private Dancer. At first crewing on Hoppers was an occasional treat, a break from the commercial ride balloons I usually crewed on (starting with 90,000 ft³ balloons back in 1988, and moving up to 180s and 250s by the time I retired from commercial crewing), since John lived up in the LA area at that time, and only flew in the Del Mar area on vacation, and Fred's Hoppers were only available occasionally. But eventually John moved to Solana Beach, and I began crewing for him 2 or 3 times a week, as commercial crewing and work schedules allowed. Since then, I have given up crewing for anything over 90,000 ft³, and have purchased a Hopper of my very own, a used Lindstrand 31, the former G-BVOJ, that I named The Bomber, which I now fly over a Cameron Hopper bottom end (so its a Linderon).

Generalities

One of the nice things about being a Hopper pilot does not have to find lots of crew to go out and fly - one person is usually enough. I know a couple of Hopper pilots who would fly without any crew, and hitchhike back to the launch site after the flight, often getting a ride from one of the other balloonists who were out flying. UltraMagic even designed a Hopper for a totally solo experience, including a bike, and having the burner and framework converts into a little trailer. But usually, you can find one crew to come

out (my wife Jenny, in my case, or me, in Johns), and this guide will be written with the solo crew person in mind.

Set Up

Setting up a Hopper is much like setting up any other balloon, except that it takes a lot less effort. Two people can easily move the tank and burner assembly, even when fully fueled, and even an old gimp like me can move around a 31 envelope without any help. Tarping, if you do not have the luxury of grassy launch and landing sites, is also easier, as a smaller, single tarp will suffice, rather than the couple of 30x60 tarps needed to provide adequate protection for a 90. Once everything is off the truck, and the tarp is out, its time to hook things up.

Each system is a bit different, as you would expect, but for most there is a movable ring around the burner to which the envelopes flying cables attach. Since the rings spins, it doesn't really matter which connection point you start at, as long as you keep things straight, and have the scoop on the bottom, if there is one. And you're done with the set-up.

The Inflation

After dragging out the envelope, which is easily accomplished by one reasonably strong crewmember, it's time to inflate the balloon. The pilot will usually handle throat duties, while the crew deals with the parachute and crown line. Most Hoppers are relatively smooth balloons, with lots of gores, and consequently lots of spots for Velcro tabs to hold the top in during inflation. Often the tabs are quite small, but if they are full size, make sure you know how the pilot wants them attached. It can be nearly impossible for some pilots to open the parachute of a 31,000 ft³ balloon that has full contact on 15 or more normal sized Velcro's, and your pilot may want only half contact on the tabs, or even only every other set of tabs to be secured. Now it's time to move to the crown line.

As the Hopper fills, a couple of gentle tugs and releases on your part will help to spread out the fabric, which ultimately makes your job easier. During the cold pack, it is relatively easy to control a Hopper with one hand on crown line, and rolling can be controlled without having to run back and forth. Try to stay in one spot, directly downwind of the burner if possible, increasing tension on the crown line as the balloon rolls away from you, and

easing up as it comes back. You don't want to let the crown line go slack, since you will lose all the control you just worked to gain, and you don't want to pull as the envelope rolls back toward you as that will just increase the oscillation. On a windy day, even a Hopper can start dragging you around, but you don't want to pull too hard, as you can exert enough force to put an angle in the envelope, making hot inflation very difficult for the pilot.

As the pilot begins to burn, remember that it does not take as much heating to make a Hopper buoyant, and it will come up relatively fast, even compared to a 77. Keep a good amount of tension on the crown line until you can see that the envelope is completely full, and then let it rise. If it is calm, you can stay on the crown line longer, and guide the balloon to a perfect standup, but the windier the inflation, the less time you have to spend on niceties. Usually as the balloon stands up, I am hand-over-handing my way in to the tank and burner, keeping steady tension on the crown line. Be careful not to pull too hard against the rise of the balloon - most crew people would be fully capable of keeping a Hopper from going up, at least at first. On windy days, the wind itself may keep the envelope from rising, so worry more about controlling the side to side movement, and don't pull down on the crown line. Once the envelope is under control, but not necessarily vertical, it's time to run in, turn off the fan (if the pilot didn't already do so), attach the crown line, and put weight on the tank.

Most Hoppers do not have a gimbaled burner, so it is important to watch how you put weight on the tank. You may need to help point the whole tank and burner assembly, especially during windy inflations. You get the most control moving the bottom of the tank. Once the envelope is vertical, you will need to hold the whole thing down as the pilot releases his or her weight to get into the harness. During this time you may need to put in some burns to keep the balloon inflated. Make sure you know how to do this, and that the pilot is OK with you using the burner. Also remember that there is probably no gimbal, and you have to point the whole assembly to aim the burner. Finally, it is important to remember that the burner is quite low, and you should probably be ducking most of the time, unless you want to singe some hair during the inflation.

Overall, the setup and inflation go much faster for a Hopper than for bigger balloon. On one calm morning, my wife and I set up the Bomber between two large commercial ride balloons. She started pulling our balloon out of the bag as the commercial balloons started to go hot, and I was in the air before they had finished loading their passengers.

Pack-up and Chase

Once your pilot is airborne, the hard part begins. You get to put everything away by yourself. Hopefully, if there are other balloons crews present, and you are on good terms with them, you can get some help folding the tarp. Remember to fold it in such a manner that you can unfold it by yourself, possibly in a bit of wind, without too much trouble. And then there is the fan! If you are going to be crewing solo a lot, and your pilot has a full sized fan, whine to the pilot about getting a liftgate if the truck doesn't already have one. Lifting the fan into the bed of a mini-pickup isn't too bad, but putting it in the bed of a lifted, four wheel drive pickup is something altogether different. Chasing solo can be difficult at first, navigating and watching the balloon, so good radio contact is important. Study how your pilot flies and learn how to anticipate what he or she will do under different conditions, as this will help you to be there when it is time to land, and unlike basket balloons, sometimes the pilot really does need you there to make a landing.

The Landing

Most of the time, a hopper pilot can land the balloon by himself or herself, often hopping along the ground if there is a moderate wind (this is really quite fun), but if there is a significant amount of wind, it can be quite difficult to stop a hopper without doing a rip out landing. Once you add the weight of a second person to a hopper, it will pretty much stop, although the envelope may come over towards the ground if you stop too fast. By grabbing the top and bottom of the tank from behind, you can get a good grip and easily guide your balloon to a gentle stop; having a large loop of cord connected to the top ring of the tank helps, kind of like a tail-hook landing on an aircraft carrier, except, you, the crew have the hook.

If you need an immediate stop, as soon as you get a hold of the tank, put your feet in the snowplow position from skiing, and dig in. The longest I have ever been dragged is

about 30 feet, and that was a pretty windy day. Remember, if you are trying to keep the balloon up, that there is no gimbal, and you will have to angle the tank if your pilot is to put in any heat without making any unplanned openings in the balloon. Once things are stabilized, you can move the balloon, put out a tarp, or assess the area for deflation. You should know where the pilot light shut off is, as sometimes it is difficult for the pilot to reach it when sitting on the ground. Now it is time to deflate the balloon.

While you are out on crown, it is very easy to drag the balloon (plus tank, burner, and pilot), so keep a light touch. Pull in on the bottom webbing lines as you would a normal balloon, and watch that you aren't preventing the hot air from escaping - you can make quite a bubble with a small balloon by pulling the webbing lines to the top of the balloon too tightly. If you are crewing solo, there will be very little weight holding the balloon in place once the pilot starts to squeeze out the air, so again take care that you are not dragging the whole thing across the landing site.

Should the landing be in a bad spot, a Hopper is quite easy to walk out, especially if the pilot keeps the balloon inflated? Typically, the pilot can walk or hop out of a bad spot, or you can go in and walk the balloon out, but it is not the ordeal that it can be with even the smallest basket balloon. Of course, you usually won't have any help, but you probably won't need it either.

The Final Pack-up

Putting a Hopper away is quite easy, and can be accomplished in a short time with just the pilot and one crew person, or even just one person. By taking short bites, the pilot can keep one arm on the bag and help you drag it, but dragging the bag solo isn't that hard on a balloon of 31,000 ft³ or less. There is no basket to load, usually only a single tank, and probably not a lot of propane left to weigh things down. You'll have everything loaded onto the truck and be opening a cold beverage while the crew of that 77 that landed just before your balloon is just getting the envelope packed into the bag, or the unlucky crew of the 240 is just getting to the equator while squeezing the air out.

Many thanks to all the contributors this month, yet another edition that has made it past twenty pageslong may it continue. Naturally it goes with out saying see you all again real soon, until then fly safe. But have fun!

Steve Roake
Editor

All articles for inclusion in future issues, please forward to the editor at Information@cloudhoppers.org and all feedback good, bad or indifferent will be welcome. In future we might even run a letters/email section. Views aired by contributors may not be those of the editor.

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