

# Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 149

October / November 2022

Hello Readers,

October is my favourite month for writing the Newsletter. It is the one month of the year I am guaranteed content with the OMM. Exactly how it was this month, but with the added content from some other events that have happened and you glean snippets of information from people you interact with along the way. Trouble is, being busy means it goes into November. I've personally been to Ireland for the Irish Nationals and had a Ball with some lovely people and the rest was needed. With regard to the One Man Meet, this year I tried something different with small incremental reports after each slot. I hope these made people who weren't involved feel more included, but would appreciate your feedback on the subject.

With the added launch of the new Cameron Neo based Hopper bottom end we have a fair amount to talk about, and some definitive decision making on my part regarding the ongoing issues with my Millennium hinged bottom end. So without further wasting of time I think the time has come to dive straight into edition number 149- hope you enjoy the read!

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

- Ed Speak – Irish Frustrations /One Man Meet Joy
- Annex 1 Balloon Meet – Sackville lodge.
- 50<sup>th</sup> Irish Nationals- a week on the Guinness.
- Albuquerque hopper content
- The 39<sup>th</sup> annual One Man Meet 2022.
- Cameron Balloons Launches the Neo Bottom end.
- My Millennium bottom end tale reaches a conclusion.
- Second Hand sales – A bargain waiting for a new home
- Gallery Photos – A few of your editor's choice.

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*Facebook membership breaks the ,2211 mark.*

Articles for inclusion are always welcome Anything for future inclusion to the usual email address please. [steve.roake33@gmail.com](mailto:steve.roake33@gmail.com) many thanks in advance.



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## **Ed Speak- Interesting Month**

October has been a month of ups and downs for me personally. Initially I had the return from the Irish National championships where, through gross incompetence from my personal doctor, my trip became that of a Spectator rather than a Pilot. In retrospect this wasn't such a big deal as there were only five flyable slots and or these, I'm guessing id only have flown a maximum of three in the hopper. However, within a week of returning to the UK we had the annual One Man Meet and a chance to fly at that event went as expected and was successful. Therefore, after the low came the high.

Coupled to this there was a decent amount of reporting of events happening at Albuquerque and the hopper content which was gratefully received.

I also got wind of some news from Cameron Balloons at the OMM regarding their latest iteration of the Cloudhopper base unit and will detail the various changes to the design later in this newsletter. These new versions only come along a few times and so the latest changes are eagerly awaited and featuring a new burner, the interest has been building for a while now.

I also made a decision regarding my Millennium Base Unit going forward and the ongoing issue with the hinge mechanism. With guidance from Cameron staff we have agreed a process to eradicate the issue once and for all and I will again later in the newsletter tell you of my thoughts on the proposal and what I have decided to go moving forward .

Then I will hint at some forthcoming content which I have been promised which is genuinely interesting and hopefully of interest to you the readers. This is the Ying and Yang of ballooning. Sometimes you have hardly any content and then other times you have a good amount of content. Thankfully there are a few enthusiasts who have passion and determination to get things done. Details are beginning to come through and I will outline what I know so far.

Despite all of the nasty things going on in the world to turn our lives into complete doom and gloom, people continue to buy ballooning equipment – so long may it last.

Happy health to you all and keep safe.

Editor-Steve Roake



## **2. Features Section**

### **The Annual Annex 1 Meet ( Sackville Airfield- Riseley Bedfordshire).**

The Homebuilding community is still growing in the UK and during the weekend of 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> September, the leading light in Homebuilding, (Tim Wilkinson), hosted the annual gathering of interested people at his Sackville Lodge Airfield in Riseley, Bedfordshire. Arriving late on the Friday evening after work, I arrived around 7pm but due to the weather being inclement, there was no flying on this evening.

With a brisk erection of my tent, assisted by my pal Jim Findlay we then joined the social at a local pub with lots of the other attendees. We snuck into the pub just in time to order dinner and tucked into the local fare with gusto.

Saturday am arrived and with it a 6-00am briefing which whilst flyable, indicated the upper winds would be on the stronger side of things. Being of a conservative nature I decided not to indulge but local Andy Austin took to the skies reporting a fairly fast flight but with a stand-up landing on a local golf course after some 45mins. None of the other entrants fancied the idea of launching so those of us who were left behind adjourned to the local rifle range called Sporting Targets Limited where they cooked up some amazing breakfasts. A very relaxed attitude to the whole event meant we didn't rush back. In the effort to get airborne Ian Warrington had burnt a couple of panels in Trudi Laws annex 1 77 envelope. The great thing about annex 1 is that you can do your own repairs and so multiple people got involved with unstitching the balloon around the damaged panels and then sewing in the new repair fabric.

Whilst I don't think I'd ever have the patience to build my own balloon, it was a real pleasure to get involved cutting some panels for an upcoming 65. By the evening briefing the weather had marginally improved enough to tempt four balloons into the air. The only hopper involved in this slot was G-BKBD the T&C 31. The flights all remained relatively low to ensure they weren't too affected by the upper winds and flew off towards the Santa Pod direction which was North westerly from the airfield. All those who flew then rushed back to enjoy a very nicely prepared barbeque with Host Tim doing the cooking.

Again, not the longest evening ensued as quite a few teams had high hopes for the Sunday am slot but there was always the prospect of potential fog around this time of year and with the temp and dew point at a similar point it wasn't surprising that come the morning, the predicted conditions arrived.



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Personally, I was tempted to get my hopper out and play as the surface winds were benign but the wet grass put me off. The added stress of having to dry it out just before my trip to Ireland was a factor in my decision.

Despite all of this the morning would become memorable because we all got to witness the first outing of Tim Wards Thunder and Colt bottom end Chariot after his loving restoration. Tim Wilkinson allowed Tim ward to use G-CIWZ for the inflation and very nice it looked too. There will be more on this project in the future once Tim has written it up. The winds were very light and variable but intense ground fog precluded long flights . However, some people decided to hop around the airfield including Barry Newman who got out his ladybird homebuilt hopper GCJSY BM-34 (That is currently up for sale).

Once Tim Ward was satisfied with everything he had renovated, he graciously allowed my crew buddy Jim Findlay a go in the hot seat. Suffice to say Jim was grinning from ear to ear and has a new appreciation of hopping now having had a chance to practise "on the taps".

Once again when we had finished playing with balloons, we adjourned again to Sporting Targets for another fine cooked breakfast. Tim Ward was tickled pink with his work, which looked to be the highest standards. What remained to do was to return to the airfield, pack away and slowly head for home.

Every time I come to the Annex 1 meet, I glean more useful information about homebuilding and my appreciation of the efforts of those who choose to undertake this task is immense but I do think I haven't the patience to undertake such a task myself. Thanks as ever to everyone who attended and specifically to our host Tim Wilkinson who facilitated everything.

## **The 50<sup>th</sup> Irish National Balloon Championships**

Despite its grandiose name, the Irish Nationals is a very sociable balloon event and having attended twice in the past , I felt it imperative to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> version which was located in Birr County Offalway. All the movers and shakers in Irish ballooning seem to attend and the welcome you receive is second to none. As well publicised in the past, I was due to attend with my hopper , but thanks to my local gp, I missed out on getting my class two medical and therefore decided to attend as spare capacity to anyone who required assistance. The year that I've had , I just knew I needed to get away and have a holiday and so travelled to the event with friends Jim and Suzanne Findlay and joined up with Francis Dickson from Ballynahinch near Belfast.



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The most ridiculous part of the journey is the ferry times. Thanks to our contact with Irish ferries we had secured a great deal on the fare but found the sailing time of 01-40 am definitely taxing on the body with no ability to get some shut eye on then ferry, I ended up doing 48hours without sleep. This was further exasperated when we got to Pembroke Dock (our agreed departure point ) only to find the details on the booking said Holyhead, and so we had to pay (later refunded) to amend our booking.



Carol flying her lovely Sky 25 over Birr

We arrived at Rosslaire in Ireland around 7am and then had a small two-hour journey to the town of Birr and our Hotel which was the County arms (and the nerve centre of the event). Irish roads are smooth and largely pot hole free with little traffic and so the drive on Irish soil was lovely. Non-motorway roads allowed a fast-free flowing experience which at sunrise was a pleasure to drive.

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Once ensconced in our hotel rooms we seamlessly merged into the proceedings , helping other teams who were light on crew. With the exception of Francis, all members got to fly over the week and from the standpoint of this genre of ballooning , there were three hoppers evident flying during the proceedings.

The hostess with the moistest(Carol) flew her beautiful Sky 25 G-BXWX and after all this time, it still looks a classy balloon in its burgundy and beige scheme. Gareth Gray brought his Cameron N-31,G-BGHS which still looks okay after all these years. The third example was Ian Chadwick's Jacobs 35 Homebuilt G-CEWF which had recently flown at Longleat after a period of inactivity.

There was great sociability during the week and in all five flyable slots which we all enjoyed. For me , I just needed a holiday and I was in a position where I was able to bring back to the UK two Klein fans for a couple of people. The highlight of the trip for me was visiting a school with some friends and seeing such enthusiasm from the kids and realising what a fantastic job the teachers did.

All I can say about the overall experience is thanks to all of those who put the whole thing together and also thanks for re acquainting me with the Guinness. We had a "crack" and at the end of the day that's what life is all about, good times with great friends.

## **Albuquerque 2022**

During our time in Ireland, Albuquerque Balloon festival got under way and thanks to the posters in Facebook land , we received some great updates and photographs of the hoppers which actually attended this time around . Like the one man meet , I have tried to encourage greater reporting from the event to try and get across the essence of the meet and so thank all those who undertook to posting to the Cloudhopper's page on Facebook during their time at the event.

Whilst I believe there were only around 5 hoppers taking part in the festival most got photographed at some point during the week. Obviously, I cant post all of them, but a sample of the flavour of the event is posted below with thanks to the photographers for their efforts. I believe there were mixed weather conditions during the week and some of the shapes got very wet necessitating in their reinflation inside some buildings to dry them out .Hope you like their collective efforts.



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First photograph is Jeff Buesing landing his LBL31A  
N7504E having flown the "Albuquerque box"

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This second LBL31A is Russ Buesing in N714LB ( seen on day 4 of the event)

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Also flying on day four photographed by Gerry Paulin was this Gauthier 42 with Lindstrand bottom end.



Dan Walsh prepares to fly his LBL35A N861LB

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## **The 39<sup>th</sup> annual One Man Meet**

For me , quite simply the annual OMM is the event within the hopping community. It is the one place where everyone who is anything to do with Cloudhopping goes to for catching up with friends, great flying in fantastic locations and simply hanging out with like minded people. If you have a hopper in the UK and you don't go, I can't understand why you got your hopper in the first place.

This particular year was the 39<sup>th</sup> occasion of the annual gathering and for the third time in a row it was to be held on the estate of Lord Apsley and Lord Bathurst on the grounds of their Cirencester home. Not only is it a fantastic venue for playing around with hopper, it also happened to be one of the closest venues for me in recent years. Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October was the date and having booked my customary day off from work I cruised down to the site for the 4pm briefing and enjoyed the drive through the Cotswolds to the venue for the allocated time rendezvous. There was no particular hurry because the weather forecast was pants with 20plus knot gradient winds predicted and rain. This year the team had screwed up with accommodation (not booking it early enough) and so we missed out on our preferred choice of the Premier Inn and had to settle for the local travel lodge which whilst sufficient for our needs wasn't a patch on the previous choice. I arrived early and so booked into the hotel (just as well that I did ), and managed to change our choice of room from a double to a twin for myself and Spikey(Iestyn Leek). Unfortunately, Jim Findlay our other crew dog and local resident had fallen foul of the dreaded Covid acquired the previous week in Ireland and had to miss out on our shenanigans

For this year's event, I wanted to try to keep those who for one reason or another couldn't be with us informed with some daily small reports back onto the Facebook page in an effort to include those who wanted to follow proceedings. Friday's report went along the following lines. Some twenty odd idiots convened at the allotted time in the grounds of Cirencester Estate to hear what we already knew from John and Wendy . The rain which was due for 16-00 arrived bang on time and so the decision to black flag the launch was an easy one and never in doubt. A quick hello to all present followed with a hasty retreat back to our hotel to plan the evenings food allocation. For some strange reason I had Italian on my mind and the decision to venture into the town and visit the local Italian fare proved to be an excellent choice with great food served very quickly by an enthusiastic waiter who it seemed nothing was too



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much trouble. We weren't too disturbed by the lack of flying as the weekend forecast (in my humble opinion), only really showed one true slot and that would be Saturday pm if the predicted forecast turned out to be true. However, like all good idiots we would get up on Saturday morning and trundle the 4 miles to the launch site to be told what we already knew, it was going to be unflyable at that point but improving during the day. Surface winds were 240 degrees at 4 knots, but whilst upper winds varied from 280/300 degrees at 13/14 knots the 2000-foot winds were 320 at 19 knots and with the ground wet from overnight rain and the pie ball balloon showing keenness to get out of here fast, we decided that the waiting game would be prudent.



Lovely shot taken by Donna Marie.

During the day having done breakfast at the Premier Inn, we decided, like many others, that a trip to Kemble airfield was in order and some plane spotting ensued with some keener than others. For me it was a chance to see the 747 they had moved public side of the car park from a close-up range, and for spikey, a chance to go all gooey over a couple of abandoned phantom jets (he used to work on them). As the day progressed so conditions became better and earlier than the briefing Kevin Tanner and team snuck back into the estate and flew his Lindstrand 25A G-HOPR across the lawns ensuring that the remarkable record for the OMM continued with 37 of the 39 events featuring flying. It seemed like a lot of effort for little reward to me, but at least he had achieved something.

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Returning to the field for the 4pm gathering , the conditions were definitely improved and this would become the slot to fly for the masses. I was told 37 balloons flew that slot. It was one of those evenings where you just had to wait long enough for the conditions to improve sufficiently to be in the position to fly.

The forecast was for surface winds of 250/5 , with everything else up to 2000 feet 270 at 7 knots. The QNH had risen to 1025 and with sunset at 18-30 local we finished the briefing and took our time to find a sheltered spot and do a casual preparation for the flight. By 17-15 I was ready to go and had a lovely inflation tucked either side of Lenny and Helen Vaughan and Stuart Skinner and with Kevin Tanner on my left-hand side. The rare hoppers present at this slot were probably G-CDAD (LBL25A) of Gary Madelin and G-OBAB (LBL35A) with G-CDXF also making an outing. We were joined by some one-man bigger balloons with a rare 56(G-BICM) being the one all the spotters were seeking amongst the more common craft. The actual flight was lovely with some playing around on the grounds and then exiting towards the North East slightly north (thankfully) of

the Brize Norton Zone. Whilst not one of the earliest to fly , most of my flight was to be adjacent to Pete Bish in G-BXIT(Cameron Viva 31) and Paul Spellward in G-CJYJ (another Cameron O-31). At no time did my flight exceed 10 knots with the predicted 7 being pretty spot on. I had to fly over some sensitive landing areas until I happened upon a great field in a place called Barnsley having flown for just under an hour.

My choice of landing field turned out to be not quite as straight forward as I thought from the air. Whilst there were plenty of cut stubble fields , I fancied grass and so selected one which was quite narrow going 45 degrees to my track . I had seen two sets of power lines as I approached thinking id clear the first set then drop into the field before the second parallel lines became an issue to me. However, upon alighting at said destination , as I cleared the first set I realised that the second wires were in fact transiting across the field at 45 degrees and so made a point of ensuring my landing was both early and firm without too much drag influence and keeping a healthy distance from the perceived problem area. Having successfully achieved my goal I then needed to walk out of the field to find my retrieve car using the what three words app. The only difficulty occurring was the retrieves phone set to voice mail and an area where the reception was at best iffy. Eventually we got together and packed away just



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as the sun was going down. Immediately, the next most important thing was to find a sociable watering hole for the evening's sustenance. Unfortunately, this ended up with us securing a table at a pub near Kemble where the cooks were only staying on for a further ten minutes so we were unable to accommodate our friends as we had suggested we would. This OMM was turning into less of a social than previous years, but unfortunately this was unavoidable.

The following morning was light enough surface winds for people to be able to play with their hoppers but the upper winds were over 20 knots so with wet grass no one bothered getting their kit out. John and Wendy brought the prize giving forward to facilitate an earlier departure for all. The dates of the 40<sup>th</sup> OMM were also announced as the weekend of 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> 2023 with a hint that the venue is likely to be on the Welsh borders somewhere I guess around Oswestry region.

As ever many thanks to all for sorting the event out and thanks to the venue for the last three years but it is time for a change and a chance to sample the joys of flying somewhere new and fresh.

### **3, Homebuilding Section**

Whilst not exactly homebuilding, whilst in Ireland I was joined by my good friend Greg Winker who let me in on a small plan he has in conjunction with Ultramagic balloons Ltd. With a promise to reveal all when the criteria has been finalised, Greg did say he was designing his ultimate Cloudhopper which will be around 28,000 in cubic capacity. Utilising materials supplied by Greg, Ultramagic will build to his own specification a one off, unique ultralight envelope for his future needs. When quizzed about the weight of such an envelope, Greg said he expects the weight of the finished project to be early 20's in kilos. We look forward to hearing more and seeing more on this project in the near future.

Aside from this exciting new project, there appears a lull in home building projects currently.

### **4 New Balloons**

Within the last calendar month, there has only been one notable new balloon which came from Canada. Shane Lockyer showed us his new hopper envelope based on a Bard 31M design, and very pretty it looks too. C-GFHY is a vibrantly coloured masterpiece and a credit to its owner.



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C-GFHY Bard 31M photo with thanks Shane Lockyer.

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## 5, Second Hand Balloons

One notable sale this month was G-CIMW the Cameron O-31 which was Belgium based. The owner says that he didn't have sufficient time left with which to use the balloon and so it was moved on. Bart Geeraerts originally purchased the yellow and black "striking schemed" hopper in 2015 and has used it quite extensively. The rabbits balloon team have plenty to do and so the small bunny had to go. Its now known that the balloon is off to Austria.

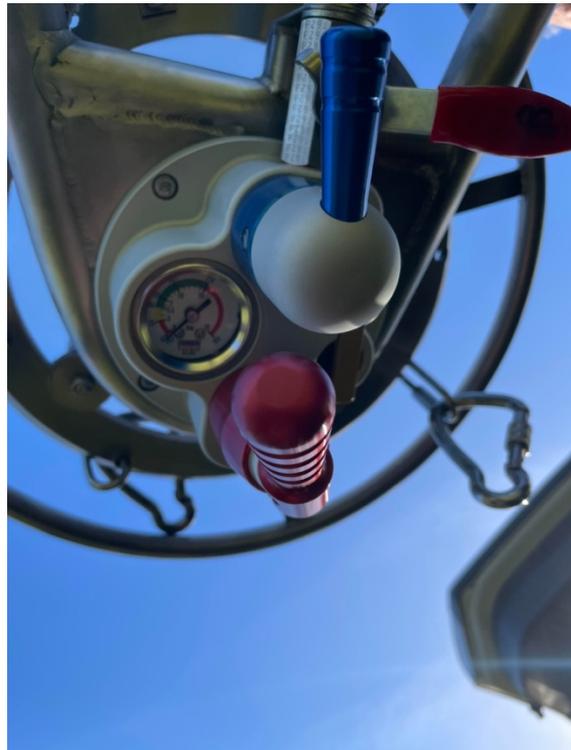


Sometimes the simplest of schemes are the most effective.

## **6, Manufacturer / Event News.**

### **Cameron Balloons Launch the New Neo Hopper Bottom end**

Cameron Balloons launched quite quietly at the OMM their updated Bottom end design .With the Millennium version quite dated now they took the opportunity to refine the design and incorporate a few modifications. These comprised new adjusters for the straps, a wider seat unit and of course the introduction of the Neo burner. Having product tested the design it was evident at the One Man Meet with Paul Spellward utilising the new design. The need for a wider seat unit, suggests that “bigger framed” individuals struggled in the older design and there was no surprise that the latest Neo designed burner was incorporated into the refresh. Some photos were sent to me by Bradley Lewis of the block and the burner.



It is believed that servicing the unit is now a lot easier and whilst pricing is unknown , they have confirmed three additional orders have been placed already.

## **My Millennium Hopper and the Hinge problem**

Speaking at length to Cameron Balloons including at the OMM, I have decided that the Hinge problem on my Millennium Hopper base unit will only annoy me more as time progresses and that a solution was required for my foreseeable future hopping needs .

After consultation with various parties at Bristol, I decided to return my hinged bottom end and get it substituted for the previous fixed frame version. Mine is being returned this month and obviously with the fix I will be investing in new luggage to accommodate the changes. Cameron's have graciously agreed to accept my luggage as part of the deal and therefore there will be a used set of Millennium Luggage available sometime soon from them. The more I looked into the rocking of the hinge whilst holding the burner on the frame during inflation , the more I considered the non-hardened holes would elongate and so a slow deterioration of my situation was predicted. Whilst this set up might suit some people, I was very keen to ensure the rigidity of the frame during this phase of flight and hence the decision wasn't hard to come to.

Peace of mind was at the forefront of my decision and having paid for the alterations, I cannot wait to get to use the bottom end again. Thanks, in particular to Dave Groombridge for his help in facilitating my desires and to Andy Booth and Craig Moore for their collective efforts.

Collection of the revised bottom end is scheduled for the Icicle Balloon Meet Weekend.

## **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.

This month's selection comes from a great source who just happened to be in the right place at the right time during the One Man Meet . His photos generally are top drawer but I think you'll find he has done himself proud with these . Many thanks for allowing me to use his gift, to Bob Garnett. You judge, I think they are superb.



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G-CDXF LBL 31A – photo by Bob Garnett

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G-CMOO Cameron Z31SS – Photo Bob Garnett

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G-OBAB LBL 35A – Photo by Bob Garnett

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## **And lastly**

As we close at the middle of November, the number of people subscribing to the Facebook page has reached 2,211. This is a fabulous push forward towards a greater figure, but to achieve 2,000 plus is a real milestone so thanks for your continued support and membership.

Please send all submissions for future editions to [Steve.roake33@gmail.com](mailto:Steve.roake33@gmail.com)

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