



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

Welcome to your Cloudhopper News.

This time around I'm doing an early Newsletter so that it arrives before we all pile off to Metz for the Bi Annual festival of Lorraine. I'm looking forward as always to the hopper flight and will be taking mine specifically for that one flight. There are a few new hopper owners who will be attending the event this year and it will remain to be seen if we beat the previous record for attending one man balloons. However before that happens we have some more action for you to digest. So without further delay let's get into the action.



Action shot from Bedale with two hoppers inflating in the foreground – photo By Tim Wilkinson.

Some interesting reading within this edition, including reports from Bedale

Yorkshire, a nice first article by Andrew Davidson on flying solo, some interesting news from Tim Wilkinson on his third build project of the year and a newish low houred Lindstrand 35A returns to the UK for Andrew Gregory and Family.

Contents

Ed Speak –

The next instalment

Essential Extras

Solar balloons

Ipad software

The Features

Section –

Going Solo with Andrew Davidson

Bedale Report

My First hop – Gary Davies

Favourite photos

Metz memories

Gallery pages

G-OBAB

Manufacturer

News/Events

Brian Boland

Meet dates for 2016



1, Ed-Speak – The Next instalment.

Bearing in mind the average private balloonist in the UK now does less than ten hours a year of flying; my year is going pretty well. Leading up to Metz, you need to have flown at least three flights within the last three months, and having completed nine I'm comfortable with my recency. Not one generally to boast, I have to say I found last month's newsletter one of the most enjoyable to create since I started these in 2004. I went to Beadle in Yorkshire with the same attitude as I had for the little and large meet, thinking a flight would be a bonus and yet once again we weren't disappointed. This event is turning into a hopper extravaganza with more and more attending each year. Most event reports speak of only the flying that took place. Trust me, in Bedale, the ballooning was only a part of it and the event is so much more, so I hope I capture the essence of the event for you all. For those attending the festival Montgolfier du Lorraine, have a safe journey and see you there.

Steve Roake

2, Essential Extra's / Tech Talk- Cameron Balloons Solar balloon/ Moving Map technology

It seems that at Bristol International Festival this year, Don Cameron will fly a solar powered balloon. I for one will be interested to see if this phenomenon can be translated to hoppers. I hope to obtain some technical information for the next newsletter on this project and so will report back with whatever I can learn.

Finally, with help from my good friend ken Lowry, I have finally got my sensitive area software on moving maps on the I pad mini. With a nod to technology, this is the future and whilst it will never replace a map in my flight bag I do agree that having this software helps with flight management and with making the decision of when to land as you can see ahead what is coming at the speed you are flying. All I need to do now is sort out the mark 2 instrument pod to include the I pad. I might actually leave this job until the winter months as it is a good project for those evenings when you have nothing better to do with your time.



Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015



Loaded with sensitive area software on the Ipad mini.

3, The Features Section

Billy No-Mates flight by Andrew Davidson

I don't know any balloon pilots who do not appreciate their crew, for muscle power, retrieve driving, company and sometimes for tactfully pointing out something you may have forgotten.

If you really want to appreciate your crew then try going ballooning without them, as I did, for the first time ever, yesterday. I have recently tasted "one man ballooning" and it has its charm but it is not really solo ballooning. There is usually someone helping you to rig and inflate, and importantly, to drive the retrieve.

Friday was a glorious sunny morning with very light winds and everything was perfect except that Mel had pulled a muscle, gardening, and was not able to come out and play. At 4.30 am, I felt it would be a bit much to phone anyone else, so I set off for Gopsall House Farm, near Twycross, on my own in my VW Caddy van with G-CIGA my trusty UM42.



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015



I arrived at the field at 5.30. Getting the kit out and assembling it was not really a problem, but then there is the inflation. I put the fan on and held the mouth open, then went to tab in. I got the top few tabs in but then the mouth closed up, so I went back to the mouth and held it open again. The grass was long and very wet and my 3HP fan was not able to fill the envelope. I had to keep walking round, spreading the envelope and putting a few more tabs in, but eventually the envelope was cold inflated.

The next problem was the crown line. There were 3 horses in this field. Yes, I know, but these ones were fine but not one of them offered to hold the crown line, so I tied it to my tool bag. I have to say this worked rather well and the hot inflation was easy, but then there is the bit where you ask for the crown line to be handed to you, to attach to the burner frame. My tool bag just sat there, about 20 feet away like, well, a tool bag. I had to climb out of the basket



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

of a fully inflated balloon to fetch the crown line. While I was at it, I was able to tidy away the fire extinguisher and put the fan next to the van before climbing back into the basket for some pre-flight checks. The next problem was that the very light wind was actually blowing me gently back towards the van. With crew, this would be no problem; they would "walk" the balloon away from the van to the end of the line, however, with no crew to do this, the balloon, once buoyant, rose gently to sit at the end of the quick release, 15 feet vertically above the van. I was lucky that when I pulled the release, it did not fall through the windscreen.

Once released, I rose vertically and experienced that wonderful freedom which seems unique to solo flying. You concentrate entirely on the flying with no distraction. My track was towards the south west, speed about 6 mph. The air was clear; I could see the Birmingham sky line about 20 miles away.

I had enough fuel to safely fly for an hour, with a 30 minute reserve for landing, but doing everything myself had taken time and it was now 7.30am and the air was warming up, so time to land. I descended and my track veered to the right (opposite from the usual) and was able to line up on a field of mowing grass and land at the edge.

I suppose I could have packed the kit away then walk back to the van, but instead I phoned Mel (we had agreed on this at 4.30) and she drove to Gopsall House Farm and fetched the van, by which time I had packed the kit up and carried it to the field entrance.

The experience had been enjoyable, if a bit tiring, but next time I shall fly with a crew.

Andrew Davidson

Bedale Balloon Festival – by Steve Roake

This event is the most relaxed one you will ever find in the UK, and the atmosphere is lovely down to three people. Nicola, Richard and Mark are this event, and it's down to them that this invitation only event is the success that it is. This is an event that you could go to, not fly and still have a great time knowing you would return another year. None of this mattered this year because like years previously, we all got to fly. The essence of this event is in the social, and whilst it is a long drive to get to the venue; it's worth every mile to be part of



Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

The gathering. Friday evening started with an early briefing where Mark Stelling told us that the winds may drop out later on, but most of us weren't convinced and headed to the bar which is situated in the sports club where our briefings were held. Traditionally, the Friday night food of the event is pie and mash but this year it was jacket potatoes with a choice of fillings with salad all for a £5 nominal charge.



That moment of pure elation as you depart – with Mark Stelling,
photo by Bob Garnett

There were a few who hoped the wind would die down but most of us headed to the bar for some liquid refreshment and a fairly early night because we thought it might be flyable in the morning and the briefing was called forward to 5-30am. Camping on site gives you the added ability of just looking out of your tent and knowing if it was going to happen and with the alarm clock set at 5-00 I got up instantly recognising that we had got our wish. On Marks advice I didn't wait for briefing, and as he circulated telling everyone the met forecast, we prepared to fly. This event has become a bit of a



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

hopper fest within the actual balloon meet and so I joined Geoff Lescott, Niall Rowan, Tim Ward, Kevin Tanner, Jan Fraser and John Hilditch with a single man flight over the weekend.



Geoff Lescott prepares to go in his lovely Ultramagic H-31, G-CHIM- Photo by Bob Garnett

Taking off mid pack at 6-05am with a drift towards RAF Leeming there was some good steerage available with some good right with height and plenty of left on the surface for those who wanted to stay low. Jan Fraser and Geoff Lescott both headed more northerly than the rest of us and I decided that I would head over to the airfield and then descend to see what the lower winds were doing as there didn't seem too much cut crop and I didn't want to



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

have to struggle to find a landing spot on low fuel. Funny thing about the lower levels was that there were distinct spots where it was flat calm and you had to manoeuvre to achieve simple 1-2 knot winds. As I had flown over the A1 I spotted Kevin Tanner operating low level in front of me with a quite pronounced northerly track on the surface and it seemed he had already found a nice place to land, so as I descended over RAF Leeming which was asleep with all aircraft inside hangars with the exception of a solitary visiting Boeing Chinook helicopter which was on one of the remote HAS, I expected to emulate Kevin and had seen some mown grass fields amongst the approach lighting to the main runway which looked suitable for my landing. Typically as I descended through 1500ft to around 300agl, I hit one of those dead spots in the air and basically sat stationary above the airbase. Whilst we had been told we could if necessary land at the airbase, I didn't want the prolonged paperwork so thought it best to try to fly on. The location of the airfield and an adjoining river to its eastern side dictated where the retrieve vehicle would have to cross the river and whilst I thought ultimately I would get a northerly draw wind, as I played around with height the small 1-2 knot stuff actually took me further east and I decided that as it was now approaching 55 mins into my flight, I should get serious and actively decide where I thought I might end up. I didn't want to end up over crops with little fuel and to my eye I had seen some possible landing spots just over the river, hopefully outside a sensitive area which was chickens in a building. My new declared goal had three fields heading easterly with possible landing potential and a couple more cut grass if it went northerly again. This part I always find the worse in the flight. You know eventually you will get to where you are going, but when the wind is so light, you feel like you aren't making progress and have to tell yourself to calm down and fly economically until you reach the proximity of the goal. As I finally moved past the chicken shed on my whisper burner, I saw one of my chosen fields had sheep in it and as I descended towards it the fickle winds now decided to take me north again over some power cables and into the two cut grass fields. Not wishing to mess around and now having flown for one hour 15 mins I took the first one with pleasure. I was just checking my position relative to the chicken shed when a farmer arrived quite concerned on a quad bike thinking I may have been in the power lines. The lovely chap (Farmer Mr John Coxon), was very helpful, even driving me in the quad to rendezvous with my retrieve crew Paul who



Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

had volunteered to assist that morning. Explaining to the farmer that I was part of an event and that by entering his details into a draw he could be the recipient of a hamper, Little did I know that later that weekend in the prize giving, my farmer would be the winner.



Team Hilditch / Ward / Rowan prepare G-BKVY their Airtour 31 amongst the bigger balloons on the lush grass launch field. Photo by Bob Garnett.

So naturally I'm delighted that such an amiable feller wins a nice prize. For me just to get a nice flight in was reward enough for going to the event, we dodged some rain which appeared as I packed away and having dropped Paul off at his hotel I returned to Bedale and joined friends in the village centre for the obligatory full English breakfast and post flight analysis. All had stories of nice flights, decent farmers and were buzzing, and so whilst in the village, I took the opportunity to visit the award winning local butcher to get myself a nice piece of Rib eye steak for the afternoon barbeque. This event normally produces some nice social interaction, but during the day all the potential homebuilding types were drawn out to see the latest creation by Tim Wilkinson. Having already restored to new an old Colt balloon, Tim has successfully in recent months built an Airtour 56, and was



Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

now finishing off his Airtour 77. It was time to put in the parachute and do the lines. Britain's "second biggest manufacturer of balloons", had done yet another marvellous job on the balloon and was keen to show others what is achievable. As we speak he is actively building the third in the series which is G-CISD an Airtour 31 hopper.



Jan Fraser's lovely Lindstrand 31A with chariot bottom end
-photo by Bob Garnett

The 77 Looked stunning and big kudos to Tim for not only stirring the pot in homebuilding terms in the UK, but for actively encouraging others to join in. Some Belgium pals who were at Beadle, stopped off at Tim's place on the way home to see his



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

ventures. I'm hoping Tim will write up his tale of the hopper build for us here but as you can see he is a busy man. Having got the hopper a little wet packing it away from this morning, I decided that before the evening briefing I would cold inflate the envelope and dry it out- just in case we didn't fly again. This proved to be a good call because the wind didn't really drop out as expected later on and whilst one balloon flew, the inflation and shape upon lift off was interesting to say the least. Some decided to see if the wind would eventually drop, but as a pragmatist I decided that beer o'clock had arrived and coupled to that great piece of steak, and the morning flight that I enjoyed, the decision to bin it was so easy. A fine evening ensued with the other pilots with plenty of beer and sociability and eventually I retired to my canvas abode.

Sunday morning and I awoke to the sound of an inflation fan to find a small window of opportunity and John Hilditch and Tim ward were off for a morning hop. Tim flew to the RAF base and John ended up with a stand up landing in a lorry park. With so many people living a fair distance from the venue, the prize giving was brought forward to 10am.

My first Hop – by Gary Davis

This was the first time I went too this meet (The Little and large Solo Meet), which was very well organised by David such and others who were involved. We turned up with our T&C 65 1981G-FUND which still flies like new!! Believe it or not, she's crispy fabric too.

Anyway we got there and decided to take a peek at the new light weight Cameron hopper. It's certainly had a lot of interest and pilots and crews enjoying sitting in the seat suspended which looks like a swing! Lol I got chatting to Steve Roake and Simon Askey about the hopper experience and many questions etc, I've never ever been in or inflated one at nearly 1000 hrs! I was looking forward to flying FUND solo along with all the pilots in there hoppers, then Simon dropped the" Gary take it for a flight" mmmm never flown anything without a basket!:)0 could be interesting. Me and my crew went for a quick snack and coffee at the club house and chatted about it, I decided after asking other hopper pilots their thoughts, I said yes I'll give it go!

So I got some very quick but thorough briefing from Andy Booth a hopper expert and Simon Askey then we all went to



Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

briefing and the evening flight was called on, the winds were dropping nicely after a rather fast trough going through.

So onwards in convoy following the host David Hopkins which he took us to the west of his club house, so we could get the best route over the club house, but in order to ensure the competition too that Dave such had arranged! No pressure then lol

It was the ball nearest to the 18th hole I believe!? Wasn't too sure, however the aim was to go low over the club house and give the punters and golfers some entertainment.

We rigged up G-FUND as Simon Askey was flying this as I was in the O-31 lightweight hopper, so pleased Simon flew the old bag of wind We laid out the hopper, my friend Lorraine didn't realise it came with a balloon, Lol ! Anyway it was weird inflating a balloon not in a basket, by God it inflated quick! I noticed how small the karabiners were and how thin the flying wires were, however very strong! I finally got in the chair, and Simon and Andy fastened me in, Hey this is weird. I got the balloon ready to lift, and off I went, the first to take off, I remember Ian Crouch helping me find a somewhere to put my map, let alone instruments etc lol

Oh sod it. I didn't take anything except map and fags lol. Ok so I took off only my legs on the little bar, but very comfortable and relaxed! This was amazing and awesome!! It was just like floating in the air dangling your feet, but I could control the up and down movement. I went very low over the club house and was aiming for this so called 18th hole, I threw it and convinced I dropped in the wrong one(The 9th oh well). After 20 mins into the flight I saw the other guys following me, I was just in awe skimming the corn and tops of trees, it was funny looking up at a mirror too see the cylinder gauge! It didn't move for an hour twenty five minutes! A very efficient balloon. I decided to go up a few thousand feet just too feel the experience, truly loving this, felt so in control and just floating over the fens, it was a great feeling of euphoria, I would recommend to anyone. The weird thing was the fact you can spin around and change your outlook of direction, although I did get a bit tangled with the rip cord a



couple of times

After an hour I came low over the road side where the lovely crew and Cameron pick up chaser was waiting by a lay-by, they shouted are you landing here? I said no!! Having far too



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

much fun and enjoying this ride, I proceeded over Chatteris and on way to Doddington, I could see many of the other balloons had landed. The fuel cylinder was still not reading after an hour 15 mins! This is awesome! I phoned the crew up to say I had my eye on the football field, David was gassing away I lost a bit of concentration and lost height just in front of the biggest poplar trees! Went through the top like a piece of candy floss twirling on a stick! Lol Thankfully no damage, just to my pride, Steve drawbridge had clipped a go pro on, unfortunately it ran out five minutes into the flight, as not enough storage had been allowed! The argument with tree would have been fun to watch. Ok so I came down on my final approach, skipped over a load of caravans and saw this beautiful grass strip at the end of this barley field. Remembering how I was told to land and how I actually did were two different things; I loved skimming the rape field first with my feet, as the wind was running at around 5-6knts. Finally, I got to the edge of grass strip and there's a big Dyke! ok bang on the side with cylinder, not having too over burn as this balloon was very responsive! I ripped out and came to a stop, crew there, awesome flight 1:25mins, no damage, perfect conditions. I would recommend a hopper to anyone! They're fun, and so easy to fly, and plus so light you can carry



out anywhere!

Thank you to Cameron's for giving me this opportunity and use of their kit!!
Any one selling a decent hopper?
Best wishes Gary Davies

4. Favourite Photos – with Metz in mind

With the bi annual pilgrimage to Pilatre de roziere Festival Mondial du balloons Lorraine aka Metz less than a week away, we highlight some classic old photos from a few years ago. This montage of classic shots is designed to wet your appetites for some serious flying and for the hopper line up which in previous years has been held on a Wednesday. If by chance the organisers have overlooked the hopper fraternity we will post on the notice board the morning that we have in mind for a hopper flyout together. If they are organised, then we will obviously use their day as the gospel choice but I think am is better than pm for most hopper pilots especially if it is hot.



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015



Metz 2007 –photo by Liz Bishop



Same morning in 2007 by Liz Bishop



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015



Random Metz photos to get you in the mood!



Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

5. Gallery Pages – Fans this time!

This section is the Editor's choice of new jpegs, visuals and older balloons of interest or alterations. If you know of a new or interesting hopper or Duo that hasn't featured in this section, and then feel free to forward details of it with a suitable photograph to me using my normal email address.



Returning to the UK from Italy, G-OBAB has around 10 hours on it and is now with Andrew Gregory and Family.



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 78

July 2015

Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

News from Brian Boland that his now annual Hot air balloon and Experimental Airship meet will take place over the weekend of May 19th-21st 2016. Whilst these dates are set, the length of time you want to stay is up to you. There are other people who are going to stay for days before and after the event dates and Brian is keen to accommodate any extended stayers.

Per Lindstrand is apparently calling his new balloons "Signature Lindstrand Balloons". They are apparently going to be lightweight but no news as yet about hopper designs.

And Finally. Metz – See you there !

There you go with all that's happening right now in our world of hopping. With Metz barely a week away, drive carefully and I look forward to seeing your lovely faces on the launch field or in the air! Audience figures for Facebook participation continue to rise with over 628 members now subscribing, but feel free to introduce more fans, owners or prospective owners to our group.

Steve Roake

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

© Cloudhoppers.org

Issue 78

July 2015