



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 67

November / December 2013

Greetings one and all and Merry Christmas.

A smaller compact joint edition, hopefully with you before the dreaded day, and whilst it is reduce in size, I hope you all enjoy the read.

Within this Xmas special we have for you a real treat. Chris Dunkley has in his own inimitable way written about his first ever hop. This has been a long time coming so I'm glad it is here for your festive digestion.

Andy Austin gives us part 2 of his review of the new Cameron hopper system and his verdict on whether or not to buy one. Whilst most UK people start to think about the Icicle Balloon meet and show at the Elcot Place Hotel , the event has a new venue for the flying this year so details are included for you here.

1. Ed-Speak – Reflections on 2013

Reflecting on 2013 is easy for me personally. In simple terms, I feel short changed. Both Metz and the One Man Meet failed to deliver the expected flying, my actual number of flights this year was one higher than last year but still woefully low compared to previous years. The reasoning behind this trend? Wind! The changeable conditions, coupled to my desire not to compromise and take chances led to the amount of flying I achieved, but elsewhere things are on the up.

Ultramagic continue to produce successfully their Tekno products and Cameron Balloons have addressed their long running problem of a tired Hopper product, with more to come early in 2014, and with Dave Such enthusing about a new event for 2014, we should be boyant going into 2014, collectively hopping is still on the up.

Worldwide, the homebuilding scheme continues to gather momentum and demand for second hand equipment sensibly priced still outstrips supply. All in all, the school report would say," we are in a good place and continue to do well in troubled times" By the time of the Icicle Balloon Meet, the Cloudhoppers list will be Ten years old.

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Therefore from me and David Barker my fellow Moderator, many thanks for your continued support and thanks for all your contributions over the last 10 years. This idea originated as the one place you go for all your hopper needs, I hope you feel that you get that right here. If not tell us what we can do better and we will try to include your ideas. On behalf of David and myself, Happy Christmas to you all and have a safe and happy new year.

2, Essential Extra's / Tech Talk- A Christmas Present?

I've kept this one back for a couple of months, simply because it represents great value for money and in a world of instant video, it offers the versatility of a Go pro style camera at a budget crunching price. Now in austere times we all need to save a few bucks, so as an alternative to the GO Pro cameras I suggest you look no further than the Mobius 1080 HD camera system.

<http://youtu.be/7wmlyD1fM4M> is a great place to start looking into what a Mobius is. This well packaged camera system is simple in its usage , probably lends itself to occasional filers like myself , and comes with all the various mounts you could possibly want and will accept a 32gb memory card and film for about an hour on 1080 mode.

Currently on sale on Amazon for approximately £75, it represents a serious saving on the price of its Go Pro equivalent, and seems to be built by people who have listened to what is required in the marketplace. If I have one criticism, I would say the lack of waterproofing isn't great, but then hopefully we won't be using it in the rain.

There is a very good comparison video on u tube (comparing like for like), <http://youtu.be/YU0Sm4dlOm4> , and your editor has hankered a camera for hopping for some time and is treating himself to one of these. Further thoughts on the Mobius after I've used it.

So for a late present to yourself or for a friend, essential extras recommends the Mobius Camera system.



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3. The Features Section

Andy Austen on Cameron's New Hopper- part 2

Finally the day came when after many weeks the rain stopped and the weather conditions looked good to fly the brand new hopper that Cameron's had given me to test. The only problem was that everywhere was so wet. I studied the predicated wind directions and realised that in theory I could use my regular launch field and land at the local Sywell Airport. This should give me a good chance of keeping everything dry and clean.

I chose the windiest part of the launch field as I wanted to be sure that the envelope would remain stable in tricky conditions. No point in testing in anything less than normal UK weather. The inflation was fine and after a few minutes of pre flight checks it was lift off in the wrong direction.

However as I climbed through to 3'000ft the direction was as predicted albeit 15kts.

The flight was good, great visibility and everything going to plan. I spoke to the control tower at Sywell and the landing was permitted, exactly as planned after a very sharp descent and ultimately being caught by the first class crew who were waiting for me in the airport fire tender. The final landing was 7kts and although a bit quick for a first flight it was very stable.

The gas consumption after 40mins was c20 litres, the new rotation ring worked very well and actually gave the impression that the new bottom end is safer although this does not make much sense I know. The new quick release straps that held the seat in place during inflation worked perfectly.

The only question that remains is will I buy it? (The result was that yes, Andy did buy the balloon -Ed).

For reference the bottom end is the very latest Cameron Millennium and the envelope is a Cameron Z31 made from lightweight fabric with scoop.



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G-CIBX Cameron Z-31, Andy Austen's new balloon



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4, My interesting / First Hops- by Chris Dunkley

Smirnoff - Well they said anything could happen!



Air-Britain Photographic Images Collection

© Bill Teasdale

G-BIDV photo courtesy of Bill Teasdale

"Chris, When was your first hopper flight?" enquired that Hopper Devotee Mr Steve Roake? No idea, but I promised I'd have a look see. Now then, first off I had to find my old logbooks, which has proved to be less than easy, on top of this I have to admit that a lot of flights never got entered, usually the beer mat with the details scrawled on got washed or lost long before the event was recorded properly, then with the passage of time, it was forgotten until someone says 'Here, remember that flight over the hill and far away' and on attempting to look it up in aforementioned logbooks (if



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you can actually find the relevant one) you realise that it was left out so, for the moment, truth is then, if I ever do find my early logbooks, I probably can't tell you when my first hopper flight was anyway but it was in Smirnoff, of that I'm reasonably sure. But the puzzle doesn't end there because unfortunately there were two Smirnoff hoppers. First was a Colt 14A built in 1979 and registered G-BIDV (International Distillers and Vintners Ltd) and operated by The Hot Air Balloon Company, then based in Chelsea, or it may have been G-BJXD a 1982 built 17A and also run by HABCo out of Chelsea. Robin Batchelor had flown BIDV down the rowing course during Henley Regatta (narrowly making landfall before it ran out of fuel) a year or so before I joined HABCo and it was pronounced knackered so it may well have been BJXD. Not sure which now I come to think of it anyway, the Smirnoff promotion then was 'They said anything could happen' followed by 'Expect the Unexpected', perfect for a hopper. I do recall flying G-BJXD from the Royal Crescent in Bath dressed in Tudor clobber but that's another story and I think we took it to a One Man Meet once!





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In 1983 Smirnoff Hot Air Airship, a Colt AS-42 G-WZZZ, Joined the hopper and made a few flights one, in 1986 or '87 piloted by Mats Backlin, ending up in the toilets at Bristol when the pressurisation fan stopped and the ripline burnt through during the attempted recovery and sliced down the hull appearing out the nose, which was amusing for everyone except Mats and the occupant of one of the portaloos! The picture shows the B&Q airship G-BLSN which was supported then by a '31 probably taken shortly before the 'incident'. Airships never appealed as they were noisy and seldom if ever seemed to get airborne. When they did the engine invariably died and now all you had was a very unwieldy special shape. Being dragged sideways across a field in the gondola was no fun. Yep, the hopper was always going to win hands down.

Colin Prescott was the 'hopper man' back then but he was not available for the job that had come up the next weekend (can't remember where or what it was) and RB was busy being famous in Alka-Seltzer so I drew the short straw and was despatched off with it, which was fine, but having never flown one before or fought my way into the playground swingseat I reckoned a bit of a practise ought to be carried out first. So it was that we worked out how the harness and seat went together and trotted off to the Black Horse to give it a go. Colin Prescott's last helpful tip was to 'get the straps adjusted before you clip onto the cylinder'. Bad idea, once the leg straps were on I resembled a Chipmunk pilot waddling out to his plane, parachute strapped to arse, like they did, not having a cushion to sit on. Unclipped, things were a lot easier and straddling the tank with the envelope drum-tight a very quick and uneventful inflation occurred much to my relief faced with the tiny mouth and rather blustery burner flame. Once upright and clamped to the deck by willing volunteers it only took a minute or two to snap the Capewells closed, tighten up the straps and we were away. This was brilliant. I wobbled off down the valley towards Wendover spinning myself round and round until the inevitable happened and the rip line got tangled up with everything. A bit of reverse spinning and untangling followed by a very long burn prevented a premature landing I'm pleased to say.

Now I'm not a watch person and so decided that I'd set the time at midday and fly for half an hour which ought to give me a bit of reserve for the landing. Doesn't work like that. The old



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Thunder Cloudhopper bottom ends were equipped with a buzzer warning which went off (supposedly) when you had about 30% left. It did have a test facility which, now airborne, I decided would be a good idea to try. I flicked the chrome plated switch over to 'test' and it gave a squeak and that was it. Oh well, never mind, glance at watch showed quarter of an hour past twelve and the cylinder wasn't rattling yet so plenty left. Cloudhopping clearly was most agreeable and although there was much to be learnt and, from the point of view that you are very much on your own, actually it wasn't unlike gliding, quite selfish really. What was great fun was getting down really low and dobbing your toe on the ground then racing upwards with the ground receding away between your shoe laces. Contour flying the houses on the outskirts of the village got plenty of attention and with the wind falling ever lighter I elected to land on the road at the top of the old council estate. By now of course the cylinder was getting well rattly and the flame didn't quite have to pathetic oomph it started out with as a result I had precious little to do with the landing but to the outsider it was all so controlled and with the gentlest of bumps I was sitting in the middle of the road on a bend when I suddenly realised this wasn't the brightest place to land, re-enforced by a car pulling up rather sharply! There was I having survived the flight and now about to be run over. No need to worry it was a known local who clambered out, rolled a stogey, pointed at the diminutive envelope as it gently settled over a Transit van and we commenced laughter. I was reckoned there and then that I was going to enjoy flying these little devils.

Chris Dunkley

Many thanks to Chris for the above interesting article including the period advert (see below).

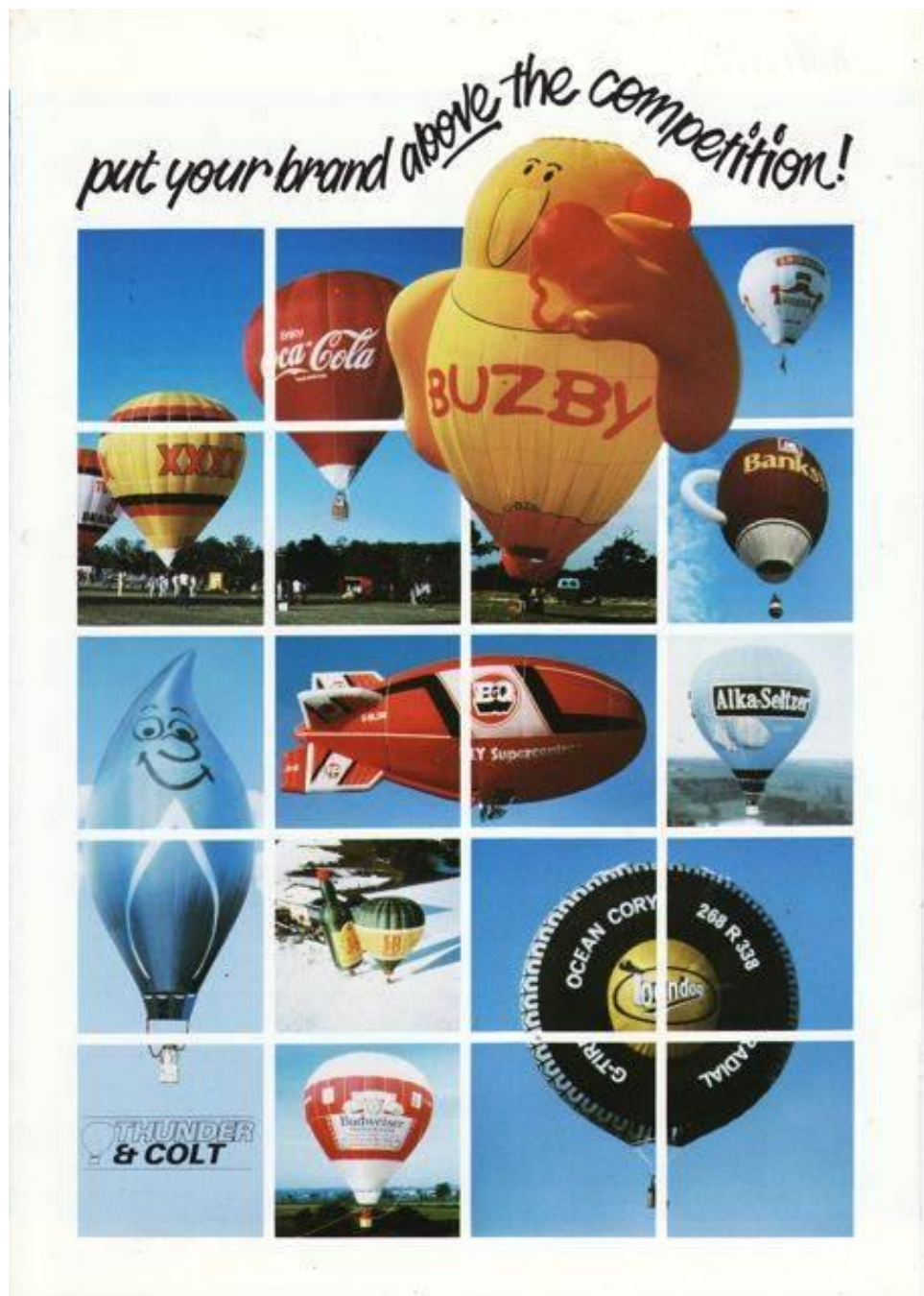
So that's the format, what happened on your first ever hop or interesting flight and how it felt compared to your expectations? Submissions to me please at steve.roake@ntlworld.com



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As its Christmas we have another Interesting Story for you, this time contributed by Dave Such.

Chariot of Fire by Dave Such

My introduction to the world of Solo Ballooning

During a chance conversation with Dave Baker in August 2011 at a meet in Northern Ireland, I discovered that the BT Balloon Team still had their Cameron H-34 envelope G-BZBT complete with T&C Skychariot MkII bottom end sitting in their balloon store.

As a condition of purchase, I had to think of a design to disguise the large Piper artwork that was not stuck and sewn like the smaller pieces of artwork but formed part of the envelope. A few ideas were put forward before finally the BT Team felt the design we agreed on would suitably change the balloon's appearance as not to be recognized as either the Piper or BT registered trademarks.



Before work commenced on the artwork change, the balloon underwent the first annual inspection since it had been operated for BT, which included applying for an EASA Certificate of Airworthiness. The envelope was in stunning condition and with a



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new liquid hose and pilot light igniter, so was the Skychariot MkII bottom end. We also had the 10-year PPT/INT/PRV maintenance done on the H30 cylinder.

After a three month wait for suitable conditions to make my first Chariot flight – less than 5 knots on the surface, no more than 8 knots at 1000 feet and good visibility with the grass fairly dry – the day finally arrived on March 11th 2012.



Launching at 1530 with a gentle drift towards the south-east of our normal launch site, I gingerly climbed to 600 feet and although I had felt more anxious than I had ever felt before launching any balloon in 24 years of flying, all anxiety had completely gone before achieving level flight. After descending to ground level, I climbed to just under 2,300 feet, which was an awesome experience.

I eventually landed after flying for 70 minutes with just over 35% of fuel remaining. You have to land facing backwards with a Skychariot to avoid breaking your legs. Careful use of the turning vents in the envelope will allow the balloon to turn moments before touchdown.



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I didn't fly the Chariot again until the One Man Meet at Welshpool in October 2012, making two flights over the weekend. One of the reasons that I hadn't flown G-BZBT between the March and October flights was due to the envelope volume combined with my weight grounding me in warmer conditions. I realised that a 42 envelope would be ideal but needed turning vents with the Chariot. Finding a 42 with turning vents wouldn't be that easy I thought.



Pieter Kooistra in the Netherlands had been advertising an Ultramagic H42 with almost zero hours and it had turning vents. I contacted Pieter and discussed a possible deal with him, as well as getting a lot of help and advice from Ultramagic supremo Paul Dickinson. I also spoke with Peter Gooch for some advice who owned Ultramagic H42 G-OOCH. His envelope was identical to the envelope in the Netherlands and Peter had also bought G-OOCH from Pieter in 2007.



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In 1996, Ultramagic built four identical red, white and black H42 envelopes that carried advertising banners for the opening of Amsterdam ArenA in the Netherlands. It is the largest stadium in the country and it was built from 1993 to 1996 at a cost of €140 million, and was officially opened on 14 August 1996. I understand that each of the four envelopes were never registered or had a Certificate of Airworthiness back in 1996 and were just inflated to display the advertising banners.



Now I am not that often always blessed with luck but on this occasion, Lady Luck was certainly smiling down on me as Peter Gooch was considering selling G-OOCH and it hadn't hit the open market. I quickly arranged a trip down to see Peter and his envelope. Following a cold inflation on 8th July a deal was done and I brought G-OOCH away with me.

I advertised G-BZBT and within 24 hours the envelope found a new home with Tim Wilkinson at Sackville Lodge, who operates it with a small basket and single burner.

My first flight with G-OOCH was ironically at Sackville Lodge at Grass Roots 2013 on 21st September and second flight was on 1st December from Bassingbourn, Cambridgeshire.



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G-OOCH is certainly flying a lot cooler than G-BZBT with the larger volume and easily provides the scope for using it pretty much throughout the year in most temperatures we are likely to have in the UK.



Now for those fuel consumption nerds amongst us, I've only flown the 12-gore Ultramagic H42 twice: first AM flight 21st September with 15 Celsius at 240 ft AMSL launch site used 39 litres in 75 minutes or 0.52 ltr/min. Second PM flight 1st December with 8 Celsius at 90 ft AMSL launch site used 30 litres in 65 minutes or 0.46 ltr/min. Both included inflation and 5 mins or so standing time. At 125kg or 277lb I am no lightweight (really need to shed some pounds!) and the Skychariot MkII bottom end fully fuelled weighs 77kg or 170lb. The envelope weight – as manufactured in standard ripstop and no artwork – built in 1996 is recorded as 68kg or 150lb which I think is heavier than it seems and the flight manual suggests 60kg or 132lb which I think is more realistic – really should get it weighed. Using the turning vents with the Chariot will obviously increase fuel consumption, which I will do if I find myself flying backwards, but I only use them when I feel necessary and I haven't used the parachute in either flight other than for post flight deflation. The envelope now only has 10 hrs 30 mins TT.



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The Ultramagic H42 is a lovely well-made envelope that had just over 8 hours TT when I purchased it and should provide many years of solo flying fun.

I have now made eight flights in the Chariot and love it. Although a bit more cumbersome than a cloudhopper, everything still fits in the back of my Hyundai Santa Fe including the 3.5hp fan and the Chariot does provide a good amount of protection for landing. I love the fully gimballed burner and being able to see my fuel status easily and the well-padded seat is very comfortable. The only downside is not being able to substitute fuel cylinders and having to refuel the cylinder in situ as removing it and refitting is time consuming.

It is a shame that Cameron Balloons decided to discontinue the single Skychariot or Single Airchair (as they had rebranded it), as they are pretty rare beasts to find second hand.

Dave Such

Three Favourite Jpegs and why – By Paul Stumpf

Paul Stumpf has sent in his second set of three favourite photographs and why (for which we thank him), and on this occasion, they all have special meaning to Paul as they all are family members.





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The first photograph is from Post Mills, VT Experimental Balloon Meet circa 1995 Nicholas Stumpf (my son) "solo" tether, age 6. (photo by Paul Stumpf).



The second submission from Paul is also from Post Mills, Vermont Experimental Balloon Meet circa 1995 featuring Suzanne Lawler (my wife) (photo by Paul Stumpf).



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Third and final submission from Paul (for which we thank you), is of Tetley, the ballooning dog. Circa 1980. Tetley was often aboard my various balloons. One of her favourite ballooning activities (besides drinking champagne) was "barking back" at the other dogs on the ground, as we flew over. I think she logged around 20 hours. (photo by Paul Stumpf)



Contributions for future editions of my three favourites and why to steve.roake@ntlworld.com please. Do it today folks and share those memories.



4. Updates to the Website / Newsletter/ Topics of Interest

Facebook Roundup

In early November came words and (finally) pictures from the US showing Jim Grazier has been able to walk away from his sewing machine, having completed his 42.

Judging by his frequent updates on the "Cloudhoppers" and "Hot Air Balloon Forum and Repair" pages he managed it in seemingly no time at all. The pictures show the effect of the unusual, printed fabric....



Jim Comments , ".....I purchased the fabric from a friend who had purchased it several years back and never used it. It is a 1.e silicone coated fabric. I have no idea of the original supplier or any other source for it. The envelope weighs in at about 74lbs. I will get an exact weight soon." Jim's build wasn't the only homebuilt discussed, - Mike Veliz publicised his blog



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[http:// experimentalta.blogspot.com/](http://experimentalta.blogspot.com/) and later posted pictures showing his unflown, dismantled homebuilt in bags which he quickly put back together again with lighter load tapes.

Mike also offered some 20 gallon Raven/Aerostar tanks which are very popular with homebuilders in the states....he's still got a couple left at a reduced price.



Remaining with Horizontal tanks, Dave Such posted some details about the T&C H30 incorporated in his Sky Chariot setup (more later....).



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Switching to the subject of video, a short but particularly nice one on the XLTA Experimental LTA aircraft rally in September was shared and can be viewed on You Tube using the link - <http://youtu.be/xP66nGBndlo>
The people featured –who are members of this cloudhopping community– really portray the spirit of experimental homebuilt ballooning. With this is the freedom of being able to think outside of the box to improve portability / ease of use for spontaneous adventures. Here is one of Paul Stumpf's more minimal offerings, proof tested by Tetley the ballooning dog.....

Talking of minimal –“Travelling light- time for Hang Time by Pauline Baker...”



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Various items have appeared for sale recently, including a burner bag from Jackie Hibberd and a Lynx Helicopter harness from Ross Powell. Most notable though comes this rarity from Mathieu Dekock.....



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G-BKVY - on the UK register, Airtour C/N 001 from the 80's, now EASA Annex 2. Still registered to Malcolm Davies in the UK. This envelope is currently in the South of France...but now reserved. Where will it end up? And remaining in the 1980's, pictures from the "Dany Clayet-Marrel Aerostatic Tools" page have appeared including this one of the Thunder Sky Chariot at work....



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From a Mk1 Chariot at work to a Mk2 at play, Dave Such's Ultramagic 42 G-OOCH...this has promoted much interest.



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A question about efficiency prompted the following response from Dave...

"I've only flown the 12-gore Ultramagic H42 twice: first AM flight in September with 15 Celsius at 240 ft AMSL launch site used 39 litres in 75 minutes or 0.52 ltr/min. Second PM flight last Sunday with 8 Celsius at 90 ft AMSL launch site used 30 litres in 65 minutes or 0.46 ltr/min. Both included inflation and 5 mins or so standing time. At 125kg or 277lb I am no lightweight (really need to shed some pounds!) and the Skychariot MkII bottom end fully fuelled weighs 77kg or 170lb. The envelope weight (as manufactured in standard ripstop and no artwork) built in 1996 is recorded as 68kg or 150lb which I think is heavier than it seems and the flight manual suggests 60kg or 132lb which I think is more realistic - really should get it weighed. Using the turning vents with the Chariot will obviously increase fuel consumption which I will do if I find myself flying backwards but I only use them when I feel necessary and I haven't used the parachute in either flight other than for post flight deflation. The envelope only has 10 hrs 30 mins TT."

On a final note, the latest postings are about first experiences with hoppers and chariots, there are sure to be many more. Steve Roake posted this picture of his first flight (T&C 31 in 2005). It shows a suitably seasonal view.....



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Subscribers to the Facebook group have just broken the 400 mark. It's certainly proving to be a very quick and easy way of communicating with the like-minded.

Dave Westlake.

Homebuilt section

Nothing to report on homebuilding this month!



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5. Gallery Pages –

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, then feel free to forward details of it with a suitable photograph to me using my normal email address.

Due to time constraints this section is empty for this edition.

Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

Icicle Meet Details

This year's Icicle Balloon Meet is being held at the Elcot place hotel as in recent years, but the launch field has changed. This year the briefings will be held at 8am at the Rugby club on Marlborough Common in Marlborough. For anyone attending the grid reference is Map 173 183700. Hopefully with a good frost we could see a decent turn out of hoppers. See you there.

Adverts / For Sale / Wanted section

Nothing currently being advertised here. If you wish to advertise contact me directly.

And Finally.

Membership is currently a healthy 459 members and numbers are Generally stable. All articles for inclusion in future issues will be gratefully received by your editor. Please forward them to steve.roake@ntlworld.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.