



# Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 55

April 2012

Hi Folks

Despite no flying recently, I am surprisingly upbeat about Cloudhopping, partly because I had a very enjoyable introduction To Ireland at the Trim Balloon Festival, and even without flying had fun, and partly because whilst out there I met a ballooning Genius.

Yes I use that phrase with caution, but this person has personally contributed more to furthering ballooning in my time in their field than anyone else I can possibly think of. Therefore in this issue, I'd like to share with you my findings so that you can all appreciate where I am coming from.

Without further delay, let's get into what I hope you will find as a full magazine, and I hope you enjoy the read.

## Ed-Speak –Irish reflections.

Have you ever been in the fortunate position of going to an event where the hospitality is so good, you find it hard to spend your own money? I was very fortunate to be invited over the Easter break to the Trim Hot Air Balloon Festival by our members Malcolm White and Pauline Baker, firstly to make their acquaintances and then to enjoy the prospect of flying one of their hoppers..

In my experience I have not been to such a nice event where so much of the community come together to sponsor and support to the extent where the organisers apologised for not paying my airfare! It took me back.

However, when the weather turned bad, I was also taken back when I suggested to fellow pilots that we all contribute to manning a stand where the public could get access to pilots and kit, some said No even though they had all their expenses paid including the substantial ferry costs. It seems some people don't realise when they have been

looked after and should support the event, which is what I tried to do, even comparing some of the show (which made me laugh since I haven't been behind a microphone from when I gave up DJing in 1984). Ireland I apologise!

Steve Roake

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## Essential Extra's / Tech Talk

Once again this section has no content as no one has come forward with anything useful that they want to pass on to the rest of you. When you have please let me know so I can pass the details on to the masses.

## The Features Section-

### Paulo Bonnano – Pure Engineering Genius

Whilst visiting Ireland, I was fortunate to meet a designer and manufacturer of ballooning equipment that quite probably you might not have heard of and yet if you have been in mainstream ballooning for any time, id put money on you coming across one of his designed products. Does the name Paulo Bonnano mean anything to you?

This shy 68 year old Italian legend from Mondovi in the Aosta region of Italy, has been designing ballooning equipment for at least 30 years and probably most people's introduction to his stuff would be the simple quick release mechanism, as sold by Cameron Balloons Ltd. This was the one that used to smack you in the face when under extreme tension in a vee bridal arrangement, until it was redesigned with an offset rope to alleviate the rebound.

If I told you that this man had personally manufactured over 7000 blast valves for Cameron Stealth /Shadow burners alone, and designed and made every Sirocco burner for Cameron's before going on to manufacture the Power plus burner system for Ultramagic Balloons Ltd , perhaps you can understand why people use the word "Genius" when around him. Quite simply when it comes to burner systems, Paulo is the man!

I found myself totally engrossed in conversation with this man who started life as an electronic systems designer and for whom understanding the world of burner design and application is easy. When it comes to setting world records for Ballooning, all those who need practical reliable, 100% assured reliability come knocking at his door. From Steve Fossett to Pauline Baker, anyone needing a bespoke burner application finds their way to Paulo for the answer. This reluctant to acknowledge his own status as one of the very best in his field Guru, when explaining his designs often deflects the attention away from himself and praises the pilot's skills for using his equipment to the maximum parameters in order to extract the required level of performance. Yet they can only operate with the tools provided and I would put Paulo on a level with Adrian Newey of formula one fame for his attention to detail.



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This pipe smoking, softly spoken Italian designer simply knows his way around Burner systems and whilst remaining quietly in the background because in his words, "My English is not so good", will at length explain why his products work in environments where others fail. One story I extracted from the maestro, was about three balloons which were taken to the South Pole for some flying, and only one burner system worked- no prizes for whose it was! He also explained to me that when the Sirocco system was new, some eminent pilots needed training on how to extract the best from the system when they all believed it was flawed and he explained it wasn't.



Paulo Bonnanno with burner system from Pauline Baker's record breaking Ax-1 G-CEHX which is a Mylar Lindstrand 9A.

Part of the reason he was in Ireland was to deliver to Pauline Baker a version of his new Hopper bottom end and as you would expect it was full of Bonnanno thinking and innovation.

The Thing with Paulo, (and I was told this before I met him), is he perfects the solution to the problem and then designs the tooling in order to manufacture the components to a high level of finish. This is both in quality and execution in the way they work, and quite simply the beauty lies in the detailing.



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Paulo remarked to me about how when record breaking you rely on the pilot to be able to fly to the strict demands of the equipment, citing Pauline's Ax1 record where the temperature needed to be below minus 15 Celsius and with a burner designed to fly on pressure settings finitely set between 0.7-0.8 bar, it was only in his opinion, Pauline's understanding of the demands that made the equipment work-such is the modesty of the man. In a world with little innovation, this man's Genius in his field simply shines out for all to see.

Steve Roake

## **A Detailed look at the new Paulo Bonnano Hopper bottom end – by Steve Roake**

Whilst I didn't get a chance to fly the new Bonnano hopper bottom end , my time in Ireland wasn't wasted as I had plenty of time to thoroughly investigate the way it was made and see the salient points where the designer has tried to improve deficiencies and advance the technical aspects of the design. We, (myself, Paulo and his wife Nicole), used it for the Nightglow so got a good look at the burner characteristics.

On first appraisal, you notice the beautiful level of finish over all the main parts with stitching on the cloth sections particularly well executed on this uniquely green version for Pauline. Then naturally your eyes are drawn towards the logo exquisitely embossed on the front.

Once you have gazed at the beauty of the finish, the salient points of interest become apparent. Thought has clearly gone into the specification and the differences to previous hopper designs are obvious to see.

The most noticeable feature is the swivelling ring which moves in a gliding motion over a multi bearing track with a silky smooth action. Then your eyes are drawn to where the envelope attaches which with extended steel lines is clear of the swivel ring meaning no way the rip line can get tangled and hands don't get hurt whilst performing the rotating action.

Proceeding lower on the seat, you notice the angle of the tubing which is done intentionally to ensure a comfortable posture whilst in flight.





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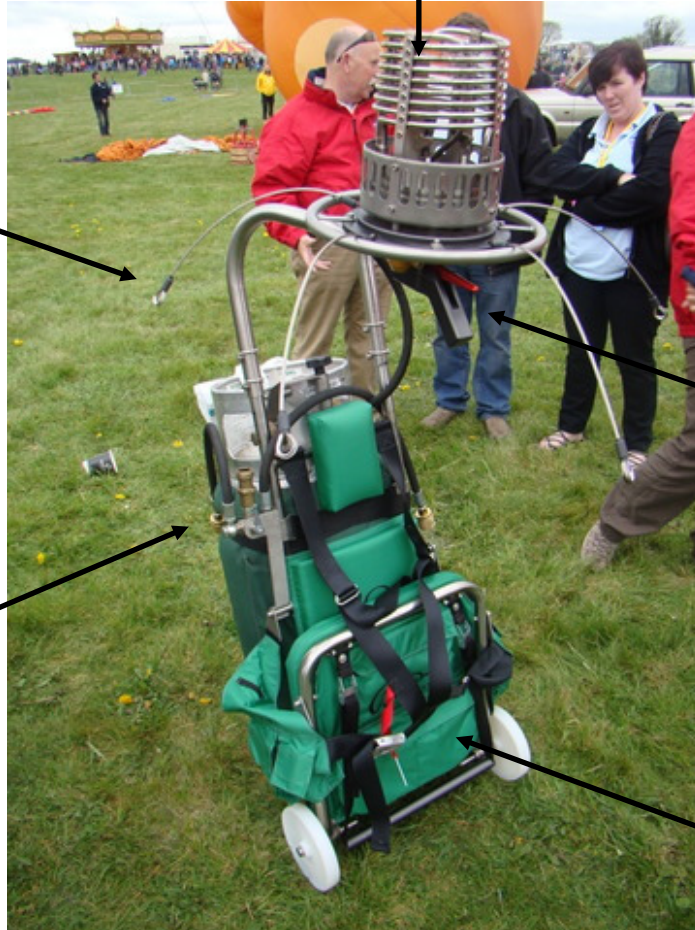
Twin Pilot lights and Twin Piezo

Karabiner attachments (clear of the rotation disc)

Two stage blast valve incorporates visual fuel gauge and audible alarm.

Note attached Manifold for when using two fuel tanks

Pouch under seat accommodates the wheels when not in use



Detailing on the Bonanno Hopper-jpeg by Steve Roake



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The next thing to see is the main blast valve. This has a unique two stage action and you have to have a go to realise how light the action is – to say it is sensitive is an understatement, very little pressure is required to light the first stage. At about 75% depression, the second stage (a much fiercer flame pattern takes over with loads of more power). This is the stage that Paolo says you use when you are “in the Shit”! Then you realise that in the middle of the handle as you look up is a digital gauge that tells you the last 20%, 15, 10, and 5% of the fuel contents. First Three lights are green and the last one red, and when this one comes on you get an audible warning also telling you to land. All of the parts to this gauge are created and produced by Paolo himself. It is linked by a lead to the dip tube which has three tubes of various lengths.



Paolo demonstrates the digital gauge and diptubes

The next thing that caught my attention, was the simplicity of the belt arrangement. They say that the best solutions are the simplest to work and in his execution, Paolo has devised a clasp that is so efficient and yet effective, it makes you wonder why others haven't achieved the same conclusion.



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What Paolo has done is extend the tang which goes through the two loops of the vertical top straps. This then locates in a regular seat buckle with an R clip ensuring a secondary safety feature. The left hand side webbing houses a handling line which is a great idea. The RHS has handy storage pouches.

I expect that by now all you hopper experts really want to take a peek into the coils to see the engine room and where the serious expertise lies. Fear not I have coming for you a nice big juicy photo of the powerhouse in this kit. The attention to detail remains firmly in place with exquisite detailing and a high level of lustre. As with all of Paolo's burners, you feel that the way they have been prepared will ensure that they will stay that way long term. As will pure art no words are needed to describe the beauty of these components, so I'll let you peruse unassisted.





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Apologies for the non centred photo – I couldn't get near enough.





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## Carol Davis goes the Extra Mile for Breast Cancer The Extra Mile

I'd wanted to do some kind of fund raising event for a Breast Cancer Charity for a long time, and the opportunity arose in October last year when, as distributors for Avon Cosmetics, we were asked to try to find an original idea to raise much needed funds for their cause, the Breast Cancer Crusade. The Crusade funds 2 breast cancer counselling nurses who travel all over Ireland helping people who are suffering with the disease. As my own Mum died of breast cancer 3 years ago, this is a cause which is very close to my heart so raising money for this charity was an obvious choice. "But what will I do?" I thought. Then I recalled the phrase "going the extra mile" and I thought "that's it! I'll go the extra mile for the crusade, but I'll go a mile ... straight up!". The balloon I would fly in would be our Sky single seat cloud hopper.

I started planning the flight straight away, setting up a link on the charity website so people could pay direct, and liaising with the Crusade directors within Avon. The donations started pouring in and my husband Geoff (also a balloon pilot) and I got very excited about the event. We usually have some good flights around Christmas time so I thought I'd have the flight done before the end of 2011, but last winter was different. Not much snow but lots of wind and rain. Time dragged on and I began to feel I'd never get it done and that people would think I'd chickened out. The only nice clear calm days were when I was really busy and couldn't fly.





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Carol is nearly ready to fly

Easter blew by, but then, lo and behold, the weekend after Easter looked like it just might be possible! We watched the weather all week and on the Saturday began making plans for the flight the next day. It was still a last minute decision to go ahead but we managed to rally round some friends to help out and support us. On Sunday 15th April we packed up Sky Baby, our 25,000 cubic foot hopper, and headed off to the chosen launch site, Crover House Hotel. We chose the hotel because it's in a beautiful setting beside Lough Sheelin and also because we hoped there would be a lot of onlookers who might help add to our fundraising. We were right, there was quite a crowd watching as it turned out.

For extra effect I took off from the helipad in front of the hotel.



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Carol departs on her quest

I had been quite nervous in the previous few hours but once we started rigging I became focussed and was no longer nervous. I decided to take off a little early because the wind was very light and variable and I wanted to make sure I cleared the lake. Just in case I didn't, I wore a life jacket and we had a boat on standby. It's a big lake so the risk of getting becalmed over water was quite real. I took off at 17.50 and ascended at between 400 and 500ft per minute. The fastest the ascent rate reached was 710ft per minute. Geoff was in contact with me on the radio all the time, and as I called back my altitude to him he was relaying it to the spectators, who incidentally thought I was completely nuts! My altimeter was reading 250ft on the ground so I needed to reach 5530ft to reach a mile high. Fifteen minutes into the flight, when the altimeter read 5600ft, I called on the radio "Mission accomplished!" and in response Geoff transmitted the crowd cheering for me over the radio. That was a great feeling! I continued up another hundred feet before starting my descent. On reflection I wished I had continued on up to 6000ft.



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Oh well that's for another day. I took some photos while up high, including a snap of the altimeter reading 5709ft, and I also had a video camera attached to the frame of the hopper above my head.



People might think it strange to want to fly that high in a hopper (or to fly a hopper at all) but I found it very exciting up there in Sky Baby, I feel confident with the equipment and don't get nervous when flying it. The reaction from people when we land the hopper is almost always "... you were up in that thing? Where's the basket?"

At over 5000ft there were a few little wisps of cloud about and it was very cold so not wanting to stay up that high, I started to descend after a few minutes. The fastest the descent rate got was about 600ft per minute. At no time did I have cause to worry about the pilot light going out, or gas tank freezing, or any other part of the equipment. I descended to around 3000ft to get a bit of drift away from the lake, and then dropped down low over a bog and forest, before landing gently and safely at 18.55 in a little field with Geoff waiting by the gate. The total flight time was 1 hour 5 minutes. I am still collecting donations but to date I've raised about €1500 from my flight for the Breast Cancer Crusade.

Carol Davis





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**My First Hop-** Gavin Chadwick gives us his story

**First hopper (Sky Chariot) flight – Mondovi, Italy - 16 years old (5 weeks before my 17th birthday and getting my “purple book”)**

I have always wanted a hopper ever since I can remember. So pretty much since I started properly learning to fly when I was 12 years old, I had bugged the “old man” to help me in finding a good one to buy. Once I had passed my Air-Law exam, Dad did then start helping me to look for one, but he wasn’t overly pleased though because he thought that my flying a hopper wasn’t the best idea at my young age.

We compromised on the idea of a Sky Chariot. Dad informed me that Kevin Meehan had one and to his knowledge he didn’t fly it very often. We were also fast approaching the first one man meet that I could actually fly from (doing examiner supervised solo flights). Dad rang Kevin and asked about the balloon saying I was interested in buying a hopper and that Kev’s balloon would be ideal, so we all agreed to meet at the coming One Man Meet in the English Peak District to look at the balloon with a view to buying it.

I was counting down to the days to the One Man Meet. In the mean time I had agreed with Dad that I would fly our N-42 (G-BMWU) out of the One Man Meet using our one-man basket, whilst Dad would fly my “crispy fabric” V-56 (G-BICU). Anyways the day came when Kevin met us at the One Man Meet which this year was being held at Ilam Hall. As we started unloading Kevin’s car I had already made my mind up at this point that I wanted to buy this balloon. However, I was also taking in every little thing in that Kev was telling me about the balloon, having no direct experience of hoppers.

After about an hour of going though all the kit, Kev said to me I could inflate the hopper under his VERY close supervision. I then very nervously tethered the balloon for about 15 minutes with Kevin talking to me and instructing me, whilst Dad walked around the balloon looking at what I knew would be my first one-man balloon. As we were doing this following the morning flight (at approximately midday) it started to get a bit breezy so I deflated the balloon whilst asking Dad to pull the crown line. The balloon came down very quickly as it was so small. I then released myself from the harness and, as we packed the balloon away, Dad and Kevin were asking me for my thoughts. I made it very clear that I had completely got the hopper bug and we quickly agreed a price and said that we would pick the balloon up in about a week’s time. Kevin then flew the balloon himself that evening, for the last time.

After Dad and I went to pick the balloon up from Kevin’s house, Dad asked me if I wanted to take it to Italy when we went out there the following January. Well this was a no brainer! Over the months leading up to the Mondovi balloon meet I never got the chance to fly the balloon. So, on a very white morning of the 4th of



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January 2007, the weather was perfect for me to do my first ever flight in the Sky Chariot. It was freezing cold and I was very nervous, but remembering what Kevin had told me I knew I would be taking to the skies for the first time in a Hopper.

I took things very slow during the inflation and I had every possible thing with me that I might need. Dad was also flying on this morning so we agreed that he would take off first and I would follow him. So off he went and, after about 5 minutes of me waiting inflated on the launch site, I lifted off of the first time. I had flown solo before this day several times but nothing compared to this. I was sitting down with a balloon above me flying over the wonderful snow covered Italian town of Mondovi.

As soon as I could, I brought the balloon to a low level and turning myself backwards using the turning vents. As it's a Sky Chariot you have to land it backwards. This felt very weird at first but, after practicing this several times, when it came to landing after about 50 minutes of flight I knew what I was doing. When I landed the crew came straight to me so we quickly deflated the balloon and packed everything away. I was so overwhelmed and high on adrenalin!

I landed nowhere near the "old man" so this made it a bit tricky for our double retrieve, but that wasn't on my mind during my first hopper flight. After the flight we took both balloons to refuel. Still on a high I told everyone who would listen about my first flight, probably boring everyone to death. I went on to fly the hopper three more times that week, two during the Mondovi Balloon Meet. Out of all the flying I have ever done, solo flying is the most selfish but enjoyable and flying with a chair is just unbelievable.

I have now flown a total of 18 flights to date in hoppers / chariots, flying 6 different envelopes: G-CCJY N-42 "Cameron Demo", G-BSAK Colt 21A "Nobby 2", G-CEYD N-31 ex "Lloyds", G-BXIZ LBL 31A "Hyundai", G-CEWF Jacobs 35 "Sunshine" and G-BVCN Colt 56A "Buxton". I have enjoyed every flight to date, even the one when I burnt "Hyundai's" scoop on landing, but hey-ho - we all make mistakes!

Gavin Chadwick

So that's the format, what happened on your first ever hop and how it felt compared to your expectations? Submissions to me please at [steve.roake@ntlworld.com](mailto:steve.roake@ntlworld.com)



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## Three Favourite Jpegs and why-by Steve Roake (third time)

In this seventeenth version of my favourites and why in the absence of any support from you the readers, I have in desperation selected my three favourite Duo chariot photographs and Why I like them.

This process is made so much easier since there aren't too many Duo chariots out there to pick from. My choices here stem from a joy of colours and that ingredient of a great backdrop by which those colours are exquisitely shown off against. A balloon colour scheme is definitely a demonstration by the owner of their own personality and the self expression of their own values.

Now this might sound like a load of old cobblers to some of you, but if you think about it, how do you come up with a colour scheme for a new balloon when you have a blank canvass and a full pallet to choose from?

The first balloon that I have selected is probably one of my three favourite balloons ever. The mixture of a silver background and the full spectrum of rainbow colours against a white snow scene is just sheer bliss as far as I'm concerned, coupled with the fact that it invariably photographed only at Chateau D'oex just adds to the exclusivity of the jpeg. Forgive me but I believe Sandy Mitchell took the photo, for which I'm grateful; however I'd rather see it in the flesh myself. I believe that it is owned and operated by the Swiss Ultramagic dealer who certainly maximised on his ability to manipulate the company logos to suit his environment, a feat I think he has done admirably. HB-QTC is an Ultramagic M56 coupled to the companies Duo Chariot.



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HB-QTC Duo chariot





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My second choice reverts to my fascination with those Demonstration craft that graced the skies a few years ago . In this case it's a Duo chariot that belongs to Neil Lindsay. I don't know what it was about Thunder and Colt at that time but they used a beautiful hew of yellow as their primary colour with once again rainbow colours cascading around the envelope.



G-ILEE, No idea where this was taken but I suspect Parham Park.

Third and final contribution for this month was harder to decide upon Since firstly I didn't intend to do this month's quota of content but there again am I surprised I was let down by a lack of support from you guys ? If the trend not to support this section continues, then it will simply be binned (as a bad idea).



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G-BVDY Cameron C60 Duo of Pauline Baker and Malcolm White



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The choice of G-BVDY as my third favourite was easy. This is because I have seen this balloon in various guises over the years. It was once owned briefly by Jonathan Dyer and married to a collapsible basket, after which it found its way to Ireland and its present owners Pauline Baker and Malcolm White. I even saw this balloon briefly over Easter still in great condition but in this photograph taken by Bob Garnett, it was basking in the sunshine of Chateau D'oex.

Many thanks to myself for the contributions but this section is constantly a struggle for me, I know not why. So who is going to be next to submit? Contributions for future editions of my three favourites and why to [steve.roake@ntlworld.com](mailto:steve.roake@ntlworld.com) please. Do it today folks and share those memories.

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

The facebook section called cloudhoppers has a good healthy bunch of just over one hundred members. Recently there was a thread about Thunder and Colt hopppers and as a by product of this thread, John Hilditch posted some photos relating to a project called the "Sky Bike". With some extra information from Robin Bachelor, it transpired that Colin Wolstenholme may have had a hand in the process.

A short Text to my good friend Colin revealed that the whole idea and execution of the project was Colin's project for the 1980 Icicle Meet which was held at Marsh Benham. It transpires that the whole caper was devised for a challenge to be screened on Tomorrows World with stunt star Eddie Kidd trying to clear 20 busses.

The outfit was married to a Kawasaki Z650 motorcycle with a detachable sidecar and the results can be seen below in the accompanying photographs. The custom bottom end was married to Colin's sponsored T&C 56A envelope "Bandag".



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As a stunt this was definitely funny, as a serious proposal probably not.

## 5. Homebuilt section-

Another month with no content, so therefore once again, it remains empty. Please notify me of the status of your projects so that we can let the readership now what you are building and more importantly can incorporate all the useful tweaks into their projects too.





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## 6. 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.



Metz 2009 and Geoff Lescott in G-CFPS.



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Again Metz 2009 and Bernie Williams captures Phil Griffiths at ease  
in G-RBMV his Cameron O-31



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## Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

Only a couple of weeks until the Pidley BBML inflation day, hope to see some fine hopper activity at this popular event.

## Adverts / For Sale / Wanted section

### Martin Axtell offers G-CCKZ for sale



Customcraft 25A, 14hours total time .Multicoloured and lightweight envelope with customcraft bottom end which splits into two like a lindstrand system in red and vgc. Comes with 60litre tank .All Annex 2 so no messing around with EASA etc ...flies great and all paperwork in order.

Ready to go £5000ono,  
Telephone Martin on 07786622802 or email  
[mjaballooning@hotmail.com](mailto:mjaballooning@hotmail.com)



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## **G-BVUI is for sale**

Lindstrand 25A. 1994. G-BVUI. 96 hrs. Lindstrand colours (no words) in red, yellow & blue. New EASA C of A on delivery. £1700 Zebedee Balloon Service - 01488 681527, 1700 British Pounds= ( + - ) depending on exchange rate: \$2700.00 Photo of balloon is the first one on the Zebedee list under envelopes. web page:

<http://www.zebedeelist.co.uk/list/list.php?section=envelope>

I also have the matching Lindstrand hopper bottom end that I might be willing to part with. If anyone is interested, E-mail me at [advanced@gci.net](mailto:advanced@gci.net), or call me in Alaska at 907 242-5860

Jack advises that £3750 buys the complete kit.



Photo thanks to Zebedee list- Peter Bish





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Pauline Baker offers for sale EI-DJZ Lightweight Lindstrand 31A



Pauline Baker offers for sale her Lightweight Lindstrand 31A envelope. a rarity at any time, this record breaking envelope has only done 30 odd hours, of which 20 are free flown. Whilst artworked, the envelope has a current C of A and ARC and weighs in at a very respectable 36kgs weight. £4000 secures the envelope. Call Pauline via email [ballooning@eircom.net](mailto:ballooning@eircom.net) or phone +353 46 9483436 during office hours.



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### And Finally.

Membership is currently a healthy 444 members and numbers are generally rising. All articles for inclusion in future issues will be gratefully received by your editor. Please forward them to [steve.roake@ntlworld.com](mailto: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.