



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 52

November / December 2011

Happy Christmas to you all

Ed-Speak – October is a great month for hopping, and every OMM is special for different reasons, and this one is no different. The venue, the topography of the land, nice folks, great weather and sociability all add up to a mixture that has success written all over it.

A good familiar turnout enjoyed a great few days in North Wales where we enjoyed the hospitality of Welshpool Airport and some beautiful flying in the mountains. Yet another OMM continues the remarkable trend of successfully achieving flying slots. I have never understood what it is about OMM's that get to me but I always come away from them invigorated and buoyed up about our kind of flying and with a renewed desire to write up the experiences so whilst that remains, let's talk hoppers!

Steve Roake



G-ONCB LBL 31A recently changed hands, now with Martin Freeston and Sandy Mitchell. – jpeg by Sandy Mitchell.

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Essential Extra's / Tech Talk

The Features Section- **All I want for Christmas is a Bonanno Hopper.** **By Pauline Baker**

The history of Hopper design has seen quite some progression since its early days. Maybe a lot of the design improvements have been responsible for the increased numbers of balloon pilots joining this unique section of lighter than-air flight.

Despite the number of improvements, there are still some pros and cons, irrespective of which manufacturer you go to. A number of them have been addressed in Paolo's new design as follows;

One of the niggly little issues I experience with hopper flying is the parachute line getting looped around the frame if you are turning a lot during a flight. I tend to use the same hand and rotate in the same direction so it is an issue for me.

Well not any more, if you are lucky enough to own one of Paolo Bonanno's new hopper bottom ends - the man is a genius.

The design of the burner and swivel ring means there are no lines getting looped around the frame and the wires from the envelope are connected to short wire tie-lines that are mounted inside the swivel ring. This leaves the swivel ring free of carabineers etc, making the bottom-end easy to turn.

I was in my element on the test flight taking photos and admiring the views of the Mondovi countryside without checking if the lines were getting themselves in a twist and with no fear of getting squashed fingers.

Another issue Paolo addressed is fuel management - no mirrors and neck craning to check the fuel level anymore - his new invention takes the work out of that too. Paolo has reinvented the dip tube - his design has a cable running from the dip tube, which is attached to an LED display mounted on the burner handle that indicates the fuel level left in the tank.

There are coloured LEDs that illuminate to show specific levels in the cylinder. A buzzer sounds when 20% remains in the cylinder so you can start looking out for a landing site.



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Seen here, short cables keep the ring free of carabiners- jpeg P.Baker

The bottom end allows for either one or two flight tanks with a very simple fuss-free manifold system for tank changeover. The bottom end is designed to accept Worthington cylinders, however, if Paolo is given the exact dimensions of any alternative tanks he will manufacture the relevant brackets to suit.

As the burner has the luxury of two pilots you don't have to worry about your pilot lights during a tank switchover. Paolo laughs as he tells the reasons behind all these little extras "I always see the hopper pilots checking if they have a couple of strikers with them before take-off".

Like his Power-Plus burners, the burner is two-stage (when he first invented this for one of my record burners I named the second stage the "sh*t happens" stage). The burner is also height-adjustable (3 positions) by lining the upper frame up with different holes in the lower frame. For me, (a vertically challenged pilot) this is a very welcome comfort - no aching shoulders after a long flight.



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The sitting position is also more comfortable - you are sitting back a little more than in other hoppers which, I think makes it more relaxing. The harness is un-complicated and easy to use with quick adjustment straps and holders for your radio and GPS (and Paolo even had a pocket on his harness for his pipe!).

Don't forget that the Hopper bottom end is Annex 2 and would not qualify for use with a Type Approved envelope, but it is a great choice for homebuilt or other Annex 2 envelopes.



Clearly visible, the attachments take the carabiners clear of the swivel ring and the rip line and crown line attach clear of the bottom end –jpeg P.Baker

I won't go into a lot of detail about Paolo's 31 lightweight envelope but, suffice to say, it has been built to Paolo's normal high standard. It is made with ultralight silicone coated fabric



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and uses a custom Kevlar load tape (which is also used for the crown line). It weighs in at a very skinny 26kg (compared to our lightweight Lindstrand LBL 31A that I used for my AX4 distance record flight at 36kg).



After landing, Nicole's aspect of the design was put to the test - a set of nylon wheels, that were discreetly packed in a pocket under the seat, were quickly and easily attached to the frame enabling it to be wheeled around like a small suitcase. This is ultralight flying at its best.

Footnote: I *could* be tempted to sell my Series 2 Lindstrand Hopper bottom end to fund one of Paolo's bottom ends, as we have a few Annex 2 envelopes tucked away - any offers contact flights@balloons.ie. Pauline Baker



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Malcolm White advises that the price for Paulo's Bottom end is a very reasonable 3200 Euros with around 400 Euros for the diptube tank gauge and carry bags. This seriously undercuts anything currently out there that's new .

History of the One Man Meet- by Steve Roake

Let me start by stating, I am the guy who got into ballooning to have a hopper. Earliest memories of those crazy guys at Flying Pictures having fun in their small nimble machines stoked my imagination.

Once I had achieved a license, there was never a doubt that a hopper would be next as it was only money that stood in the way! Along the way I discovered that those who hopped tended to meet up at an event called The One Man Meet, an annual affair at the end of the ballooning season where they always tended to fly. After crewing for friends at this event, confirmation (as if it were needed), of the need for one emerged. This naturally took time, patience and long hours to get the dosh together to be able to buy my first hopper. This then led to a quiet field to get used to how it worked, followed by a couple of dodgy flights and then it was time to go to the OMM.

What an event it is! Now into its 27th year, just joining the ranks of participants was an achievement. However if you get into conversation with the established entrants you realise that it has evolved over those years and a recent fact finding mission with Phil Dunnington and Peter Bish exposes the history shared by these two who seem to have been to most or all of them between themselves.

The actual event isn't confirmed in age but piecing their tales together makes the picture clear.



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It transpires that the first meeting was held at Culham in Oxfordshire in 1984 and remaining there until 1986.

Initially the event was held in June but suffered from a lack of entrants, even after transferring to Churchill in Somerset from 1987 until 1991. The significant change of date to the current format occurred in 1992 when the event moved to Cunsey in Cumbria, with the thought process that this would attract more participants as now commercial pilots would be able to attend.

This new date in October suited those hardworking individuals who wanted to let their hair down and party at the end of a busy calendar year. The new date suited more flyers and so became the norm from then onwards.

From 1992 until 1996 the venue was still Cumbria for the fantastic flying and tremendous views and scenery but it changed location from Cunsey to initially Wray Castle (93, 94) then onto various launch sites in 95 and onto Sawrey/ Ambleside for 1996. This particular year nothing free flew and only G-BSMM the T&C demonstrator tethered.

Phil thought that by taking the event around the country it may inspire people who don't travel to get involved in the event. So for 1997 the event moved to Wales on the start of a four year session of Welsh hospitality. In 97 the host town would be Llantony near Abergavenny. Then the following three years apparently it was held at a nice hotel in Crickhowell (1998-2000 inclusive).

For 2001 and in the wake of Foot and Mouth disease, the event was held at Ashton Court Bristol. In 2002 the



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OMM went to Llanvihangel Gobian (but this needs confirming).

In my humble opinion, of all the OMM's I've attended, 2003 was way the best with the event centred on the country house hotel of Llansfarrant Court Hotel Raglan in Monmouthshire. Being able to tumble out of bed, to the briefing downstairs, and then flying from the lawns in front of the hotel was lovely.

Also big leather chairs with open fires when being social and then staggering upstairs to bed takes some beating. Yes it was expensive, but when you've got all year to plan for it, there isn't an excuse for missing out on the fun. Phil Dunnington was away on duties so the event was run in his absence by Clive Bailey.

In 2004 we all traipsed off back to the lakes, the event being based in Bowness in Windermere. This event was spaced out around the area, and for some reason people weren't all together properly. Venue Pubs couldn't cope with the demand as hopping was taking off in popularity with the launch of the Cloudhoppers Newsletter and Yahoo Forum, numbers generally were up.

The following year 2005, saw the event travel to Monmouth Monmouthshire. Then in 2006 the National Trust grounds of Ilam Dovedale in the peak district hosted the event. Probably the most hoppers in the air at one time flew here with 29 doing the Saturday pm slot. Yours truly being the only one grounded with no crew!

In 2007, there was some debate as to where the OMM was held. Officially it went abroad to Italy where about 15 participants held an event to celebrate 25years of the OMM (even though it wasn't).

Those who choose not to go hastily organised the "Not



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The OMM" which was hosted by Colin Wolstenholme at Husbands Bosworth Gliding club in Leicestershire. Tastes were catered for on all levels but the overall theme was about getting together and socialising in the clubhouse.

In 2008 The OMM was back on track and once again returned to Husbands Bosworth with the Barolo meet scheduled a week later for those who wanted to do both events.

2009 saw the event head to Somerset and the unusual setting of Wookey Hole.

Based at an unusual Hotel venue, the resultant flying was superb over the Mendips. Good weather once again surprised us with over 20 hoppers in the air on the Sunday morning slot. With the success of 2009, for 2010 once again the event headed to Wookey with more great flying.

Bang up to date 2011 the OMM convened at Welshpool Airfield in Powys. This venue proved popular with plenty of flying and good socials had by all who attended. The 2012 event has been planned for the same venue, over the 2nd weekend of October.

Participants seem to number around 30 these days and so if this has wetted your appetite for the One Man Meet, get yourself a hopper and attend the next one.

Steve Roake



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People over the years always say, "what's it like to fly a hopper"? in an effort to try and reply I've written this article, trying to answer the eternal question.

So What's it like to fly a hopper?-by Steve Roake

I am frequently asked, "What's it like to fly a hopper"? So at the recent One Man Meet held in Mid October at Welshpool Airfield in Powys, I took the time to think about it analytically with a view of passing on the sentiments and feelings that go with flying one.

Saturday Morning and after a misty delay its time to start preparation for the imminent flight. The gear is so compact that it fits into a family car without the trailer and so we find a small quiet spot to start the assembly process. Moving the bits from the car in their tailored bags, the equipment goes together in an organised way which you can do with one crew mate or if you're brave alone.

This is a very singular process that tends to be done by the pilot as ultimately they have to check everything before they fly and it makes sense to be systematic in the build up. You tend to get the seat unit out of the bag and strap the fuel tank onto it using webbing straps, followed shortly by the extension tubes that secure the burner onto the seat. The safety pins that hold the units together tend to go opposite ways to ensure safety should one fall out (which never happens). At this stage, the excitement is building as you perform a burner test. The quick links attach to the swivelling top ring on the burner and when the mirror is in place the bottom end of your hopper is complete. At this stage it is important to attach the bottom end to the vehicle and then we go on to unfurl and attach the envelope carabiners.

The small dedicated fan is now started and with your crew friend holding the crown line taught keeping the parachute nicely tight and you open the mouth and the beautiful little hopper inflates until it holds its own shape. With the fan either off or close enough to turn off you straddle the seat unit and ignite and hot inflate in a leisurely way ensuring a steady transition is accomplished to the vertical plane and you get your crew to apply weight on the tank so you can transfer yours and get seated. The pulse is now quickening as the process seems to accelerate because you only have one tank of fuel and you don't want to waste it.



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With the straps pre adjusted before inflation, you engage the leg straps and/or the side straps and top straps and now you are becoming one with the machine as it fits tightly around you. You start your instrument attaching (either individually or on one of the various pods available), get your striker around your neck, make sure you have a map and then move onto the final checks. All of this is done whilst checking the balloon has enough hot air in it to keep it pressurized.

Releasing the parachute from its tabs , and working your way down the envelope using the acronym "preclimb", you suddenly are ready to go. With a visual check around you for conflicting traffic you get buoyant and detach from the car and ease into the skies.

The sensation of release is simply awesome. Now free of restraint the balloon gracefully ascends into the air amongst the other 21 hopppers or Techno balloons present. A quick 360 spin using the swivel feature ensures the airspace around is clear and i descend close to the ground to enjoy my favourite flying in a hopper, contour flying!

It isn't how high you fly in the hopper, It's more about realising what elements are involved that hit you as you traverse the countryside. The feelings of fresh light winds layering and the freshness of the dew against your skin making the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end. You are part of the craft and in these small balloons that means constant inputs as they seldom stay level. This is a good thing as you hone your flying with lots of small inputs which instantly result in lift or fall.

This is the sports car of the ballooning world and quickly you realise the more you know about the craft, the more it will reward you. The sense of flying them is really apparent and more than a bigger balloon you feel everything that's happening. The whole sensual perception experience is heightened when flying the hopper and you feel the freshness of the surroundings, the stillness around you and you hear the sounds around you greater than in a basket since the sound isn't interrupted.

These machines are great in light and variable conditions where you can loiter over things that take your fancy, but equally they will land easily in stronger conditions since there is little mass connected with a reasonably large parachute . The secret of a faster landing is in the planning and obviously to find a field large enough that you get into early.

One tip that id pass on to any budding hopper pilot is just before you land, carry out a 360 degree turn on the swivel



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to ensure nothing is around you and more importantly that the ripline hasn't got tangled and caught up in the bottom end of the envelope rigging and will operate properly.

Then it's a case of working your way down towards the chosen landing spot and turning approximately 45 degrees to the direction of travel and use your legs as an anchor to slow down the descending balloon, landing on your chosen side. The added bonus is that packing away takes no time at all and with the envelope bag with you, more often than not you have it in the bag prior to the crews arrival.

My First Hop- Chris Dobson gives us his views.

My first hopper flight took place in 2006, although my love of Cloudhoppers started a long, long time before that. As far as I'm concerned I'm lucky in that I grew up at a time when ballooning in the UK was really starting to take off (no excuses for the pun) and people and companies were buying balloons left, right and centre.

It was also a time where in comparison to today's ideologies that special shapes need to carry lots of people and be backed up by another large passenger carrying craft, balloons were much, much smaller. My childhood was spent going to balloon meets "crewing" for my father, when in reality, I was just another child addicted to small basic special shapes, their tiny, curious backup craft and all the magic and beauty of that goes with hot air ballooning.





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It was almost a rule that if you wanted to sponsor a balloon in the late 1980s, it didn't matter what else you bought, there would be a Cloudhopper with your name on it. Turn up to any balloon meet and Cloudhopper's were a normal sight. I was in love and it is no surprise that 20 years or so later I only own two balloons, a 1980s built special shape (Choc Dips) and a Cloudhopper!

Anyway, this isn't my life story, Steve wants people to read this Newsletter not fall asleep, so back to first flights Mr Dobson!

As a result of my childhood, and being totally, madly, stupidly, fascinated by Cloudhoppers I would jump at any opportunity to get near, look at, or simply talk to people about them (especially Mike Webb at Lindstrand's, who spent many an hour answering questions about them!).

Having checked out and become a pilot, and accepted that my father was probably talking sense when he said I couldn't buy myself a Cloudhopper until I had some experience flying normal balloons, there was a bit a delay to my first hop. I just used the time talk to current hopper pilots about flying techniques, Cloudhopper equipment and anything else Cloudhopper related that popped into my brain.

First hop time. Having got some hours, and very fortunately, being in a position where I could buy a new hopper, I placed an order with Lindstrand's for a 25A. It's a full kit designed to look like a Cadbury's Creme Egg (in homage to one of my favourite special shapes from my childhood). It was delivered in Autumn 2006. I was happy, it rained, and rained, and rained some more.





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As a result, my first hop became my first tether. In a few minutes of tranquil weather at dusk I stood my hopper up in my parent's back garden, which was only just big enough to cold inflate, purely to have a look at it!

My memory of that evening is just being happy. This was my very own Cloudhopper. And thinking that it was a good job I hadn't burnt it as everyone had told me that "Cloudhoppers get burnt regularly, especially if you tether them, as they have small mouths and no gimbal on the burner ". What the neighbours thought I have no idea.

My first free flight came a month later when there was finally some decent weather. With the forecast looking OK I decided I would go and fly alongside my father on a passenger rides flight he had booked in. It was something different for the passengers to look at!

People always go on about Cloudhoppers being great because they pack away into the back of a car, and that is true, if you own a small fan. If you don't then you have issues. As a result I ended up dragging a big heavy trailer out with my tiny hopper in it for its first ever flight, purely to accommodate a fan. I now own a small 3hp fan that fits in a 4x4.

Getting to the launch site, the weather was fine so it was go, go, go. Having previously tethered the Cloudhopper made my life far easier. I knew how it properly fitted together. So nice and quickly everything was ready and we were cold inflating.



Cue fits of laughter from my crew as he realises there are more Velcro tabs holding the parachute in place during cold inflation on my Lindstrand 25A than there were on the Lindstrand 105A inflating next door! Having reasserted my full authority as a pilot and reminded the crew this is because of gore structure and is in no way of comical value, I set about hot inflating the Cloudhopper and getting airborne.



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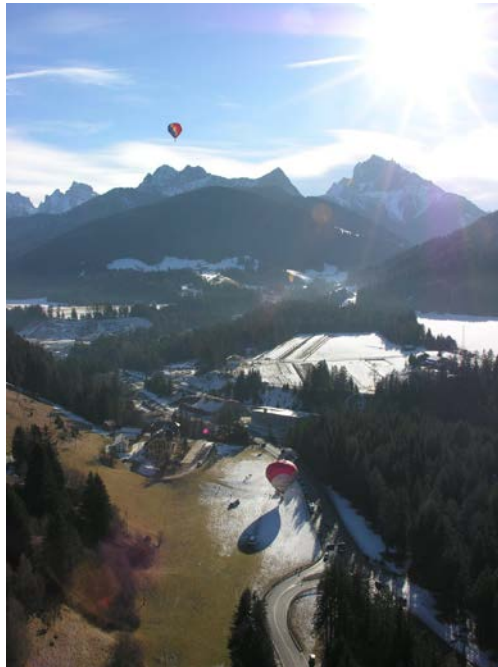
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It's at this point, you start recalling the years of talking and asking questions. "Plan the landing before you take off". "You land sideways, choose which side and empty those pockets". "Attach bag as padding". "Don't land in a stubble field in shorts" and so on and so forth.

With plenty of flying hours and a brain full of knowledge, I turned on the burner, I was nervous, who wouldn't be, I was about to be airborne in a Cloudhopper, 20 years of dreaming was about to become a reality.

I stood the balloon up, sat in the seat, looked out and proceeded to go "B*****S". I burnt the rip line! Well to be exact I melted the outer core. Rest of the balloon was fine, but still I wasn't happy. My new baby was hurt and I did it! Getting into the air in a Cloudhopper for the very first time, is a complete sensory overload. It doesn't matter how high you tether one, when there is no rope attaching you to something, everything grabs your attention. I've flown balloons solo a lot. I was very used to flying on my own before I ever flew the hopper, so the lack of other people didn't bother me. But the fact the Cloudhopper's bounce, spin, whistle etc. means that you spend that first flight looking purely at the balloon, checking everything over and over again, especially that small little mirror above your head.

After taking off, my first ever flight lasted for a simple 30 minutes, most of it spent over 1,000ft ensuring I avoided everything which allowed to me safely get used to what was happening around me without having the added worry about that tree/road/house (insert as appropriate).



This was my 2nd ever flight in a cloudhopper



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They say that Prior Preparation Prevents P*ss Poor Performance, and all the advice about planning the landing before I took off paid dividends. I could see a nice grass field on my track, crew watching, I'm going to land. The adrenaline kicks in. Up to this point I've forgotten it's my legs and not wicker that touch the ground first, but that survival instinct kicks in, and I dropped it in, touched down and ripped out. Stuff keeping it upright. Cue one big, big grin, lots more adrenaline and the delights of packing away a 25A Cloudhopper

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

Three Favourite Jpegs and why-by Bill Teasdale

In this fifteenth version of my favourites and why I've taken a slight liberty as none of you have contributed this month. However Bill Teasdale, who frequently contributes jpegs taken from a vast collection of Photographs taken over the years, has just sent me some more gems. Three are included here.





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Marsh Benham January 1992 Colt 31A



Lindstrand 21A G-BVRL seen at Llantony OMM November 1997



Finally with this year's event in mind , seen at Chateau D'oex is
G-B-S-O-F taken January 1992



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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

This year like others, Graeme Houston has managed to sneak out for a winters hop in the Scottish snow. Like previous years, Graeme has videoed his flight and the quality of the video gets better each year. So whilst most of us can only dream of a nice snow lined hop, lease enjoy Graeme's latest hop.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjjiXr9WNwM>

certainly looked like a nice flight.

5. Homebuilt section- Paulo Bonnano's Hopper

Recently flown by Pauline Baker, this delightful looking hopper was manufactured by Paulo Bonnano. Technically a home built design , his attention to detail makes this a very nice design weighing in at only 26kgs.





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Interestingly, the scoop is unusual in its design. This 31K envelope features ultralightweight material, Kevlar load tapes and a Kevlar crown line.

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.



This Thunder Ax3 is in the hands of the British Balloon Museum and Library and was the subject of a freak power line fatality in 1994.



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This Balloon will be on display at the BBML inflation day at Boughton Hall near Kettering on May 18th.



Another Bill Teasdale photo – G-DHLZ Colt 31A at the Bristol Balloon Fiesta Ashton Court in August 1995



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Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

With immediate effect Tim Revel has stepped down from serving the UK market as an Ultramagic Dealer, his place is now taken by Richard Penny. Would just like to thank Tim and Hilary for all their support over the years on behalf of cloudhoppers .org and to wish Richard plenty of success.

Adverts / For Sale / Wanted section

Ultramagic H-42/05



Ultramagic H-42 (Year of Manufacture: 1996), believed to be C/N 05. Zero hours flown only 2 or 3 inflations. Possibility for attaching banners to envelope.

Price: € 5.500,- ex VAT. Contact: Pieter **Kooistra** joure, The Netherlands

Phone: +31 - (0) 513 - 417503E-mail: kooistrapieter@yahoo.co.uk



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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, 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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The Klein FAN Smaller is better!



Tiny but surprisingly powerful
inflation fans!

9 kg empty, 10.5 kg full (fuel
+ oil)

2.5 hp Honda engine

One fan easily inflates
balloons up to 2000m³

Two fans will blow your
socks off!

Contact Advanced, Inc.

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And Finally.

Membership is currently a healthy 431 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 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.

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