

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 182

October 2026

Greetings My avid readers.

I'm delighted to have you aboard, wherever I find you in the world. Welcome to edition number 182 of your favourite Newsletter. October's edition is always special to me, because it includes the One Man Meet review.

Thanks to those who have supported me through generous donations, but I would encourage all of you to support my efforts if you have enjoyed reading this over a prolonged period. **www.buymeacoffee.com/cloudhoppers** is where you have a chance to donate towards the running costs of the site. Thanks in advance and please don't go ballistic, I wouldn't expect anyone to donate more than £12 a year or theoretically a pound an edition. As I said this is voluntary but financial assistance would lead to more options for the growth of the brand, and I guess after nearly 22 years it is a brand. Therefore, I would ask you to feel generous if you can afford to be and support me, and for those who will, many thanks in advance.

So here is what we have for you in edition number 182 of the Newsletter:

- Ed Speak – The importance of the OMM.
- The 43rd Annual One Man Meet
- Reigersburg Balloon Festival Austria.
- Dates for the OMM 2027.
- Request for historical Cameron Hoppers Information and photos.
- New Balloons
- Second hand balloons-
- Manufacturer News-
- Gallery- More Photos
- Articles for inclusion are always welcome Anything for future inclusion to the usual email address please: steve.roake33@gmail.com many thanks in



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advance. Now please enjoy this edition of the world's only Hopper periodical brought to you with pleasure and kindness with all the most up to date information on our unique form of flying and longing for your support. I'm not after your wealth, just a small indication that all of my collective efforts over the years are still appreciated and that you enjoy the regular insights. Whilst some of you are generous, the majority still don't support me.

1,Ed Speak- The importance of the OMM.

You might wonder what is the One Man Meet, and why is held in such esteem by certain people? I would include myself in the group because to me, Hopping and the OMM go hand in hand. Now in its forty third year continuously, I have the pleasure of attending the last 24 without a break. The fact that it travels around the country is part of the attraction, taking in some beautiful vistas. I hope you don't mind, but when it proves to be unflyable, I always include details of what we did instead. Firstly, it highlights local attractions and gives you a sense of the region we are visiting, but more importantly it gives a flavour of the surrounding community. This year we were situated within 20 odd miles of Coventry which is pretty industrialised, however we found ourselves in beautiful countryside with loads of farms mainly farming Sheep with loads of fields with grass. The main feature apart from the main roads that bisect the region is the Grand Union Canal a previously important carriageway for goods in the historical past. Now used for pleasure purposes during the early 1900's it shipped Coal, iron ore and steel across the country linking the industrial North to London. This wasn't actually the first time the OMM had used Husbands Bosworth as a base for the event. We last visited in 2008. Hopefully this time around we might fly further as on the previous occasion it was foggy and so pilots flew across the grass airfield.

Elsewhere there were two other events in October, one in Austria one at the



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iconic Albuquerque festival. Thanks to those who helped me write reports on them both. So now let's crack on with the 182nd Newsletter. Regards to all, Steve Roake.

2, Feature Section

The 43rd Annual One man Meet

Following on from the 42nd OMM which was not really "satisfactory", based around Popham Airfield in Hampshire, John Tyrrell and Wendy Rousell were focussed on finding a more suitable site for 2026. Initially the focus was on a site in Mid Wales, however, the locals weren't in favour of more ballooning in their location so it was dismissed. With the time clock ticking, time was running out when John and Wendy got the suggestion of Husbands Bosworth Gliding Club which was negotiated with the help of Andy Austin. Whilst successful, the nearness of the process to the date meant that the number of participants would be lower than normal because there wasn't so long to book accommodation and to get organised. Coupled to this was a weather forecast that was degrading and with it less possibilities to fly. This was a pure shame because the week previous had been perfect for flying. With 43 years of the OMM and the two previous years being unflyable, there was a deep desire to ensure if at all possible not to let the trend continue. Trouble was there was a weather front coming through. We departed Surrey around 10am on the Friday morning, with about 120 miles to the destination, a leisurely drive would get us in the area early for the afternoon briefing and whilst others were cancelling left right and centre, I was committed as my good friend Francis Dickson had committed to joining Jim Findlay and myself and he was coming from Belfast Northern Ireland. We stopped at some services 20 miles short of our destination for nourishment, just as well as there was an accident which stopped the traffic dead. Fortuitously for us it cleared after about 20 mins and we arrived to the airfield café before the 3pm planned meeting time.

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Initially we were the only team present, before John & Wendy arrived. The forecast was non-flyable with upper winds forecast to be upper 25 knot plus. The following morning was also a right off so the weekend wasn't looking good. John told me that around 12 teams had indicated they might attend, and whilst Ian Chadwick didn't make it, Sue and Dave Champion (his crew) did, arriving a short while later. They were followed later by Gareth and Chloe Gray who arrived (but we never saw them again during the weekend). Alan Turner had indicated via the what's app that he and his wife would appear on the Saturday and would like to join in if there was to be a social gathering . This was a sentiment echoed by Tim Ward and so we discussed suitable possibilities with John and Wendy for local establishments who could cater for a crowd and they suggested the Wharf at Wheldon as a suitable pub so when we left the café I went and checked out the pub booking tables for 12 people (which ultimately went up to 14 in total). We were staying at a Premier Inn in Brownsover road Rugby (14 miles from the launch field), and so returned there for the evening, taking dinner next door in an adjoining restaurant. We already knew we didn't have to get up early for Saturday am briefing and so went into what to do when away from home mode, focussing on suggestions from Stuart Skinner and Wendy as to local points of interest. When you can't fly you get cultural. Saturday Morning arrived and with it a plan of action. The first place we were going to visit was an amazing man - made creation called Foxton Locks which were a series of eleven lock gates next to a museum formed in a staircase at Foxton near Market Harborough. Nicest thing about them was the fact that they were only 19miles or half an hour drive from our base camp. As soon as we arrived we knew this was a great choice as people there, from the canal society trust, were both passionate and enthusiastic about the site which straddles the Grand Union Canal.



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Constructed between 1898 and 1900 the site allows canal boats to ascend or descend some 75 feet and whilst it only opened and worked for some ten years , it was way ahead of its time (being likened to HS2), and created by Benjamin Bevan. However due to demand the site housed a unique Inclined plane system which had the ability to transfer two canal boats using steam power with pulleys as opposed to the lock flight . This system was designed by Gordon Cale Thomas comprising two caissons which balanced each other.

Each one would hold two narrowboats at the same time with vertical guillotine gates keeping the water in. the steam powered plant house held two engines producing 25 horsepower which meant you could travel up or down in 12 minutes as opposed to the typical 75 mins to operate the lock system. The process of using the locks took 25,000 litres of water which was utilised with adjacent overflow ponds .

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a4y-2JKPXm61DnAP6rJn0JawA82a09g/view?usp=sharing>

Sadly, the inclined plain was shut down in 1911 due to the substantial cost of running it . The attached museum was useful as a font of knowledge , there was also great food available from a canal side café at the bottom adjacent to a pub and we had a good time here. I would recommend it as a place to visit if you are in the area.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EgA1x1cFIWVP9Jtmy_mKr2MoyuCe_0rM/view?usp=sharing

Following on from this, Wendy had suggested a couple of places which we decided to also visit. Knowing the weather was still useless for flying we ventured down the road to the Ordinance Depot which was a reutilised site of a former army camp in Weedon Bec some 26miles south and close to both Northampton and Daventry. Again, a small museum detailed the sites previous history as a distribution centre for ordnance ideally placed centrally in middle England. With history dating back to 1802 when it was built and with access to the grand union canal it was a perfect place for horse drawn canal barges to transport munition and guns. Built on 153 acres of land and at one time housing 500 men in barracks, the site also had 121 military prison cells incorporated into it. During the first world war uniforms were also stored here and some of the ten major buildings were

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fitted with bomb proof roofs which helped especially in world war two with nearby Coventry getting blitzed. Decommissioned in 1965 the site has been repurposed with artisan trades and a café and currently work is underway to create Air b&b accommodation in one of the feature buildings. We soon realised we wouldn't be back for the 3-30pm briefing so indicated we would meet up with folks in the pub for 6pm. However, we weren't done yet. We then visited an eclectic motor themed site called Gasoline juice, followed by Industry and supply which was further south but unfortunately closed before finally finding a nice tea house at the old Dairy farm craft centre in Upper Stowe. From this location we headed for the pub at Weldon for the social event. Joining those mentioned earlier were Tim Wilkinson, Alan and Kirsten Turner, Tim Ward and Jono, and locals Andy and Jane Austin. It is always good at One Man Meets to have a social where various subjects get discussed at length. Good food and decent ales assisted and by the time we left there was an expectation that we had a fair chance of the morning being flyable. Knowing the alarm clock would blast at six am , we turned in in preparation for the opportunity.

Sunday morning delivered a bright sunny morning as we gathered by a bonfire site at the airfield. The reduced numbers were expectant although I still had doubts with the airfield being such an open site. The forecast was better than expected. Surface winds were predicted as 240 4-7 knots, 500ft winds 280/13 knots with 1000ft winds 300 degrees at 15, and 2000-foot winds 310/14 knots. The prediction was for it to deteriorate as the morning progressed so John suggested if you were going to fly go early. I set up behind a small hanger trying to get some cover with Ron Griffin (G-CMKB Bard 32), next to me. We were the only hoppers present but would be joined in the air by Alan Turner flying his Cameron C-60(G-CKIT) solo. and Andy Austin with Tim Ward flying Tim Wilkinson's Sackville Lavoie 56 G-CLLS.



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Photo by Alison Griffin.

Leaving the airfield, it was very clear that the wind at height was more than predicted. I registered 18.8 knots at 800 feet which is fast by anyone's standards. However, this means you know you are going somewhere. Initially I flew over Andy's home village of Sibbertoft, noting how many sheep were in the surrounding fields. Getting into a position where I could descend to see what the surface winds were doing I found it to be 7 knots on the surface. This was going to be a sporting flight. With the two larger balloons off slightly to my right and Ron behind me, I also noted little directional change with height. My track was a true 105 degrees and the higher you flew the wind remained similar speed.

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Keeping the OMM record alive- 43years, 39 flyable events.

Photo by Alison Griffin

Next thing to be aware of was the Kelmarsh Hall estate which has recently become balloon unfriendly unfortunately. Kelmarsh whizzed past at speed and I couldn't believe the extent of visibility with great views in every direction. I continued at pace towards Loddington noting that Alan had descended and appeared to be tracking to the left low level. As I approached where he was at, he resumed his flight climbing back to around 1000 feet. There was little variation of wind speed with height and in my mind I began thinking of where I would be

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landing and looking after the town of Kettering on my moving maps app I could clearly see wind turbines so I would have to wait until I would be around Great Addington before I would have serious options for landing. However, approaching Kettering town centre the wind suddenly slowed at lower level. I skimmed down the side of the Kettering golf course and then saw possibilities coming in the Kettering region just north of Burton Latimer. I then identified four grassy areas which I wasn't sure were all associated with schools, but descended to see if I was aligned with any of them. Crossing the A14 I suddenly noted the wind speed at 600 feet was down to 5 knots. The field to the right-hand side of me wasn't an option and Bishop Stanford School would have needed some left to achieve it. However shortly after this one, another school called Southfield School had possibilities.

I thought I might miss the first field on my track but maybe with luck and descended flying, I might just slide into the second field. Crossing Martin Road, I called out to a bystander asking if the field had access? He thought there was so I committed to my approach and final landing, arresting doing about 6 knots

which was a lot less than I had expected earlier. One hour and 2 minutes of flying, 12.9nm flown and I found access limited. Not a problem for me as we could pack the balloon away and haul it over a locked gate in Lewis Road. Whilst glad I'd had a decent flight which taxed me, my overriding thought was that the OMM

was once again flyable and thank goodness, this year we hadn't blanked again. Having packed away we returned to Husbands Bosworth Gliding Club Café for a well-earned cheap subsidised fry up breakfast. At less than £10 for a heaving full English, this was very good value for money.



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This is everything that flew – thanks to Wendy Rousell . Alan Turner flew G-CKIT solo and the silver one G-CLLS was Andy Austin with Tim Ward at the helm.

Time for reflection. Alan Turner commentated that whilst over Kettering he had a strong smell of molasses and his sense was of Weetabix, which John Tyrrell confirmed was their main UK depot and distribution plant. I was just so glad that we managed to fly all, be it in much reduced numbers. The record speaks for itself. 43 continuous years of the OMM, 39 of which have been flyable with the majority of them in October is impressive in anyone's eyes. Time to thank those who made it happen . John and Wendy , Andy Austin and all those who chose to support their efforts. The dates are set for 2027, and let's hope we have another cracking time, wherever we are based .

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Reigersburg Balloon Festival

Set in rolling hills pasture, surrounded by corn crops, Reigersburg is a scenic municipality situated in the south-eastern Stryrian hills of Austria, some 63kms east of Graz. Created by Thomas and Elisabeth Kindermann- Schon (Austrian Cameron Dealers) with help from Cameron's Nick Purvis, the event which lasted some four days at the start of October was new for 2026.



Photos by David Head.

Check in occurred on the Thursday with the first flight that evening . Nick describes the area as Hilly terrain interspaced with pasture and then every 5/10km open river valleys with cut crops. Most flights featured silly competitions .Featuring a total of 13 hoppers off and on including six Austrian Hoppers



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(OE-RLP, OE-SEP, OE-RAT , OE-SAI, OE-SRD and OE-SLC) , two English (G-CNCX and G-CJWY) and one Swiss (HB-QJJ), they managed to fly six out of six flights over the four days. They were joined by a Dutch Duo under a 77 envelope (PH-MAD).



Joined by a racer , some regular balloons and even a rides outfit , the recipe seems great and obviously sets the tone for future events. Thanks to David Head



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and Nick Purvis for their help with this article. Nick stated they had sociable events and a prize giving in a local castle and most people stayed in a chalet park walking distance from the launch field. Nick also hinted whilst the event will return it may not be next year due to commitments.



This photo by Bernard Fellingner seems to encapsulate the scenery perfectly.

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Albuquerque 2026

The traditional yearly Albuquerque Balloon festival also took place in October. Based at altitude in New Mexico, this annual pilgrimage features literally hundreds of balloons and vast crowds. Whilst the number of hitters is relatively small four regular hitters got into the air along with the chariot of Michael Glen. Two others were present but Patrick Smith didn't register his and so flew on the Thursday whilst Nathan W Deringer never got to fly his.



Pat McGrath and another hitter set off from the launch field Photographed by Kerry McGrath.



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Kerry McGrath reported that Husband Pat flew six days of the event only choosing to not fly on one occasion because the upper winds were tasty. He was joined in the air by Mar Issa, Jerry Paulin and Dan Walsh.



Patrick Smith flying Thursday



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Michael Glen flew his chariot with two envelopes during the event. Initially he flew the ex-Graham Bell Kubicek envelope before returning to Busy Bee (the shape).

3, New Balloons.(Nil again)

Proving we are in a recessionary period, another month where no one has ordered a new hopper to my knowledge.

4, Second Hand stock

Obviously this is just my own opinion on the state of the marketplace but sales of second-hand stock seems slow. Edd Shields has placed a reasonable price on his late father's Um H-42 full kit (G-CEAY) at £7500 for the complete balloon.



G-CEAY Um H-42

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Elsewhere Bruce Ross has reduced the price of his Um H-31 G-DVCI to £13,000 for the full kit, and finally there has been some interest in Andy Walkers LBL 35A G-CFAW, whether this will lead to the sale is currently unknown.

6, Manufacturing / Event News

The OMM 2027.

A date for your diary. Confirmed by John Tyrrell at the recent OMM, were the dates for 2027. Mark down October 1st to the 3rd 2027 with the venue to be confirmed nearer the time.

7, Gallery

This section is your editors' chance to find interesting photographs either from his own collection or from stuff submitted for the newsletter, or alternatively something that featured on the Cloudhopper's Facebook page during the month.

This time around I am celebrating significant anniversaries within our sector of the marketplace. This first dates back to October 1960 and a very significant date for Hopper pilots.

On the 22nd of October 1960, Ed Yost took what is arguably the first ever hopper flight in a Raven Balloon . It was the first ever free flight of a modern hot air balloon and took place at Bruner Army Airfield , located in Thayer County Nebraska USA.

Whilst the actual flight only lasted 23 minutes, and flew a mere 3 miles , what Ed did opened up the possibilities for normal people to enjoy the sport of Hot Air Ballooning. Therefore, I thought we should celebrate the 66th Anniversary of that momentous event . little did they know what would follow.



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Whilst grainy here it is flying



Also celebrating recently a birthday , here is Pauline Baker , Record breaker, in the smallest "real" hopper I've ever seen , G-CEHX the remarkable LBL 9A



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8, Finally

Request for historical information and photos on Cameron Hoppers

Those close to me know that I'm in the process of writing my second book. This appreciation of cloudhoppers over the years, will seek to be an almanac that puts the collective history of cloudhopping in one centralised place. I have a great start on this with chapters already written on Raven industries, Thunder and Colt, Lindstrand balloons and shortly Ultramagic. However, whilst I understand some of the Cameron history with regard to Cloudhoppers, I really would like to get the timeline in order and where possible include photographs.

Clearly there is a map of their activities which started I understand with a harness created by GQ parachutes who used to be in Woking Surrey, through many iterations including the Sky chariot with its twist grip throttle, to today's Millennium.

I have sought help on this from Nick Purvis at Cameron's but being a very busy man does lead to extended times where I get no response. So could anyone out there have the knowledge that would be prepared to impart it on to me please?

I also need photographic evidence of their envelope progression, wondering if G-BIBS the P-20 was in fact their first stab at producing a hopper envelope?

So if you have the time, and can help, please reach out to me thanks.

Just another plug about **buymeacoffee.com/Cloudhoppers**. Your support will go a long way to supporting ambitions I have for the site and the Newsletter. If in the past I have assisted you with either a valuation or with finding your new envelope, please remember the value I added to your quest to find your forever gem. Any contribution will be gratefully received and trust me, everything received will go back into the site, so please be generous within limits (no more than £12 for a



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year), or potentially a pound a copy. So, few of you have contributed so far and yet loads of you state how much you enjoy the read. Here we are at the end of August 2026 with the number of people subscribing still growing. We now find the subscription numbers to the Facebook page reaching over 4809 (up till the 24th Oct.) and still rising monthly. This is a great achievement with sustained growth as we navigate our 22nd year of publicity for Cloudhoppers across the worldwide community. All are welcome but, **I would emphasize that content is strictly on hoppers and Duo-chariots and not “general ballooning” and if we find those pesky adverts for constant Tee-Shirts, the publishers will be banned and anyone who “veer’s away” from the few rules we have, will be also treated the same way and their account will be deleted .**

Please send all submissions for future editions to Steve.roake33@gmail.com

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