



Cloudbopper News

Issue Number 120

December 2019

Hello again folks

Welcome to your December Newsletter.

Traditionally a quiet month for news so you won't be too surprised that then content in this edition of your favourite Magazine isn't so large this month. However, it is always the end of the year when we reflect on sales and we think of our wish lists for modifications we might like in the next design of hopper, so we delve into both of these issues in this edition of the magazine. There may be plans for a new design shortly and now is the time we can all influence the outcome.

As it is the season, may I take the opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and season's greetings for the new year. My eternal thanks to everyone who has contributed content for the magazine in 2019 and please continue to support what we are trying to do here in 2020. I hope Santa brings you everything that you have asked for but above all else, good health and I look forward to catching up with you all on a field real soon.

Here is what we have for you in this edition.

- Jan Smrcka 's hopper OK-YBA01
- Some movement in second hand balloons.
- Icicle 2020 details from Jonathan Harris.
- Recent second-hand purchases.
- The One thing you could change on a bottom end?
- Gallery pages

Please send to me your items for inclusion in future editions of the newsletter to the email address below

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None currently

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1, Ed Speak- A chance to look back on 2019

December is a time of year for reflection. A brief respite in time before we charge merrily into 2020. As usual for this time of year I get a chance to review what a year 2019 was in terms of Cloudhopping. For me personally, it was another successful year with some changes to try and create the environment where my flying was more rewarding by changing where I went. So out the window went Metz and in came things like the Easter meet in Temecula, which will be repeated in 2020 as I've just booked my flights to return.

Such is the way that I've analysed my flying, the desire to concentrate on hopping only meant the sale of my bigger balloon and so going forward I am hopping only. However, whilst the conclusion of my ambassadorial role for Cameron's meant the return of G-CJWY, my way ahead in regards of my future hopping requirements has been successfully sorted and news of the future will come in 2020. For now,

G-BYNW is my current stallion and what a trusty steed the H-34 is. Sometimes we forget the value in older craft and their ability to still deliver enjoyable flying potential for relatively little outlay. I expect her to be with me at the Icicle balloon Meet in January.

In terms of sales for 2019 the figures are pretty much as expected for the year. 2019 was in fact one of the leanest years for new balloons in recent times with only one Cameron (G-CLFF Z-42), and one Ultramagic (G-CLGY H-31), hopper added to the database. Probable reasons for this include the uncertainty of Brexit with regard to UK sales and a lot of second-hand stock availability at good prices with relatively low hours available at the same time meaning canny buyers had some good overall choices available to them.

Going into 2020, I know of some data already that shows it should be a better year going forward (more when I can). I would also suggest that now is a very good time to negotiate a brand-new product from any of the big three manufacturers. This doesn't take into consideration the recent arrival of the Adams "Ace" hopper which is doing very well.

Steve Roake

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2, Essential Extras – Nothing of Note

Apologies but I couldn't find anything of note for us hopper exponents of interest I even went as far as to look for stuff as a Christmas present but drew up blanks so this section is clear this month.

3, The Features Section. –

OK-YBA01 Kubicek 34,000.

Jan Smrcka is a very agreeable chap who has recently joined us. Finding us through his good friend Tony Shields from Hastings Kent (also a hopper pilot), Jan has a couple of PUT's he is currently training. Within a few short messages I'm being invited to some of his events in the Czech Republic. It seems that Jan is into various forms of flying and is keen to promote the potential pleasures of time spent in his homeland. His main event on the Calendar which he is keen to promote is in August at a place called Jihlava.



Jan Smrcka's Bottom end

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The subject of this article is quite a unique hopper which started life as a fairly early Kubicek envelope. Construction number 6 which was originally built in 1985, and was the first ever Kubicek with turning vents. Purchased some ten years ago, the envelope is mated to a fairly unique bottom end using two tanks and what appears to be an old thunder burner. Originally the bottom end had a horizontal tank but Jan rebuilt it using a vertical tank set up. The 980cubic meter envelope (34,600 cubic feet), is flown without a scoop and belies its years well.



OK-YBA01 Kubicek Hopper.

It is always interesting to receive information and photos of rare or interesting hoppers so if you have something a bit different feel free to send it in to me for inclusion in future editions of the magazine.

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The one thing you could change on a new Bottom End.

Recently in conversation with a friend, they let slip that a Cameron Balloons may, (note the MAY), be thinking of revisiting their Cloudhopper design to incorporate a recently revamped burner system.

With this in mind I contacted my friend Craig Moore who is a director at the Bristol based manufacturer. He intimated that the design team "might" look into mating the recently released Stratus Neo manifold block to a cloudhopper bottom end but nothing was set in stone.

This is the holy grail for an engineer like myself so immediately I asked could I have input into any future thoughts on changing the current product as this is a subject so close to my heart. This is a topic which frequently comes up in conversation and the two things that always surface as the most popular modifications desired are.

- A burner that Gimbals
- Some form of fuel gauge that doesn't involve moving your head through 180 degrees to look at a mirror.

However, as this is something that may or may not happen, now is the moment of opportunity for you the readers to communicate your desires and wishes with what, if anything, you'd love to change. It could be as simple as the modification I did to my mark 2 LBL hopper bottom end which I added one-inch thick memory foam to the seat bolster. This simple yet effective addition transformed the comfort level.

It is always that one thing that somebody else has done to their hopper that makes you think, ah yes that's a really good modification and I ought to carry across the idea to mine, but when a manufacturer is considering change it could be the one essential element that was missing that could transform the ownership experience for the better so I urge you to have a good think and see if you can think of something that has grated for a time and could be put right.

There is no time like the present to effect change!

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5 Interesting Photos



With thanks to Kevin Mclaughlin for the photo , G-NLCH LBL35A
Is now with its second owner , Sean Simmington of Eccles.

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6, New Allocations This Month / Changes of Ownership

Not unexpectedly – Nothing allocated in November for this section.

7, Second Hand Balloons

At a time of the year when you wouldn't expect any news of sales leading up to Christmas, news appears of three recent changes of ownership.

Firstly, the LBL35A G-NLCH that used to be owned By Steve Lacey, has moved slightly to another Norfolk owner in Sean Simmington from Eccles, although this is yet to be confirmed on G-INFO I know the information to be correct. Secondly and more recently Andy Booth confirmed recently that he is the new owner of G-ISOB the former Chris Dobson owned Cameron O-31. This may make an appearance at the Icicle Balloon Meet (weather dependent), and Andy has big plans for his new craft including removing the artwork going forward when he can schedule getting replacement panels applied. Thirdly, and registered on 1st October to Mark Stelling is G-MUTE the old Motorola liveried Colt 31A. Going forward there remains some tidy examples available with both G-OINN and G-XAIM, (Both Ultramagic H-31's) available through Glen Everett, I'm unaware of the completion of the sale of G-BVZX Chris Monks Cameron H-34 so suspect it's still for sale and I do know that Dave Mc Cutcheon is still looking to sell Colt 31A G-PIXE. Joining all of these is the Per Lesser Cameron H-34 G-BZBT which seems cheap at 3250 Euros (envelope only).

8, Manufacturer / Event News/ Industry News

The 2020 Icicle Balloon meet has opened its entry list, and once again this well-run annual event has provided information via Jonathan Harris regarding what is occurring. Unfortunately, Hoppers no longer get the discount they previously enjoyed on entry fees but if you book early you can save five pounds with the entry fee £20 in advance and £25 on the day. There is also an official badge that can be purchased to commemorate the event if that floats your boat. See all the details below.

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7. Gallery Pages –

Your Editor's choice of New and unusual topical balloons.



Recently purchased By Mark Stelling, G-MUTE is a Colt 31A.
Photo by Sandy Mitchell.

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Icicle Refrozen Balloon Meet 2020 Registration & Dinner Bookings now OPEN!

The Icicle Refrozen Balloon Meet Committee are delighted to announce that the 5th Icicle Refrozen Balloon Meet will take place on Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th January 2020 at Donnington Grove Country Club on the North West edge of Newbury, Berkshire.

The 3-4-40 Region BBAC welcomes balloonists from across the country to attend this iconic event which is a spectacular location for flying, accommodation, trade stands & social. The Icicle Refrozen Balloon Meet remains informal, un-sponsored and open to all balloonists.

We invite you to join us for dinner on the Saturday evening, where we are delighted to announce that Brian Jones will be our guest speaker. As many of you will know, Brian was co-pilot for the first successful around the world balloon flight in Breitling Orbiter 3. Launching on the 1st March 1999 from Chateau D'Oex, Switzerland, Breitling Orbiter 3 covered a distance of 45,755km landing in Egypt after 19 days, 21 hours & 47 minutes.

In recognition of his achievements, Brian received awards including the Harmon Trophy, the Hubbard Medal & The FAI Gold Air Medal. Brian also received an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 1999. In recent years, Brian and his wife Jo have travelled the world promoting their outstanding charity work.

Entry fee for one Hot Air Balloon of any size participating in Icicle Refrozen 2020 is £20.00. Early registration will close at midday on Thursday 2nd January 2020. Entry fee for one Hot Air Balloon of any size " on the day" will be " £25.00.

Further details, including registration and dinner booking forms are now LIVE and can be accessed via the Icicle Refrozen Balloon Meet website

www.icicle-refrozen.com.

Jonathan Harris

3-4-40 Region BBAC Secretary & Even



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Facebook membership continues to rise with the current level of 1346 (correct to the 1st December), current and still rising. Let's hope this trend continues as the popularity of hopping embraces even more people. All articles for inclusion in future issues will be gratefully received by your Editor a week before the end of each month please. Please forward them to steve.roake33@gmail.com

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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