



Issue Number 45

November/December 2010

Merry Xmas Everyone,  
As you all sit down and contemplate the year that is ending, we tend to reflect on the things accomplished and when it's not possible to fly; there is nothing better than to indulge in some balloon reading. Whilst reflecting on achievements, congratulations finally to Mark Schemilt on his ratified Ax1 record that has finally been recognised. I look to other magazines to see what offerings they have for Christmas, and in keeping with the trend I have for you this month as a "Christmas Special", an all areas report from a recent trip to Ultramagic Balloons in Igualada Spain, delving into the DNA of the company and a good look at the product that interests us, The Techno 50.

### Contents

In this 45th edition I have for your reading the following choice subjects;

- 1, Ed Speak- The future looks bright
- 2, Essential Extra's -
- 3, The Features Section-featuring the following submissions:
  - Tony Jay writes about his Barolo experience
  - Editor's trip to Ultramagic Balloons limited.
  - The Techno 50- a look into the lightweight system
  - Eric Van Dooneward hops in Portugal
  - My Three favourites and why by Paul Sweatman

#### **4. Updates for the Newsletter/Website/ Forum talk**

- Request for help please.
- Mark Schemilt finds a Czech hopper
- Graham Houston's festive Hop.

#### **5. Homebuilt Section**

**6. Gallery Pages**- Another mixed choice of hoppers, selected by your editor

#### **7. Manufacturer News / Events / Updates**

- Content for the Icicle Meet

#### **8. For Sale /Wanted Section**

- Um H42 for sale.

#### **9. Last and not least.**

- The Ultramagic Four!

#### **1. Ed Speak by Steve Roake** - The future looks bright

Normally the annual review of the year starts now, but rather than dwell on things gone by, I'd rather share with you positive sentiments I have for future ballooning development. Having just returned from Igualada Spain where Ultramagic Balloons have their headquarters, let me tell you, here is one company that isn't sitting back on its laurels milking the large balloon market only. In a refreshingly open approach to my questioning on future plans and specific and direct questions about future plans for elements of our market sector, the prominent exponent of lightweight flying reiterated their drive towards technically excellent development and progression for the benefit of all. Sounds like corporate speak I know, but remember I have no ties to any manufacturer and base my prose on what I have seen and know to be in development stage right now. Based on these leaps coming into production, we are all looking at a serious step forward.

The way they have set about looking at every aspect of their business is refreshing and it gives you a buzz just to be aware of what is coming. Further details later in the magazine, but be aware due to commercial restraints I cannot reveal specific examples although some are known to me.

Steve Roake.

## 2, Essential Extra's-

## 3, The Features Section

### Tony Jay -Reports from The Barolo OMM

“Bring it on” Barolo – Tony Jay

So how did it come about that I ended up hopping in Italy at Pietro Contegiacomo’s One Man Meet? I bought Tony Bubb’s LBL 25 in June (while my girlfriend took a conveniently timed holiday leaving me with the chequebook). G-EECO is a very nice lightweight package including a titanium tank and a 38kg envelope (which is fortunate as it lives up a set of steep and narrow stairs in the spare bedroom).

My only previous hopper flight was limited to 40 minutes of “very low flying” in Paul Spellward’s 21A G-OFOR in 1995. I was hoping that the confidence of using modern kit along with a 60 litre tank would mean I would be less anxious than my previous experience.

So 12 flights (and some minor burn damage) later I found myself signing up for the One Man Meet weekend in Barolo, Northern Italy. The main logistical problem was sorted by Peter Mossman generously driving out the UK based balloons, allowing the rest of us to fly to various airports. The cost was sweetened for me by accidentally winning a Wall’s sausages “Bring it on Britain” competition to “Fund my Passion” who sent me a small cheque in exchange for being associated with sausages.

We arrived at Milan airport at lunchtime on Friday, picked up a hire car and drove to the afternoon briefing in time to be reunited with our kit for the first of 5 potential slots. As our tanks had come out from the UK purged, Paolo provided us with cylinders to fly with or decant from. There was also the

opportunity to look at Paulo Bonano's new hopper burner – as expected a wonderful piece of engineering.

So to the flying; about 10 of us took off and flew north past Borolo. The scenery is (of course) beautiful, small towns on hill tops, vineyard on the sides of the hills and a couple of rivers. The plan therefore was to find a field that does not contain expensive vines nor is made of water. I took the lazy approach and tried to follow Jackie Hibberd (in Ikea). I had been one of her passengers in a 1992 while I was still a PUT so assumed that she knew what she was doing. She landed in a nice field by a river so I followed her in a few minutes later. I was treated to being pulled by her and Hans to the corner of the field while waiting for my retrieve, I had time to inspect Jackie's Smart Car and home built trailer combo. This is particularly clever as the trailer collapses to fit inside their motor home and then the trailer 'A' frame is reused to tow their car behind the motorhome. A Smart car is not an obvious retrieve vehicle, but it is so light it seems to float over the field.



*A Smart retrieve*

Dinner was found at a local eatery (Italy does not seem to be short of places to eat, but one has to be careful as when it is out of the tourist season many are closed). The meet deal (one by which you got a lot more than what you paid for) included 3 nights for all the teams in a local hotel. We checked in, swapped stories with the other teams and got ready for the morning flight.

Bad weather is always a problem in ballooning, unless you are in a country with 300 flyable days of the year. However, our Saturday morning flight was the second and last flight before the rain came. We had then experienced of

the other 65 days. A very gentle northerly greeted us in morning. Apparently these are the local conditions, up the valley at night and down the valley in the morning. We had been set a minimum distance task and if you were clever a box looked possible. I took the low slow northerly to start with and then went up to find out what I could get at 3000ft. I discovered that I got “a bit scared” and there was not quite enough southerly to get back to the launch site. The rest of the flight was “vine hopping” followed by a nice dry landing on the road.



*Nice views and my singed nomex*

That was the end of the flying for us. The clouds had been rolling in during the flight and the rain followed soon afterwards. It then rained relentlessly for the next two days. The Italians could teach the English something about rain; it was not “drizzle” but full blown “drenched to your underwear” type rain. We used the enforced grounding to explore Turin (with Porticos) and Milan (more Porticos). The conclusion was that they were both pretty places with nice food, but a bit damp (unless you were standing under the porticos).

Pietro's organisation also extended to getting us free entry to the museums of Barolo (including the newly opened wine museum). The hospitality continued to the final (free) evening's dinner which included a different bottle of Barolo with each course. I think there were about 8 courses but memory is a bit hazy on that bit.



*Cloud arriving during the last flight*

So in summary, Pietro's enthusiasm for this meet (in memory of his brother) is infectious. Two flights were enough for me to know that I would like to go back. All we need is someone that likes driving a van half way across Europe packed with balloons and then back again packed with Barolo wine.

Tony Jay

### **The Christmas Special- Your Editor visits Ultramagic Balloons Limited**

Working in my line of business (F1 Motor racing), makes you Introspective. You tend to constantly analyse the things you are

doing, be self critical and see where you can improve the smallest items for the improvement of the product.

Therefore I am in a unique position to cast a curious eye over the ballooning industry as a whole and identify where people are doing things right. Being independent, means I can be both critical and objective, and as I have no allegiance to any manufacturer, having owned a Colt, Lindstrand and Um product, but being in High Tech Engineering, and seeing great rate of change, I clearly identify with Ballooning Innovation when I come across it, all be it that it happens at a slower pace.



Taking up a long standing offer to visit the premises of Ultramagic Balloons Ltd in Ingualada near Barcelona Spain, I had a chance to see their set up and appreciate the ethos behind the company which is arguably now the biggest supplier of balloons. Having previously visited both Lindstrand and Cameron Balloons Ltd's facilities I was looking forward to seeing how the Spanish compare and where (if anywhere), they take a different approach.

Immediately I was surprised how so many balloons could be built in what is a compact factory unit, and initially assumed it to be a converted hanger taken over on the airport site. However with further investigation and with input from my hosts Carlos, Joseph, Paul Dickenson and my companion for the trip and friend, Tim Revel (Um's UK dealer), I soon understood that in fact the factory was built to specification to match their specific requirements. The second amazing fact was that they run a tight ship with only 35 personnel. Delivering around 100 balloons a year is impressive when you see no waste in employees. There is also a clear effort to bond with the staff with all the directors working in an open plan office environment and a pride that extends all the way through the business and ultimately Joseph or Carlos Llada Costa personally inspecting every balloon on their test inspections to ensure the qualities built into the company apply to each and every product produced.

In a Company which has been cautious about their growth over the years, and being debt free, it was good to see investment in state of the art cutting facilities (Zund) and Screen printing machinery. The massive printer was being calibrated during my visit and whilst achieving the manufacturers levels of quality, was being enhanced to achieve a Um driven specification level of Significantly higher grade.





### *Busy "Carpeted" Sewing room*

In a unique position of completing all aspects of balloon construction "in house", attention to detail was abundant with a very clean working environment and (in a first for me) a fully carpeted sewing room which I'm told is hoovered weekly. Owning the property and surrounding land, enables the partners to expand the business as demand dictates, but whilst the recession seems to stop evolution of brand with some manufacturers, there is a definitive process of re evaluation into every aspect of the product here and refreshingly a mapped path of what is coming in future development. Success seems to drive the business forward here, and a shining example of this is in one of their latest products, the Techno 50, a portable two person balloon with collapsible basket that liberates the operator from having a trailer.



*Latest Techno 50 for an Austrian Client awaiting Test inflation*

In an economic downturn and with the exchange rate for the Euro against them, Um have achieved double figure sales of this innovative product in its first full year of production. The bottom end alone comes in a tailored bag, features logical assembly which utilises "Flat Pack" to the extreme, and a variety of burner options. From seeing the prototype at Metz in 2009, the progressive refining of the system has achieved impressive refinements in quality driven by usability and feedback from the client base. Even the stowage of the parts has been improved following extensive testing, yet adhering to ergonomic constraints.



*Bespoke Printing machine being "Calibrated"*

Naturally I was keen to understand where the company sees technical progress in the future and I was delighted to be told of innovations that have development programs currently underway (unfortunately, it would be inappropriate for me to divulge them to you now), but clearly there has been some serious thinking behind how to drive the costs down whilst moving forward technically, whilst others "talk" about potential gains in design, these guys and girls are actively pursuing these aims, and I saw tangible evidence of the Research and Development that is happening now.

In an industry where it is important to retain your trade secrets until products are launched, it was surprisingly refreshing to be allowed access to all areas and to have no questions unanswered even if at times I was verging on being prying.

To Sum up my time in Spain, I honestly felt invigorated by my visit to Ultramagic Balloons Ltd, they remain clearly focussed on being a technically progressive company, seem to be in tune

with what the market needs, and are driving the breed forward without compromise to quality.



*Obligatory Computer Cutting Machine (Zund from Switzerland)*

If progress continues at this rate, the future of ballooning is positive and looking rosy. With thanks to all concerned for my visit and access to their world.

Steve Roake

### The Techno 50 by Ultramagic- an overview by Steve Roake

Changing times tend to bring up radical solutions and when you need a lightweight system that suits one/two persons then Ultramagic Balloons think they have the answer. It seems that the buying public agree. In an economic downturn, the Techno 50 system has been achieving good sales figures and the bottom end in particular is a popular option with over ten sold in its first full year of production. This popularity stems from clever design,

ergonomic storage and a brilliant application of the theme in the collapsible basket. There have been other collapsible baskets, but this one really works and whilst strong weighs in at a very creditable 35 kgs and yet allows the complete kit to fit into an average estate car or 4 x 4 without the need for a trailer.



*Seen with Mark 21 burner option- this Techno Basket is for an Austrian client*

The kit utilises the flat pack form of fold up storage around two solid steel top and bottom load bearers. Into spaced with these are eight nylon poles which are further strengthened by cross lattice tensioners. The strength of this system cannot be underestimated and the design has evolved until perfected over a series of improvements which were customer driven.



Ingenious tank straps clip to the steel lower section of the chassis and also attach to the upper metal work in a similar fashion. Incorporated into this strapping are stowage pockets for essentials whilst in flight. The basket is rated from 31-65 range of envelopes but the system is designed around a 50,000 cubic foot envelope which comes in at 50kgs. Whilst all collapsible baskets are by nature "snug", you can mount tanks outside the basket as easily as internally should you wish. Time to assemble is under ten minutes and would speed up with practise. A video instructing you how to assemble will soon be available through ultramagic's website. The first UK example was purchased By Alison Haugham of The Packhouse Antiques Ltd and is stored in the back of a Toyota Amazon when used. Her version utilises the Single Power Plus burner option and with two V30 (60litre) fuel cylinders will fly for over two hours duration. Tim Revel, The UK agent is so impressed with the product, he has one coming for himself.



*Seen with the S-50 envelope, G-CGPH c/n 50/02 is the first UK Techno 50.*

As soon as is possible , I hope to bring you a flight test report on the Techno 50 but clearly it is easy to use and assemble and represents a major step forward to lightweight flying in our sector of the market (hence its inclusion). Part of the lightweight envelope achievement is the use of Kevlar load tapes, and

simplicity of envelope design. Added to this is the increased range of lighter colours from the manufacturer, and another nice touch is dedicated sections to the stowage bag for each element of the kit which will enhance the ownership appreciation.

### **UK Pricing (exclusive of vat at 20%)**

Tim Revel advises that a complete Techno with the S-50 envelope retails at £14500. An S-50 Envelope in lightweight material (50kgs) is £9200. The Superb Techno Basket measuring 0.8x 1.0m is £2000, and the two burner options are as follows Powerplus Sport 008 is £3400 and the Mark 21 single is £2996.

All prices are correct at time of press and may be subject to exchange rate variables and possible price adjustment-Ed!

The basket has had extensive testing including repeated drop tests from a rig to simulate 2 tonnes of load. I get the impression that the Techno 50 is a balloon that our sector of the marketplace is going to get very excited about as it liberates the trailer as redundant, and gives flexibility to the small mobile crew marketplace easily utilised by two persons.

Once again many thanks to Ultramagic Balloons for the access to this product, I look forward to flying one soon.

Steve Roake

### **Cloudhopping over Portugal-by Peter Van Harten**

From 10 -13 November I have joined the 14th 'Baloes ar quente' in Fronteira, Portugal. This year I brought my single Skyhopper 25, PH-ZSL. With this balloon I also visited the 'One Mans Meet' last month. Thanks for the "tits" Phil ;-)



The meeting in Portugal started with fog and clouds and so I made my first real 'cloudbopping' flight. Nice to fly above the clouds, and enjoying the sunshine. Although the wind got very strong and gusty I succeeded to make a safe landing, next to the highway.

The next day was really sunny and calm, really good weather for the hopper, so I could make two nice flights. Unfortunately the days after I only could take off during the morning flights, during the windy conditions in the afternoon.



With five nice flights ahead (same as in Wookey Hole), I flew back from Lisbon at the 14th of November. A lot of pictures can be found on my website [www.hotairballoonflights.eu](http://www.hotairballoonflights.eu)

Kind regards,  
Vriendelijke groeten,  
Peter van Harten

### **Three Favourite Jpegs and why-featuring Paul Sweatman**

In this sixteenth selection of my favourites and why, thanks to Paul Sweatman who selects his three favourite photographs with reasons why he loves them.



*G-WETI at Wookey Hole 2009*

G-WETI - Cameron N-31 serial 449 taken at the 2009 Wookey Hole OMM. It was nice to see this 1978-vintage hopper at the 2009 OMM and it really wasn't showing its age. I was always surprised at the size of the mouth on the N-31. I think there were around 13 N-31 on the British register and this was one of the first I saw. I hadn't seen this one since the famous BBM&L meet at Cardington in 1997. It would be interesting for someone to post a picture with the original artwork.

It was originally named Puddleduck. Flown at the OMM in 2009 by the expert Mr. Butter. Great to get a digital image of it in the Autumn sunshine.



G-BRCO - Cameron H-20 serial 2030 taken at the ilam OMM in 2006. This is a 1989-vintage hopper which has fortunately seen a fair bit of use over the years. Flying with the non-standard Colt Mk1 Cloudhopper bottom end rather than the original NS-20 twist-grip bottom end. Mr. Axtell is at the controls. With the Shell Unleaded artwork it was one of the most colourful hopper I think I have seen. Even the modified Hello Funleader looked great. I reckon this must

have taken ages to make this design. It is now in storage in Worcestershire with Peter Lawman. It's a shame it is not going to fly again.



G-BKWE - Colt 17A serial 533. This was scanned from a slide hence the poorer quality. I think it was taken at the 1994 Icicle Meet and I'm pretty sure Chris Dunkley is at the controls. It was the first time I had a close look at the Colt Mk.1 bottom end. I was impressed at the way a standard Worthington tank was adapted to form the basis of a bottom end. It really did look like basics only. I'm one of the few pilots who still fly with this old design of bottom end but it works fine. I was amazed how small the whole package was when packed away. I think it's probably one of those things that made me want to get my own hopper. Sadly, no longer current. Chris, how about bringing it to OMM 2011?

Thanks very much to Paul for his interesting choices and why. This section is getting increasingly difficult to fill; I don't know why since all you have to do is dig out three favourite photographs and send me some words to accompany them. 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**

This is my letter to Santa time. Following my request for help in making this newsletter more presentable I got Zero help. What I'm after is someone to come up with a template I can use for the newsletter that just looks more like a newsletter style and is more up to date. If you know of someone who can help, please get in touch with me directly.

Mark Schemilt recently sent in this link to a Czech Home built hopper he found .The clip shows an interesting take on the burner used. Thanks for that Mark.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTm2-vfxu78>

Graham Houston wins the award of most festive Hopper video. For a long time I've longed for festive content that is hopper related. Graham decided to go for a hop complete with Santa's red coat and give all his friends a festive greeting whilst in the Air. You can see the results of his exploits on U- tube using the link below.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaYmmciAX6I>

#### **5, Homebuilt section**

Nothing again this month- you must all be busy constructing!

6. **Gallery Pages**-This section is the Editor's choice of new jpegs, visuals and older balloons of interest or alterations.



*Just a couple of shots to make you smile at this time of year first is PH-SJK Cameron Z-56 Duo chariot, HB-QTC is the other an Ultramagic Duo from Chateau D'oex.*



## 7, Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

### The Icicle Balloon Meet 2011

The Icicle Meet is scheduled for the weekend of 8<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> January with the trade show at the Elcot Place Hotel. Whilst I'm not in the know to which manufacturers are going to be present having had a couple of disappointing years where some haven't shown up, what I can say is that Ultramagic Balloons UK are definitely going to be a highlight of the show with a themed display aimed at our sector of the market. Make sure you pop down there to see the exciting stuff they are bringing to the marketplace.

### 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: kooistapieter@yahoo.co.uk

Sounds like a bargain to me-Ed!

## Cameron Duo Chariot Bottom End

There is a possibility of a Cameron Style Duo Chariot bottom End becoming available in the Spring, should anyone be interested in expressing an interest in purchasing a nice condition bottom end (based in Europe currently) please send me an email and I will forward your details to the potential seller. As ever [steve.roake@ntlworld.com](mailto:steve.roake@ntlworld.com) is my contact details.

## And Finally.



*10<sup>th</sup> August 1996 four Ultramagic H-42 balloons were "Purchased" for a once only one day tether. Of these c/n 5 is the one that is in the for sale section unregistered and as yet un flown. Here is the iconic Test inflation photo.*

Membership is currently a healthy 423 members and despite a small dip, numbers are generally still 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

That just leaves me time and space to say Thanks to all for your contributions this year, have a great Xmas and new year.

Safe and happy hopping! Steve Roake.

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