



Issue Number 37

December 2009

Dear Friends,

Normally I have no content for a Christmas/December issue of the newsletter and the fact that I have both some content and the time either signifies that, I'm either bored with the Christmas stuff(ironic since its only boxing day), or I have the urge to write. Whilst this issue won't be the biggest ever, since Barry Birch sent me some editorial on Barolo I am moved to produce.



Vineyards and Hoppers -it must be Barolo -jpeg by Aeromedia.

Happy New Year to all - and safe flying in 2010! Enjoy but fly safely please!

Contents

In this 37th edition I have for your reading the following choice subjects;

- 1, **Ed Speak**- Christmas....time to write the newsletter!
- 2, **Essential Extra's** -none this month.
- 3, **The Features Section**-featuring the following submissions:
 - Steve Roake's annual review of the Hopper manufacturing scene numbers and trends etc.
 - The Barolo Balloon festival -by Barry Birch
 - My three favourites by Ernie Hartt
4. **Updates for the Newsletter/Website/ Forum talk**
 - Use of the Ripline with Parachute Floating.
5. **Homebuilt Section** -
6. **Gallery Pages**- Another mixed choice of hoppers, selected by your editor
7. **Manufacturer News / Events / Updates**
 - First dates for events in 2010
- 8, **For Sale /Wanted Section**
 - G-BSDV Colt 31A Envelope is up for grabs.
 - Mark 2 T&C Sky chariot bottom end for sale.
- 9, **Last and not least.**

1, Ed Speak by Steve Roake - Xmas Newsletter Writing Time!

Normally December is a naff month for writing the newsletter. Lack of content, coupled with pilots taken away for family business leads to a general apathy and resultant zero content, but

2009 is one of those years that are the exception rather than the rule. The internet has had a good topic on the go with an enquiry about Parachute Floating, and coupled with some late news from Barolo by Barry Bowers gave me a platform on which to add some editorial rubbish. Added to this a review of the marketplace and there you have this month's magazine- whilst not the best ever I hope you enjoy the read as I've had plenty of time to write as I'm cheesed off with Christmas and looking to fill the void. Desperately need people to send in their favourite hopper shots please with some reasons why you like them .Thanks in advance.

Steve Roake

2, Essential Extra's-

Another month with no great ideas from you guys.

3, The Features Section

The Annual Review of the Hopper Production-by Steve Roake

As seems traditional now, December always tends to be the time of year that I review the state of the industry and how it stacks up in terms of trends and where the purchases are going. Year on year interest in cloudhoppers and duo chariots remains buoyant but at the end of the day, it's a number crunching exercise and the data never lies. In times of recession, expectations are lesser compared to the optimism of boom growth, but 2009 has seen some upgrading by established pilots and a surge of new interest particularly in second hand equipment by budget conscious buyers in this niche marketplace.

The figures used in the following survey are established directly by myself and do not reflect published figures by manufacturers

directly so potentially could be wrong. In times where manufacturers are loathed to declare their positions, I believe they are fairly accurate, but would welcome and additional input from any source.

Lindstrand Balloons Ltd

First thing to remember about LBL Ltd is that they don't produce a dedicated Duo chariot bottom end. Some folks have matched lightweight 60's and 56A's to chariot bottom ends and even a 77A has been used but I guess, they consider the marketplace doesn't warrant another design of bottom end. In terms of hoppers, they have always been proactive in the market place, but a lot of buyers have bought ex demonstrator machinery. Accessing the state of their marketplace, I would say that the smaller models still sell reasonably well but in ultra weight sensitive times the bigger 35A and 42A designs are slightly heavy. However in 2009 they supplied two brand new 35A's to Switzerland and Italy (although registered on the G- register), with a fantastically priced earlier example returning to the UK in G-SIPP.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Sales of Hoppers</u>	<u>Duochariots</u>
2005	One	Nil
2006	Three	Nil
2007	Nil	Nil
2008	One	Nil
2009	Two	Nil

The product is well engineered and versatile but could now be due a revamp of the design to reflect the impetus on lighter weight envelopes which appears a common concern these days.

Cameron Balloons Ltd

Whilst clearly the market leader in numbers of balloons produced, Cameron Balloons Ltd continues to focus their energies on the most viable products i.e. Rides Balloons. Subsequently the Hopper and Duo chariot range is at best "Dated" and in need of replacement. The Millennium bottom end has a successor in prototype format and there has been increasing rumours of Concept based envelope designs to modernise the designs. Until these appear, demand for the older H style and Viva based products will naturally be Limited whilst Z designs have had modest success.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Sales of Hoppers</u>	<u>Duo Chariots</u>
2005	One	Nil
2006	Nil	Nil
2007	Two	Nil
2008	One	Nil
2009	One	Nil

Hopefully, the time put into designing the new bottom end that gimbals and a newer design of envelope will bring new interest to the Cameron Range.

Ultramagic Balloons Ltd

Ultramagic Balloons Ltd are the most recent manufacturer to enter the Hopper(Solo) and Duo Chariot field and have used their impetus combined with material development to establish proof of concept models and establish a product that is generating interest in the marketplace. Year on year, Um appear to be pushing the market on Solo and Duo sales although in 2009 both

hopper sales were to established pilots who are utilising the envelopes with alternative bottom ends. The main point with Ultramagic envelopes appears their ability to deliver lighter products at market leading prices.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Sales of Hoppers(Solo's)</u>	<u>Duo Chariots</u>
2005	Nil	Three
2006	Three	Nil
2007	One	Nil
2008	Nil	Three
2009	Two	Two

In the environment of recession, these figures show the surge in interest in cloudhopping particularly in the UK . The UK remains the strongest marketplace for cloudhopping, but the most active place is the USA with the impetus on homebuilding and design of ultralight envelopes at very reasonable prices compared to supply from manufacturer products.

I hope the above figures have been of interest to you all.

Steve Roake

One Man Meet Barolo 2009- Barry Birch

In what has now become established as an annual event in the Langhe wine region of Northern Italy, the One Man Meet in Barolo is held in memory of balloonist and aviator Paolo Contegiacomo, the pioneer of aerostatic activity in Italy and brother of Pietro Contegiacomo. He was a man who above all else, valued friendship within the flying community. In true keeping with this spirit, this year the village of Barolo offered up exceptional hospitality to all participating teams and even the weather was kind too, which meant that all slots were flown.



Another Aeromedia jpeg captures a launch.

The meeting got off to a great (if a little fast) start on the evening of Friday 23rd October. All teams having checked into their respective accommodation decided to make the most of the good conditions and headed off to the launchfield below the castle to have a first evening jolly. Although it was a little damp onsite, everyone got inflated and away. The direction was back over the village again and climbing to get the direction to open spaces for landing offered great views of the snow-capped Alps in the distance, which had just had their first dusting a few days previously. The remnants of a distant weak front did make the landing challenging for a couple of pilots, but their skilful flying averted any problems and everyone reconvened later at the excellent Cantina Syall Sebaste for the first of many fine dining experiences. A classic Italian meal ensued with many courses and a different wine sampled with each plate. Outstanding.



Jeff Lawton in G-CDAD LBL 25A.-jpeg by Aeromedia

Saturday morning and everyone met for the customary coffee and croissant in the village bar before descending to the launchfield and preparing to fly. Conditions were ideal with light and variable winds on the ground and the general direction towards the fine town of Alba. A splendid morning's flying over the sleeping villages saw everyone landing and packing away without even the farmers stirring from their beds to see who had dropped in from the sky. The same evening brought more spectators to the launchfield and local children had been promised the launch of some paper sky lanterns when the pilots returned to Barolo. The spectacle of 100 of these illuminated paper balloons taking to the night sky was a wonderful and quite magical experience to all those present in the village square.

The teams met for another evening of culinary delight in the Hotel Barolo whilst below in the square the locals were preparing a Wood fire for the highlight of the weekend, a great stew made from tripe! No this is not that ghastly stuff boiled in milk and served up looking like the mangled sole of an old shoe. In Barolo the slow cooking begins at 3am so that by noon the following day after 9 hours of gentle heat with vegetables, herbs and large quantities of chickpeas you have a thick broth that when washed down with some local wine will prove to you that tripe is a wholesome and subtle dish.



Roger Kunnert in G-BYRK his Cameron Viva 42-jpeg by Aeromedia

Pilots met again in the morning and the only pre-requisite at the briefing was that after the flight and refuelling all had to sample the tripe stew at lunch time, or they would get no gas for the evening slot. Again a perfect morning with only a slight haze obscuring the mountains, saw everyone enjoying a beautiful morning flying and as requested all participated in sampling the tripe at the local festival at midday, with photographic evidence even being produced in case of doubt and to secure the much needed gas for the evening slot! The evening proved to be another glorious occasion of drifting over the autumnal vineyards with their mosaic of bright colours against a backdrop of blue cloudless skies and the snowy mountains. Spectacular.

The evening meal in the basement of the Cantina Rosso proved very enjoyable and here was also the opportunity to present a unique gift to the pilot that had contributed that little something extra. This year the trophy (a beautiful painting by Forgonni) in memory of Paolo Contegiacomo was awarded to Pete Bish for providing a friendly help and logistical centre for the transport of the all the hoppers going out and back to Italy. Pete declared that it was the first time he had picked up an award at an international event; well honestly it was about time too!

Let's hope that next year sees the return of this great event with its focus on friendship and fun for all those pilots who like to fly solo.

Barry Birch

My Favourite Jpegs and why-

In this eight selection of my favourites and why, as there are no takers this month, I am going to choose my three seasonal favourite hopper shots.



My first choice G-BVHP Colt 42A in typical winter scenery

Belgium based with Danny Bartels, this hopper is seldom seen but looks superb in this winter shot. Colt 42A's weren't that common but the composition of this shot appeals to me, including the shadow off the tree branches in the sunshine.

My second choice this month is the Beautiful G-BXXU Colt 31A which resides with Peter Mossman. This photograph is taken a number of years ago and is a timely reminder that The Alpine season is now upon us and specifically in this case Chateau D'oex festival. For all of you attending, here is something to wet your appetites.



G-BXXU Colt 31A at Chateau D'oex

Finally, my third choice of the season is a double photograph from Chateau D'oex from 2008 taken by Bob Garnett, featuring Malcolm White/Pauline Baker and the Pierrick Duvoisin Colt 31A.



If this place isn't the place for hopping, then I don't know where is. All the great jpegs of winter scenes over the years have emanated from chateau Doe.

Well I've filled this section once again but need your help to continue it for the future, so now who else would like to make their unique choices of hopper or duo chariot favourites? Selections to me as ever please, care of steve.roake@ntlworld.com.

4, Updates to the website / Newsletter/ Forum Topics

The overriding feature of note on the forum this month is a topic started by Bob Kupps in Thailand who had just read an article in a US Ballooning magazine describing a steep approach technique as (from memory) a quick vent immediately followed by a hard burn then ripping out just before touchdown. Does this work with hoppers? This led to talk of the effectiveness of the parachute on a hopper and its tendency to try to stall or float and not reseal properly.

Jon Radowski suggested a technique which works along the following lines and supplied a link with a diagram.

1. Firmly Vent
2. Burn back to near equilibrium
3. Wait for the proper moment to begin level-off burns
4. HARD BURN(s) to level off
5. HARD VENT/gentle touchdown (often simultaneous)
6. Smoothly release vent line before too much air is released and the mouth closes up.

Here's a diagram:

<http://www.apexballoons.com/tips/steepdescent.png>

However, most knowledgeable scribes offer caution when using the parachute as in some cases it has a tendency to stall and not pop back into place. The "floating" described was a new terminology to me so I asked for clarity and the following were offered as explanations.

Kasey Shwemmer said Parachute floating is when you pull the vent/parachute open and it doesn't re-seal itself, but stays open. This can be very dangerous in a hopper as the pilot needs to react swiftly to prevent it stalling and with the effectiveness of the chute and loss of air, it could lead to a crash and serious injury.

The general feeling is that the chute should be used sparingly and steep approaches exercised with caution. Most pilots descend close to a potential landing spot and then they rip out when over the actual spot from a lower altitude.

The merits of parachute design were then appraised, with a number of notable scribes advocating the use of bungee cords to limit the extent of available drop space for the chute.

Sean Kavanagh commented;" that this discussion on floating vents is really interesting. Obviously I have had more than my fair share of work on deflation systems over the years so it is a subject close to heart. The thing that is spinning me out a little here is a) the number of people who have had a vent float in a production balloon, and b) the number of people who have dealt with this by either ignoring it, ceasing to use the vent in flight or even more spectacularly, continuing as though nothing were wrong and allowing it to happen a second or third time. Now Don Piccard correctly noted that having a parachute vent that will float or stall on final deflation is a good thing as it relieves the pilot of the work load of holding the vent open until final deflation is achieved. The thing that scares me about this comment is that in some minds it normalises the idea that a vent can and should float or stall. In my opinion, especially in a small balloon like a hopper or duo, the vent should never stall until a good volume of air has been released, i.e.: on final landing after the vent has been open for a good 5 to 10 seconds. Now I admit I have only ever built one 21k envelope and on the first inflation you could get the vent to stall. It went straight back into the sewing machine for half an hour, got new attachment points a little higher up the envelope, centralising lines shortened and bingo, a vent that will not float until the balloon is half empty. It has to be empty enough that if I were flying you could hear me swear from the northern hemisphere. The rest of the time, you can give that baby a good pull in flight with confidence as it snaps back into place every

time. This is a plain old parachute, none of our fancy stuff. So my comment here is that it is simple geometry that is specific to every model and particular profile shape. It is not hard to get right and should be right or it may just kill you. A floating vent is a bad thing. Not being game to use your vent in flight is a bad thing. If your manufacturer won't fix it by moving the attachment points and adjusting the rigging then it is probably not appropriate to say what I think!

There is a sweat spot for the rigging for parachute vents. Your manufacturer has a duty of care to find that point and then document how to operate up to it allowing for the greatest number of silly actions and poor pilot choices. Forgiving in operation is the key word I suppose I am looking for.

If you as a pilot accept it as situation normal then you probably need to take a step back and think about in terms of the brakes on your car. If you took delivery of a new car and the brakes locked and stayed on if you pushed the pedal a little hard would you be happy? Would you try and drive without touching the brakes? How long can you go before you touch them a little hard in a panic and end up with a full blown crash? Would you make a call and demand it was fixed (and probably taken there on a tow truck rather than driven...)

If you are a home builder then you need to do the really boring thing and put a new balloon back into the sewing machine before flying it again, move the attachments, figure out your centralising line lengths and re-rig the vent. Tedious? Yes. As much as replacing panels because it was falling on your head? No.

The only thing I will say here to qualify all of the above is that floating vents when breaking the tabs is not uncommon because people do it before the balloon is at full temperature. If you have experienced it at that stage, then heat the balloon up closer to flying temp before breaking the tabs.

For everyone, play with these things just under your normal

operating temperature and while loaded for flight **but while still on the ground**. Give it a little pull, then a big pull, look up and see what is happening through the whole cycle from open to closed. How soft is the envelope? How soft can it be before it needs a burn to push the vent back in? How long to get it uncomfortably soft or to that point? How long can I hold it open a little? How long can I hold it open a lot? Most important, read your flight manual and supplements, who knows, all the answers may be in there...

Seriously, the more you do this on the ground with every balloon you fly the better you will be at judging how you can use your vent, when you can use it and for how long. Burn the propane getting to know how it all works. It is an investment that pays tenfold.

Sorry if it sounds like a lecture but a lack of understanding of performance or worse still, flying with a deflation system that is unfamiliar or stalls too easily could kill you and we are all too nice and pretty for that when it is avoidable".

Richard Sargeant the Swiss Lindstrand Dealer added; "I'm frequently in a position where I'm briefing an experienced "big balloon" pilot for their first-ever hopper flight in our LBL 35A demo. Bearing in mind that even experienced pilots lose some ability to absorb new information when stressed (human performance limitations et al) when briefing I concentrate on Richard's most important rule for new hopper pilots: "Never do anything in a hopper for more than one second, neither burn nor dump". This is especially true of a 35A which are very lightly loaded with the average pilot particularly when flying cold. As Ian Chadwick noted below, because of this and the fact that the chute area is small it requires very little effort to pull out the parachute completely and stall it. Oops! I prefer to treat gross parachute use like I treated the Velcro rip on my first balloon, i.e. I only heave a large amount out when I'm about

to totally quit flying, hopefully very close to the ground! The line on Lindstrand envelopes (called a "French line" for reasons of which I am unaware) as far as I know (I'll check!) has no role in preventing parachute stall but is simply there so you don't have to walk inside your nice clean envelope from the top to fish out the parachute to tab it in. Just a small detail that costs virtually nothing! I'll check next time to see if I can stall the parachute in my 35A - I suspect yes, since my memories are that on stand-up landings I pull right out to finally deflate, and the chute stays out.

All of which leads me back to fly with minimal use of the parachute, using it only as you contact the ground to ensure you've quit flying"!

Following all of the above Bob Knupps has taken some video of pulling out on his Cameron Viva 31 from about 15 feet on a tether and noted how the mouth completely closed up. If it gets posted soon, I will include it in next month's newsletter.

In conclusion, treat the chute with care. As Richard suggested, small regular inputs are the way to go, and after any change don't forget to put the opposite variable back in. Please be careful.

5. Homebuilt section

No content for this month so this section is empty.

6. Gallery Pages.

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

No new jpegs this month although both G-OBAB LBL 35A is a recent delivery to Barry Bowers in Italy (jpeg required please)

and also G-CGFO Ultramagic H-42 to Jonathan Dyer (again jpeg required whenever).

Fear not though because care of Graeme Houston in bonny Scotland we have a short video of hopping over the Xmas period.

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

This is great and a must to be viewed.

7, Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

First event news of 2010 comes courtesy of Bill Teasdale who informs us that the venue of the BBML inflation day will be at Lakeside Lodge Golf Club, Pidley in Cambridgeshire on 15 May 2010.

Whilst announcing dates for 2010, the now established grass roots event at Sackville Lodge in Bedfordshire has also its 2010 dates set. With thanks to Robert Cross for the information, the dates for your diary are September 10-12th. The event will follow its successful format and expect hoppers to feature.

Details on both to follow when I have updated information.

8, For Sale /Wanted section

G-BSDV Colt 31A for Sale priced to sell £1500 for cash!

Your editor is selling his Colt 31A Envelope, registered on 19th April 1990, she has done 76 hours 15 mins (last flown 21st March 09) and cold inflated in July 2009. Lapsed Cof A with EASA agreement to be renewed. She is now surplus to requirements as I can't fly two at once.



Ready for a new owner in 2010 -who will buy G-BSDV Colt 31A?

Turning vents are currently disconnected but lines will be supplied and can be reused. In the current climate, a price reduction to £1500 for a cash sale seems fair. The price includes the original Colt bag and stylish Lindstrand 31A replacement bag. Great entry to Hopping Balloon with loads of life left in her, she needs new Loving owner!

Contact Steve Roake on 07721-358758 or 01276-516125 after 7pm weekdays or Email steve.roake@ntlworld.com

Thunder and Colt SkyChariot Mk 2 Bottom end for sale

Just a small reminder that the ex BT Chariot bottom end is still for sale by Dave Baker. This represents a very good way to get into hopping when you consider that the price includes the integral fuel tank and therefore is a complete bottom end ready to fly. It dates from 1993 and has done approx 200hours.



The bottom end comes with an integral H-30 Tank which has a Rego fitting. It all looks in great condition-Ed!



The Bottom end utilises the Colt Mark 2 Single burner which has a Liquid Pilot light. Naturally this sale is as a complete kit and Dave isn't going to split it up. The price is a very reasonable

£1850 complete. Contact Dave Baker on mobile number 07860-937103 or 01635-866682. Email via dave.2.baker@bt.com



And Finally.



G-EECO Lbl 25A rarely seen these days.

Sent in by Pat Bubb (many thanks), here is Tony Bubb in action over Italy in 2004.

Membership is currently a healthy 398 members and despite a small dip, numbers are generally still rising. We are getting closer to the magic 400 mark, only two short now, and on January 16th 2010 the forum will be six years young.

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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