

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 158

February 2024

Welcome to the latest Newsletter.

Here we are at the end of February and hopefully we can look ahead to brighter times and a great flying season which for me traditionally starts around Easter. The whole of the UK has been waterlogged and I spent the last weekend in Cambridgeshire where flood plains were doing their thing such was the extent of the recent rains. At a time when normally our world is relatively quiet there has been a surprising amount of hopper activity which we highlight in this edition.

Now the political bit

In a troubling world, it seems that the ballooning world as a whole has its head in the sand. When massive issues affect everyone, all people seem to do is turn a blind eye and ignore what is blatantly apparent. For not the first time ever, UK pilot licensing is front and centre once again and more on that in my editorial section. What is the world turning into? Why cant ballooning just concentrate on the things we all love about our sport? Give idiots power and they all get deluded above their station in life.

Anyway , before my blood boils, let's see what's going on in the Hopper world this month.

So here is what we have for you in edition number 158 of the Newsletter:

- Ed Speak – politics and ballooning and Longleat.
- The unusual LBL48L
- How do you get into hoppers?
- Greg Winker's ultimate hopper
- New Cameron O-31 for Pete Dalby
- G-CBLN sells quickly.
- Cameron built another stock hopper
- Cameron update regarding LBL piezo igniters

Articles for inclusion are always welcome Anything for future inclusion to the usual email address please.

steve.roake33@gmail.com many thanks in advance.



1,Ed Speak- Politics in Ballooning

I hate to say it, but we have to discuss politics in ballooning. There is such an uproar in the UK about the state of the BBAC, and very slowly it is getting nasty. In January, in complete frustration with the leading committee members of the BBAC a Special General Meeting(SGM) was convened to discuss the disenchantment most pilot members have with the way the club representatives are pursuing the license review. Two individuals have misrepresented the wishes of the majority of the membership to the point where it has come to a head and most people want rid of them. One has ruled the committee like a dictator and has followed his own aims above and beyond the wishes of the members.

So, a second SGM was brought about in February to address these issues and lo and behold the candidates concerned choose to go down the path of accusing others of bullying. (pot calling Kettle black).

In a twist of fate leading up to the second SGM it seems that those directly implicated have concluded an agreement with those bringing the motions. Personally, I think it is wrong to agree anything with people you don't trust but it looks like the main protagonist is now history. However clearly the club constitution needs changing specifically with a need to be able to oust anyone not serving those who voted them into office.

This now leads us into a state of flux with regards to licenses, wondering who will now represent the wishes of the membership and will tell the CAA to shove their proposals up their backsides as they don't suit balloonists.

Whilst no longer a BBAC Member, I have personally engaged my local MP, Mr Michael Gove to pressurize the DFT into telling the CAA to canvass Balloonists on what license they want moving forward.

On another front, there has been adverse publicity because Longleat safari park have decided to change the people running their annual balloon event. Slipstream management have been charged with taking the event forward after Exclusive ballooning received notice that they were no longer required. Facebook is ripe with people defending Exclusive, thinking that Longleat have done them a terrible injustice firing them from the role. **Funny how nobody has questioned Exclusive on their financial performance in 2023** with regard to the event. I have been told that the charges levied to Longleat were unacceptable who are in this to make money.

Personally, I am looking forward to returning to the event where the organisers are in it for balloonists, without gimmicks rather than their own aims. Expect a totally different experience at the 2024 Event. Cheers Steve Roake

2. Features Section

A peculiar hopper the "LBL 48L"

From time to time (being a hopper geek), I seek out vague hoppers from a period of time which strike me as weird, and I go about trying to find out why they were different, why they were made and why such a decision to build a weird size was undertaken and how come they didn't become more mainstream.

In this case I was updating my database of every hopper built when I happened upon two Lindstrand Balloons LBL48L's. These dated (by construction numbers) from around 1999, when Lindstrand were arguably at their very peak. I love starting a new topic on Facebook and awaiting the answers from those with more knowledge than me, and yet I can't get a definitive answer in this case.



OE-ZOO LBL48L c/n 552 photo by Joachim Friess.

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The other peculiarity about both balloons is that the schemes were reversed on the second one for some strange reason.



OE-ZOP LBL 48L c/n 553 photo again by Joachim Friess.

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The conversation surrounding the two unusually sized craft comes from people who were employed by Lindstrand Balloons at the time. Mike Webb told me that originally they went through their swiss dealer a guy called Richard Sargeant. Andy Marshall who was also involved at that time thought that the reasoning for the design was to get the smoothest gore pattern possible but as you can see by the photographs neither balloon looks like it was ever used commercially for advertising purposes.

What have we learned ? well to be totally honest, nothing at all . These two unique sized hoppers appeared for no particular reason and nobody seems to know the reason why they were built – how very strange.

How to get into Hopping.

It has been a while since we discussed the route into flying hoppers and I thought now was a good time to convey thoughts on the process to enthusiastic folks who may like to try in the future. Make no bones about this , there is no fast track into flying a Cloudhopper. I would suggest the first thing you do is learn to fly in a regular balloon and build up some knowledge “hours wise” so you learn how the thing handles, and you feel you can predict how it will react.

At this stage (I guess 50 hours or so), I would suggest you transfer your skillset onto hoppers, which let's face it, are a minimum of half size of a regular balloon but sometimes a third of the lift capacity. Going into a hopper for the first time, find someone who has experience to guide you and start with a tether and bobbing up and down on a calm evening whilst on a rope and learn the nuances of the burner which you will be using far more frequently but in small bursts of power. With a hopper and its smaller mass, the emphasis is to treat it like a kettle, (always just about to boil), so that when you put in a two second burn you feel the response instantly. No hopper burn or Rip for that matter is longer than three seconds. In most cases , Pilots opt for allowing the balloon to naturally cool to initiate a descent.

What about buying the equipment I hear you say? Well in the first place I would recommend spending no more than £2000 on your first envelope. Something second hand around £1500 would be good , because you don't have to be precious about it at that price, secondly you could put 30-40 hours on it and sell it on to someone else having honed your craft and lose very little money in the process. My first hopper envelope cost me £1600 , I flew it for 40 hours and sold it for the same amount.



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Where I would advocate you spend serious money is in the seat unit. The envelope may in time be upgraded to a nicer one but your hopper bottom end will be your companion for life and as such you put a lot of faith in its reliability and quality and with only one tank and one burner, it's your neck on the line. A new bottom end from Camerons is circa £7000 these days but it will look after you and if you buy new, then you can maintain the looks and condition of it from day one. Buying second hand (unless it is a very lightly used example) always opens up questions regarding the maintenance undertaken, storage and quality of care exhibited on the craft prior purchase.

Budget is a definite consideration but you can be airborne for around £8500 if you are shrewd. In my case I purchased a used T&C 31 initially, with a LBL mark 2 bottom end (brand new,) followed by a brand new UMH-31B in 2009 for £6000 cash (some four years after starting to fly hoppers). I sold my Ultramagic / LBL combination only because I had an agreement to fly a Cameron Hopper as a brand ambassador for three years and they gave me a new one to fly in house colours, and so I felt I should make the kit completely Cameron and so purchased the bottom end new. When their envelope went back to the factory at the conclusion of our contract, I purchased its replacement directly from them. This remains my current equipment.

I hope this insight into how to get into hoppers is enlightening and helps enthuse those of you who have as yet not taken the plunge. Flying hoppers is very cool and rewarding and you join an elite group of men and women who partake in this fine form of flying.

Cameron Balloons

Following on from last month's article on Alu tanks by Camerons, I received notification from them that they will look into the size of the Dip tube gauge and took on board that it is smaller and represents more difficulty for reading by hopper pilots.

Greg Winker's Ultimate Hopper Project

I've been very fortunate to call Greg Winker a friend for a number of years, and the serial homebuilder has created some amazing craft including the famous Tetrahydron Hopper. Over the covid shut down period he built his most recent creation, which is a 54K envelope to compliment his Paolo Bonnano duo bottom end. With typical Winker attention to detail it featured an amazing



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scheme which wasn't the easiest to sew. In conversation, around this time Greg eluded to the fact that he harboured building what he described as his ultimate hopper which would be bespoke. The only trouble with the plan was that Greg and Wife Molly are world travellers and finding time to fit in the build was against him, so having spent some serious time in the company of Josep from Ultramagic Balloons, Greg informed me that the maestro will build the craft for him using Greg's ideas and to his specification. He even questioned at one point did he need another hopper as he already owns five?

Then it happened, and furnished by photo evidence of the finished product I asked Greg to write about his experience with the new Balloon. Here are his thoughts on the creation.



N113BW Um M-31

Building the ultimate hopper-by Greg Winker

I've been part of the home-building community for a long time now. Decades in fact. A recurring conversation that we homebuilders have is how to go about building lightweight balloons. Hey, we're not getting any younger/stronger and - more importantly - who wants to carry around more weight than they have to.

So one day - also decades ago - I set about to design the ultimate hopper. Without sacrificing safety I wanted to end up with a balloon custom made for me; my weight and my home flying area. I would use the lightest weight materials that made sense and apply generous safety margins. I would also design the balloon for solo inflations. I wanted to have it all.

The project was stop and go for years. Lately, the big problem has been time. I travel a lot. And I mean a lot. The most I've traveled in one year was 50 weeks. Second place was 49 weeks. Even being home during Covid for 18 months didn't allow me to kickstart this project. However, I did use Covid to build a 56K for my Bonanno Duo-hopper bottom end. This project had been on my to-do list for about 10 years and was a bit more conventional. I still made no progress on the ultimate hopper. It was starting to look grim for ever getting started on this project.

A few years ago, I started hanging out with the guys from UltraMagic - Josep, his daughter Neus and the rest of the gang. A really good group of people. I knew they had occasionally made highly customized balloons, so we talked. After a few conversations, they offered to help out. The original plan we discussed would have me finish the design work, specify the materials (and provide them where necessary) and UltraMagic would construct the envelope.

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That was the plan.



However, it didn't quite work out that way. What I ended up with was an M-31 envelope, 100% Ultralite fabric, with a parachute top, Nomex throat

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and Kevlar load tapes. More standard than I was originally hoping for, but still light weight. It came in at around 44 kgs. It has been named "Mini-Patagonia with registration number N113BW.

How does it fly with the Bonanno bottom end? Don't know. Haven't flown it yet. As soon as I get home from my current trip.

Ed- so there you have it, Greg's ultimate hopper. Kind of baffles me though as 44kgs is still pretty heavy, but still very pretty.



Many thanks to a very busy Greg for the story (currently jetting off to Singapore), I look forward to hearing how she flies under your bonnano solo with the Power Plus burner .

3, Homebuilding Section

Nothing to report this month on homebuilding.

G-CBLN sells quickly via Cloudhoppers page on Facebook

When you get a phone call from a friend asking for help of course you say yes.

Dave Such alerted me that John Till was selling G-CBLN the Z-31 (ex Benedryl) for a friend. To be fair it had been advertised previously but at a price which I thought would never sell at. Now with a revised price , John sent the details through to me and I posted on the cloudhoppers page and within hours it was sold. The old adage, if its priced right- it will see springs to mind.

The good news is that it is staying in the Uk with lovely new owners who live in the Bristol area so congratulations to them .

4 New Balloons.

By the middle of February Cameron Balloons announced that they had made another hopper. This time the O-31 that has been built is unregistered as it is now a Stock option ready for any discerning client in need on their ready to buy section of their website . c/n 12616 is ready for anyone who will part with £10310 plus vat and comes with all the usual bits associated such as karabiners and an envelope bag.

In recent months it seems the boys and girls from Bedminster Bristol have had the sewing machines full on with hoppers. I bet it makes a nice change for a seamstress who toils away for days on end building big rides balloons.

Not only have they made this stock envelope out of all the offcuts they had lying around the factory, but it wasn't that long ago they built the first O-38 G-CMTM which has now travelled a very short distance to its new owner.

Then on the 24th January another Cameron O-31 was listed on the UK civil register . This one a very pretty design was allocated G-CMRO and it transpires it is for long term hopper exponent Pete Dalby. I believe this is his own personal balloon with others (including Ikea G-CCSI) , being on behalf of sponsors. Pete has also on occasion used the Late Phil / Allie Dunnington hopper G-CIPD.

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G-CMRO Cameron O-31 c/n 12662

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Brand new and ready to fly, c/n 12616 could be yours for £10310 plus vat.

5, Second Hand Balloons

Playing catch up

G-BWOY the 1996 built Sky 31 didn't hang around for long. The very reasonably priced kit sold fairly quickly and with sub 60 hours on it , this got registered late January to Jan Smrcka in the check republic although currently still on its UK registration.

G-CIOV the very pretty UM H-31 went to Heaven Crawley and Paul Dopson who are brits living in Frobosa Sottana in Italy.

G-CBLN Cameron Z-31 went up for sale during February at a reduced price , sold by John Till for a friend. In a matter of hours , when advertised on the Cloudhopper's page on Facebook the craft sold. Priced to sell the complete balloon went for £6995 which is a bargain . Luckily the new owners are still UK based in the Bristol area so the balloon should still be seen regularly hopefully.

Poof if ever it were needed that the cloudhopper's concept with the Facebook page is the place for people who both want to buy and sell can get what they need .There is a strong need for second hand bottom ends . Should you have one that is surplus to your requirements , please let me know as I have been approached by prospective buyers who are looking for kit

G-JEMZ

This rare Um H-31 has come on to the marketplace for sale with only 16 hours total time. All blue in colour, the 2016 built craft I think hasn't flown in the UK at any meets. Priced to sell , this represents very good value at £8700. Bear in mind this craft has a Cameron Millenium bottom end and comes with a hyperlast parachute, and turning vents. Also included are a Tether line with Carabiners, and a Worthington Slave cylinder inspected with PRV due in June 2026. Rego fittings and the Hopper c of a expires on 19th sept 2024. Finally the owner has included in the sale a Klein 3hp lightweight fan .

More details contact : **(Jim Atkinson – 07710266999 ajunja@gmail.com**

And tell him you saw it advertised here.

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PH-HOT

Cameron Z42, PH-HOT 1017. (was G-CJUO) . 1200 m3, 60 kg, as new (8 flights / 7 hours) , with scoop, 2 rotation panels, standard parachute, including Flytec TT34 temperature sensor, never overheated, no artwork. ARC valid until 1/2024. Classic rattan basket: 35 kg, black leather, cushion floor, fire extinguisher (7 hours) . New Cameron Single Shadow burner (one hour) . Including Bonanno quick release (new, never used) . No cylinder. Honda inflation fan: 2,1 CV (new) **17.975 Euros** or best offer! (Cameron pricelist: 26.092 Euros + VAT) Contact for more information. (Charles Desmet – info@aerovolare.be or mobile (Belgium) : +32472222333 . Available in Brussels, Belgium)

OE-RNW

OE-RNW Kubicek BB9E, built 11/2020, 25 flights, 26 hrs. 900 m3 / 31.000 ft3. Turning vents, full size nomex mouth, envelope weight 52kg. In well maintained condition. Comes with new ARC. Envelope only. Price only€ **6.250**,

to discuss about **Contact:** Markus Wilfling, Pischelsdorf, Austria. Apologies no email contact details but there is a direct link on www.balloons4sale.eu



.6, Manufacturer / Event News.

Cameron Maintenance News for LBL Jetstream Piezo igniters

With thanks to Dave Such for the initial news and to Andy Booth at Cameron Balloons for the specific details, it transpires that for some time there have been difficulties getting hold of the Piezo buttons for Lindstrand Balloons Ltd Jetstream burners. This therefore affects their Hopper bottom ends. It is perceived that these originated from domestic heating boiler applications and the company who manufactured them no longer exists.

When Cameron Balloons took over the rights to LBL stuff they obligated to support the Jetstream burners and so have for a period of time investigated the issue and have effected a solution which involves changing the whole assembly. Therefore, should you or your maintenance organisation have difficulty finding the solution I can tell you the relevant parts required .

Andy Booth would love to assist you with the Kit which is a redesign of the parts enabling you to keep your lovely burners going and more importantly sparking.

The Kit part numbered **CQ2118** costs £85 plus vat and comes with the electrode, Piezo and the locking ring.



The CQ2118 replacement kit

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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 Cloudhoppers Facebook page during the month.

I hope he doesn't mind me nicking the photo from his Facebook page, but Andy Booth snuck one in in February with his Cameron O-31 G-ISOB. Great photo by Mike Woodcock.



Andy and G-ISOB in harmony in February.

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Before I go , just wanted to tease some of you .We have some great Balloons lined up for the **BBML inflation day** that don't belong to the collection. Mark Stelling has worked his connections to achieve most of these , I myself have found one with hasn't been out of its bag for at least ten years. However one is a very illusive, slightly rare Cameron 42. So see you all at **Pidley on April 27th** .

And Finally

Here we are, end of February 2024 with the number of people subscribing exploding in recent weeks, we find subscription to the Facebook page reaching 3761 and still growing monthly. This is a great achievement with sustained growth going into our 20th year, yes 20 continuous years of publicity for Cloudhoppers across the community(where did that time go?).

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

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