



Hello again everyone,

Wait for months for a newsletter and then "Zap!" two turn up in quick succession- whatever next. And as a bonus this is a bumper Issue!

Content

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Ed Speak- By Steve Roake

I must be barking mad. Months go by, without a chance to put together some sort of newsletter, and then suddenly a belt of enthusiasm rips through me and here we are having a go at a second one within a couple of weeks. Forgive the diatribe, but this particular issue is all about a project that I've been wrestling with that is quite close to my heart, how and where to mount your instruments when flying and one man's answer to the problem (i.e. me, but with more than a helping hand from Jonathan Dyer,

without whom I probably wouldn't have completed it so swiftly ...so JD many thanks for all the help). Later on in this issue I'll show you what I came up with and why.

The yahoogroups list continues to thrive with healthy debate over the issues that are close to everyone's heart. However, sometimes it suffers no fools and blacklists innocent individuals who then can't get their mail because their ISP and yahoo don't agree to allow mail flow. With this in mind I have taken the step of duplicating our list on googlegroups and for those who wish to join it, Cloudhoppers@googlegroups will also get you all your mail requirements.

Occasionally there are issues that require debate and arbitration, generally most are voiced fairly and good topical points from both ends of the spectrum ensue. One such topic that continues to be a favorite is that of the proposed certification of hoppers in Light sport category of the US legislation and whilst I know nothing of the issue personally with the exception that a 15 gallon tank exceeds the limit, I've decided to include the topic in the next issue for those of you like me need to know more on the salient points. Many Thanks to Jim Rogina for all his help with this article, as I have to confess, I knew nothing of the Light Sport initiatives and the FAA stance on the legislation. More views to me please!

Features This month

The Annual One Man Meet 2005- Monmouthshire (Wales)

As you all probably know by now, the annual One Man Meet (OMM) alternates it's venue between somewhere in Wales and somewhere around the Lake District in Northern England. The event has over the years defied the weather predictions and been successful in achieving a staggeringly high rate of flights flown considering it

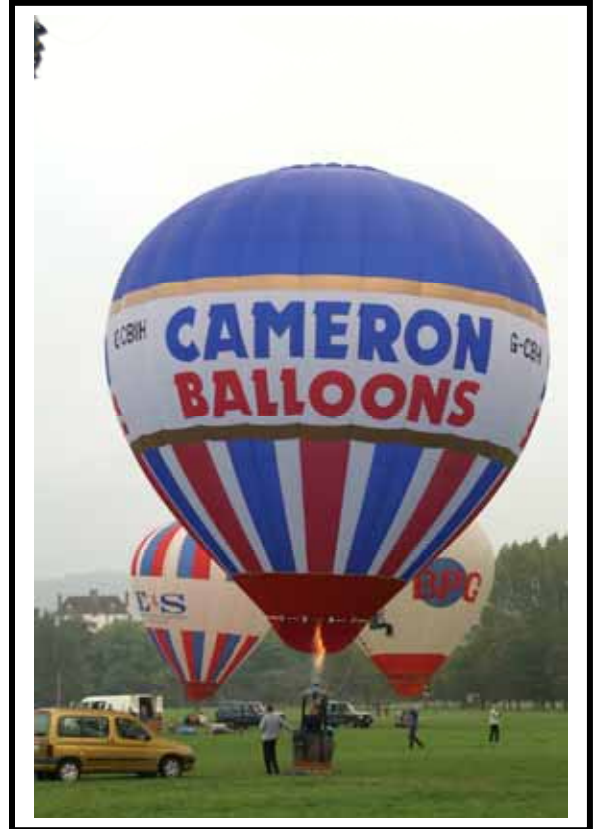
is scheduled for October , and so over the weekend of 15/16th 2005 the optimists amongst the hopper fraternity gathered in Monmouth with Phil Dunnington once again hosting proceedings ably assisted by local expert Clive Bailey. From all the feedback and numerous jpegs that I received (having to work stopped me playing this year), it seems that the event was a "blinder" with 19 one man balloons launching from the field.



As you can see from this general shot the field got quite busy, here eleven participants inflate on Saturday morning.

Participants included Andy Davey, who brought G-BWEE a Cameron Viva 42 over from France for the event. As you can see with light winds, the lift was possible and I believe that only Roger Kunnert didn't fly this slot but later inflated G-BYRK. Telephone calls on my mobile phone from other list members

exasperated the knowledge that I had missed a quality experience that those present clearly were enjoying. The following views typify the ambience of the launch field.



The gradient winds remaining below 5 knots enabled many participants to continue flying around the launch field for some considerable time period. Amongst the older generation of hoppers, one old treasure that flew in the hands of Richard Turnbull was G-AYMV, a Western 20 which dates back to November 1970. This was one of many balloons whose owners preferred to fly with basket bottom end. The whole process was repeated after launch at the same venue with lesser success but none the less flyable with the predicted approaching front, "Stalling Out" just off the Welsh coastline and the Valley environment giving its own protected Micro-Climate suitable for further inflations and free flights. As you can see from the shot

below, some interesting landing sites utilized all available areas including Bill McKinnon's use of a countryside lane.



At least the roads around this area are relatively quiet!!
(Thanks to Bill McKinnon and Neil Iverson for the jpegs of the event, and "Stumpy" for the continued updates on what I missed).

The Christmas Project - The I-Pod (I for Instrument)

My relatively low numbers of completed hopper flights are for the most part due to not feeling comfortable about the state of my preparation. This might sound strange given the fact that as an Engineer for a formula One team, my daily ethos revolves around "preparation is paramount", but the fact remained that every time I inflated the balloon and transferred my weight into

the harness, the next five to ten minutes resulted in a rush to try and tie on any Instruments that I had in mind to fly with. These consisted of an Icom A3 radio (as I live near a zone controller), a Variometer, and Garmin GPS12XL. Some might say correctly, you don't need all that stuff, but being a creature of habit, I like to fly with what I'm used to in the regular balloon. So in the process of tying on in two places these items, the envelope is a soggy mess, needing more gas and slowing the process down.

This got me thinking that clearly how you connect your instruments, whether onto your flying jacket, clipped via a bag to the frame, or just slotted around your body by Bungee cord is a very personal affair and not something to be mucked around with, and once sorted out, should stay with you for the duration of your flying. My gut reaction was that there must be a simpler way and so I started a debate on the cloudhoppers@yahoogroups list, unsurfacing via Adam Barrow in Australia a neat unit from paragliding pilots (£45), and a custom built Lindstrand affair which turns out to being an idea originated by Steven Lacey from Norwich and built to his requirements and then developed by Lindstrands and yours for approx £135 ouch!

Having already a map case which hooks on and then dangles in the breeze, I clearly only needed a platform for the instruments, i.e. an "I-pod"! Following years of being brought up on TV that thrust sticky back plastic and washing up bottles into your mindset, and in the knowledge that most of the components required were readily available, I thought, hmm let's have a stab at doing my own thing. What you see below is the culmination of hours of Xmas toil whilst missing nothing on TV and a thrashing around of ideas with Jonathan Dyer (fellow hopper exponent and provider of fabrics and brainstorming soundboard).

The resulting item can be easily attached via two Witchard carbine hooks, has the instruments set prior to laying out the Envelope or bottom end, Sits on your lap, and has all you need to

fly with in front of you at a glance, leaving more time for actual flying of the balloon, and if you are that bothered could be clipped to one side before the approach to land.



The details of the build process with pictures to demonstrate follows below.

I started off with a piece of 6mm Medium density Fiberboard (MDF), onto which I got some industrial foam used for filling toolboxes and then cutting out "Shadow boards" for the tools. This foam was about 25mm thick and Cyanocrylate mounted... ("Loctite Super glued") to the MDF. Then using cardboard templates accurately replicating the instrument sizes I played around with positions until I was happy with the spacing. Using a surgeons scalpel I then cut the individual holes for the

instruments making sure that any nooks and crannies for buttons etc were catered for (picture A).

The access for each item was checked and where necessary additional holes were drilled for encompassing existing mountings such as the screw which goes through the MDF into the Vario.

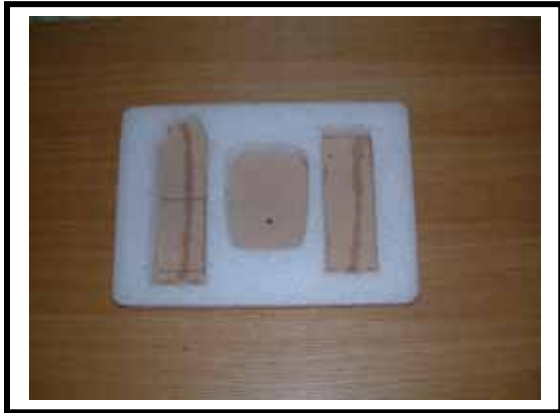


Figure A



Figure B

Using Cordura as the Final Finish of choice, I then started giving the whole thing a tailored look. My intention was to cover around the sides lapping onto the top and bottom faces by approx 10mm, and then covering the remainder of the item to give that (hoped), Quality that would be “long lasting”. Flipping the I-Pod onto it’s back, and using JD’s sewing services, we made some lengths of Webbing (300mm per side) and attached the Witchards. These were then cut to finished length after a mock flying position check in the hopper frame, and attached these to the MDF with “Loctite”. (Fig.B). these could have been Staple Gunned in for absolute certainty of attachment but I felt it unnecessary as the whole thing was going to be covered in a Cordura hard wearing cloth.

The Final part of manufacture was the time consuming tailoring of each individual cut out area, and where necessary (GPS/Radio)

attaching of secondary Bungee Cord for assured holding of the Instruments. Naturally a hole was crafted for the Aerial and the Icom A3 is inserted with Stubby already attached and clip mike inserted. Below shows the project at about half way stage.



The final look may not suit all tastes but does mean I can gain back valuable Air Time and simply get passed the item and two clips later am ready for "last pre flight checks". With Instruments in situ the whole unit weighs under 2kgs.

Whilst this may not be everyone's answer to the problem of where to hang the gear, if it encourages one other person to make one besides myself and JD (who is having a smaller unit made with Garmin Rhino and PRM radio for compactness), then letting you know the process has been worthwhile .
More views of the final look are below.



Build time was less than that needed to consume all the Xmas Pudding and left over Turkey!

The I cicle Meet 2006

The first weekend in January in the UK sees the ballooning community descend on The Warren at Savernake in Wiltshire for the annual I cicle Meet and over most recent years a certain number of flights have taken place. This year being no exception, the UK weather leading up to the event was grey and horrible with Damp muddy fields all around. However, the evening prior to the event saw a big frost and light winds expected, so I ventured down to the launch field for the 08-00 briefing. The weather wasn't great with swathes of grey blanket cloud around 5000ft but with surface winds of less than 5 knots and 2000ft winds of 10kts some would definitely fly. No less than 40 balloons took to the air, and amongst them were some cloudhoppers.



The Cameron Viva 31 on the left G-BRMT, having just recently been sold to Barbara Reed was having a visual inspection prior to departing for a new life in Poitiers France. The Amazing thing about this envelope is that whilst it dates from 1989 , it has only logged 26 hours total flying time.

Another trio of hoppers set off together in the shape of Nick Langley in G-BROJ with Lindstrand bottom end (similar set up to mine-ED), Nick Calvert in G-CBLO Lindstrand 42A with a twist grip Airchair bottom end and Julia Wolstenholme in Sky 31 with Skychariot bottom end .With my recent attention to how people fly with their instruments, you will see the next few jpegs focus on the "office department".





After the morning flying, the majority of balloonists headed off to the Local Hilton Hotel at Swindon where the trade show was situated. This year was undoubtedly the worst show I've seen in years. There was very little new exhibitions on display with I'm pleased to say the exception being Ultramagic UK who were demonstrating a production version of their Solo Hopper. This factory fresh example was a significant step up in terms of the finish from any other previously seen example. Both Tim & Hilary Revel (UK agents) were on hand to go through the specifications with me, and point out the generously proportioned custom built cases with which the Hopper is transported in .Paul Dickenson (over from the factory), was also thrust into the sales pitch with prospective clients. The factory price for this set up with a 25,000 cu ft envelope (with turning vents), comes to £8500. Tim confirmed that he will have the complete kit ready for inspection

at the forthcoming SOLO MEET to be held at Great Missenden over the 1st May bank holiday weekend.

28th Chateau D'oex -Switzerland Balloon Festival

Give me any excuse to go to the Alps, and I'm there! Chuck in potentially 100 balloons, 12 of which were registered as hoppers, and I'm running for the plane. Add Switzerland as the sweetener and I'm in heaven. So whilst I couldn't afford the whole week off work, the opportunity to attend probably the worlds most prestigious balloon festival (in terms of exclusivity and setting), the prospect of a first ever trip to the Chateau D'oex balloon festival, as "Press" for the Cloudhoppers list and I found time for a small four day excursion. Set in the base of a beautiful valley system with over 3000 ft of mountains either side of the town and a unique micro climate, the elements that make an event special were already stacking up. Some of the finest hopper photos I have ever seen, always seem to be taken in this setting, so I hoped to see more of the same amongst the special shapes and regular balloons. Traveling from the UK to Chateau D'oex has become ultra cheap due to the budget airlines, coupled with cheap car hire and a hotel only 12kms down the valley, as we approached the site, Les my traveling companion and I knew we were in for some spectacular sights.

Saturday morning dawned, and as you do in the Alps, the teams arrived on the launch site around 10am (very reasonable timings) with flying able throughout the day until 5pm and sunset. Surface winds were light and variable with gradient 10knots at 2000ft and a BOX to use. Many of the established names attend this festival, including some of our members, and whilst no hoppers were in evidence on day one, a great time was had by all.

I took the opportunity to speak with Joseph Costa of Ultramagic Balloons who intimated that they are keen to do a Euro hopper / Duo Chariot Meet, so if I can combine our ideas with theirs, perhaps the likelihood of this event happening will come a step closer fairly soon. This also gave me a chance to catch up on my favorite Alpine A compliment, Goulash Soup! I never tire of the stuff, with Lunch time being the preferred Time of choice for some "internal heating".

Day two (Sunday) arrived with pretty much the same weather but in the opposite direction down the valley, and I had a chance to bump into two new members of the list. Firstly Bernie Williams who has kindly sent in these fine jpegs, and secondly Richard Seargent who happens to be Lindstrands dealer in Switzerland. Without too much persuasion Richard got out the first hopper for the meet (sadly my only one, HB-QIV a 35,000), and proceeded to offer me a flight with it. Many thanks for the offer, but with no local knowledge of the valley winds, and whilst not being entered for the event I turned the fine offer down. Richard then proceeded to fly a spirited Box for about the next 40 mins landing close to where he took off.

Fellow list member, Ted Moore flew G-OLLI the first Cameron Special Shape 31, looking stunning against the sunshine and snow kissed mountains.

Monday morning whilst looking great for flying brought a met forecast of 25plus knots over the mountain ridges, and whilst you could see the snow getting whipped off the tops, it was a shame that hoppers did not appear, as the valley seemed perfect for a small hop, low level! Alas at this point I had to return home to blighty for work the following day. However, hoppers were out On Tuesday as the following jpegs show, just my luck. The Swiss Skychariot was flying with a 69,000 envelope over it.



HB-QIV Lindstrand 35A



G-BXVP Sky31-24



HB-QBU Colt 69A Skychariot

G-BVCY Cameron H-24

Gallery Sightings

Sent in from one of our Italian Members, G-NOMO Cameron O-31 Cloudhopper in characteristic countryside view.





This unusual visual was seen on the Bennie Bros excellent website www.ballooningpages.com newsletter. It dates from 2003 but unfortunately never made it into full production. There are precious few shaped hoppers about, I'm sure this one would have worked well.



Ex G-BVOJ.....with thanks to Ernie for a great shot of "Bomber", his Lindstrand 31A.



On the Left hand side, a very nice brand new Home build Hang Balloon(26,000ft) by Bret Shirley and Curtis Pack from the USA, whilst on the RHS a beautiful day shot of Curtis Pack's own 28,000 cu ft. Tank sitter.

Manufacturer Updates / News / Event Details

Following on from the last newsletter and the news that Kubicek is looking into the idea of doing a 31,000 size hopper envelope,

fresh information from Chrispin Williams(UK agent), via Graham Bell, now confirms that the company plans to concentrate on larger balloons. Drat! We need to convince them to change this opinion in order to get more choice at reasonable costs.

For the second year in a row, Cloudhoppers.org has linked up with the Black Horse Balloon Club to bring you another One Man Balloon meet, called the SOLO MEET. This year's event coincides with the first UK May bank holiday (29th April -1st May) and will be held either at The Black Horse Pub launch site in Great Missenden or an alternative somewhere in the Aylesbury area with good flying in all directions. Details and entry forms will be via Aerostat or further information via this newsletter.

Another new prospect for us all is the chance to fly and stay at a balloon friendly site near Poitiers in France. This could be a possible starter for the long proposed European Hopper Meet, but more information from Barbara Reed with hopefully some jpegs soon .She has accommodation in a cottage on site that sleeps four with alternatives also available locally, and the added bonus of her own gas tank at reasonable rates. I'm told Calais is only 6hrs drive away.

The coincidence of the above with the indication that Ultramagic are keen to stage a European Hopper event draws me to the conclusion that we need to explore this issue further, and I would seek your opinions as to where you would like to see this event staged, and any preferences for the event. My own prerequisites are good budget price accommodation, easy access; gas supplies nearby and minimal maps to fly off. If I've missed anything out please tell me.

News of another event coming up, this time in Seattle USA over the weekend of August 5th and 6th, is a new event run by Dan

Nachbar and whilst the primary focus is on homebuilding ,
hoppers and Duochariots fit nicely into this category . More
information is available either via email to
balloonbuilder@mojotron.com or via their excellent website
www.xlta.org . Most of this information is passed on the balloon
builders list and whilst on the subject, one new record has just
been established for an Ax-2 balloon category by a Swiss man
called Pierrick Duvoisin who in his home built hopper with radio
controlled balloon burners flew his Mylar balloon for 7hrs 40mins
and 9 seconds. Pictures and text (in French) at
www.roberts.fr/ballon . Awesome achievement in such a small
balloon, congratulations to him and his team.

Nearly finished! The for mentioned XLTA East event is scheduled
for June 2nd -4th at Amherst USA .Details again via www.xlta.org .

AND FINALLY

Through yahoogroups we have the ability to design and sell
merchandising with a connected site. Therefore I have done a
design for our logo which I hope you all like .The idea behind this
is to raise some money to pay for the website hosting and if it is
a success, perhaps get some professional help with the website
(which I now know is written in a mix of JavaScript and
Dreamweaver should anyone want to help). Therefore I hope you'll
indulge yourselves in the clothing etc. It will be available at
<http://www.cafepress.com/cloudhoppers> but the image is below
for your curiosity.



Next Issue

In the next edition of the newsletter, I will be looking into the following items

- 1, Light Sport Ballooning -An overview and how it may affect us.
- 2, the details of our 2nd Hopper Meet to be held at Missenden Buckinghamshire (1st May bank holiday weekend)
- 3, anything else I receive.

Fly Safe everyone, Membership stands at 160 (early Feb).

Steve

All articles for inclusion in future issues, please forward to the editor at Information@cloudhoppers.org and all feedback good, bad or indifferent will be welcome. In future we might even run a letters/email section. Views aired by contributors may not be those of the editor.