

Issue Number 24

March 2008

Hello again People,

Easter weekend, and whilst we may only be one week away from British Summer time, most of the UK is being blown to kingdom come with snow storms sweeping the country. How fickle our weather is and whilst the fields remain saturated and flying seems the furthest thing from being what we are capable of, another month's magazine imminently reaches publication datelines with slender content and nothing imminently due to bolster the pages. Therefore in what may be seen to be more compact than usual, here without further waiting are this month's meagre offerings!



*Neil Ivison and friends February Hop- see the features section!*

## Contents

In this 24th issue I have for your consideration the following;

1, Ed Speak- Editor's perspective after 2 years of publication.

2, The Features Section-featuring the following:

- Malcolm White / Pauline Baker's Alaskan Attempts.
- Neil Ivison reports on a remarkable days flying in February.

3. Updates for the Newsletter/Website/ Forum talk

4. Homebuilt Section -

- Greg Winker talks about certification.

5. Gallery Pages- Another mixed choice of hoppers selected by your editor for inclusion.

6, Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

- The Solo Meet
- XLTA 4 Amherst- details from Dan Nachbar

7, For Sale /Wanted Section

8, Last and not least.

**1, Ed Speak by Steve Roake** - Issue 24 -Two years of magazines and still going strong!

Surprise- surprise, here we are at issue number 24 of the newsletter and still managing to deliver hopper news on a regular basis. What started off as a whim has turned into a fairly serious production with the help of the various submissions. High on the list of thanks goes to the most consistent of contributors, those without whom there would be no content. The special people who have embraced the concept the greatest are Greg Winker, Graham Bell, Neil Ivison and Malcolm White. Three of these feature again this month which says a lot about their collective efforts and also highlights how little the rest of you 350 odd members contribute. It's about time some of you stopped taking

and started giving of your exploits, ideas, experiences and thoughts for the collective benefit of others. I get tired of asking for more and should there be no submissions, then the magazine will simply stop period. If you find a month without a publication - you can rightly assume that I too, can't be bothered! So in a nutshell - support it or lose it- your choice!

## 2, The Features Section-

### **Malcolm White -Alaskan attempts ultimately fail for 2008**

Two emailed submissions from Malcolm, the first received on 3<sup>rd</sup> March quite optimistic, the second one six days later summing up the lack of luck.

Despite UPS's best efforts to screw up our trip to Alaska by not collecting the balloons the day before we flew here, we arrived in Fairbanks with all the kit (most brought as excess luggage on the flight with us) late last night, after driving the 350-odd miles up from Anchorage. We had an impromptu meeting with the local balloon pilots who have been most helpful by going out of their way to help us where they can. The temperature here as we speak is -24.4 deg C and flat calm. We have the AX-1 (8,800 ft<sup>3</sup>) and AX-2 (14,000 ft<sup>3</sup>) with us and will, hopefully, be in a position to get a flight or two in before the end of the week. Pauline and I are here with Paolo and Nicole Bonanno, both of whom were sick last week in Anchorage, but are now fighting fit again.

Those who know the area will understand the lack of roads, so we are planning snowmobile retrieves. Hopefully, we'll get some great video footage. The scenery is stunning and all the rivers and lakes are frozen solid. Fortunately, the moose here are fairly friendly and the bears are in hibernation!

Then on the ninth (six days later).

Well, we've admitted defeat and will be heading back to Europe having been unable to get the cool temperatures we need to attempt any records. Had we known it was going to be so mild yesterday here in Fairbanks, we could have gone somewhere 15 degrees colder, like Memphis or Nashville!! Many of

the competitors for the World Ice Carving Championships here gave up before finishing their masterpieces. Despite the weather, the local Fairbanks balloon pilots have been very accommodating and, quite by chance, we bumped into Susan Hazlett, who was at our hotel in Fairbanks, at a bird conference. She overheard someone saying that there were balloonists in the hotel hoping to attempt World Records. She introduced herself and advised us that she held some of the first female altitude records in the AX-7 category back in 1976 and 1977 when she flew to over 7200 and 8600 metres in the first balloon that I ever flew in!! What a small world! Thanks to everyone on the list who passed on their good wishes to Pauline. Looks like it will now be next winter.

Thanks to Malcolm White for keeping us all in the picture - better luck next year!

### **Neil Ivison's February Hop with friends**

#### **Ballooning, The way it should be**

Having purchased a cloudhopper in July 07 there had been an intention for myself and fellow Chiltern Region hopper owners, Andy Austin and John Tyrrell, to meet up and go hopping together. Although we live “reasonably close” to one another, this had not proved easy to get off the ground. It came close at the recent one-man meet held at Husbands Bosworth but as some of you will know, we were fog bound on the Saturday morning and on the Sunday I didn't quite fancy the wind speed (or in truth, the landing!) with my still “limited” hopping experience.

Moving forward into early February we were blessed with a few frosty mornings and on forecast, a perfect Sunday for hopping, i.e. an early morning frost and very little wind. Having seen this forecast midweek I had made arrangements with Husbands Bosworth Gliding Club for a couple of balloons to have CofA inspections, then to fly out afterwards. After a few phone calls it soon transpired into we would have our CofA inspections in the morning, John would come and join us for lunch, then we would all go hopping in the afternoon – oh, and we were to use our Frelander for retrieve, hmmm.

Sunday morning came and just as we started to think about getting the balloons out for inspection the frost dutifully disappeared, typical.



*Neil and Andy – up close and personal!*

With one of Husbands Bosworth's tarmac areas now employed the inspections were completed leaving the paperwork to be done. The reason I mention paperwork in this report is, if you haven't had a CofA in recent months there are now a few more forms to be filled in, so it is a good idea to have an inspection where there is somewhere nearby to escape to. Rather handily the gliding club has a club house with good food and more importantly, plenty of coffee!

With just over an hour's paperwork finally coming to an end it was time for lunch. By this point we had been joined by John and another pilot from Bourne, Sarah Sherwin who fancied flying somewhere different. This made lunch a very sociable and friendly affair. Those of you who have been to Husbands Bosworth will probably know the catering (staffed by volunteers) is very good; on this instance the Sunday roast was very welcome. This led us onto time to go flying, and a few of us wondering if the vast amounts of food consumed should warrant a revisit to the load chart!

With The gliding clubs weather system showing the wind to be 5kts from the south east, Bruntingthorpe airfield was muted as a rough target. Great I thought, just as long as the recently restored Vulcan bomber isn't out for a play!

With permission to fly granted by the gliding club (who were launching gliders during the day) we set off to inflate. We soon found ourselves with a line up for a photo with three hoppers all attached to landrovers. Now, what could we be taking the Mickey out of here!

Managing to resist temptation of bouncing off the Landover's roof's it was time to take to the sky. I went off first soon followed by the others.



It was one of those launches where you take off slowly, the balloon next to you is at identical height and close enough for verbal communication, but they go left and you go right, how does that happen!? A steady climb up to 2000ft saw direction of mainly due north except for one layer about 1000ft going due west, never more than 5kts. I took time to relax and enjoy the relief of being back in the hopper seat after the Christmas period, even taking time to take a few pictures, something that is always a little nerve racking in a hopper for obvious reasons...

After an uneventful first 30 minutes we all started looking for different directions and trying to find some wind. This eventually let us us starting to spread out a little which was a good thing, as at this point one of the glider pilots decided it would be nice to give us a very close fly past! I've experienced being buzzed many times by planes and microlites, but it seemed almost eerie as the glider whistled past at speed.

After 45 minutes we had flown about 2.5miles with a similar distance still to go for Bruntingthorpe. A quick check on the fuel and time showed there

was plenty more flying to be had so I sat back and relaxed, enjoyed the slow drifting with a big smile on my face thinking this is what I bought a hopper for. I also wondered if it really could be February, the weather was just too perfect.



*John Tyrell and Andy Austin and that perfect day*

Now came time for “buzz number 2” which looked rather too close to John from where I was “sitting”. This time it was a 2 seater plane with occupants looking like they were enjoying themselves, probably more than Andy Austin & I were as it did a figure of 8 between us! A hopper seat certainly gives a very different, more vulnerable perspective on a close fly by.

After an hour John found a perfect field with easy access, and sensibly took it, a nice slow easy landing with an easy retrieve. Sarah in the fourth balloon had gone further north and also decided to land at this point.

As for Andy & I, we carried on edging ever closer to Bruntingthorpe, but equally growing frustrated with the speed dropping off to the point where it took 25 minutes to fly a mile. At this point a possible landing site appeared in front of me, and with the contemplation of it taking another 15-20 minutes to get to the airfield made the decision to land. As I started my decent “buzz number 3” was about to happen, not to me but Andy. From the East I could see a helicopter approaching on a course to go to the south of my position towards Andy. With Andy between the helicopter and the sun it made for a rather late increase in height for the helicopter and an interesting heart in mouth moment for Andy.

I continued my, in comparison to Andy’s, uneventful landing and put a close to my first 1h 30 mins hopper flight just as the fuel gauge started to flicker. By this time Andy had also decided that continuing to Bruntingthorpe was not worth the effort and found a gateway to land in on the outskirts of the airfield. With all the kit packed away it was back to the gliding club for a welcome drink and the usual story swapping. This led to the quote of the day by Andy Austin: let’s send a picture to landrover saying “We were so grabbed by their advert, we all went and bought hoppers to go with our Landrover’s!”

To sum up, a fantastic day of relaxed, pressure free flying. Just how every flight should be.

Who said hopping was unsociable?

Neil Ivison

All jpegs supplied for the above article supplied by Neil Ivison -  
Many thanks again-ED!

### **3, Updates to the website / Newsletter/ Forum Topics**

Forum topics this month include XLTA 4 which features in the events section later, enquiries about the Solo Meet and Bill Teasdale sent in two fine jpegs (both feature this month) for the Gallery Section.

### **4, Homebuilt section**

#### **Greg Winker talks about Certification**

##### **Part 7 – Certification**

Construction is complete and we've had the test inflation. The balloon works! The only thing left now is the paperwork. In America we call this saving the best 'til last.

Since I live in the U.S., this part is structured around what I went through with the Seattle Manufacturer Inspection District Office (MIDO), the branch of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that deals with aircraft certification. If you live in a different part of the U.S., this may help you too. But keep in mind every region has their own take on the rules. And if you don't live in the U.S., consider moving here. George Bush won't be president forever (ha-ha).

The paperwork process can be divided into three distinct sections:

1. Request an N number
2. Apply for the aircraft registration
3. Schedule a certification meeting

The first step is to reserve a registration number. For a mere \$10, you can pick any available number for your very own. The on-line N# registry allows you to see what's already been issued and what's currently available. This balloon is my seventh homebuilt and I have given it the construction serial number of 007. The most appropriate registration number available is N207BW. In case you're curious, BW stands for Balloon Winker.

Once you have selected a registration number (pick an alternate number too - just in case), simply mail a letter making the request. Enclose your \$10 and in a few weeks you'll receive a letter from the FAA saying the number is reserved for you for one year. And if you want to save \$10, instead simply request "any available registration number."

Once you have this piece of paper, you can go ahead and apply for registration. Make sure you do this plenty early on, since it can take six to eight weeks. Don't fret that the balloon may still be a long way from being finished. Apparently registering a bunch of parts that will eventually turn into an aircraft doesn't make a difference to the FAA. But it's imperative to have the registration in hand before you apply for certification. The FAA will not even schedule an inspection until they see the registration has been issued. A typical registration package includes the following documents:

- Cover letter explaining request
- Registration application – Form 8050-1
- Affidavit of ownership – Form 8050-88
- N# letter

I can provide copies of the actual documents I submitted for my balloon if anyone would be interested.

While you are waiting for the FAA to process your registration request, you will have a couple of months to finish construction. Once you have received the official registration certificate and you have finished construction, you are ready to apply for certification.

The certification meeting is where the FAA will take a look at your balloon, verify you built it, determine if you are a nut because you fly a homebuilt balloon, discuss the operating limitations and so forth. I think the best way to approach this step is to call your nearest MIDO to find out exactly how they want you to proceed. My region wanted to come over and do the inspection themselves (I think they just wanted to get out of the office). But usually the FAA out-sources this step to a Designated Airworthiness Representative (also known as a retired FAA MIDO employee). A typical certification package includes the following documents:

- Cover letter explaining request
- Program letter
- Application for Airworthiness Certificate – Form 8130-6
- Photo or drawing of balloon with dimensions
- Eligibility Statement Amateur Built Aircraft – Form 8130-12

In my case, the FAA provided me with a template for the program letter and discussed how to modify it for a balloon. A program letter explains where and how you will fulfil the Phase I testing required of all experimental balloons. Once you read the template, you can see it is structured for fixed wing aircraft. My favourite question – The cruise speed of the aircraft is \_\_\_\_ knots. For Phase 1 testing you normally select an area with a 25 mile radius around whatever airport you like. Since I don't normally fly from an airport, and I might go further than 25 miles during a flight, this didn't seem too workable. My MIDO guys were familiar with balloon operations, so they let me select four cities I could launch near and stay "in the vicinity of" and still meet the spirit of the rule.

In addition to the documents you previously sent to the FAA as part of the certification package, you need to have the following available for inspection during the visit:

- Construction log – you are required to keep some sort of written document of the building process (you're reading Part 7 of it right now)
- Aircraft logbook
- Flight Manual (including weights and balances)
- Bribe (just kidding - but donuts wouldn't hurt)

Now it's the moment of truth. If all goes well, the FAA will issue the certificate and operating limitations during their visit. Expect them to spend a fair bit of time walking you through the operating limitations to make sure you know what you can do with your new aircraft, what you are not allowed to do and that all your questions have been answered. I was surprised and pleased with the amount of time and interest the FAA showed during their visit.

So that's pretty much it. Or Soup to Nuts as you might say. All that's left to do is take that first flight to see if all the effort was worth it.

Coming up next – Flying a Tetrahedron.....Finally!

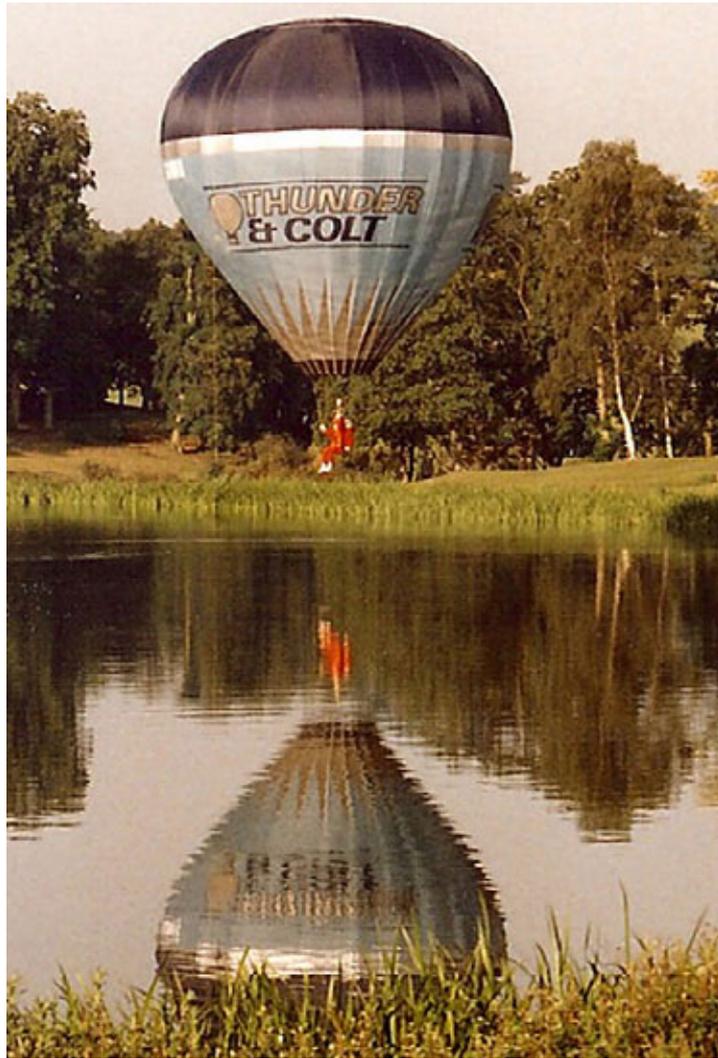
Greg Winker

## 5, Gallery Pages.

This section is the Editor's choice of new and older jpegs.



Recent addition to the UK register is G-CFAW, Lindstrand 35A(ex HB-QIV ) and registered to Andy Walker in Devon. Nice balloon with only 21 hours total time. Thanks for the nice shot. (Jpeg Bill Teasdale and care of Air Britain Pics.)



*Bill Teasdale supplied the above scanned jpeg of G-BMKI Colt 21A taken many years ago at Leeds Castle in Kent*

If your hopper /Duo picture has yet to feature in this section of the Gallery pages, send me a jpeg of approx 600kb size for future inclusion. Usual address [Steve.roake@ntlworld.com](mailto:Steve.roake@ntlworld.com)

## 6, Manufacturer News /Events /Updates

### The Solo Meet (2008)

Just about a month to go to the fourth Solo Meet and event organiser Graham Philpot wants to remind you that if you want an up to date marked up map (essential really) for the event, then entries need to be in to him by April 19<sup>th</sup> at the very latest . For online entry forms and further details check the website.

[www.solomeet.wanadoo.co.uk](http://www.solomeet.wanadoo.co.uk).

I'll see you there - please don't forget to bring the weather!

### XLTA -number 4

The 4th Annual Amherst Experimental Balloon, Hopper, Chariot, and Airship Rally, (also sometimes known as XLTA4 and XLTA-Amherst)

**WHEN** -May 16-18, 2008 (This is two weeks earlier than previous years.)

**WHERE**- Amherst MA (two hours by car West of Boston  
in the beautiful Connecticut River valley)

All builders, owners, and fans of experimental and ultra-light LTA aircraft are invited.

This is a small private non-profit event: no paid rides, no public audience, no muss, and no fuss. Just experimental LTA and the people who love to build and fly them (as well as friends and families, of course.) This event provides both an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences amongst builders and a chance to fly together informally.

### The event features:

- A fascinating bunch of one-of-a-kind LTA aircraft and pilots.
- Nearby or (depending upon winds) on-site launches.
- On-site field for tethering to show off your latest design.
- 24 hour on-site propane available for purchase.
- On-site workshop/sewing facilities for experiments/repairs.
- Pleasant on-site daytime hang-out, cooking, and eating space.
- On-site camping and RV parking.
- A wide variety of motels and hotels available nearby.  
(Be advised motel rooms in this area in May start at \$110 per night. Some less expensive motels are a 20 minute drive away.)
- Local chase crew available.
- On-site catered group meals available (with sign-up in advance)
- Nearby dining/entertainment/culture for rainy day amusement of both pilots and non-flying family members.
- On-site playground and indoor playroom for kids of all ages.

The online registration page is:

<http://www.xlta.org/regform2008.php>

Space is limited. Please don't show up without registering in advance.

All registration fees and food/fuel deposits are fully refundable if you can't make it. So sign up and send a check by May 1 and everything will be just peachy.

Each participating pilot with an aircraft is asked to chip in \$50 to cover his/her group. (All money collected is used for the fixed expenses of the event. This is a purely non-profit affair.) Folks who come on

their own (i.e. without an aircraft) will be asked to chip in \$20 per person. Non-flying folks will also be asked to lend a hand with crewing and other logistic stuff. This is a participatory, not a spectator event.

Contact Dan Nachbar at 413-549-1321 or [dan@nachbar.com](mailto:dan@nachbar.com) for more information. (If you don't get a quick response to your email please assume that your message has mistakenly fallen prey to spam filtering and give me a phone call instead.)

### **7. For Sale /Wanted section**

Nothing Currently up for sale!

### **And Finally**



*Another Land Rover Advert? - Neil Ivison and Friends*

Membership (current to end of March 2008) stands at a very healthy 360. Please keep putting the word about, we only thrive by growth and your inclusion of articles and projects.

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

Safe flying Steve Roake.

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Issue 24-March 2008