Hello again folks.

It is an understatement to say that I have been waiting for this moment for months. The annual One Man Meet is always a time I look forward to as it gives you a chance to catch up with good friends, talk hoppers, and maybe even fly a bit. This particular one man meet was expectantly more thrilling as I knew it would be the launch of the long awaited new Cameron Balloons hopper and the week before the event I was even invited to free fly the new product. Therefore with fingers crossed I hoped the weather would give me the time to test the beast and you can read my road test in a later section of this newsletter.

Tim Ward caught Eric Hodges and Mike Garcia in Abq.
1. Ed-Speak – Happy times for an Editor

Sometimes you just need to indulge in the things you love to remember why you chose them in the first place. I managed to have big fun in Wales at the OMM and got to fly too when quite a few others missed the opportunity and regretted it later. This was exactly what happened at the OMM and I feel so refreshed having flown. Anyway, with tight time schedules, let’s get on with the newsletter.

Steve Roake

2. Essential Extra’s / Tech Talk-

Nothing submitted this month in this section.

3. The Features Section

“Game Changer”

There are rare moments in your life when something comes along that makes you re-evaluate the mechanism by which you judge things. You reset the criteria by which you perceive the limits had been set, and in redefining the standards by which others will be compared and it makes you wonder why nobody has done this before. These rare occasions are called “Game Changers”, and at the 30th One Man Meet in Clytha Wales over the weekend of 12th-14th October, Cameron Balloons Limited delivered to an eager audience a new standard in Ultralight Ballooning with their brand new O-31 Cloudhopper.

Early Saturday morning on the 13th, after briefing, awaiting the fog to clear, with pretty much the great and good in UK hopping present, Craig Moore and Andy Booth revealed to the expectant audience the new product on a manicured lawn outside a country house hotel. The manufacturer had the perfect place to show the world how far it has come since Don Cameron made his first O-31 in October 1972. Nearly 42 years later to the day, and utilising brand new class leading ultralight fabric, the craft registered G-CIJJ weighed in at a staggering 30.5 kilos in the bag (nearly half the weight of its illustrious ancestor which was around 57 kilos), and designed to meet with most airlines 30-32kg allowance (max) for single item of hold /
checked in luggage. I’m told it will even fit inside a large suitcase.

Great view of the new product – photo by Les Hancock.

Tethered for all to try, and mated to a Millennium bottom end with titanium 60 litre tank, it was evident that Cameron has listened to what the essence of hopping is. Simply, a quality product with all the essential ingredients in the lightest possible format whilst not compromising on the attention to detail. They had given the craft a decent sized mouth, utilised light weight 2mm flying wires, (3mm are a customer option). Continuous Lightweight 20mm load tapes with fully sewn turn back terminations and lightweight horizontal tapes are fitted, so clearly there is no compromise on safety. A handy “Dog Pull” gracefully within arm’s reach ensures the rip line doesn’t catch in the seat unit and is easily accessible in flight.
The normal Cameron standards of finish were evident for all to see and yet with its new French fabric, (a high tenacity lightweight rip stop nylon incorporating PU coating <40gsm), the shock of a 30kilo envelope is a hard fact to swallow. You are now talking about potentially an envelope you can truly call portable, with airline oversized luggage easily achieved and portability that will change the way we go fly. You can easily remove the lower flying wires, scoop, rip line and crown line to make the package 27kgs but these components would end up as hand luggage. Phil Dunnington had previously come up with a unique way of taking a hopper envelope onto a plane involving splitting the craft in half, this is no longer necessary. I understand the envelope bag could change as Cameron is looking into a duffle type of bag that can be pulled tighter once fastened, which if utilised would assist with airline travel.

The nylon used is so new that extended fatigue testing is still ongoing and as such no definitive limit has so far been set for fabric life, my understanding is that at this stage over two hundred hours life is expected. The temptation to try the craft on the morning was immense, but as I had been promised a test flight I deferred to the following morning and like most of the others stood around wishing the fog would lift sufficiently to enable me to free fly. Patience and an adherence to remaining within my personal comfort zone made for a longer morning than some would be prepared to wait.
The steady flow of potential customers to review the balloon kept all entertained until the moment I considered it flyable. Pulling the balloon out of its bag you can instantly see that there haven’t been any compromises on the build quality. The 2mm flying wires drew comment with a false assumption of cost cutting by some of the bystanders. Being of a different size to stock wires, they actually cost more due to economies of scale.

As the inflation fan went on, clearly evident is the generous size of the mouth. With limited directional control on hopper seat units, the advantage of a bigger mouth cannot be underestimated. The scoop, whilst smaller than some, is also created in such a way that it remains in place without the need to secure the lower section.

Glancing upwards, the generous parachute worked easily and the ripline action was light and consistent in its action. The parachute and parachute aperture have been reduced to create a nicely weighted and responsive vent which optimises the seal. The flying wires are attached with rapide links meaning they are easy to repair or replace in the field as no sewing is required.
Whilst this was my first experience of the Millennium bottom end, the immediate feel of comfort and the handy ability to lean forward further than normal in the harness, meant that the comfort was never in doubt. I’m told it was fitted with a larger orientation or swivel ring and has a 90 degree fuel shut off valve which is handily placed to aid fuel isolation. Initial flights in the balloon have indicated truly remarkable levels of fuel economy and in my one hour and five mins of exploring the parameters of the craft I still ended up with over half the sixty litres left in the titanium tank. This later confirmed that a 2 hour 30 min flight was very possible in my configuration.

Large crowd inspects the new baby –photo Les Hancock

Taking off in conjunction with Andy Booth in his Airtour 31, we initially did some close up air-to-air footage and then climbing higher to see the extent of the clearing vista. I proceeded to
give the balloon a gentle climb and descent using the chute lightly. With caution as it was someone else’s balloon and with growing respect for the performance, I got more adventurous. Some less than economical manoeuvring showed me how I could rely on the parachute and with such little weight, stopping the decent seemed shorter than normal to me as expected. I’m told that the loading on each of the flying wires is light and with the ability to use the envelope up to 30 degrees Celsius with my weighting of 100 kilos, I suggest that this size will be very popular in the future sales. My old Colt 31A weighed 57 kgs and ran out of lift capacity at 23 degrees necessitating a bigger balloon in order to fly in Metz on hotter afternoons, this anomaly no longer exists. I’m sure if flown sympathetically, there is significant fuel saving to be had in this combination. On the basis of my flight test, if I were in the market for a hopper, based on my experiences of all three most popular products, I wouldn’t hesitate to choose this one before the others.
Coupled to the excellent performance, general build quality, weight savings, and superb attention to detail, the fact that pricing has been set to ensure that they are competitive at £8225 plus vat excluding CAA fees, ex works, this is the real deal with the lightweight fabric. Or if you prefer traditional standard ripstop, the O-31 is also available for £7760 plus vat, excluding CAA fees and ex works.
If you asked me would I personally change anything, the answer is yes. I would add an additional draw cord to assist with finding the parachute and I would want clear view panels in the parachute too for added safety.
Finally, a personal thanks from me to all involved in the project for letting me free fly this great product and having the opportunity of independently accessing its merits and the freedom of reporting my findings.

Steve Roake

The 30th Annual One Man Meet – by Steve Roake

When accessing the One Man Meet prospects, take a look at the weather forecast, toss it out of the window, turn up, and despite whatever the weather men say, generally we will all go flying.
The glitch in the above quote came last year when at Wellesborne Mountford near Stratford upon Avon, despite all of our efforts, we remained firmly on the ground. Some would say that one of the essential ingredients (a valley and hills) was missing. This year (at my suggestion), we returned to the Llansantffraed Court Hotel in Clytha Wales where we held the event in 2003. Whilst the hotel is expensive by one man standards, the venue had all the ingredients we needed, and the area is lovely to fly at. Monmouthshire has some beautiful rolling hills, is surrounded by the Brecon Beacons and has plenty of opportunities for landing spots due to it’s mainly cattle and sheep farming locally.
With the event celebrating its 30th year, much effort was put into trying to get thirty hoppers together, and whilst thirty teams probably turned up, the slightly iffy weather stopped quite a few from flying. Indeed initially I had some international content lined up from Sweden but the birth of Danny’s first child (many
congratulations to you both), stopped the Swedish participants from attending. We also found out at the event that Phil Dunnington had decided to hand over the reins after organising twenty eight of the thirty, with John Tyrell and Wendy Russell stepping in for next year going forward. We convened on Friday afternoon for a 3pm briefing and all of those present knew that the winds were too strong for free flying. People came from far and wide to attend, and whilst we settled in, the crews kept coming. Nobody showed a preference for flying so crews congregated in the hotel bar for a pre dinner drink understanding that the forecast for the morning was generally better but with a strong possibility of early morning fog. My crew convened for some very nice food in Raglan and adjourned for the early morning briefing at 6.30am.

Early the next day nearly thirty teams met in the meeting room of the hotel where Phil gave us the welcome greeting met forecast and general outlook for the weekend. Winds which were generally south-westerly were fairly light and remaining so with 1000ft and 2000ft gradients of approximately 10 knots. The fog was prevalent as predicted but due to lift later so we all knew we would have to wait. This wasn’t a problem because the weekend was the world debut of the new Cameron Balloons Ltd lightweight hopper and Craig Moore and Andy Booth took the opportunity to launch the O-31 with a tether on the immaculate lawns in front of the hotel. Having all the prominent hopper exponents as a captive audience the guys unveiled the new craft to amazed responses. The compact bag didn’t really give away any clues to the composition of the beast. The information that in the bag, it really did weigh only 30.5 kilos was remarkable, nee “Game Changing”. In one quick demonstration, the goalposts of what is achievable had been moved to set a new standard for lightweight hopping. Sure it had the regular Cameron standard of finish, but clearly noticeable was the new lightweight fabric, a small scoop and 2mm flying wires. Whilst a more detailed review of the product is elsewhere in this edition, plenty of people both old and new to hopping took the opportunity to enjoy tethering G-CIJJ.

I deliberately didn’t take a turn, having been promised subject to the right weather, a chance to fly the craft over the weekend. Along with others I took the opportunity to enjoy a cooked breakfast and returned later to prepare to fly. Eventually around 10.30 Allie Dunnington took off in her Colt G-HEXE reporting that the fog
was clearing and the hotel seemed the last place to see the benefit of the better weather. Within half an hour the scene improved and some of us chose to fly.

Busy Launch field (Sunday morning). Photo by Les Hancock.

Unfortunately as the multitude prepared to fly John Hilditch suffered an O ring failure on his fuel supply Tema fitting, this left him grounded. I inflated in the top field adjacent to the hotel with a variety of older craft around me. Andy Booth was flying G-LORY an Airtour 31, also flying were G-BPUB, G-BVRL, G-ONCB, G-BXXU and G-BXVP as the theme was definitely towards older hoppers. Ian Chadwick flew G-BVCN the pretty Colt 56A ahead of me as I climbed out in the light and variable conditions, descending into the field behind the hotel where upon reaching the far end I found myself
becalmed. Bobbing up and down on the spot achieved very little until after five mins I managed to find a drift wind and headed away from the hotel. The gradient such as it was now up to 4-5 knots but patchy and the surrounding fog wasn’t dissipating and having watched a few land I decided not to make it the longest flight ever, just appreciating being in the air. The flora and fauna was of reasonable sized fields dotted around by sheep and cows and whilst cresting a hill I decided (having not been able to contact my retrieve) to land before some serious High tension power lines in the village of Llanddewi. It helped to see the farmer in the field who turned out to be very nice and as I sat tethering, waiting for my crew to arrive, Steve Lacey flew over in the Norwich Lighting hopper. Just as I thought things would get worse as there was no mobile phone coverage, they turned up. Nice quick packing away followed by good farmer relations, and the donation of a bottle of wine and we still had time to join others at a pre arranged tour and sampling of the local Raglan Cider.
Around 3pm all gathered back at the hotel for the pm briefing and whilst the wind speed was higher than the morning with anticipated fronts going through, a fair collection of flyers chose to take the slot. Flying G-CIJJ (the new Cameron O-31), was Craig Moore who took the opportunity to lose his hopping virginity! Closely escorting him was Andy Booth in G-LORI his Airtour. Glenn Everett and Liz Meek had arrived and flew G-OINN the Ultramagic H-31, along with Phil Dunnington in G-CBIH. The afternoon slot was completed with G-BPUB and G-NLCH again.

Wondering if I had got my hopper wet from the morning flight, I took the opportunity to dry G-UHOP on the posh lawns in front of the house and got some lovely photos whilst doing this. It actually wasn’t wet but this is as near as id ever get to a selfie, however Chris Gingell’s version is better (see below).
The evening had a planned get together in a pub in Raglan but unfortunately I think the postcode given by Phil wasn’t close enough for us to discover the pub in question and after 30mins my crew and I decided to give up trying and we found another good venue where we enjoyed good food.

Sunday mornings briefing centred on the fog which had returned in abundance. Most of the residents took the opportunity to take in their cooked breakfasts and then returned to view the situation to see if the weather had improved. Phil Dunnington confessed to having crashed his vehicle not once but twice the previous day and later on awarded himself the cock up award. Some grew tired of waiting for the fog to clear and three crews including Richard Allen with his recently purchased Lindstrand 31A G-CEOU, tethered. The other two who enjoyed the opportunity were John Hilditch (with a fixed O ring) in G-BOYO and G-BPUB. As time dragged on I was beginning to wonder if the slot was going to pass us by but the fearless footprint winning Allie Dunnington (for twice flying in the murk), took off in G-HEXE reporting that in the direction of the mountains, the vista was clearing.

John Hilditch and Andy Davey took turns in G-BOYO Cam.V20 Ian Chadwick shortly followed in G-BVCN, and finally I got the opportunity to follow Andy Booth and Pete Dalby into the air in G-CIJJ. My findings are
listed elsewhere but suffice to say I enjoyed over an hour in the new craft which is simply a joy to fly. Unfortunately, indulging in the flight I missed the prize giving where Phil announced he was handing over the reins to John Tyrell and Wendy Rousell, who received the terminator trophy. Let’s hope they are as successful with future events. The Wooden Tit went to Mike Evens in G-BPUB for reviving the balloon and then landing it in a pub garden as well as starting to train his son during the tether. A case of New blood and old beer. That concluded another successful OMM, many thanks to Phil and Allie for their efforts over the years and here is to next year where ever that maybe?

Steve Roake

One Man Meet – 2014 by John Hilditch

The plan was for three pilots and two hoppers, Lindstrand 25A G-CBZJ and Cameron V20 G-BOYO, but with Niall Rowan having a prior engagement and Tom Hilditch chomping at the bit to do the GB Long Jump, eventually it was left to me to take the two hoppers and just the Lindstrand bottom end. I made briefing on Friday evening, but no flying and after a cream tea with Steve Roake, Martin Freeston, Sandy Mitchell and others, I headed for my hotel in Abergavenny. Now I have only passed through Abergavenny once before and tonight it made even Croydon look salubrious! Having parked the car, I was met by a wake party for some guy who must have been very popular, I did not get to see the women who were flashing their boobs, you will have to ask the Bish’s and Kunert’s, who later witnessed (possibly the same two women) arrested and thrown into the back of a police van. Eventually I was met my Tom, Ian and Abi Bridge and after final plans were agreed and met checked, we arrived at the Llansantffraed Hotel at some unearthly hour, to help prepare Tom and Abi for their long jump. With the mist and fog preventing hopping, some 15 hopper pilots ably assisted Tom with instruction - a bit like Harry Enfield’s character - “You don’t want to do that, you want to do it like this” (particularly as regards the parachute line).
Tom took off and flew for over 9 hours to apparently over 10,000 feet and landed I believe in Bolsover. From his track I calculated that he covered 175 odd miles but straight line was some 50 miles less. Eventually the mist started to clear and I began to prepare my hopper, unfortunately whilst conditions were now ideal, my burner connection was spurting propane everywhere. It was found that the ‘O’ to the Tema connection, was missing (unusually it had already been replaced at inspection and for a second time earlier this year). Now you cannot get an ‘O’ ring when you want one but then 6 came along, thanks to Jan Fraser who had a supply and were able to affect the necessary repair. By which time, I had visited a cider farm and in the wake of CB activity, the ground was saturated and so I thought better of it and spent a very pleasant evening with Pete and Elaine Bish, together with Celia and Roger Kunert in Raglan and back at our hotel, where most of the locals looked like they had been involved in some sort of fight, probably from the night before!

Sunday morning same again, just hanging around, others started to take to the air, but I was not happy, nevertheless, as Roger and others had never seen G-BOYO (which was registered in October 1988 and has still only under 10 hours free-flight) I thought it would be nice to tether. The temperature was fine for free flight nevertheless the temp flag dropped on inflation and this was even before Andy Davey, one of the original owners, had sat in her (sorry Andy!) and also Kate Ibbotson (much, much lighter!) who had tethered BOYO in November 1988.

Well I didn’t get to free fly (even though Steve Roake had offered the loan of G-UHOP as he was flying the Cameron Balloon), nevertheless it was a very successful I weekend and once again I thoroughly enjoyed myself and was great to catch up with so many old and new friends.

Thanks again to Phil and Allie Dunnington, Wendy Rousell and everybody who made this such a great event. Many thanks to all who helped including Jan Fraser, Steve Roake and his crew friends.
4. **Homebuilding section** – Dean Donley’s hopper bottom end

This beautiful bottom end featured last month as a work in progress. As you can see the progress has been swift and now it’s ready to fly.

Dean says he will test fly it and then get the finished article powder coated and will probably add a skid plate. Many thanks for the update.

5. **Gallery Pages** –

This section is the Editor’s choice of new jpegs, visuals and older balloons of interest or alterations. If you know of a new or
interesting hopper or Duo that hasn’t featured in this section, and then feel free to forward details of it with a suitable photograph to me using my normal email address.

Fantastic view of Gary Tarter sent in via facebook by the man himself of his beautiful Lindstrand hopper.

Steve Griffins lovely homebuilt envelope over a Cameron Bottom end caught mid flight.
Christian Mitta caught this rarely seen Cameron Viva 42 G-SKOT at the recent Festival of kirschberg in Tyrol Austria.
Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

Hopper event in Australia.

News from Barb Smith of a brand new event specifically aimed at hoppers down under. Here is the information as passed on to me.

Hopper, Chariot and One Man Balloon Gathering 2015 (Alternatively A party in the desert)

The suggested flying dates for the Alice Springs Hopper, Chariot and One Man Balloon gathering are Friday 8 May to Monday 11 May inclusive.

Launch time would be around 0630. The flying area will be a CTAF until 0800 when the tower opens. We would envisage flights times to be a maximum of an hour.

VHF radios are mandatory for coms in Alice CTAF and UHF is essential for social and retrieve coordination.

This will be a gathering of balloonists, not a structured meet and as such there will be no special CASA or Airservices approvals or notifications. There will be no Event Director or official in any other capacity except social.

Documentation – we will not be checking anything. Your responsibility to fly legally and with adequate insurance.

All flight and planning decisions will be individual pilot’s responsibility however;

We will meet at a central point pre flight each morning,

Local area expertise will be available to assist in launch site selection and flight planning.


A printed 1:100,000 map showing airspace and local tracks will provided. This has not yet been produced in electronic format as most of the tracks have been built by Outback Ballooning and are not marked on the original topo. We may have it in Google Earth compatible format by May but if not then sorry but you will need to look at a map as well as your tablet!

Mobile coverage. The flying area whilst somewhat remote has generally adequate Telstra coverage.

Refuelling will be available at Outback Ballooning with pure propane at cost price - current price is about $1.10 per litre.
**Balloon storage** before, during and after the gathering will be available in the Outback Ballooning Shed 35 Kennett Ct, Alice Springs NT 0870. This is also the address for **balloon shipping**. Carriers for shipping depend on where the balloon is coming from so hard for us to advise on best deals.

**A large trailer and Troopie (or Coaster bus depending on demand)** will be available to transport multiple balloons to and from launch sites for the really social pilots amongst you.

I guess if you are interested and need more info I would contact Barb directly at bjsmith@me.com


Dave Westlake placed the above link on facebook which shows the exploits of Ivan Trifonov with his Kubicek BB12 hopper. Bear in mind he had to flap inflate the craft at the bottom of this cave which makes this a completely remarkable feat of airmanship.

Alan Eustace Jumps From Stratosphere, Breaking Felix Baumgartner’s World Record
A helium-filled balloon lifted Mr. Eustace to 135,908 feet. Fifteen minutes after he cut himself loose using a small explosive device, he was on the ground.
mobile.nytimes.com | By John Markoff

Another great story posted on facebook is a film about Pierrick Duvoisin Unfortunately in French but showing the great things he is doing with his eco balloons project.
http://www.canalalpha.ch/emissions/avisdepassage/avis-de-passage-pierrick-duvoisin/

I suggest it is worth a view even if you don’t understand the words.

2nd Annual Little and Large Meet – Dave Such

Little (and Large) Solo Meet 2015 entry packs for our second event at Lakeside Lodge Golf Centre at Pidley, near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire being held between Friday 29th and Sunday 31st May have been emailed to all pilots who registered for and/or supported our first event this year.

Details of the event have been published on the BBAC Forum under the ‘Balloon Meets’ section and we have sent information through to the editor of BBAC Pilots Circular and BBAC Aerostat publications as well as webmaster for Easy Balloon’s website.

Information has also been sent to all owners and operators of one person balloons that we are aware of and if you think of someone who may appreciate receiving details of the event, either pass on the information or let me know their email address and I will send the information to them.

Places this year are to be restricted to a maximum of 25 balloons
(excluding model balloons), and we’ve already received lots of interest from pilots confirming we will have their entries arriving any day, so please apply early to avoid disappointment.

For more information, email littleandlargemeet@btinternet.com or see our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/events/249258325260073/?fref=ts

Little (and Large) Solo Meet
Friday, 29 May 2015 at 18:00 at Lakeside Lodge Golf Centre in Huntingdon
And Finally.

Membership is currently a healthy 560 members and numbers are generally rising. 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.