

Issue Number 18

August 2007

Hi folks,

Another month and a great result for anyone who travelled to the Loraine region of France for the Bi-annual Pilatre de Rozier festival at Chambley near to Metz . After a sum what iffy start weather wise, the main week was very flyable and after much organizing I would say the first official visit of cloudhoppers was an unqualified success. Much more on this later but to give you a flavour of the event look below for our first ever line up.



*Seven in a rowand Tim Dudman off to the right making it eight flying.
Photo by Liz Bishop.*

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1. Ed Speak by Steve Roake - Metz -the Milestone!

It is very rare for me to be self indulgent when it comes to ballooning. Where else in life do you genuinely have the ability to make people smile, relax and enjoy themselves the way you do when you take someone for their first ever balloon flight? I love the fact that you can give someone a unique insight into a world so different from their day to day existence, that they embrace the experience with passion. This is and always will be an uplifting experience that I cherish because, to be able to do this is a great thing and I sense it is a given gift. However, I got into ballooning to have a hopper and from the first time I went to Metz, this was the place I wanted to fly mine. After asking for permission, and thanks to Aline Dufour, this year we had a break through and hoppers were allowed at no extra charge as a second entry.



John Hilditch sent in this jpeg of myself with Kathy Reineke and about 50 other balloons on a typical morning flight on our way to Xammes doing about 2-3 knots. How relaxing can it get?

To be able to hop in a mass, particularly low level and achieve a flight of 1hr 27mins and still be on the airfield whilst having "boxed" for three times and played with the crowd, has to be one of my ultimate flights so far. Not only did 15 other hopper pilots enjoy at some time during the event the same level of satisfaction, we collectively set the precedence to be beaten in 2009 when (I hope), even more people choose to join us again at Chambley. The essence of the event will be all over this edition of the magazine, I apologize now for including every jpeg possible to share with you what it was like and I thank all who sent me photos which always give you another way of revisiting the scene from another unique perspective other than your own. Six or seven visits to Metz later, we (yes, you and I), achieved one of my many visions to be fulfilled in ballooning. (I just needed to find some sunflowers to fly throughbut it was not to be)! Thanks for sharing the experience!

2. Features Section

Tim Dudman describes his first visit to Metz as a low houred Hopper convert.

Cloudhopping at Metz 2007

As I write this, it is exactly one year ago that I first posted on the cloudhoppers forum, asking for advice on buying a cloudhopper. By Christmas I had bought G-BXVP, a Sky 31 ex-demonstrator with a Cameron Millennium bottom end. Soon after followed a Cameron 60-litre tank and a Cameron hopper fan. With the exceptionally bad start to the summer we experienced here in the UK, I only managed to get one tether and one flight in before the weather turned windy and wet. Undaunted, I entered the hopper into Metz (along with G-CBLN, Lee Hooper's Cameron Z-31) and headed for France with the Bristol University balloon team...

This was my first Metz trip, and I have to say what an amazing experience. My plan was to fly the cloudhopper whenever possible in between flying the University Cameron Z-105. With several pilots on the trip, and Lee preoccupied with achieving his 1000th hour P1, it turned out that I managed to fly the hopper five times, and the University balloon only once!



The morning conditions were perfect and the flying area ideal. Cut fields the size of Bristol surrounded Chambley Airbase. My first flight lasted 1h10m, most of which was spent hovering in between other balloons as we tracked slowly out to the south. I landed with 30% fuel remaining giving me the confidence to do long flights with the 60-litre tank. On my second flight, the direction was similar, but this time I decided to fly higher and further as I became more confident with the balloon. This flight culminated in a drag landing on a hilltop at about 6kts. I was surprised at how smoothly the hopper dragged, and this built my confidence further. Steve Roake flew over in G-BSDV shortly after I landed, and a little later the University Balloon landed next to me (which made our joint retrieve somewhat easier that morning).

Flight three was a fly-in. We had gone off-site to the edge of the 5nm ZRT that surrounded Chambley Airbase so that Rhodri Watkins (the University's P.U/T) could do his flight test with Colin Wolstenholme. Both balloons inflated together and we soon set off over the trees in the direction of the airbase. After just over an hour's flying (staring intently at the GPS heading) I came in over the hangars on the west side of the Airbase. With a surface wind of 7kts I was careful not to drag across the runway, instead landing on our normal launch position in Zone Rouge for the second drag landing of the trip. This turned out to be a particularly good morning as Rhodri passed his flight test and Lee achieved his 1000th hour too!

Flight four was an evening flight, again away from the Airbase to avoid dense forest to the east. Even though inflation was not very gusty by big balloon standards, it was still a challenge without a gimbaled burner. Once airborne, the winds were light and the majority of the flight was conducted low-level, skimming fields of maize. Towards the end of the flight, the winds dropped as I approached a wood. After a quick excursion to 500ft to determine that the winds really were dying, I did a very steep approach down to the ground to land before the wood. The responsiveness of the 31 meant that I could stop the descent just a few feet above the ground - something that would have been difficult to achieve in the 105.

The final flight of the trip was conducted in calm, misty conditions within the perimeter of the vast Airbase. After taking off in the mass line-up and flying low over the crowd, I climbed and flew back to the runway. I then had the opportunity to try jumping off the ground in giant leaps

before getting a tow (sitting on Rhodri's shoulders) back to the runway. After that I flew off at low level to follow the University balloon. I landed next to it with about 25% fuel remaining, and after a few requests from the rest of the team, performed my first hopper stack on top of the Z-105.



So in five flights I logged five hours in my hopper. I've also built up a lot of confidence for flying it back here in the UK. I can thoroughly recommend Metz as a place to take a cloudhopper, and will definitely be going back in 2009.

Tim Dudman

Metz- An Overview- by Steve Roake

There are a number of things that make the festival brilliant. Firstly, "Good Planning". For example, taking enough tanks so that you only refuel after the morning flight and this leaves your evenings free for socialising. Secondly, the unique way you are allowed to take off from any field that isn't fenced in and fly in towards the airfield when you feel like it, and help yourself to packing it away in a similar vain without having to ask for permission. And finally the mix of flying that we all adore. This year if you were the keenest of the keen, 14 slots were the maximum achievable, and splitting between hopper and LBL 90A I did 10 for total flight time of nearly 12hours. The trick is to go a day before the event officially starts (i.e. Thursday), set up your own base camp in your tent, Gite or hotel, register during a quiet time on the Friday and be ready for the start Friday pm.

We achieved all this to find that initially the first two flyable slots were at best late in the evenings Friday /Saturday and at worst a lot of effort for something approaching only a half hour flight as dusk appeared .So Friday night I watched others go and Saturday, we went to eat Pizza at a local restaurant we like. Close to where we stay and got suitably sociable.



Another Superb Liz Bishop jpegThis time of G-OLAW, Lindstrand 25A. (Cant remember the pilot's name. sorry). My hopping was restricted to two outings culminating in over two hours of fun, the first away to the south of the airfield with Kathy Reineke (who came over with husband Dave from Mahomet Illinois with the co-owned Scott Wooge LBL 35A) alternating positions and levels with me, and ultimately sharing a landing field with Graham Bell and Graham Lockett near to Xammes. The second was the famous hopper line-up morning when we boxed till we dropped.



Dave and Kathy having a laugh -pre flight on the "Box" morning with Phil Griffiths, Kev Tanner, Graham Bell, G-OLAW and me in the background prepared to go (Liz Bishop once again with the jpeg)! We even managed to bag a jpeg of Tim Dudman suitably chilled out thanks to Liz Bishop who crews for me with this fine example taken part way through the morning ascent, "loitering with intent to having a good time"!



The other thing that makes the festival so good is the company. My team for example servicing my hopper and a 90A was 13 crew. They all wanted to be there so we had loads of spare with which to help others who were short handed. We choose to camp near to the site in a village called Jaulny, and again one day we had 31 people over for a BBQ party....Awesome, my kind of socializing, plenty of chat, great food and good friends about. The actual flying is just the icing on the cake as far as I'm concerned. Roll on 2009 and a repeat performance. Other Hoppers were seen during the week and where we clocked them you will see them below.

[XLTA - Seattle a report by Greg Winker](#)

August 3-5, 2007

The week prior to XLTA-Seattle the weather was glorious: sunny, 75 degrees (24 C) and winds were L&V. Pretty typical for this time of year. Unfortunately, by the time Friday rolled around the weather had taken on a Jekyll and Hyde personality. The weekend started out with clouds and drizzle. Despite this, 5 balloons, 8 pilots and 18 crew assembled for a weekend of experimental mischief.

The Saturday morning forecast didn't look much better than what we saw on Friday. Even though it was clear when we got up, the forecast called for low-level marine stratus to form during the morning launch window. So with one eye on the heavens, we took to the sky. Ultimately the clouds never completely rolled in and we had a pretty good flight.



Flying over the Enumclaw Plateau

Ray Morgan and his daughter Kayla (from Austin, TX) travelled the farthest to be here. Jim Mueller (from Bloomington, MN) brought his balloon from the furthest distance. Larry Nelson took the most passengers. But that was a hollow victory since everyone else was flying hoppers.

I managed to do a splash 'n dash in the Green River. I thought I had a pretty good approach, but ended up going into the water about 8". No big deal if you are in a basket, but in a hopper, 8" is up to your waist. I managed to get a good soaking. We all enjoyed stand up landings and agreed it was a successful morning.

After a group breakfast, we retired to the Balloon Winker Museum for a three hour homebuilding seminar. We took one short break to watch the Blue Angels perform a few miles away. Saturday afternoon was a bit too breezy for a flight so we had a chance to catch a quick nap (important for old guys like me.)

The forecast for Sunday morning looked great - close to ideal conditions. Unfortunately, sometimes the forecast is wrong. We ended up with a low ceiling and had to cancel the flight. To make the best of the situation, we pulled out the hoppers and gave rides. We also spent some time adjusting the lines on the top of the tetra-hopper to improve the seal. Flying Jim's hopper on tether, I was pulled into position directly over the top of the tetra-hopper to personally view the fit.



Checking the seal on the para-slit

After another group breakfast we said our goodbyes. Overall, we had fun in spite of the weather. We're ready to do it again next year. August 1-3, 2008 are the dates XLTA - Seattle III. We hope you can join us.

3. Updates from the Website / Newsletter

More information from the updated website from my friend and web builder Les Hancock. The structure of the new website is nearly finished and whilst it has been a long and arduous process, the thinking behind the construction has been to make it easier for me to update on a regular

basis and whilst you may be tiring of hearing that there is no news, the pain of not being able to steam in with the new improved format will in the longer term pay off so please be patient (particularly our new sponsors) as we will reveal all as soon as possible. It will be worth the wait!

4. Homebuilt section / Essential Extras / Forum Chatter

This section has suffered once again of late, but this month following a posting on "what is useful on transition from a regular balloon to a hopper" I am giving you two items suggested by David Tanzer as being most useful.

Firstly: Retractable Tethers

The retractable tethers are indeed wonderful additions to the hopper pilot's gear list. I use two, both purchased from <http://www.gearkeeper.com>. These folks make a quality product at a very reasonable price, and are extremely pleasant to deal with. I use one to attach to my radio mike (which I keep in a chest harness). It's handy to grab the mike when you need it, and let it go when you don't. I also use this same mike with retractor in my regular balloon, where I clip the retractor to a D-ring secured, with a piece of webbing, to one of my basket uprights. I use a heavier-duty model of the gearkeeper to keep my water bottle handy while flying my hopper. The water bottle is suspended from my hopper frame right next to my left shoulder, and I only have to pull on it to have a sip, and then I can let it go without fear of dropping it. Works like a charm.

Secondly: The Combination Tools /Papers/ certificates Pouch

Another useful bit I use is the "Combination Tools/Paper/Certificates Pouch" available from Paul Stumpf (<http://www.stumpfballoons.com/tools&.htm>). I had him modify it slightly, though, for use in the hopper. Instead of the normal D-ring sewn into each corner (for attachment to a basket), I had him sew a swivel snaphook (Wichard makes a really nice one out of stainless, similar to the beautiful snaphooks Linstrand uses, except it also has a bail with a swivel) into one of the short sides. I then snap my pouch onto my hopper frame, and I then have two spare strikers handy, and I can display my

airworthiness and registration certificates to keep the FAA happy. I also reduced my flight manual to 25% of its original size, and that's carried in my pouch as well.

FORUM TALK

Below is a tale from this month's forum that was seemed worthy of inclusion again by David Tanzer.

It was a beautiful evening, an evening that demanded that one fly. The only problem was that I had no crew. My wife was busy. So I called two balloon pilot friends to see if they were flying, but they weren't. When they are flying, sometimes I'll go out with my hopper and "piggy back" on, or otherwise borrow, some of their crew. That's one of the nice things about a cloudhopper-you don't need much crew. One is generally plenty. Anyway, today was one of those stellar days that makes you yearn to fly. Crystal clear, light winds, 75 degrees... Vermont in all of its summer glory. I spoke with my friend Jeff Snyder this morning to see if he was flying (he wasn't), and he asked me if I could fly my hopper completely solo, and I told him that, yes, I thought I could, but I'd never done it. I remembered that John Ninomiya, cluster balloon and hopper pilot, told me of Russ Buesing in Colorado flying completely solo, so I knew it could be done. I routinely assemble and cold inflate my hopper entirely by myself, but I'd never hot inflated, got strapped in, and launched entirely by myself. So there I was at about 5:30 this afternoon looking longingly at the beautiful sky when I thought "why not give it a try?" So I assembled my hopper in the backyard and started to cold inflate it. Doing it yourself requires some running back and forth to tab the top in, but I had it cold packed in fairly short order, and ready to stand up. It was a bit tricky getting the first couple of burns in-the top cables were a bit droopy, and I wished I had a third hand. In the end I just rested the cables behind my head, got a couple of decent pops on the burner off, and then things got easy. A few more pops and the hopper was standing up and wanting to go. It was floating, inches off the ground, at the end of my tie-off while I turned my fan off and attached the end of my crown line to one of the carabiners. Another couple of pops, and I sat down on the seat and got clipped in. I unhooked my tie off, gave another couple of pops, and off I went on this gorgeous evening. I knew my wife would be coming home within an hour, so I left her a message that I'd gone flying (although I'm sure she would have figured that out given that my truck was parked in the backyard with my tie-off still attached to the trailer

hitch, and my fan was nearby), and that I'd appreciate a lift home when she got back. I flew for a while and then descended over a beautiful field of alfalfa. As I floated just over the crop toward an adjacent cut hay field, my cell phone rang-it was my wife, returning my call. I chatted with her for a moment, and told her where I was going to land, and she said she'd come fetch me as soon as she got home. I flew over a farm pond and on into the hay field, shut down my burner, gave a good tug on the red line, and let the little balloon lay over on its side. A woman in a house next to the farm came out to make sure I was okay, and was nice enough to offer the use of her phone, but I told her I was all set. Then the farmer drove up and asked if I needed a lift, but I told him my wife was on the way, so he bid me a nice evening and drove off.

I got the balloon disassembled and my wife drove up a few minutes later. We were on our way home within ten minutes, with the hopper tucked inside our Ford Explorer. So this was a first for me-a completely unassisted inflation and launch. The wind was light, and I ended up landing about three miles from home, so, if need be, I could have walked home to fetch my truck, but having my wife pick me up was easier. Kind of neat, no?

So, I'd be curious to hear hints and kinks others may have for completely solo flight. Any ideas to make inflation easier or other similar advice and comments? It sure was nice to be able to take advantage of such a beautiful evening even though no one was around. Life is good.

David Tanzer, Charlotte, Vermont

So any hints or thoughts on this subject please send them to me steve.roake@ntlworld.com and I'd be curious to hear from others who have perfected the technique. I have heard from Jeff Lawton who gets the balloon upright, still attached, and then puts the inflation fan in the vehicle before getting harnessed in with all the ground equipment now safe and keys to the car in pocket. He also suggested getting the fan right up where the Nomex is, (inside the mouth), to assist in the inflation and leave it running until you are ready to hot inflate, when you move it out to a place close by and turn off the fuel supply so it will naturally stop on it's own.

Each month I will now seek out the most interesting thread and reproduce it in the newsletter to stir the loins and see what feedback can be produced (as it is always welcome).

5. Gallery Pages - Choice shots from Bristol and Metz

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

Starting with this gem; a rare Colt 17A belonging to Almut Dunnington was flown for the first time in the UK since 2004 at Bristol Festival on the 8th August. Simply beautiful!

Please tell me next time its coming Phil and thanks for the jpeg!)



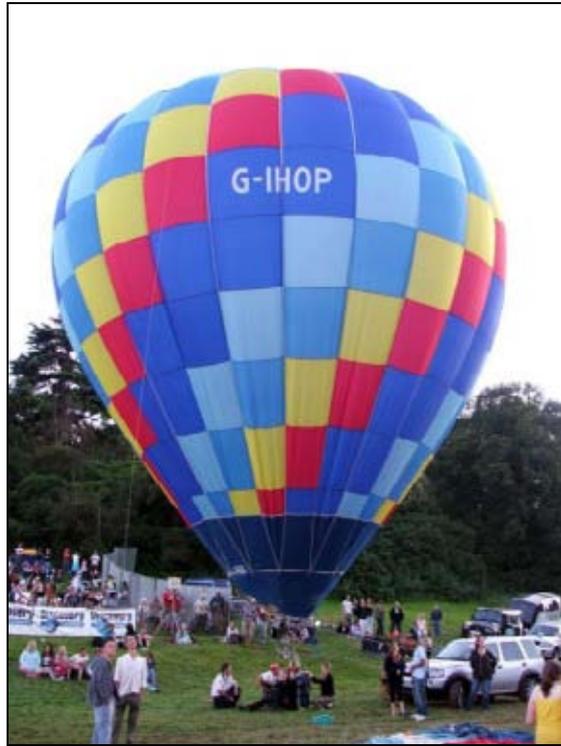
Also on public display at Bristol was G-CEJL recently registered Ultramagic H-31 captured by Mel Kirby.



Also flying at Bristol was the ex Dave Groombridge Cameron H-34 G-BXYI, now owned by Steven Harrowing of Margam. Not sure if he is a member yet, anyone know him? (Mel Kirby's JPEG).



The Final Hopper at Bristol was once again our own Dr Neil Roberts in G-IHOP Cameron Z-31. (Thanks to Mel Kirby for the photograph).



Metz photographs



David Reineke in N899LB the Lindstrand 35A captured by Bernie Williams at Metz.



Same Morning and Bernie Williams captured Graham Bell in G-DNGR the Colt 31A.



Another Bernie Williams moment, this time capturing Gavin Chadwick in G-BXIZ the Lindstrand 31A.



HB-QGW is a Swiss registered Colt 31A owned and flown by a Frenchman who lives there. (Jpeg by Bernie Williams).



Julia Bailey looks serene in the Sky 31A chariot, which she shared at the festival with Colin Wolstenholme and Peter Gooch.

Peter successfully negotiated the purchase at the festival following an inspection and cold inflation of the orange and white ex Peter Kooistra Ultramagic H-42 that was featured on our for sale board recently . C/N 31/04 will be presently registered appropriately G-OOCH! Fitting really!



Eric Martens was regularly seen flying "the Maskot". OO-BOV is a Kubicek Special shape (Jpeg by Bernie Williams).



Lenny Vaughan at the Helm of G-BZIH the Budweiser Lindstrand 31A. (Jpeg by Bernie Williams).

Others present who failed to get caught on digital media were Steve Burden in G-HOPA, Kevin Tanner in G-HOPR, Lee Hooper in G-CBLN and Phil Griffiths who flew G-RBMV his Cameron O-31. Gavin Chadwick also flew G-BSAK Colt 21A for part of the week. Just too many people and not enough photographs, More accepted (for next month) if you care to send them in to me at the usual e-mail address.

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.

6. Manufacturer News /Events /Updates

Jack Klein has been in touch again with regard to his hopper inflation fans. These items are getting very good reports on their applications and with the latest update to the motor sizes should prove to be a viable alternative to the current choices for hopper fans. All the information on the latest build of 20 fans from Jack directly on the contact details below.

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It is not too late to sign up for the One Man Meet being held in Italy this year, but you need to get your skates on to fit in with the plans. Contact Phil Dunnington via his e-mail phil@gonewiththewind.uk.org or from Pietro Contegiacomo at cloudhopper.italy@libero.it.

The UK alternative to the above for all those who can't make it to Italy is still in the melting pot, plenty of interest expressed by pilots who want to turn up but nobody has yet suggested a suitable venue. If you know of a site that would suit up to a dozen hoppers, with reasonable hotels close by (at budget prices), with a local supply of gas available to be used, and classy pubs for the social side of the event, then please contact me directly at steve.roake@ntlworld.com.

7. For Sale /Wanted Section

The only new item that I had for you form sale was to be a hopper fan that was up for grabs from Graham Bell, but as soon as word got out that it was available then Jonathan Dyer bought it.

However the informed word is that there may be another hopper fan arriving to the marketplace real soon, so anyone interested please contact me and I will inform the potential seller of your interest.

8. And Finally

I am very pleased to announce that with the membership past the 310 mark and the forum very active (19 messages in the last seven days), all I need is a few more articles to bolster the newsletter. News, Views or tales of your experiences always necessary and more topical reports on your flying please. I enjoy the hassle off fitting in all the stuff you send me and hate nagging for more, so if you want to keep your editor happyyou know what to do!

All articles for inclusion in future issues will be gratefully received by your editor. Please forward them to info@cloudhoppers.org and feedback good, bad or indifferent is always welcome. Views aired by contributors may not be those of the Editor.

Safe flying

Steve Roake

I'll leave you with your editor doing what he likes best!

