



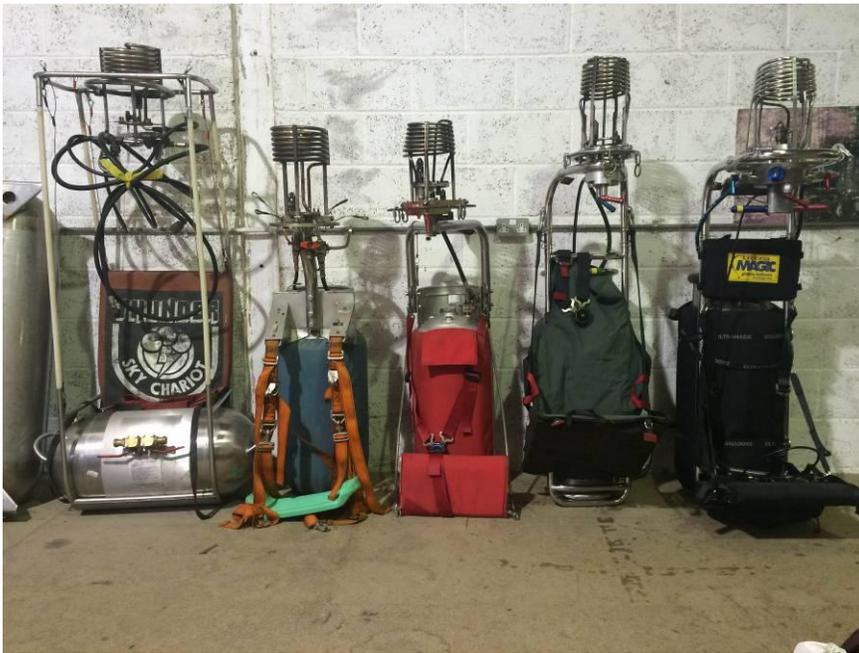
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Happy Christmas people and have a great new year.

December is always a reflective time of year and when reviewing 2014 I'd like to think it was a fairly successful year for cloudhopping. When absorbing what took place this year I'd say that in recessionary times, our world is looking quite rosy. Well I would, as I'm a half full glass kind of person and always look for the better things in life. Whilst tight times can force some people out of our world, on the other hand it provides opportunities for new folks to enter the sport at competitive prices and I would suggest this is currently the case with people such as Marcus Ekeroos (G-CEFB), Alan Turner (G-CINN), and others. There are kits out there at realistic prices that are waiting to be snapped up, YU-AOL is a prime example.



Sent in by Barry Conway – this was a recent scene At Easy Balloons, one of various types from over the years –awaiting their owners.

As you look further into second hand balloon sales, you also see currently a couple of chariots for sale, and with these becoming rarer, I suggest if you are in the market for one

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You would be well advised to act earlier to avoid disappointment. New products in the form of the Cameron Lightweight O-31 also help spark interest, and with competitive pricing I'm sure their share of sales will increase. Anyway let's get on with Newsletter. Have a great Xmas one and all.

1, Ed-Speak – Reflections on 2014

I always hate writing about times past but as you get to Christmas there is a natural need to reflect on what has occurred during the year and decide if it was good or bad. We witnessed the inaugural Little and Large Solo meet and such was the success that it has already been confirmed for 2015. Add to this the successful launch of the new standard setting Cameron Lightweight Hopper at 30kilos and you can see there is impetus in the marketplace. Generally hoppers seem to be used more and more and utilisation of product is always a good thing.

Steve Roake

2, Essential Extra's / Tech Talk-

Nothing submitted this month in this section.

3. The Features Section

Fancy buying a hopper for a friend?-by Steve Roake

Like most of these things it started with an innocent question raised on Facebook Messenger. Danny Sjokvist, my good friend in Orebro Sweden asks, "Hey Steve, How far are you from a place called Blackbushe?" The reply is naturally, "close my friend, about 20mins or 10-15 miles .Why?" "Well it transpires that there is a Cloudhopper, which is up for sale- at that place, and my friend Marcus is interested in buying it – could you go check it out for us please". So a few days later having contacted the person selling I'm off to Blackbushe airport and meeting Brian Catchpole who runs Aerobility a charity that gets disabled people flying, and it seems they are selling an Ultramagic H-31 that was donated to the charity.



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Now being a bit of a hopper nutcase, of course I know the balloon; its G-CEFB which used to be owned by Paul Dickenson so should be a no brainer as he knows how to look after kit and it has only done 16 hours total time.

The weather isn't conducive to doing inflation with a serious threat of rain, but those lovely people at Aerobility have a marquee and I can visually inspect it at my leisure inside the marquee. The other factor that should be easy with the inspection is whilst the envelope dates from 2006, the bottom end has been replaced at a later date for a newer one and has done little or no activity and appears to be as new.

As with any inspection, the first thing I did was check the serial numbers of the component parts correlated with what was present, and had a look through the logbook to see exactly how many hours were logged.

Knowing personally Paul Dickenson (the first owner), and the meticulous nature of his personality, I knew by reading the logbook that everything during his ownership seemed fine. The only unknown from my perspective was the time it had spent with the second owner in Japan although he hadn't done much with the balloon. Opening up the pristine cases the contents seemed in tune with the condition you would have expected, and whilst it wasn't possible to inflate the envelope, checking the turnbacks, flying wires and lower panels all seemed as normal. Thanking Brian for his time and said id report my findings to Marcus who I was sure would be in touch.





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Returning home and reflecting upon the price as advertised , I suggested to Marcus where I would be at in terms of an offer as the envelope whilst low houred was still eight years old and the seat unit and burner assembly although a later addition (along with the tank),and he agreed and then latterly offered exactly the same price . This was later accepted by the charity and I was asked to go and collect the balloon on behalf of Marcus, get it a C of A and an ARC, and store it until Daniel and Markus could possibly join me at the One Man Meet in Wales approximately one month later- to which I agreed.

In the meantime I took the opportunity to inflate the balloon for ten mins at a local park and video it for the new owner to see more of what he had purchased.

I also arranged to take the balloon to Chris Dunkley at Easy Balloons for them to give it an annual check and get it on their maintenance program, with ARC renewal. The balloon was taken a couple of weeks later where its true condition came to light. The seat unit has a plethora of quick links (all of which should be fastened tight and loctited). All were undone and loose which set alarm bells off inside my head. The burner unit was falling to bits with too many parts loose and more worryingly we discovered that on the fuel tank, one of the two valves which are colour coded either red or blue had been forced past its return stop necessitating a need for it to be replaced. Getting some air inside the envelope once again worryingly we found an internal quick link undone and neither Chris nor myself could find the tell tale heat temp strip which should have been in the top of the parachute.

Having to leave the kit with Chris wasn't expected and reporting back to Marcus, I had to break the news that the kit wouldn't be ready for a while and whilst deflated, Markus indicated that neither he or Danny would make the trip due to the impending arrival of Daniel's first child which was due around the weekend of the OMM and so I was asked to also arrange transportation of the kit to Sweden once legal and airworthy. The offending lever for the tank was blue in colour and due to some factory mix up, Ultra magic managed to send a red one! Yet another delay whilst the carrier pidgeon found and brought the right item ensued.

Eventually the jovial Chris telephoned to say that the balloon was finally airworthy and that all outstanding issues had been dealt with and I could go and pick up the craft.



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Now my thoughts turned to transporting the balloon the 1000 miles to its new owner and whilst I knew nothing about logistics, working for a formula one team who move tonnes of kit around the world, I knew there would be people who could assist me with the task.

Chatting to colleagues it transpired the first requirement would be to purchase a custom built box for the journey and to drain and purge the fuel tank prior to packing. Dimensions were taken and expectations given to me by our staff were that the box would be completed in three working days.



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However, never assume anything, and as it was a personal purchase, whilst I could expect a favourable price from the supplier, what I wasn't expecting was an individual in the purchasing department to sit on the paperwork for nearly a week, dithering on the price when I had said I was happy with the quotation. This did however give me time to generate a price for the haulage and eventually I got a freight forwarding company to quote using DHL on a three day delivery. Once again I wasn't aware that price is not only dependent upon weight, but also can be categorised by sizing.

Naturally Marcus was keen to get his goods, and it is horrible to have to tell someone who has spent thousands of their own money on something to be patient, but this was simply the case as everything was out of my hands. Eventually the box was delivered, contents crated up and strapped up for the journey and finally after an inordinate amount of time was despatched to its new owner.

Costs incurred by me on behalf of Marcus – just over £1000 all in and whilst I'm sure it will be a lovely balloon for Marcus in the



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future, there are some definite lessons to be learnt here. Firstly just because something is low houred, you can't assume that all will be in order and it is imperative wherever possible to go look for yourself at the goods in question. Secondly, never give yourself timelines for completing the transaction because you just don't know what will transpire. Thirdly always use people you trust implicitly, whilst this balloon was supposedly approved by an inspector prior to purchase, the reality of its condition was in stark contrast to what was expected. Lastly if you trust a friend to look after your interests (which is a brave move), you have to be prepared to fit in with their timescales and be patient and trusting of their abilities to look after your interests . I always thought about this as if I was buying for myself and applied my own value judgements.

Steve Roake

“Free Spirit” by Marcus Ekeröos

It's early in the morning, on the first of June this summer and the sun hasn't reach over the horizon yet. Last check at the weather forecast and everything looks perfect. Finally!

Batteries in the radio are loaded, GPS is in the pilot bag and everything else is in order, time to get all things together and attach the trailer to the car.

The balloon back in the trailer isn't the one that I regularly fly. In fact, it's the first time I ever seen a balloon like this in real life. The balloon loaded in the back was Daniels Skychariot (G-STBT) and I have got the privilege to fly it this morning.

My name is Marcus and I'm from Sweden. When I was around 13 years old, my father fulfilled his dream and became a gliding pilot. It was the first time for me to fly a small plane and I was with him at the small airport several times and follow him up in the air. I think it was at just that moment my interest for the air and flying started. I decided to take my own certificate for gliding when I turned 15, but when that date arrives - I realized that it costs a lot of money and as a young student, you didn't have that money. So the pilot certificate stayed as just a dream...



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Later when I started to study at the university, I found out that there was a student association that flies a balloon at my school. That's the short story how I came into balloon sport.

We headed of to a nearby launch field with the Skychariot and a bigger balloon (120a) and started to unpack all the stuff. I just stand there and scratching my head and wonder how I should put all the things together and if it really was a good idea to fly this thing. Daniel came to my rescue and we rig the balloon together and made it ready to launch. After some minutes on the launch field waiting for the other balloon to get ready, it was time to release the line to the car...

I can admit that I don't have any clear memories from the next ten minutes. I just remember myself laughing and screaming by joy. Then I noticed my feet dangling in the free air and I just started laughing again and thinking about that it was a really good idea to make a double knot on my shoelace before launch.

One hour later it was time to make the final landing. I made a touch and go earlier in the flight to just get the feeling for the balloon and landing procedure.

I'm not going to tell if was planned or not, but the landing field was really wet (I could wring out water from my socks after we have packed the balloon in the car) and the balloon was totally soaked when we put it back in the bag. Everyone knows that the best and funniest way to dry a balloon is to fly it, so I was forced to fly it again the same evening just to save my back.

This was, together with my first ever balloon flight one of my best ever balloon experiences. After these two flights, I have got the chance to fly this Skychariot another 4 times. When I drove the 170 miles home in my car, I realized that I was totally hooked up and decided to buy my first own balloon. Either a Skychariot or a Cloudbopper.

Back at home, I started to search the Internet for hoppers for sale and I found one in UK. How should I go on with this? It's too far to travel over just to check the balloon out. It looked good at the picture in the ad but how old was the picture? And you don't actually see anything in a small picture...

I started to realize that it was a big thing to buy a balloon and it's actually not a good investment for my money so I put



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Photo taken at the Orebro Balloon festival



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my plans on hold. One month later I've talked to Daniel about the advert and my thoughts and I think I said that it would have been easier if you know anyone nearby that knows his stuff and could check the balloon out for you. One hour later, Daniel connected me with Steve that lives just nearby the seller. Really, what are the odds for that?

At this point, anything went really fast. Steve and I arranged that Steve should go and meet the seller next weekend and check the equipment out for me and post me pictures and his opinion of the deal.

A week later, I've received a long and well describing email about the state of the balloon and a lot of pictures attached to the mail. If I could sum up the mail in one sentence, it says "The balloon is really good value for your money. Buy it and I'll help you arrange the deal".

I talked to Steve later this day and he advised me to close the deal. The balloon was a beauty and well worth all the money. I took a minute or two to think and then I called the seller and then it was done. We arranged the payment and set a time for pickup that Steve could help me with. Our plan was to get a C of A after Steve has picked up the balloon, then bring Daniel and his Skychariot with us and pick up the balloon at the OMM.

Well - that was what we wanted, both Steve, Daniel and me, but Daniels wife was having their first baby one month before OMM so I decided that it was maybe a better idea to ship the balloon over here to Sweden (and then maybe bring it back to OMM and fly there if I could steal Daniel from his wife without risk for a knife in my chest or a divorce on my conscience). The balloon was picked up by Steve on 5th September, an inspection was planned a couple of weeks later to get the C of A. It was really hard to wait at home for the balloon and any updates about it. I just want it now and fly it!

Every time my phone vibrated, I was hoping for an update. Has the inspection been made earlier, any other news or anything? Hello?

Two days after Steve picked up the balloon, he sent me a confession that he has written another 10 minutes in my logbook. Attached to the email, there was a video from a tethered inflation they have made with the balloon (for me to see more of it). This was actually the first image I have seen on the envelope that I know was up to date. I have lost count on how many times I watched the video... A good guess



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was somewhere around 75 to 100 times (that's true!).

Inspection was planned to 19 September but was delayed one week due to personal reasons (Steve had to attend a funeral), so the new date was 26 September. The same weekend I travelled to a balloon meeting in Sweden but I kept my phone nearby all the time just waiting for a report from the inspection. The balloon was nearly new and has only 16h in logbook so there shouldn't be any problems, or?

Finally, my phone calls and it was Daniel. He told me to connect to Facebook because Steve urgently wants to speak with me. Urgently? Now I really freaked out. What could be so urgent that he beg Daniel to hunt me down?

The inspection made by Chris Dunkley earlier that day took over 4 hours and the list of remarks was long, too long.... Loosen screws, lost sprints, handle on gas cylinder was broken and they didn't find the temp tag in the envelope. What? Temp tag is missing? How is that possible, the Tag was there in previous inspection! I have seen the inspection written in logbook with previous temp reading. They can't have searched for it at the right place? How could it be gone?

But the inspection took over 4 hours... This isn't good...

I tried to keep the hope but I think everyone nearby noticed my disappointment. Steve repeated multiple times that "you have to trust us; we will solve this for you. Relax, everything will be fine..."

All the remarks from the inspection were small things and could be easily fixed but the Temp Tag, why is it gone? It can't disappear by itself, why will anyone remove the tag?

The only reason I could think about was that the balloon have been seriously overheated, but they made an overheat inspection and couldn't see any signs of high temperature more than the rip line from the parachute that was a little crispy. Well, that's at least something.

Should I talk to the seller, cancel the deal and just forget anything or should I wait as Steve told me?

When I came home from the balloon meeting after the weekend, I called Daniel and we had a really long talk. I repeatedly have thought about the worst scenario, I've transferred a lot of money to a seller I've never met and have only talked to by phone once. Another person has picked up the balloon for me. Who is he, does the balloon actually exist? What is happening? The balloon



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was nearly new and what have they done with it? Daniel calmed me down and I decided to just wait. Chris fixed all of the remarks on the inspection protocol, fixed all screws, added a new Temp Tag and solved anything else. He also ordered a new handle from the fabric for the cylinder.

The new handle should arrive in four days or so, then the balloon should be picked up and shipment arranged. The handle did arrive really fast but it was wrong handle...

First handle arrived 8 October. The shipment of the correct handle was delayed and did arrive two weeks later, on 22 October.

Next weekend, the balloon was picked up and delivered back home by Steve. Next step was to just put the balloon on a pallet and finally arrange the shipment to Sweden.

A transport box was ordered for the shipment and when the cylinder was emptied, Steve noticed that the gauge didn't work. Well, after all other remarks about the balloon, I wasn't surprised. But now I want the balloon, I'll fix this when the balloon arrives.

The box was delivered two weeks later and the shipment was finally picked up.

One day after the transportation company picked up the box, there were a couple of big articles here in Sweden about the company, about how they throw around packages and so on. I received links to these articles from a couple of my friends (or so called friends).

On 18 November, nearly two and a half month later after the purchase, the balloon arrives to my workplace and all of my colleagues happily helped me with the unboxing.

One of them was fast and forbidden me to fill the envelope inside the office... Why!

At last, it has arrived.

But at this moment, I was still concerned about the missing temp tag in the Envelope. A new one has been mounted but why was it missing at the first place. If balloon could talk... I talked to my technician earlier and he called me the same day the balloon arrived and invited to come over to check out all the equipment. He was curious about my purchase and also wanted to help me check things out after the transportation and we just wanted to know what I've bought.



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We tried the burner out, checked everything and test it. We also opened the cylinder to check why the gauge wasn't working. The gauge was mounted the wrong way so it was an easy fix - but we also noticed that there was water in the cylinder so it had to dry out.

We also pulled out the envelope in his living room to check it out and easily found the new temp tag, but was it really mounted on the outside of the envelope?

Well, now when my balloon has arrived, it was time to switch my car to a bigger one. Have you ever walk into a car sales room and open a trunk in a car and really analyzed the size of it. When the salesmen came and ask if they could help you, you just answer that you try to figure out if your hot air balloon would fit in the trunk of this car. I made this several time and the reaction from the salesmen was priceless just every time.

Everyone knows that the weather here in Sweden in the autumn isn't that good, so now it was just waiting to get the balloon up in the air. Rain, wind, thunder, hail, more rain and much more wind...





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Finally, the day arrived that I've waited for all the time since the purchase, 6th of December, in Örebro at a balloon meeting arranged by Daniel and friends. We went out to a launch field with really low clouds, around 300-400ft. But the forecast says that the cloud should rise in altitude in an hour or two so Daniel told that in the waiting time there would be a show with my new balloon. With 15 pilots watching and a lot of other hang arounds, I started to rig the balloon and made a tethered flight over the field just to try and get the feeling for everything. Amazing!

Two hours later, it was clear sky and it was time to make the premier flight! There was a competition arranged (Hare and Hound). Have you ever tried throwing a marker from a Cloudhopper. When you start to rotate the marker to get a good throw, everything starts to wobble. And then, look out for lines! My marker just disappears from my hand and I found it stuck four turns around one of the rotation lines. I managed to get it down from there and to the ground but now I was too far away from the target. Well, I got the consolation prize for coming last but I'm totally sure that I was the happiest pilot that day anyway. I'm looking forward to a lot of flights with the balloon in the future

Thanks to anyone who helped me with the purchase, the balloon, and to get it home to Sweden. Steve, Chris and Daniel.





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And how about the Temp Tag? I mounted a new one yesterday on the opposite side of the balloon and I'll decide to keep the one on the outside. It's a part of a good story and you can't have too many of them.

Marcus Ekeröos

The Annual Christmas Story by Steve Roake

Those of you who know me well will know that I always like to give you an amusing tale for Christmas. This year is no different and this particular tale whilst not outstanding just goes to show you what fun you can have with your hopper given the opportunity.

During the winter months you sometimes come across a weather window that gives you a lovely chance to fly in conditions that you wouldn't expect and the day in question was exactly one of those days.

In order to appreciate the day in question you need a quick update on what kit I had at that time. We are talking about Saturday 4th November 2006 and at that time I was operating a Subaru Legacy Outback estate car and flew G-BSDV a Colt 31A dating from 1990. We managed to configure the car to accept the complete kit plus two fuel tanks and still have room for three people and so on a very chilly November morning I met my friends Paul Bishop and Les Hancock at a friend's farm in Buriton near Petersfield at 06-45 and set about inflating the balloon on the frosty field. There had been a cloudless night and with a small inversion and whilst wearing thermals I set about preparing to fly. The pie ball balloon had headed off towards Sussex on a good track and so at 07-45 I took off climbing slowly into the morning skies. Whilst time can cloud your judgement, I had made a notation on my pilot logbook that the maximum speed obtained during the flight was 6knots and whilst I spent a lot of the flight on the deck as nobody was awake my 55minutes took me to a village just over the county border to a village called Ditching in Sussex. I knew that phone reception was poor in these parts but had spoken to them on the radio so knew they would be close by as I made a standard approach towards a farm where I could clearly see the farmer at work. Landing in a field adjacent to the milking parlour, I left the balloon where I landed and met a very agreeable fellow who said he had seen me coming.



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Flying a bright orange balloon, I wasn't surprised and once the crew arrived I handed over a nice bottle of white wine for the inconvenience caused, receiving a reply that I was welcome to return anytime I wished in the future.



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Discussing how nice the flight was with my crew as we returned to the launch site, it transpired that they weren't needed anywhere fast and having brought two tanks I suggested that as the weather hadn't dramatically changed, we ought to investigate the possibility of flying again. Therefore following a cooked breakfast (on the pilot naturally), we returned and prepared again for flight.

Taking off for the second time that day at 11-45 I was genuinely surprised to find that whilst the speed of the wind had increased to a maximum of 12 knots, the direction had pretty much remained the same. Talking to the crew on the radio, I declared my goal as the farm we had been to earlier. I needed to stay close to the ground to keep the direction right but with a stroke of luck and some decent flying I ended up bang on track for the farm in question and once again and miraculously landed in the same field with this time the farmer approaching me. He asked me could I spare a hand? Leading me into the farm shed I wasn't ready for the sight I was about to see. There in from of me was a cow with two hoofs hanging out of its backside. The farmer had a rope around the hoofs and was in the process of trying to deliver the calf and so with my extra pulling power, I achieved two flights and one delivery in the same day. Offering the obligatory bottle of wine, the land owner refused, so it was passed on to his leading hand instead. So there you have it, a unique day which sticks in your mind and stays there, but one of those days that remains with you all your life.

Steve Roake

4, Favourite Photos – “New Feature”

Recently in put out a new subject matter on Facebook asking people for their favourite photos of flying in their hoppers and such was the feedback, that I have decided to include some of them in the Newsletter. How long this feature lasts is purely down to how long you guys, the readers, support it for. If you like it and want to participate then please send your submissions to me at my usual email address this is: steve.roake@ntlworld.com .



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One of the first submissions received was from Matthias Schlegel, and I agree with him that whilst it may not be his hopper, this photo is stunning.



Both Michael Glen and Greg Winker like this shot taken of Glen at Albuquerque this year, it could quite easily be mistaken for a Mark Pacan Print .



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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.



Nice Duo posted on Facebook by Vincent Fossey –no other information on the craft is known.



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The other hopper attending the Orebro Festival belongs to Daniel Sjokvist and these two shows were captured by above-Per Lessor, and below Henrik Atmer. Nice shots of G-STBT.





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6, Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

Following a recent conversation with Tom Hilditch, the conversation revolved about choices in hopper suppliers, and Tom suggested that Kubicek Balloons are now manufacturing their own lightweight Polyester, and having discussed previously at length the debate for polyester over Rip stop nylon with Petr Kubicek, I contacted the very open and frank manufacturer to discuss whether or not this claim is true. A few days later I received written confirmation from Petr that yes, in fact it is true. The only balloon currently flying with lightweight Polyester is in fact Petr's own balloon. He currently says it will easily exceed 300hours of fabric life and probably nearer 500 hours. With this news perhaps the time for a polyester hopper is getting nearer, particularly if the price point is right.

Dave Such has posted an update on his Little and Large Solo Meet which has been well subscribed so far ahead of its second event next may.

Little (and Large) Solo Meet 2015

Friday 29th (PM), Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st May 2015

Lakeside Lodge Golf Centre, Fen Road, Pidley, Huntingdon,
Cambridgeshire, PE28 3DF.

Our event is gaining LOTS of interest - and far more entries received than this time last year - with 12 confirmed entries and almost 50% of the 25 places available taken. Keep those entries coming and unless you want to be disappointed, the sooner the better!

Don't forget, we'd love to see some International entries from our friends outside of Europe. If you would like to receive an Entry Pack for the event, please email Dave at littleandlargemeet@btinternet.com

Many thanks and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Kind regards Dave Such **Event Director**



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Seasonal Photos

I just thought it would be nice with Christmas here to have some seasonally festive photos in the newsletter and thanks to the people below who responded with these offerings for your delight.



Malcolm White (aka Santa Claus) and his elf Pauline Baker inn their duo chariot, guessing below G-BVDY Concept 60 in Italy from a few years ago.



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Many thanks to Jarno Dooneward for the above image.



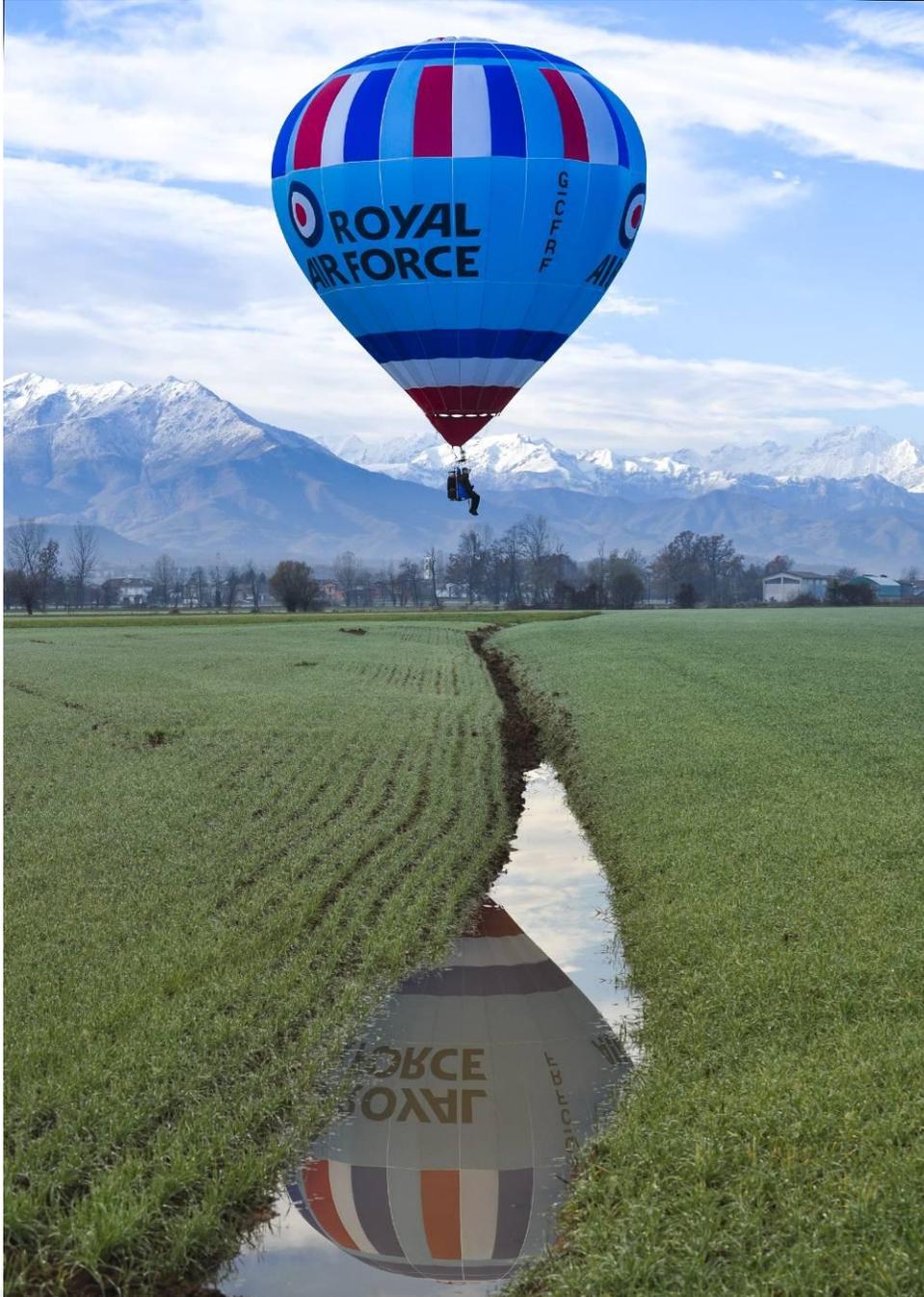
And finally many thanks to Gareth Buffon for these two.
Featuring Chris Ford having fun in November in Italy.



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And Finally.

Happy Christmas and a great New year from me. Thanks for all the assistance in producing the newsletters this year, without your support we simply wouldn't have a newsletter. See you on a field soon.

Steve Roake

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.

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