Hello Everyone,

Well you think you’ve seen it all and the world throws up another curved ball to show us, that we all know nothing. Changes that you just couldn't comprehend have happened in the world, on a colossal level that begs to be believed. Brexit, Donald Trump now president of the USA, and a turn around in sales of hoppers by Cameron Balloons that was never predicted just shows you what can happen in life. From being the worst performing manufacturer in this sector, they are now the leading light with sustained sales on the back of a great redesign and adoption of an Ultralight ethos with regard to hoppers.

Clearly an adoption of a change of emphasis in the way Cameron Balloons operates has paid dividends and it appears that this new way of approaching business is paying off in the success that is now coming their way. There is continued progression in the product range, which is refreshing and is part of the reason for their current renaissance in our sector of the market. With no bias, currently they appear to be the only manufacturer who is bothered with developing hoppers for sale.

On other things this month we have detailed information on the world record flight in Metz and as it is that time of year, I wish you all a merry Xmas and a happy new year. More information on the second hand market this month brings us bang up to date.

Steve Roake - Editor.
1. Ed Speak - What comes first, 1000 or 100?

There are some things in life you can predict and some you can’t, and then there are anomalies that just happen to occur at the same time. I think this is the case now, as interestingly two milestones appear around the same time frame with regard to Cloudhoppers. Neither can be predicted as I’m not in charge of either, however the question remains what will arrive first. Will it be our 100th edition of the Newsletter or will it be our 1000th member of the Facebook page? Both are nearing the milestones with the newsletter some nine editions from the magic 100 and with the membership growing at a fairly constant rate the current total as of 10th December is currently 921 so again still some way to go but with 25 new members in the last two months alone.

Facebook is such a more user friendly platform than our previous Yahoo Groups listing and achieves so much more instantly than we ever could have achieved with Yahoo Groups. The world seems to revolve now around instantaneous delivery of news and views and therefore being inline with what is demanded by the readership is important. However, I’m still of the opinion that in terms of our distribution of Cloudhopper related stuff, we still have only scratched the surface and further sustained expansion should be expected.

Steve Roake.

2. Essential Extras – That Christmas Present?

It is about this time of year that we all think what can I buy my loved one or myself for Christmas as I’ve been good all year? Unfortunately, this time around I can’t help you but id love to hear of anything that you feel is worthy or inclusion in this section. If I had to pick one of two items myself from the 2016 list, I really liked the sender unit that Nick reviewed at Bristol Fiesta and Bluetooth to your Ipad mini or phone or if I was being more practical I would say that for me the new price for entry for a hopper at Mondial Air Balloons in Chambley Metz is great value. Now how does it go? Dear Santa ....
3. The Features Section


Finally, it is possible to publish the long awaited details of the World record flight at Mondial Air Balloons (MAB) in Chambley Metz next July. With many thanks to all the MAB team (Aline Dufour, Sarah Laurent and Philippe Buron Pilatre), for their help and assistance and with support from Cameron Balloons, we have arrived at a position where we can disclose the details that have been organised for your pleasure.

After much discussion we have agreed to call the event the **Solo Record Flight**, mainly to differentiate it from the Great Line World record event. The agreement comes with quite a few good things for hopper pilots including:

- On going agreement that if the hopper is a second balloon for the event its entry is free of charge so long as only one balloon is used at a time.
- A reduced entry fee for hoppers of only 90 euros instead of the 190 euros for other balloons for the ten-day duration.
- A dedicated hopper launch area for the duration of the event.
- Entry to the Solo record flight is included which will give you a certificate from the flight and a personal gift.

It has been agreed that the Solo record flight will take place on the first available morning when the conditions allow and entries are to be filed both with the MAB organisation and with myself. Please send me an email with details of your type of hopper, its registration, where you live and a photo of the craft to steve.roake33@gmail.com.

Please Note carefully! In order to participate in the solo record, you have to have complied in advance with the organisers conditions prior to the flight. This means you have to have filed an entry form with MAB, had your application duly fulfilled, paid the entry fee and had your documents checked. **Failure to do this will get you excluded! These conditions are mandatory and there will be no leniency.**
The minimum requirement to beat the current unofficial record is 30 hoppers and as of December 11th we already have 26 participants signed up. As you can see there is manufacturer support from Cameron Balloons For whom I will be representing at the event. This is part of a bigger tie up which I will discuss later in the magazine. I have to say that personally I am delighted that this flight has caught the imagination of so many of you and that the organisers have seen how popular cloudhoppers have become. It should be reiterated that since 2007 they have embraced having hoppers at MAB and continue to help promote our form of flying. All we need now is a gentle wind on a fine July morning and the fulfillment of a desire to set a world record flight will have been achieved. So far at the end of December I have 27 confirmed entries for the flight with around another dozen or so intended entrants expressing their interest. The first object to make this viable by surpassing the 29 previously flown together in Ilam Derbyshire at the One Man Meet of 2006 seems to have been more or less achieved with seven months to go, I personally would love to crack the fifty mark. So as they say folks, now that the infrastructure is in place and the support mechanisms are established... the rest is down to you, so please join us on this epic voyage.

I am sure as we gather pace towards the deadline, the interest is only going to heighten, so let’s get some Annex 2 agreements in place and then another swathe of entries can participate including some from as far away as South Africa. For me the only
surprise so far is the apparent lack of interest being expressed from the countries of USA and France. I’m sure in the case of the former, this is purely down to pilots working out their logistical considerations prior to committing to the project. Updates are proposed to be more frequent from now on and posted on Facebook with a page on the www.cloudhoppers.org website in construction where you will be able to see which craft are taking part in the flight.

4. My Personal Announcement - by Steve Roake

A very grand title for what is linked to the record flight and I felt now is the time to be able to reveal what has been going on. As you know, when I put together the proposal for the Solo Record Flight, I approached all of the manufacturers to see if I could persuade one of them to come onboard and support the idea. I was delighted (many thanks), to receive more than one positive offer of help and so entered negotiations with the interested parties to see what we could achieve together. One brand stood above the other proposal and this has lead to an agreement to work forwards together to achieve the record flight and more. As you can see that company is Cameron Balloons Ltd. For me from the outset I wanted a company that embraces what is happening within our sphere of ballooning and the Cameron approach to cloudhopping in recent years since the introduction of the O-31 has been nothing but incredible. They are very supportive of the Super Lightweight Initiative and when we discussed what was needed to complete the MAB objective, then asked me would I like to take the initiative further.

Therefore I am delighted to say I have accepted an offer to become a “Brand Ambassador” for them. They say this recognises my contribution to hopping since 2004 and the emergence of the market to what it is now. In simple terms, I need to say two things immediately.

1. I am not a sales representative for them.

2. This agreement does not impact on my editorial role with Cloudhoppers Newsletter, and my ability to make independent assessments of products from other manufacturers.
I have always been impartial and have a balanced perspective towards whatever is placed in front of me and this will continue to be so moving forwards. So what does it mean for Cloudhoppers.org and the Newsletter and for Steve Roake personally I hear you say?

The answer is simple. You may see endorsement of the website and the newsletter by Cameron Balloons Ltd. In terms of the Solo Record flight, I have in build now at Bristol a unique super light O-31 balloon which will debut at Chambley Airfield on the day of the Solo Record Flight, with artwork endorsing the Solo Record Flight 2017. This balloon will be my property ongoing over a multi year deal, which is why I have advertised G-UHOP for sale with the bottom end going to Kevin Tanner and the envelope still available at time of press. As part of the agreement I will be flying a complete Cameron system, and naturally should anyone have an interest in such a craft would happily converse about the merits of the product with you. There is talk about trying to further developments in the future together so if you have an ongoing desire with regards to hopper progression, naturally we would love to hear your ideas for consideration. Finally, and im delighted by this, should anyone be considering purchasing products from Cameron Balloons in the future and hasn’t approached previously one of their lovely sales staff, I have negotiated a discount rate for you all utilising a codeword that if expressed at time of enquiry would generate a sizeable discount from list prices. For anyone who may have an interest in this option, please either talk to me at any of the meets I will be attending in person, or email me with your interest and I will be able to supply you with the codeword which obviously Im sorry I cannot broadcast in print here.

I see this as a definitive step forward for Cloudhoppers.org, the Newsletter and for myself personally. It shows that the industry actually recognises the efforts put in by myself and with your assistance, and is also a litmus test of the importance of our sector in the current climate and with the ongoing progression we have, I can only see that percentage of the overall cake increasing as we move forward. I hope you are as delighted as I am but please understand …I am not a sales rep for Camerons and that all future enquiries should still route through your established dealer network.
Many Thanks to all involved in making this happen, in particular the support shown by the management structure within Cameron Balloons Ltd and without favouritism personally thanks to Craig Moore who has shown great patience with an enthusiastic idiot in myself.

Steve Roake ...December 2016.

_Icicle Memory – by Steve Roake_

With the Icicle Balloon meet just a couple of weeks away I thought I’d share an old memory of one of the better Icicle meets. The date was 3rd January 2009 and the morning was one of those crisp winter moments that was just right for flying. I was still the proud owner of G-BSDV Colt 31A and for that morning wasn’t decided whether or not to fly. There was plenty of larger balloons active and a discussion started with John Hilditch, Neil Ivison and Kevin Tanner that resulted in a lovely photo opportunity. The four of us decided that we would all inflate and fly together and so we set off for the lower end of the field at Savernake Farm.

![Balloon Flight](image)

Left to right, John Hilditch, Kevin Tanner, Steve Roake and Neil Ivison.

What you don’t know is the things that happened when we all took off together for a lovely sociable flight. The Colt 31A had turning vents so my Lindstrand Bottom end had a fixed base unit (this was the flight I decided to go swivel from then onwards).
and upon my first approach to land I nearly broke my ankle as I hadn’t orientated the balloon far enough around prior to my approach, deciding at the last moment to bail out of my landing which probably saved my foot, which still got seriously twisted. Then later on in the flight (which in my case only lasted 35mins), John Hilditch who was slightly ahead of us, decided to try and get stuck in trees, bobbing up and down in his efforts to free himself from the branches. In relation to us two, Kevin and Neil had smooth effortless flights and when we returned to the trade show which was at the Hilton Hotel in Swindon we laughed at our escapades.

Hopefully in Chambly this coming July we can add another memorable story to the list. The Icicle Balloon Meet (refrozen) takes place over the weekend of 7-8th January at the Donnington Grove Hotel in Newbury Berks. Look forward to seeing you all there.

5. Homebuilding Section.

The Brian Mead ,"Sackville phenonemon" continues unabaited. Just when you think that the homebuilding is calming down, then suddenly there is an upsurge with new products initiated. I’ve read tht there are three new BM H-34’s starting in 2017 build. Having just spent the best part of an hour chatting to the design guru, im up to speed on the latest design to come churning out of Bozeat.
It seems that the hopper design is something the Sackville build team have been keen to do for quite a while now and the keenest of the three appears to be Barry Newman who has registered “Spot” his BM H-34 as G-CJSY. This ladybird coloured creation is the first of three which are designed around a pattern that is more fabric efficient than the AH-31 that the guys previously made and had 200mm of wasted fabric on the rolls.

The other two owner/manufacturers include Bob Romaneschi in the USA and Tim himself. It is great that Brians designs are now getting the acclaim that they deserve and with more designs on the go it seems the man now doesn’t have much free time to himself.

Concentrating on the Hoppers, the 12 gore 13 panel designs seem suited to hoppers with the bottom gore being a half gore in Nomex. The standard by which you make your balloon is down to you with material ranging from £8-10 typically although if you wanted seconds I’m sure you could trim some off the price, with talk has been around 1ounce fabrics. Load tapes again range in price but with everything in a hopper, weight is king. Brian predicts that the amount of material required is about 400m2.

Target weight isn’t critical but I discussed this with him and with my knowledge of xta builds I expect it to be shy of 30kgs.
The thing I was impressed about in their design is the 2.8 m mouth size and Brian hinted at multiple scoops to facilitate various bottom end configurations. The thing that has tested Brian’s obvious talents this time around is the fact that two of the three hoppers have associated artwork on them, with Bob’s having stars and Barry’s having spots.

For anyone contemplating having a go at building their own hopper, I’m told that something around the £2500-3000 price with cover the materials costs (depending upon your specifications). Many thanks to Brian for his insight and time to update us.

Bob Romaneschi has set up a facebook page to cover the build of his hopper, find it at www.facebook.com/groups/MinistarBM34/

5. Interesting Photos.

There was much talk in November about the Super Moon which coincided with the nearest our moon has been to earth in a long time. Bennie Bos the accomplished Photographer posted online this great shot of PH-ZSL with the moon behind it. I think you would agree the shot is stunning and thanks for allowing me to use it here.

If I remember right, it is Peter Van Harten in the seat.
6. New Allocations This Month / Changes of Ownership

As you can see from the above visual, your editors Cameron O-31 Superlight with Mondial Air Balloons Solo Flight artwork has now been approved and will very shortly commence production. To say im delighted with it is an understatement.....so very different from G-UHOP { yes its modified Cameron Balloons scheme}. Not expected to be delivered until Mid June 2017 at my request. First flight will be the MAB Solo record flight intentionally.
Second Hand Movements

The market for second hand Hoppers is very busy just now with no less than six aircraft available. Most people know your editors Um H-31B G-UHOP is for sale, joined by G-CINN of Alan Turner. Also for sale currently is G-CICO a Cameron Z-42 with basket bottom end and Andrew Davidson is selling his Um H-42 with basket G-CIGA. Then there is Martin Axtell’s LBL 21A G-OJNB but this month we will concentrate on Jan Frazer’s lovely Lindstrand G-CDUJ which is married to a single chariot.

FOR SALE: – One single T&C Sky Chariot plus a 31 Lindstrand envelope. One lady owner from new.
BOTTOM END: - One owner since new in 1993 – C of A’d by factory inspectors annually since then. Original 30kg tank was replaced in September 1996 – and its ten-year inspection carried out plus new PRV valve fitted by Lindstrand’s in September 2016.
T & C C2 powerful single burner adapted from new with two vapour pilot lights. Never let me down.
Still flies brilliantly. 25% left in cylinder after one hour flying at 20-25C with a pilot of 75kgs. ARC valid until 16 February 2017. Comes with small fan.
EASA changes etc. makes me want to give up the game finally after many years of great fun together.
COST: £5000 exc freight and any inspection costs.
Jan Frazer is contacted via either email janfrazer99@aol.com or phone 01669 650485. I’m sure this one won’t be around for very long so if you have an interest in purchasing the excellent value for money example seen above, get in touch with Jan quickly.

7. Gallery Pages –

Your Editor’s choice of new and interesting hoppers and duo’s active in the world of ballooning or good themed photos.

Chambley 2009 – expect this in 2017 but on a much bigger scale

With this being the middle of a dull dreary winter I thought I would wet your appetites for the Solo Record Flight with a couple of classic photos from yesterday year. The above offering was from Chambley LMAB
2009 and features Dan Wilson, John Hilditch, Tid Dudman and myself playing at a mass launch, and then the second one below is significantly more important because it is from Sarah Elston and comes from 2007 when hoppers were first officially allowed at LMAB.

8. Manufacturer / Event News/ Industry News

I am delighted to be able to announce to you that Ian Chadwick has been selected as UK Ambassador to Mondial Air Balloons (MAB). In this role, Ian can use his vast influence with regard to promoting MAB in the UK, and has agreed to work with me to promote the Solo Record Flight and brings amongst many attributes his vast knowledge of Annex 2 and will endeavour to work towards their inclusion in the flight. I look forward to a healthy and productive time liaising with Ian over the coming months. This is great news for other countries who may benefit from Ian’s Knowledge and guidance. Congratulations to him from all the hopper community.

So the question on most people’s lips is, Did Lindstrand Balloon Technologies return to the marketplace too early? Reason for asking this is their apparent lack of progress since they made the prototype hopper. The prototype was built for them by Lindstrand USA followed by G-CJHV (a supposed revised version) registered here in the UK. This machine hasn’t been seen by anyone in the UK and when prospective clients for hoppers have approached them, the factory has been unable to quote prices and delivery dates. Over the xmas period I asked Lee Hooper, was the hold up down to lack of resource, or is there a problem with the bottom end? All you ever get in reply is that they are comfortable with their resources and that the product will only be released when they are happy with its design.

Now this was a fine answer when G-CJHV was registered, but that was back in July and here we are facing the New Year, and nothing has changed. Quite simply, the answers don’t wash anymore and its about time some substance emerged from Oswestry. People are very patient, but with no clarification as to why there is no progress, you have to deduce that they made the move back into hoppers too soon and simply aren’t ready to return.

I for one look forward to seeing some suitable progress soon from the men and women in yellow and blue.

As you will notice, the Newsletter is now supported by Cameron Balloons. This is part of the bigger deal as mentioned earlier in
this Newsletter. It doesn’t influence any part of my objectivity and it will not interfere with being impartial when giving advice or opinions regarding kit especially where flight testing is concerned. This was a pre requisite on my part before concluding an agreement with them.

All that is left to say is have a very Happy New Year, Thanks as ever to all who have contributed to the Newsletters in 2016 and please continue to support YOUR newsletter.

Facebook membership continues to rise with the current level of 927. We are creeping towards the goal of 1000 members. I never know if any of you read this little segment but it has been a goal for a long time of mine to get past the 1000 mark. Surely between us we can find another 73 people who would benefit from membership of our unique “club”. Please help me achieve the goal.

All articles for inclusion in future issues will be gratefully received by your Editor. Please forward them to steve.roake33@gmail.com and feedback good, bad or indifferent is always welcome. Views aired by contributors may not be those of the Editor.

Safe and happy New Year hopping!  Steve Roake.

For all previous newsletters visit www.cloudhoppers.org/Newsletters.

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