



Cloudhopper News

Issue Number 58

September 2012

Welcome to September's Cloudhopper News.

Hopefully by the time you read this you will be packing the Hopper into the car, and preparing for one of the One Man Meets. The UK event is back in the picturesque area around Welshpool in Powys, and a beautiful area to fly given the right weather. Since the last newsletter we have had some glorious weather across Europe and some events worthy of talking about. In the USA, another successful XLTA took place. It's funny, the difference some great flying makes to your mindset, and currently having personally flown seven times in two weeks, life seems sweeter than of late. Long may it continue I say.



Martin Axtell's pretty Customcraft 25A seen at Sackville Lodge Grass Roots Meet.

Ed-Speak – by Steve Roake- Thanks Chris

Another month when I have to try and populate a Newsletter for your pleasure and for once I have a decent amount of

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material to embellish your reading experience. I'd love to be in this position every month but the reality is that sometimes I really struggle. The nice thing to report this time is that once again that Genius of ballooning, Paulo Bonnano has created another brilliant ballooning masterpiece in his new Duo. Coupled with a really simple neat idea from David Tanzer in the Essential Extras section, this looks set to be a full bumper edition.

Before I go any further I would just like to thank publically Chris Dobson who has for a long period of time supported the magazine from behind the lines. Chris has decided, that time is right to move on and on behalf of everyone id just like to thank him for his input which has been invaluable.

So without further, less from me and on with the newsworthy stuff.

Essential Extra's / Tech Talk

Sometimes it is the simple things that make all the difference. During a recent discussion on Facebook to the merits of Paulo Bonnano's latest offering, David Tanzer alluded to a really neat idea that helps when hopping. David suggested that you make a few loops of material and fix them to the lower Carabineers on your swivel on the hopper. By using the loops when you want to turn yourself during the flight, you reach up and use the handy attachment which should be hanging invitingly close by.

As David Says, please find a photo of the small rotation slings I use on my hopper. The slings I use are made by BlueWater, and they are called Titan/Runner Loops

(<http://www.bluewaterropes.com/home/productsinfo.asp?Channel=Occupation&Group=&GroupKey=&Category=Runners&CategoryKey=&ProdKey=188>).

They are 6" (15cm) in length, and simply attach to the quick links on my rotation ring. At the suggestion of Ernie Hartt, I've used these slings for years, and it's one of those things that makes hopper flying just that much more enjoyable. You can hook a finger through the sling to make rotation just a bit easier, and with this simple solution you are far less likely to get a glove or finger caught between a rotation bearing and swivel ring. I highly recommend them! Make sure you get the short ones which are plenty long enough to snag with a



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finger, yet won't get caught on anything as you spin around in your hopper. They even come in four bright colours and will make your hopper just that much more stylish!

David Tanzer in action with his Titan Runner Loops clearly visual.



Many Thanks to David for the brilliant and yet simply effective solution to an everyday problem with hoppers. Another Essential Extra!

The Features Section-

Sint Niklaas 65th Balloon festival-by Steve Roake

Following a fantastic introduction to the oldest European Balloon Festival last year, and with this year's event celebrating the 65th running of the Sint Niklaas festival, and with loads of shapes attending, and a weather prospect to die for, I returned with my trusty wingman Clive Cooper for another weekend of Belgium fun and hopping.

For someone who is based in Surrey, this event is perfect distance with only a two hour run to Dover and around 90mins on the



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other side of the pond. We left at the crack of sparrows (that's early in everyday speech), and cantered down to Dover enjoying the early morning Dawn chorus, being inadvertently overtaken and then retaking Paul Burrows who was heading to the same place as us with the most vivid green trailer you would ever see. The ever changing renaming process for Ferries now saw our boat Labelled DFDS Seaways, but it still looked like Norfolk line to me. With the demise of Sea France in recent months, most of the signage had changed at Dover with a new player "My Ferries.Com" plastered everywhere (bet it didn't take long to think of that name)!

With a huge high coming from the UK across Europe for the weekend, the prospects of some flying were great and so a relaxed approach to the weekend activities prevailed. The funny thing was that on the Friday, the weather wasn't so good and so there was no rush to get to the venue and sign in. The crossing on the ferry was more settled than expected, with the occasional bumping into friends heading the same way (Bob Garnett in this case), and having absorbed all the facts thrown at you at Dover, (for example, 42000 people had used the service the day before, using over 4500 lorries,-definitely one for a pub quiz), we had arrived on the continent.

Viva la difference. Smooth road surfaces greeted us as the bland voice of the Sat Nav directed us towards our destination. Little was I to know just how much exposure, awaited our arrival- I have never been filmed so much at one event lol! Let me give you an example.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNMHhVBo4xo&feature=related>

I didn't realise how prestigious the family Sax that run the event are. Talking to a local man it transpires that as well as three generations of the family running the event since its start in 1948(to celebrate the liberation of Belgium following the second world war with initially Gas balloons) , it seems that a great great grandfather in the family created the world famous Saxophone!

Friday afternoon was all about settling into the Hotel and going through the rules and regulations of the event since we already knew it wasn't flyable that evening. The best part of the whole



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event is the weather briefings which are simply the best service you will ever find. In the knowledge that good weather would be with us by the morning, we decided the best course of action was to retire to the bar and sample Belgium beers .

Saturday morning at "early o'clock" we convened for coffee and cakes at the pilot marquee. Flying in the mornings was never mandatory, but the keen ones were there for a nice briefing and agreement to fly out towards the motorway and beyond with Antwerp ATC's only demand that we land before the river on this track. Approximately 38 balloons chose to fly and when leaving the cobbled market square, initially just relieved to be flying again, the prevailing wind was a light 4-5 knot gradient with plenty of variation over the surface. This was a flight to just get back into flying but I had to wait until well past the motorway before descending on the surface where the leading balloons were indicating a 90 degree variation of track.



Bob Garnett captures my departure in front of the impressive City Hall

Once clear of power lines I dropped down with plenty of



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opportunity to land before the build up of industrial estates near Antwerp. The only challenge was my choice was a tight field to land in where the left hand side had power lines and a tree of considerable size needed clearing prior to touchdown. Typically most people flew for around 45 minutes, and I landed in a village called Temso.

Back to refuel the pilot and crew and then off to refuel the hopper (nice to only have to fill one tank!), and then a small siesta (watching the Belgium GP). Before you knew it we were all reconvening for the afternoon briefing. The afternoon had been punctuated with three gas balloon departures and whilst the direction had changed for the evening slot, the wind speed wasn't significantly higher.

In the briefing all the discussion was about flying over Antwerp docks and towards possible landing sites afterwards, necessitating the loan of another detailed flying map. In fact what actually happened was a lovely flight towards the village of Neukeken and a pilot decision not to go too far and take a very accessible field which was already catering for my good friend kiao Chemin from Brazil with the Woodpecker shaped balloon.



Sandy Mitchell captures my TV moment as I depart



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What had taken place prior to this was some serious audience participation, with a crowd counting down from ten to zero before my departure. What I didn't realise until I saw the above photo, was that it was going out live on national television, with some serious cheering as I popped out of the arena.

Sometimes it is better to not fly as far as possible and enjoy what you have had, so with crew near and good access, with a friendly landowner, I'd say I took the right option.

Sunday morning dawned with slightly worse weather but definitely flyable with a prognosis that the evening slot could be iffy. Therefore I was determined to enjoy a third flight and maximise on the opportunity. However, slight pilot error on the inflation resulted on a balloon overhead with the mouth closing up and no chance of getting more air in there. With no choice but to pull out and reinflate, (due to proximity of other fliers), I ended up last off the market square. Initially the track was the same as the previous flight towards Neukerken but with reduced visibility and a gradient speed of 10 knots I once again decided not to go ballistic and protect the balloon choosing a long field after 50 minutes. With the tops of the trees getting busier and the met forecast stating that the gradient was due to pick up considerably after 8am, I thought the decision to land was spot on. You always consider it would have been nice to fly on but particularly when away from home, you need to remember there is always the next slot to think about and this discipline is hard to learn and sometimes easier to ignore. So Three flights in the bag and no problems- good result.

Sunday evening proved problematic for all due to weather that was crossing the area at the slot time. With bigger balloons rolling around in the arena and shapes struggling to inflate, an easy decision to can the flight was taken, unfortunately the commentator now had the idea that I was prime target for another audience participation event. Tactfully I deflected the attention towards those who were flying and was rewarded with an opportunity to tether a shape (Bertie Bassett... 168feet high sweet). Thanks to Andy Kaye I realised what is involved with these monsters. Two 60 litre tanks in 25 mins was enough for me.

All that "remained" was the survivor's meal! After being last year's worst dressed dudes, Clive and I scrubbed up well to arrive shortly after 9-30 for the meal which saw us retire around



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3am after some beautiful cuisine and fine company. Sint Niklaas had been another enlightening experience, with some delightful flying, and with thanks to our hosts, I for one look forward to returning next year if invited.

Steve Roake

The 5th Grass Roots Meet – Sackville Lodge by Steve Roake

This is the biggest non commercial balloon gathering in Europe. It's quintessentially English, full of no frills, fly if you want and based in a nice part of the country with an enthusiastic team of organisers, and you find the level of participation that you desire.

With on site camping, showers, a marquee for pilots briefing and a bar, and food to suit, the essential ingredients are all in place to ensure the meet is a success. Clever management of the teams, the local farmers, and the structure of the event has proved, popular and continues to grow year on year. The ballooning doesn't take over proceedings at this active grass airfield, it co exists alongside normal operations. Therefore it was appropriate once I had arrived and set up my base camp for the weekend, to see a vintage Tiger Moth bi plane flutter over the threshold and taxi back to the clubhouse.

Relaxed flying amongst 70-80 other balloons was possible simply because Ultramagic UK with support from Paul Dickinson from the factory backed the event with their sponsorship. Richard Penny, the recently appointed UK dealer took a relaxed backseat role whilst ensuring the event received his total support, not just financially, but with support with light hearted competitions, prizes, great signage and his participation. There was a desire to get as many Ultramagic Balloons to the event to reflect the new sponsors input, so whilst I wasn't free flying the hopper, I did take it to tether for the enthusiasts. These people are a big part of the event and over the years, special effort to find rare envelopes for the event have resulted in some rare exhibitions.

Along with the organisers, (Rob Cross, Peter Gray, Tim Wilkinson and Mark Stelling), we have tried to promote hoppers at the event and continue to do so. This year we had eight present, with six of them free flying. Chris Dunkley from Easy balloons has always supported this event, both financially and with his presence and so I wasn't surprised to see his Hopper G-BSIG in action showing



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newcomers to our sport the joys of Cloud hopping. I was at the refuelling area having flown, and to see the hopper quietly in action on the airstrip was a sight to behold.

All four of the flyable slots suited hoppers and therefore it was good to see Kevin Tanner, Rob Clements, Andy Marshall, Trevor Reed, Steve Lacey and co in the air mixing it up with the bigger craft. In a world of ever increasing costs to go flying, taking the hopper to an event like this makes a lot of sense. If you like the sound of this, then pack your tent or caravan and come down to Bedfordshire for some fun flying.

My first hop or an Interesting Hop- by Malcolm White

6th October 1999

Two months earlier, I had taken delivery of my second Panasonic Battery special shape (G-MAXX) which had its maiden flight at the 1999 Bristol Balloon Fiesta in the UK. As part of the deal with Lindstrand Balloons, I also took delivery of a new Lindstrand Hopper bottom end (Mk2) but, at that time, had no envelope suitable to fly over it. My attention turned to Albuquerque in October. Having previously attended the Albuquerque Fiesta with Intel and Panasonic as sponsors, and having no sponsor willing to commit to the budget of getting a balloon there in 1999, I decided to take the Hopper, and Colin Butter kindly loaned me G-WETI, a Cameron N-31 (previously advertising Wet Ones), which was shipped out inside his 'Barbour' basket, together with his 90. The Hopper bottom end went with me as luggage and I borrowed a tank and fan from Colin.

I had two great flights on the first Saturday and Sunday, one of half hour and the other of an hour. Weather conditions were poor for the Monday and Tuesday but Wednesday was looking very promising with light southerlies forecast. Wednesday at Fiesta is also the 'Flight of the Nations' where a representative from each country is invited to take off ahead of the other 500+ balloons carrying their national flag. As Ireland's only pilot at Fiesta, I had that privilege (as we have done each year we've been since). Wednesday was also a competition day with target crosses located in the north gravel pit, directly north of



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the old Fiesta field. By the time the first balloons launched, it was clear that the wind had shifted to a SSE making it all but impossible to get to the north gravel pit.

Those who are familiar with the Fiesta will know that there are some large drainage ditches running alongside the launch field. After taking off, I stayed very low and managed to descend into one of these ditches, which carried me north towards the targets. As I approached the only road across my path, I climbed slightly to cross the road, passing closely overhead a moving police car! I managed to drop back down into the north gravel pit and dropped my marker directly in the middle of a cross from 2 feet off the ground. I was the only balloon that day to reach the scoring area. It was somewhat disappointing to later find that my drop was disqualified (missing out on the prize of a Harley Davidson) as the tail of the marker hadn't fully unwound, having dropped it from such a low level.

After dropping the marker, I climbed and picked up the wind taking me across to the Rio Grande river and towards Rio Rancho at about 5kts. The next half hour was uneventful except for the toe dipping in the river. As I reached closer to Rio Rancho, flying at around 500ft agl, I caught a glimpse of another balloon beneath me overtaking me at a rate of knots! I was fairly clear that the lower winds had picked up significantly. Several other balloons in the area were having some drag landings and I was still drifting along at around 5 kts knowing that this landing was going to be interesting. As I started my descent, I picked up my radio, took off my gloves and tucked them under my backside and called my retrieve crew who were fairly close on Coors Boulevard. As I stowed my radio, I looked up to see the whole side of the envelope caved in and I looked immediately for the first landing opportunity. Fortunately, a scrubby field (filled with small cactus) presented itself. A couple of other balloons had also chosen the same field and had dragged up the whole length.

Landing the hopper with a small envelope would normally consist of



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firmly grabbing the rip line, unbuckling yourself from the seat and stepping out the side whilst holding the rip line. This probably works well up to around 10kts; however, it is not recommended in the winds that we had that morning (assessed at around 20kts). There were a number of incidents that morning with balloons being dragged into houses, walls and powerlines.

The time between my radio call and landing could have been no more than two minutes. My gravest mistake was to not have the time to put my gloves back on prior to landing, being preoccupied with getting heat back into the balloon when it became so distorted. As I touched down and started to drag along the ground, I unclipped myself and had hold of the rip line. The result is obvious. The rip line went through several layers of skin on both palms. Fortunately, another balloon team retrieve had arrived with a First Aid kit and my hands were duly treated and bandaged. I only did one other flight that week as a passenger in Colin's 90. The valuable lesson I learned from this flight (other than to unravel the competition marker next time) is to wear gloves that allow me to carry out all functions (the gloves I had were too thick to easily operate the radio buttons) and to never take them off.

You never know when that hopper landing might not be the gentle stand-up landing you are probably used to!

Malcolm White

So that's the format, what happened on your first ever hop or interesting flight and how it felt compared to your expectations? Submissions to me please at steve.roake@ntlworld.com

Three Favourite Jpegs and why-by Rob Clements.

Following some serious pestering (sorry Rob), I am delighted to say this month's three favourites and why come from Rob Clements. Rob is one of our members who I met many moons ago who had all the passion for hopping and yet hadn't quite got the finances in place.



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Every time we met up, Rob would remind me that he was on course for the hopper but not quite yet. I was delighted when eventually he got his wish to join our small select club in the skies. Now he lives and breathes hoppers and shows what is possible when you set your mind to something.



This first picture is of Kevin Tanners LBL 25A G-HOPR at this year's grass roots balloon event. This balloon is particularly a favourite of mine as the shape/gore pattern of the hopper is highlighted by the vibrant colours. (I am no expert in which balloon patterns work well at a particular size, but I note the LBL 35 changes to a 24 gore pattern as does my 42.)

Picture 2 is an odd one you might say, but...albeit this was taken at low level, to the non-hopperist the wish to dangle at height below a big bag of nylon with a tank of flammable gas on your back with a big flame above your head might sound like a strange hobby. But,

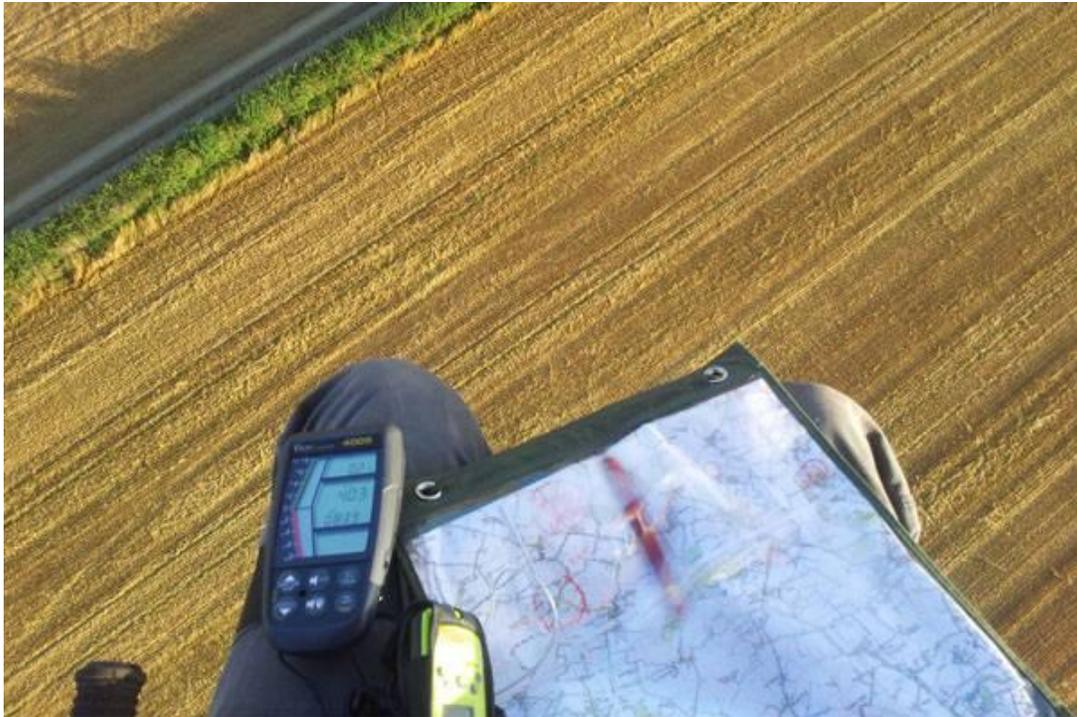


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we all do it because we love it and, in common with many others, hopping reminds me of my first solo flight, achieved with help from Ken Scott/Ray Shortall on the ground.



Third and final contribution from Rob.

Yes indeed, this is my own balloon so I guess I have taken a small liberty here. Taken in Metz 2011, this picture reminds me of a great week of flying and much hopping was done. In particular, it stirs memories of being in an extremely tight pack of 20 or so balloons all touching and being the smallest there I was buffeted around at the will of the larger envelopes. (Good fun in the end but a little hairy at times).

It truly was a nice flight to observe from where I was (just slightly less densely placed but close by) –Ed.



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Contributions for future editions of my three favourites and why to steve.roake@ntlworld.com please. Do it today folks and share those memories.

4. Updates to the Website / Newsletter/ Topics of Interest

Celebrating a recent sale of the Ultramic Solo bottom end to a client in Australia, Paul Dickinson sent in a photograph of proud owner Barb Smith trying it out for the first time under Adam Barrow's envelope. However, Barbara then sent in a photo of the balloon as she will fly it which you can see in the Home Built section below.



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Paulo Bonnano has done it again. This design genius, has mated two of his solo hoppers into a bespoke Duo with the addition of being the first Duo set up that swivels using the usual bearing rotation system. Clearly this has generated plenty of interest on facebook where a beautifully put together video has recently been released.

<https://vimeo.com/49561234>

Talking to a few people, most appreciate the fine craftsmanship involved and whilst there are currently no prices available (hint hint Nicole), the only item that some seek would be some form of protection sump for the tanks for a reward landing.

5. Homebuilt section-

This month Barb Smith has mated a brand new Ultramagic Solo bottom end to her homebuilt envelope.



Clearly delighted with her seat unit, The Envelope VH-BOX is a 31,000 cubic feet homebuilt . Enjoy Barb!



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6. 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, then feel free to forward details of it with a suitable photograph to me using my normal email address.



G-BREG Colt 21A- subject of recent discussion

Brought to our attention recently on discussion on the cloudhopper page on facebook by David Tanzer, this pretty 1989 built Colt 21A in factory colours has just recently been advertised for sale in Wisconsin. Used sparingly in the UK, it was deregistered to the USA in 1991. Whoever the lucky owner is, I hope it looks as good as in this photo (thanks to Mark Stelling).



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With Thanks for the ever efficient service, News comes from Ultramagic Spain via Paul Dickinson of another Techno S-50 sale. This one represents the second repeat sale of a Techno 50 to Japan and with C/N 50/09, indicates still strong interest in this popular sized Balloon.



JA-1443 Techno S-50 C/N 50/09 jpeg thanks to Paul Dickinson



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Manufacturer News / Events / Updates

One Man Meet time is upon us and with this year's event based at Welshpool (Mid Wales) Airport in Powys, our host and organiser Phil Dunnington has posted a request for more aerial arrivals. Last year four members arrived by aerial means and Phil is keen for any rotary or fixed wing friends to join us at the event which starts on Friday 12th October. See what you can do and more importantly , see you there.

Adverts / For Sale / Wanted section

There generally seems plenty of stuff out there for sale at the moment. Pauline Baker has withdrawn her advert for EI-DJZ, since her world record has just been eclipsed by in her words a measly 20 odd Kms. Think there may be another attempt soon coming lol.

I do wish EASA would sort out this Annex 2 stuff; there are some lovely second hand balloons on offer for silly money which just can't be transported around Europe. Sooner this is fixed the better!

Martin Axtell offers G-CCKZ for Sale (Now only £3500)





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Customcraft 25A, 14hours total time .Multicoloured and lightweight envelope with customcraft bottom end which splits into two like a lindstrand system in red and vgc. Now without the 60litre tank .All Annex 2 so no messing around with EASA etc ...flies great and all paperwork in order. Ready to go now reduced from £5000ono to only **£3500**. Telephone Martin on 07786622802 or email him at mjaballooning@hotmail.com

G-BVUI is still for sale



Lindstrand 25A. 1994. G-BVUI. 96 hrs. Lindstrand colours (no words) in red, yellow & blue. New EASA C of A on delivery. £1700 Zebedee Balloon Service - 01488 681527, 1700 British Pounds= (+ -) depending on Exchange rate: \$2700.00 Photo of balloon is the first one on the

Zebedee list under envelopes. web page:

<http://www.zebedeelist.co.uk/list/list.php?section=envelope>

I also have the matching Lindstrand hopper bottom end that I might be willing to part with. If anyone is interested, E-mail me at advanced@gci.net, or call me in Alaska at 907 242-5860 Jack advises that £3750 buys the complete kit.

Finally with one eye on Albuquerque, Malcolm White is offering for sale what has to be (in my opinion), the bargain of the century." Hang Time" is a Lindstrand 25A that looks fantastic . This represents a real steal at a price of only \$2500 and it is available for purchase at the fiesta.

Surely there is a pilot of around 75-80kgs who can't resist this beauty.



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Last inspected in July 2012, contact Malcolm white before the event to avoid disappointment. His details are as follows. Email Malcolm@white.ie or phone +353 87 6400000



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The Klein FAN Smaller is Better!



Tiny but surprisingly powerful
inflation fans!

9 kg empty, 10.5 kg full (fuel
+ oil)

2.5 hp Honda engine

One fan easily inflates
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Two fans will blow your
socks off!

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And Finally.

Membership is currently a healthy 439 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.

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