

# Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 160

June 2024

Welcome to the Latest Newsletter.

After eight long tedious months of inactivity, I got to fly once again in June at the very successful Midlands Air Festival. This uniquely different balloon festival has continued over the years to deliver a polished event which is quite unlike any other, mostly due to a laid-back approach from the organisers and by having a great team of people all pulling together constantly trying to give back to the teams as much as they can to ensure you have a great time whilst there. Coupled with a lovely landscape and a picturesque stately home, what isn't there to like? I completed two very different flights, both challenging when you have been dormant for a while, but both reinforcing the feeling of why we do this great experience. Due to inactivity you do forget some of the nuances of flying and I can assure you Sunday morning in light winds with 137 balloons in the sky by 07-30 was an awesome sight and coupled with very nice residents who came to say hello upon landing, a simply great time was had by all who attended. My only hope was that the next one in Yorkshire towards the end of the month would be equally as pleasant as its been four years since the invitation only event took place and it always was my favourite.

As we go to press it has come to my attention that there have been two untimely deaths in the community and I would just like to pay my respects to the family and friends of both Dee Shapland and Nick Godfrey, both great guys who loved their hoppers. Condolences to both their family and close friends who mourn their passing.

So here is what we have for you in edition number 160 of the Newsletter:

- Ed Speak – June as it was.
- The 2024 Midlands Air Festival
- G-JEMZ appears at Midlands Air Festival.
- David Koenig talks about "Jim's Joy" , a Grazier SH.
- Photos from the Midlands Balloon Festival
- Bedale 2024 balloon meet.

Articles for inclusion are always welcome Anything for future inclusion to the usual email address please.

[steve.roake33@gmail.com](mailto:steve.roake33@gmail.com) many thanks in advance.



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## **1, Ed Speak- June as it was**

A topsy-turvy month which saw me finally take to the air after a long lay-off, with two very interesting flights in the Midlands which were entertaining for different reasons, and then followed up with another at the end of the month in deepest Yorkshire. What you don't realise is that in two of the three I had to work towards achieving the goal of getting to where I needed to be. Sometimes you need reminding why we all love flying and trust me I got the message loud and clearly.

Thanks to the Easy Balloon team for slotting in a c of a in between the two festivals within their limited available time period, which meant I could go to Yorkshire with a fresh annual ticket. The transition from a full-on event to a grass roots, no frills, back to basics classic was amazing and I have to say I really love the Bedale event which has been a firm favourite for years. Now four and a half hours to drive to the venue isn't for the faint hearted but the collective comradery is such a nice change to events driven by Nightglows and spectacles with the crowd in mind. In an area of Yorkshire bereft of regular ballooning flights, to be stopped by the public and thanked for coming back (after a fur year break), was a very nice surprise. More on this later in this edition.

Then upon returning home I got wind of the untimely death of Nick Godfrey who was very keen on his hoppers with the J&B Whiskey branded craft. It appears he stumbled whilst walking the Pyrenees Mountain trails and fell to his death. Sympathies to all of his many friends and family and likewise the same sentiments to family and friends of Dee Shapland who was also taken from us and loved his hopper.

Getting back to festivals for a second, the essence of festivals has been so severely diluted in recent times that the public are getting short changed by certain events. A recent example happened in North Wales, where crowds queued for hours and paid a hefty ticket price to see arguably a very drab line-up of predictability. No wonder they all complained on Facebook. We get so conditioned to every event having a Nightglow that the essence of the glow has become tired, predictable and ultimately boring. Time to re invigorate our festival concepts I feel.

Regards Steve



## **2. Features Section**

### **Midlands Balloon Festival 2024**

The last weekend of May saw me travelling up the M40 to Shakespeare's county Of Warwickshire for the annual return to the Biggest Balloon festival in the UK at the magnificent site of Ragley Hall Estate near Alcester. The neighbouring landscape is lovely with a lot of fields that had been harvested prior to the event and the vista is gorgeous from the air.

The house which is located 8 miles west of Stratford upon Avon was originally built in 1683, is a typical Jacobian style with imposing architecture and beautiful grounds and forms a lovely setting for an airshow and for the launching of multiple hot air balloons, but driving along the motorway through torrential rain storms I couldn't get excited about the prospects for the weekend. However, I thought to travel up after work on the Thursday, I would get a chance to set up my camping area and be prepared for whatever the weekend offered. Much of the important information pertaining to the weekend was communicated via a Wots app portal and as I set up my pitch, I found out that the Friday morning press launch with TV media present, had unfortunately been cancelled due to unfavourable weather forecasts. What had surprised me more than anything, was how many people had also chosen to travel early to the site.

I may be the unusual one here, but I do find I sleep better when I go camping than I do at home, and having slept soundly I was awake early for the Friday morning and enjoyed a decent breakfast before going to the main marquee to register and receive my passes for the weekend. The ladies concerned did a sterling job and the ease at checking in was commendable. The first real action in ballooning terms was scheduled for 11am with some dedicated tethering but not including balloons in our genre. Whilst it was entertaining, the prevailing winds showed that unless you were sheltered behind tree lines, then at best it was difficult.

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual airshow proceeded with pomp and style and the crowds piled into the site which seemed to feature more trade stands than previous years, but for Friday evening the weather whilst improved wasn't particularly great and so the briefing suggested that only very current pilots or pilots with

large experience should only be the ones who should fly. Predicted winds of between 12-20 knots at 500 to 2000 feet, didn't actually materialise. As the

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evening continued , the surface winds ended up conducive for a hop across the launch field but alas by that stage of the evening I had commenced drinking. In the end only around 9 or 10 balloons took flight but the evening continued to settle down with a Nightglow still scheduled to take place.

By the time this came around , the winds had eased to the point where envelopes could be inflated in very settled conditions for a very well executed light show for the large crowd who had stayed on for the spectacle. For me an early departure to bed was very necessary with the knowledge that Saturday's briefing would be a better opportunity for flying and that illusive first flight of the year.

Saturday morning awoke around 04-45 and after a quick cup of Tea I routed around the dormant campsite and into the main marquee in time for the 06-00 morning briefing. Weather was better and the forecast still wasn't perfect with some winds from 500 feet of predicted 12 knots up to 15 knots at 1000 feet. My theory was that I wouldn't go too high and use the lower winds to my advantage. Bearing in mind I hadn't flown in eight months , I was very circumspect about the preparation of my flight , and was very observant to all the things you need to check before you fly. However, I had picked a specific place tucked behind some trees in the lee of the prevailing winds, and the inflation and installation of the pilot all went extremely well thanks in no small part to the help of Jim Findlay, my experienced crew buddy. His help was invaluable when my head is scrolling through all those things you need to check prior to flying, and if you aren't thorough this is where you can forget something you'd later regret. Sticking to your training ensured that nothing was missed and always in a first seasonal flight – back to basics is always my mantra.

Taking off in very settled conditions I realised I was the only hopper flying on that particular slot which when you consider the flight was understandable. I had a lovely flight, but the winds were very fickle, with a weird characteristic nearer the ground . At around 1000 feet as I headed pretty much due south the winds increased up to around the pre-predicted 15 knots but when practising approaches the decrease wasn't as high as expected. On one practise approach it dropped to 9 knots but generally the expected decrease in speed wasn't there. As I headed towards Evesham, it actually increased at a lower level. With farmers having experienced some outbreak of decease recently I was keen if at all possible to avoid going onto agricultural land and during my 45min flight I actually had a couple of possible landing sites on my track.

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The first which was just on the outskirts of the town was a school , but I dismissed this option as I felt that on a Saturday, there was a high probability that the gates could be locked and getting access might be a problem, so I flew on. My ultimate landing spot was spotted about two miles out and in order to achieve the desired place I had to descend to just above tree top height in order to channel the wind direction down a road and into the park land I had chosen. The only slight concern was that at a round 300 feet, the wind actually picked up to 13.5knots. This jet of faster air was both unexpected and of interest in focussing my brain in achieving my desired landing place with the need to get into the park early to scrub off the speed. I nailed it perfectly and actually slid on the wet grass of the park which was still dewy at 07-30 am.

It transpired that the park in Abbey Road Evesham, had a circus in the corner of the grassland, and one of the employees came over to say Hello after I landed. My only problem of the whole morning was when I wanted to what3words my position to Jim who was in my car. The app had for some reason , location services turned off so my initial position I texted to him said I was in Oxford. Once I had corrected the issue, he arrived in no time, by which stage I had already packed the envelope away and chatted to a local dogwalker. Later chatting to Gary Davies who had been flying alongside me in a Cameron 105, he mentioned that some four miles later on , he landed in 19 knots. My landing had been text book, challenging and enjoyable but definitely not for the faint hearted.

Upon returning for the debrief, some people were amazed I had hopped in the conditions, whilst not for low experienced hopper pilots I actually (despite my lack of currency), felt well in charge of the conditions and whilst not having to hand over the gift to the land owner, I took the opportunity to give it to the lovely guys from Avanti Gas who did refuelling, as thanks for their efforts over the weekend.

We refuelled over breakfast and then topped the fuel tanks before returning to the campsite for a long overdue shower and rest and recuperation prior watching some superb aviation exploits from the fixed wing brigade. For me particular highlights included a 1950's Red Bull Douglas DC6 and obviously the never ever mind-blowing display by the Red Arrows display team. Later that morning some more tethering took place but with nothing of interest for our style of flying.

During the downtime, quite a lot of discussion took place regarding the report from the AAIB on the racer accident which took the life of Peter Gregory with quite a lot of people not really wanting to address the issues raised by the

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report. Without discussing the points raised nobody would benefit from the findings and I believe we can all learn from their concerns and conclusions. Tim Wilkinson who seems to be the epicentre of home building in the UK told me how he had personally helped the investigators with their findings and was confident that the effects arising from the report would hopefully have minimal impact on the home building community. (More on this in a separate section).

Saturday evening arrived and, in the briefing, it transpired 67 of us had flown in the morning slot. The evening briefing wasn't the best once again and it appeared challenging. Specifics of the met forecast were, surface winds predicted as 6-14 knots from the North North-East, with upper winds of 13-16 knots from 500 feet up to 2000 feet. Again, accuracy wasn't the best and it appeared the actuals were less but a late foray across the launch field wasn't in my mind, having flown in the morning, but we elected to help Stuart Skinner fly his Cameron H-34 G-BYNW launch for a 12 min flight along the crowd line.

As we walked back to the Marquee, I spied Jonathan Dyer conducting a C of A on the Ultramagic H-31 G-JEMZ in the Cameron Arena. (More on this in another section).

Sunday Mornings Briefing was brought forward to 5-45 am because the weather forecast looked promising and whilst the surface winds were forecast as being 5-6 knots and from the North-North-West the upper winds varied between 500 feet and 2000 from the same direction at speeds from 15-18 knots the reality was considerably less. With bright glorious sunshine 137 teams took to the air with very lovely calm conditions. The lower winds were around 4-6 knots on my track, so I decided not to go too high. My actual speed at 1000 feet was nearer 10 and this dissipated as you went lower. Just out of the arena at low level the crawl was as slow as a 3 knot draw wind. Then it was up and over the trees just above them, within feet of the tops of the leaves. This time there were other hoppers airborne including Nick Purvis in the Cameron Demo.

Just after seeing Nick go past me, I decided to climb to see the variation in my track with height which surprised me how pronounced it was. The Amazing sight of so many balloons bumbling around the skies just reminded me why we do this thing and the associated joy of flying. After my 45mins yesterday I wanted to fly for longer because I try to average around an hour per flight so using the availability, it seemed silly not to extend the trip to bring the weekends total higher. We all headed towards Bidford on Avon, (a place I've landed at multiply in previous years) and low and behold on my track was another park that meant no land owner issues if I could get into it. This would require some effort as the low-level wind was some 90 to 100 degrees different to the upper winds.

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Just about ready to fly Sunday morning -photo by Jim Findlay

My first descent towards the field of choice was way too early and I checked my descent and reascended as I skirted the field choosing to go positively into the rugby pitch later and in a more determined manner. This time I nailed it, and was shortly followed by others who knew a good landing spot when they saw one. With the balloon still inflated I encouraged the younger members of the local families to come and take a closer look at the balloon. Mums took photos and little ones ranging from 5 to 8 years old made promises to draw pictures of balloons when they got home and stick them to the fridge in the kitchen. I then clocked that on one previous year I had already landed in this very field and once I'd what three words my landing spot to Jim, awaited his arrival with the car and the bags for packing away. By the time I deflated 75mins were in the log book making a round two hours for the weekend.

Once again upon returning to Ragley Hall, it seemed only right and proper to once again donate the beers to the Avanti Gas men who willingly assisted us achieve our goals this weekend.

Breakfast then followed and a return to the camping area for a shower and slow packing away before departing for home by around 10-30am. There are many reasons why the Midlands Balloon festival remains the go to event in the UK but many thanks to all the organising team for another memorable event which ranks as high as the others .

## **G-JEMZ Ultramagic H-31 appears at the Midlands Balloon Festival**

G-JEMZ is a Ultramagic H-31 hopper with very low hours since purchased by original owner James Atkinson in 2016. Construction number 31/16 had just 16 hours on it and was never seen at any UK event including the One Man Meet even though the owner was actively encouraged.

This was out at the Midlands Festival in the Cameron Tethering arena late on the Saturday evening when being C of A'd by its recent purchaser Jonathon Dyer who was conducting the annual on it. ( I'm not sure I agree with the principle of an inspector inspecting their own kit – but that debate is one for another day). I say "Purchaser" rather than owner as said individual has a history of purchasing kit and moving it on without registering it in their own name even though the CAA mandatorily tells you to do this within 28 days.

Anyway, the rare kit was witnessed by many and apparently is already being touted around to prospective individuals who have shown interest. Clearly Jonathan can't fly it, as it is massively too small for his considerable weight. Rare hoppers are always good to chase and to pick this one off was for me the one



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of the event, let's just hope it becomes more common moving forward.



Nicely captured by Keith Harbor- thanks for the photo

## Jim's Joy N103GB

Jim's Joy is a 43K hopper built by Jim Grazier of Waukegan Il in 2014. This was the last balloon he built before he died of cancer and although he was able to inflate the balloon, he never free flew the beautiful aircraft. I acquired the balloon through the generosity of his wife Heather and promised to maintain and fly the aircraft for the enjoyment of others. Every time I fly Jim's Joy, I think of him and remember the passion he brought to the balloon community.

The balloon is made of a combination of 1.3 oz silicone "tie-dye blue" material and 1.1 oz calendar yellow nylon. The trapeze (chair) portion is a welded and bent aluminium frame with a single Thunder C-2 burner. I modified the burner to allow for self-centring. Behind the pilot are mounted 2 X 10-gallon aluminium tanks. There are two turning vents and a parachute top. The envelope, trapeze, burner, and tanks weigh in at 156 lbs.

I had previously built a 43K hang rig in 1997 with a 20 g laydown Aerostar tank that was ridden like a horse so had a lot of experience in flying a 43K balloon. When I flew Jim's Joy the 1<sup>st</sup> time, I used approximately 15 g of fuel in 50 min. I knew I needed to do something, or this balloon would be tether-queen. We suspected the uncoated calendar material was the contributing factor to high fuel consumption. Using coating treatment that is available we coated the calendar material from the inside of the envelope. This was not the 1<sup>st</sup> time we had coated a balloon but the 1<sup>st</sup> time coating uncoated material. The application is much easier and soaks right through to the other side. With coating the next flight consumed 10 g /hr!!

The next modification that impacted fuel use was to alter the ties for the parachute. Jim was an Adams pilot (Original Adams) and the vent was installed with alternating centring/vent ties. When the balloon was inflated the weight of the vent line and ties would pull that corner of the parachute away from the envelope, allowing for lots of leakage. We decided to move the vent lines to the centre line location on the chute so that the centre lines would help in weight distribution. Well, that was the plan. but we ended up moving the centrelines to the vent line location on the chute which made the parachute about 1/2 gore off the appropriate placement for the Velcro tabs match up. Still able to Velcro in the top so it was not a big problem. The modification was done at Post Mills fly-In and Brian tied all the knots. Meaning my balloon has real Boland Knots!! I do not want to remove that piece of history, so the vent on inflation is turned slightly to the left or right depending on the placement by crew. Now the fuel consumption is about 8g per hour, close to the performance metrics for the 43K I made previously.

I really enjoy the turning vents. My hang rig did not have turning vents and I always would fly backwards. It is great to be able to orient myself in the direction of travel. Plus, one year at AIBF I was able to "curl" the balloon about 200 yards to land off the reservation. The balloon flies like a dream.

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I plan to keep on HOPPING for years to come.

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## **Bedale Balloon Festival 2024**

Following a four-year absence due to factors such as Covid, it was a real joy to return to the Bedale Balloon Festival in late June. The weather in the south of the UK was glorious with Glastonbury bathed in sunshine and as I drove the 270 miles north to Yorkshire for the return, I knew I was heading into a front with rain and potentially not much flying. This article is a complete indulgence as I was the only hopper present who flew at the event but the underpinnings of the event are what made it successful in the first place and I don't mind stating, the fact that this is my favourite UK festival by miles.

Firstly, its back to basics Grass roots stuff, no commercialism , No Nightglows , no public participation in masses, just a good old-fashioned Invite only small collective of like-minded souls gathering to recapture what makes ballooning great. Situated at a sports arena just off the relatively new Bypass road into Bedale, the loveliness of camping at a sports club with up to another 14 teams with access to decent showers , loos 24/7 and a communal feel to the entertainment, re-energises where staid traditional festival formats have dulled the enthusiasm to a point where interest wains.

Friday evening arrives having travelled during the day encountering rain showers , traffic hold ups and 50mph zones on practically all the major roads North, but we won't be put off .

Briefing by Mark Stelling confirms what we already know, it's not a flyable evening with the rain front moving through(gusty squalls and winds of 20 knots plus). It's off to the local Chinese restaurant for a take away to be consumed in the Clubhouse whilst enjoying reasonably priced alcohol and getting to socialise with the other teams who had arrived. Not too late to bed as briefing would be brought forward to 05-30 the following morning hopefully to proceed some incoming rain due around 08-00.

There we were at the "oh my god its early" briefing where Mark in his characteristic way tells everyone "this won't be a slot for everyone" Surface winds of 7-14 knots, direction of 180 degrees(but actually lower it turns out), with upper winds at 500 feet at 8knots and 15 at 2000 feet mean there are not too

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many takers with three teams accepting the challenge and flying. However, with good TAFS from local airfields Topcliffe and Leeming, it certainly wasn't black flagged and some seasoned pilots decided to fly. All three teams who set up and departed from the launch field (which for this year was across the road in an adjacent field) all had great flights towards Leeming and North Allerton. For the rest of us who watched, we knew the evening forecast was markedly better potentially.

Whilst the weather front went through around 08-00 . I returned to my tent for some well-earned breakfast before setting out on foot for Bedale town centre and their traditional Saturday morning car boot event. We waltzed into town around 9am and folks were already closing up their stands as they had been put off by the light rain which to be fair wasn't that bad. Mostly tack was on offer unless you were into plant life which was all fresh and well grown. My team bought nothing but took the opportunity to go further into town to peruse the antique shops and select some salad and choice cuts from the award-winning local butchers' shop in preparation for the evening Barbeque. Some very yummy Hot sausage rolls were also consumed whilst still hot and having broken my washing bowl on the way up to the event, its replacement was found in the local hardware shop.

Returning to the campsite / launch area we decided a relaxed approach to the day was in order whilst constantly accessing the updated weather forecasts which were predicted to improve considerably. Eventually six pm arrived and with it the afternoon briefing and forecast. Mark stelling delivered the news we all wanted to hear. Surface winds were predicted to be around 4 knots in a more westerly direction of 230 degrees. Upstairs the 500ft wind was 250/5 knots with 2000ft winds estimated as 280 / 6knots. When it was suggested that this was probably "the Slot" of the weekend, I'll be honest, I wasn't 100% convinced as I thought the breeze was higher, however I agreed to go look at the options on the launch field. There was a lot more interest in flying by the other six crews present and as the only active hopper at the event I decided to set up and see how I felt about the conditions- still not convinced. My hopper had been inspected by the Lovely Easy balloons people the week before , but like all inspected stuff, it had been put away slightly differently to how I would have and so spent a bit more time getting the bottom end back to how I like it. Watching a couple of other balloons float away I was happy to fly and proceeded with a lovely inflation with help from Tim Ward who assisted whilst I got comfy in the seat.

The launch was effortless and progressed well, with a lazy climb out in the



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Direction of RAF Leeming airfield. Having initially flown low at a round 6 knots I initiated a climb to around 1000feet agl and noted slightly higher winds typically around 12-13 knots but actually reaching a max of 15 at one stage.

With Damian Toppingdon some five mins ahead of me on a similar track I watched with interest how he tracked over the military airfield then descended and had a marked change in direction low level of some 30 degrees more northerly. I decided whilst my track wasn't quite so central over Leeming, I would also descend and track the Z-90 for a while noting that the new track was quite close to the A684 towards Northallerton, Low level over the meandering River Swale was enjoyable before continuing towards the village of Morton-on-Swale which had a school half-way through the built-up area, and for a second, I contemplated landing at the school on a football pitch. In the back of my mind was the thought that at the weekend the gates might be padlocked so decided to practise my approach (which was bang on track), preferring to fly on. Next possible landing site was either a golf course or a very posh house next to the club but once again I decided to fly on. By this stage of the flight I had realised weather was approaching fast at around 1000feet and in the knowledge that you never outrun weather, I realised the balloon was on this occasion going to get wet. Now I was on track for Northallerton tracking along the remains of either an old roman road or possibly an old railway line. On my right-hand side was an outdoor event with music so loud you could hear it from over two miles away. In the knowledge of my previous practise approach, I could clearly make out three distinct areas with associated grasslands figuring that two of them were associated with schools so best avoided. Then on the third, just behind a retail park I spied a man walking a dog across a football pitch – so clearly there was access to this field.

As I approached the town and its railway line I realised I was quite close to a level crossing and whilst waving to many people on my flight remembered a woman and three kids outside a pub on my left-hand side as I started my slow descent remaining highish so not to lose my preferred track into my goal. Unknown to me, the woman packed her children into her car and followed my progress. The straight railway line was now identified as the Wensleydale railway society's private track, which got close to the mainline with a train approaching the station as I flew over it. As I got lower My choice of fields got fewer, but luckily for me, seeing the man and dog had proved priceless. The other two options were in fact a school and a sixth form college with dubious locked up potential. I on the other hand was now bang on track for two football fields which were behind a retail park which included Halfords and B&M.

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I did also briefly entertain the idea of landing in the car park , but preferred the grass option. Now with speed dissipating, I chose the first pitch and got into the middle of it noting the drop in speed as I got below tree top height. Now comfortable with my option and seeing a car park adjacent to the second pitch I decided to hop over the trees and placed the craft into the second pitch. At this point it was pointed out to me by the assembling crowd that I was in fact at Northallerton Leisure Centre and with the balloon still inflated I decided to have a chat to all those who bothered to come over to me to say Hello. Amongst these were the delighted woman and her three children who I conversed with. Whilst awaiting my crew to arrive who were close by and had received my what three words location, I asked the mother to photograph the balloon and get the children to draw a balloon the following day and put the picture on their fridge for a week. Unknown to me the lady concerned would post photos and video of my arrival on Cloudhopper's page on Facebook.



Imagine my delight when a few days later when I received this from the lady (Sarah Thomas ) whose daughter Evelyn had drawn this rendition of me. You never know when you are sewing the seed to future generations of potential pilots and this was a real joy for all.

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A lot of people were commenting on how nice it was to have balloons back in a region that doesn't have regular flying in their area. For the record the flight had flown 7.1nm in one hour ten mins, but I would need to re-inflate in the morning as it went away into the bag soaking.

We returned to the launch site sports hall where the barbeque had been lit and was ready to serve our purposes. The delicious choices from "Cockburns the Butchers", were placed and cooked alongside a nice salad with a few beers from the bar area whilst Coldplay were on a massive tv screen live from Glastonbury. To say this is what ballooning is all about is an understatement. Great food, good company and some entertainment equals awesome in my books. Seven teams had flown including Craig Moore from Cameron Balloons who introduced me to all his lovely extended family who were there en mass. We enjoyed the evening thoroughly, with a departure for the pit of golden slumber around 10pm, knowing there was still an outside chance of flying in the morning.

Sunday morning arrives at 05-30 for the 6am briefing and straight away I knew I wasn't going to fly. The winds just above the tree tops were fairly stiff and having had a nice one the night before, I felt no desire to marginalise my decision making. It then transpired that everyone else felt exactly the same way and whilst we did put up met balloons, everyone decided to stay on the ground having heard the forecast. For the record, the briefing showed a surface wind of 6-15 knots in a 300-degree direction, with upper winds of 11-17knots with height. Therefore, nobody decided to be brave or stupid depending upon your point of view. What was needed was an airing of the envelope to dry it out before returning home and so just after 8am I got the kit out once again and inflated in front of the clubhouse on very short grass and whilst I did put some hot air into the envelope, at no stage would I try to stand it up. Luckily for me I got it away nice and early and dry before going for some breakfast and packing the camping gear away, then venturing for a needed shower before Prize giving.

Once again Cameron Balloons had backed the event with prizes for the top six teams. Craig Moore also recognised the efforts of Richard and Nicola who ran the whole thing with Mark Stelling's help. They received sweatshirts from the manufacturer who once again had gone above and beyond supporting grass roots ballooning. In the end, I only flew one flight, but this event is so much more than just the flying. Thanks to all I will return next year and enjoy another dollop of great British ballooning.



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## **4 New Balloons.**

At this particular time of the year, there are no other known new hoppers emerging from the two main manufacturers. I'm sure we haven't seen the last of the new ones for this year but only time will tell.

## **5, Second Hand Balloons**

Another month where stock for sale comes to the fore. There was some discussion over a second-hand Z-31 recently which ultimately will sell at a price that reflects its true value. One other great example of a hopper priced accordingly was G-MUTE , a 1991 Colt 31A with 109 total hours on it .Mark knew the sweet spot price wise and had a plethora of potential buyers who he could decide which one to sell to . Graham Day is the lucky boy who paid a mere £1250 for the envelope with a new ARC on it.



G-MUTE Colt31A a real bargain hopper



## 6, Manufacturer / Event News.

### Cameron Balloons grand gesture

In a very popular move, Cameron Balloons gave away to each pilot at the Midlands Air Festival a free T-Shirt with a funky graphic on it depicting where the company will be going in 2024. Midlands, Longleat and Bristol all featured on the funky design and I guess they will also be distributing them at the other two events to people who haven't already secured one (needs confirming obviously). However, if you are one of those very important crew persons who actually fancies getting one for yourself, I'm told they are available to but on the Cameron Balloons Website. So, thank you very much to those people concerned for mine and as gestures go, this was a lovely one.

### The 2024 OMM

John Tyrrell asked me to remind you all to keep clear the weekend of **4-6<sup>th</sup> October** for the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual One Man Meet which will be based in the Oswestry area. I'm told there will be multiple launch sites utilised this year and John is keen for Saturday night to be a complete social occasion for all. As soon as all the details have been confirmed, we will release further details to you all. However, I would suggest you can now confirm your Hotel arrangements before the pricing gets too expensive.

### 7, Gallery

This section is your editors' chance to find interesting photographs either from his own collection or from stuff submitted for the newsletter, or alternatively something that featured on the Cloudhoppers Facebook page during the month.

This month I am only going to select one photograph for my selection as a gesture of recognition towards Nick Godfrey who sadly departed this world following a tragic accident whilst walking the Pyrenees Mountains. His contribution to Cloudhopping was immense and the J & B branded envelopes alongside the special shaped bottles were an ever present in years gone by. Condolences to his extended family and close friends.

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RIP Nick Godfrey

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## **And Finally**

Here we are at the start of July 2024 with the number of people subscribing still increasing in recent weeks, we find subscription to the Facebook page reaching 43 shy of 4000 and still growing monthly. This is a great achievement with sustained growth going into our 20<sup>th</sup> year, yes 20 continuous years of publicity for Cloudhoppers across the community (where did that time go?).

Please send all submissions for future editions to [Steve.roake33@gmail.com](mailto:Steve.roake33@gmail.com)

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