

Cloudhopper News

Issue No. 164

January 2025

1. Welcome to the latest Newsletter.

Firstly, let us recognise the longevity of this product. This month is the start of the twenty first year of continuous printing of the magazine, which in itself is a hell of a milestone. Twenty years, yes that takes some sinking in even for me. Hopefully you have all enjoyed the subject matter and look forward to your monthly/ bi-monthly dose of Cloudhopping News. There aren't many publications that last the test of time, yet year on year we continue to grow with increased subscription to the Facebook page and so many of you say you enjoy the read which keeps you in the loop with everything ultralight one man or two man ballooning

However, after a sustained period of "freedom", I have decided to add a funding option to the Newsletter. When you see how many people worldwide subscribe to this medium, I think it is something that has been coming for a while and after some consultation with friends I have set up a place where voluntary donations to the cause (and that includes webhosting costs) can help me out and stop this being a cash drain for me. Should you feel suitably moved I would love your help **at www.buymeacoffee.com/cloudhoppers** where your choice of donation can be uploaded. Thanks in advance and please don't go ballistic , I wouldn't expect anyone to donate more than £12 a year or theoretically a pound an edition. As I said this is voluntary but financial assistance would lead to more options for the growth of the brand. Therefore, I would ask you to feel generous if you can afford to be and support me, and for those who will , many thanks in advance.

So here is what we have for you in edition number 162 of the Newsletter:

- Ed Speak – Hope and expectations
- The 53rd Icicle Refrozen Balloon Meet
- Retrospective on the time a Cloudhopper featured on a tv commercial with unique thoughts from those who starred.
- Build a balloon in Qatar
- Yet another Cameron O-31, this one for Europe.
- Gadget time once again.

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

steve.roake33@gmail.com many thanks in advance. Now please enjoy this edition of the world's only Hopper periodical.



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1,Ed Speak- January

Here we are, entering 2025 and a whole new year. Just wanted to start by thanking Jurgen Kerschbaumer from Austria, who reached out to me to correct my mistake and to tell me that he was a customer of an Ultramagic in 2024 purchasing his M-42 registered OE-ZVT, (c/n 42/25) .The beautiful envelope features the latest trend of UM advertising. Jurgen supplied a photo which as you would expect is in the Gallery section of this Newsletter. I also found another Cameron O-31 which was delivered in June to Peter Kelder. PH-LFO is the item, with construction number 12687,

Returning from a successful Icicle Balloon Meet was a good way to start the year, shame the weather put paid to day two of the event but I would say that the Saturday more than surpassed most expectations.

On a different subject, I have been waiting for ages to write an article on the crowning glory for Cloudhoppers, where it featured highly in a television advertisement many years ago. Now with thanks to those who participated at the time, I get the chance to remind all of you of the hallowed moment in time some seventeen years ago. Many thanks to my two willing participants who searched back through their collective archives so that we can bring you a unique "insider's view" of what happened and how it came about at that time. Full glory to both participants, I personally never think their feat will be eclipsed. I would also thank them both for the photographs which accompanied the submissions sent to me. Just simply understanding the timeline involved with this project and what needed to be done to achieve it is remarkable. For me understanding the background to the project is so important and I hope you get a sense of the scale and the time involved from my submission.

Always good to hear of the production and delivery of another hopper to our community, once again many thanks to those(who know who they are), at Cameron Balloons for the information. Secondly thanks to Sandy Mitchell for confirming some information for me.

Finally, I do get requests from people for valuations on their kit. Naturally I have over the years gained some considerable knowledge on brand worth. I will happily share this insider info with you but once again , should your kit sale achieve what we think is its value , a small donation of thanks to www.buymeacoffee.com/Cloudhoppers would be most appreciated and remember I can advertise it for you either on the Facebook page or here in the Newsletter for no upfront costs to you.

Cheers to all Steve.



2. Features Section

The 53rd Icicle Balloon Meet

Leading up to the icicle Balloon festival (an annual event held in the first weekend of January every year), most people fell into one of two groups. The first were soiling their underwear thinking that the weather would preclude any activity and the second batch were savvier, weather observant and relatively confident that some activity would occur. I fell definitely into the latter group, observing a changing forecast affected by two weather systems converging with a substantial amount of forecast snow tolling down from the north clashing with milder weather stationed over the south of the UK. The night before the event my mind was made up. The components all aligned for some activity with a predicted lemming syndrome occurring.

The facts were predicted overnight frost down to around minus 2 solidifying the ground, light winds forecast by the UK met office of between 2-6 knots but with potential for fog to persist until clearing. My mind was set, I was going the 50 odd miles to the venue and so went to bed early to alight around 05-30 and leave my place at 06-30 for an hour's drive to the hotel. Briefing would be at 08-00 with expected flying initially then pronounced tethering of older envelopes from 09-15 onwards.

First observation, despite temps of between minus 2 – 2.5 Celsius, there were no obvious signs of sheet ice over the roads as I drove some motorways and trunk roads to the venue at Donnington Grove hotel in Newbury.

Secondly, no risk had been undertaken with the possibility of getting cold. Thermals, second set of socks, a Bennie hat and gloves accompanied my flask of Tea with me to the site which I arrived at around 07-15 (the journey being smoother and less worrying than predicted).

Briefing was held alongside the butty van who were doing a roaring trade in bacon, egg and sausage baps with beverages for the assembled masses. The weather, delivered by John Crawford in his usual style held no new uncertainties, other than a weird forecast from Brize Norton which was on the intended track.

Subsequently action moved to the hardened grounds of the launch field. Now usually icicles when flyable see the same old range of older tea bags inflated and whilst some were evident, sufficient balloons of interest kept the expectant crowd happy. There were a surprisingly high percentage of hoppers

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Rarely seen these days G-BWHD LBL 31A

present willing to fly including some rarer examples. G-BWHD whilst fairly local , has never been the most common of LBL-31A's and this flew. G-SIPP , a LBL 35A from the Manchester region of the country made a rare southerly visitation which was also nice to see. At least another five envelopes flew out of a total of around 22-24 balloons booked into the event. Star of the morning wasn't even a

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hopper but a Cameron Concept 70 owned and flown by two hopper exponents (Gary Madelin and Jeff Lawton).

The tethering and flying lasted some 3 hours all in , in which time we were even treated to a sprinkling of snow-flakes. However, by the time I repositioned into the hotel I was ready for a hot drink and a change out of my thermal clothing. The trade show was in full effect with the usual stalls with one exception – No Ultramagic presence. Why they chose not to attend was beyond me, so I reached out to UK agent Richard Penny to ask why they were not there. He told me a family member had been ill so fair enough, because family comes first.



Mike Woodcock in G-CIJJ his Cameron O-31

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Of those who were present , Cameron Balloons thing this year was about awareness of their collapsible basket which is now available in a third size



Anne Rich travelled From Manchester region with G-SIPP LBL35A

suitable for bigger envelope sizes. Douglas Hoddinault was present with Kubicek UK but I didn't actually get to speak with them. I spoke with friends until Jim my trusty crewman appeared and we descended into the pub area for some lunch with the lovely ladies from Cameron Balloons, plus Chris Timpson. Once they had eaten they swapped with Nik Purvis who was also great company. We then traversed back to the stalls where the lovely Jo Scott tried to persuade me to re-join the BBAC. Hmm. Not sure about that yet, not convinced it reflects great value for money at the price point with a reduced number of Aerostats per year. I guess time will tell and for now I will monitor the situation. Finally, I went and relaxed in the bar lounge in the company of some very nice people including the magnificent Robin Batchelor. Most of the people were staying for the evening meal and after dinner speech by Peter Dowlen but I opted to return home arriving back some twelve hours after setting out.

I thought the Icicle 2025 delivered on all fronts although I did hear that ladies were frozen in the marquee during dinner. Thanks to all who put on the event.

An amazing Television Advert Using Cloudhoppers

Cast your mind back some twenty odd years and think about Commercial ballooning in the UK. Two main players existed fighting for the big contracts. One was Virgin ABC and the second was an outfit called Flying Pictures. Now Flying Pics had some stellar clients, one of which was a successful relationship with the Jaguar Land Rover brand (JLR). Numerous balloons were commissioned by JLR including some shapes so to the tram behind Flying Pics they were a known entity.

However, "creative differences" meant that Flying Pics was evolving and three essential elements decided to part ways and do their own thing. One of the three was the renowned stunt person and Pilot Ian Ashpole who had over the years performed some pretty crazy stunts in his time and was known as a can-do kind of guy. Having parted ways with Flying Pics, Ian set about serving those who needed his skillset via his own company Wye Valley Aviation.

It came as no surprise to Ian when in late 2006 a production Agency called Knucklehead Limited contacted him with an idea for their client Land Rover who were seeking a niche way to publicise their new product, the Freelander 2 mid-sized 4x4. Tim Katz the MD of Knucklehead told me that they

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had completed car adverts before but Jaguar Land Rover were a new client. The commercial was written by a creative team of Steve Williams and Adrian Lim from an advertising agency in London called Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe/ Y&R. They came up with the idea , wrote a script for the tv advert and then the Director a chap called Johnny Green – pitched for the job and won the contract. Johnny took their script and bought his vision to executing the idea.

They had an idea that would utilise a Cloudhopper in the storyline and Ian was their choice to facilitate it. The project was discussed at length before it was agreed and in order to see a Cloudhopper in full effect, the advertising agency went to Chateau D'oex in 2007 to witness one up close and personally. Agreeing to its suitability the project had a story line which was agreed and Ian contacted Cameron Balloons in Bristol with a very specific wish list. He wanted two all silver Z-31 's for the filming , using one bottom end and Cameron's needed to assist with building a framework that would look like the bottom of an envelope under which the Hopper bottom end could be slung for the close-up work.



Classy shot of the hopper reflecting in a skyscraper

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The storyline involved a couple with a woman in the Cloudhopper being chased around a city and out into the countryside by a guy featuring the new product. To make matters more interesting, a portion of the scenes would be filmed in a city late at night.



Cameron Balloons made the rig which was hung from a vast boom.

Naturally there were things to be ironed out before the filming could take place, like what city would host the production team and who might do the female parts in the filming. Knowing what a great pilot she was, Ian asked his close friend Jo Bailey would she come onboard to assist in the project? He was

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delighted when she agreed. The City chosen was Vancouver in Canada and the agency arranged all the rights to close streets at night for the filming , done by a local production company under an English producer.

Two Shiny new Z-31s appeared in G-CESX and G-CESY both not showing any external registrations for the project. Silver was chosen as it would look great at night and be neutral to the colour of the vehicle which would be red.



Filming at night in Vancouver

With everything in place, Ian flew to Vancouver in September (leaving on the 15th), for the filming which would last approximately three weeks in duration. The first four days involved doing Recce's with the production team finding the best places for filming. Jo followed some two or three days later and fortuitously for the pair the weather turned out to be favourable and filming went fairly smoothly. Initially the filming was centred in downtown Vancouver with tethering on rooftops and very high tethers whilst alongside skyscrapers. The team then transitioned to a lake for some close up work with the bottom end hung from a

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gigantic boom, before finally then transitioning to a Ranch in British Columbia which was Canada's version of the Grand Canyon, and Ian referred to as real Marlboro country. The Cameron built rig was also utilised for the "Money Shot" where the lady touched down on the roof of the car whilst her partner was looking the other way.

For Jo most of the filming was tethered shots but included some 2-3 hours of flying. She substituted for the actress in the stunt shots and stated that it was quite enjoyable but the highlight was seeing a bear in the wild in the scenes filmed whilst at the ranch doing the countryside footage.



Jo Bailey preparing for another tether.

Ian on the other hand ,couldn't remember exactly how much flying he performed and actually never logged the hours. He did say that whilst at the Ranch he flew two, thirty-minute free flights on the 26th September, He said that the local team of professionals were great fun to work with and being a small, tight-knit outfit, everyone got on well. These folks were joined by two representatives from Land Rover who checked on everything.

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Returning to the UK with the footage "in the Can", post production and editing took place, with Knucklehead saying, their timeline for the project was around 3 months from initial brief to production of the 29 seconds you will see in the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myhr6Flf3Pw>

The subsequent production was a huge success, and post filming, editing etc went live some three months later once approved by the client.

. Ian maintained storage for the production company of the two lightly used hoppers until they required disposing of having been purchased by Wye Valley Aviation from Knuckleheads. Ultimately these were then sold on in 2012 , one going to France and the second living on in Austria.



Preparation of the shots over the lake.

Personal thanks to both Ian and Jo for taking the time to indulge my efforts to republicize this great feat and for routing through all of their collective archives to find material which is some seventeen years old. Also personal thanks to Tim

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Katz and Christina Waife-Toppin at Knucklehead Tv for putting up with my unending questions for accuracy of the project.

I truly believe this is the best portrayal of a Cloudhopper and it remains the only time the product has been utilised for commercial advertising in mainstream television. Surely never to be repeated alas, and whilst some years have now passed , I think it is good to recognise their achievements.



Free flying in Marlboro Country.

Building a balloon during A Festival (Qatar 2025)

Whilst attending the annual Qatar Balloon Festival recently, Paul Stumpf decided to build a small balloon during the event . I am hoping for a full story of the build in future months from Paul , but it was pretty amazing that this thing got



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to fly during the event itself and hats off to all involved with its manufacture. Whilst strictly not a hopper the fact that a prolific hopper builder did this seems enough reason to me for its inclusion.



QBF5 – Home built balloon from Qatar

Gadget Time

Here at Cloudhoppers we love a gadget, particularly if it meets the needs for our form of flying. What I mean by that is it has to be small, portable, serve a great purpose and hopefully not break the bank when buying one. The one we

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are about to discuss the merits of I have to confess, I'd never heard of, however, Wendy Russell pointed out this remarkable device to me in the trade show at the icicle meet trade show and apparently it was being used by model balloonists. So, what is it I hear you say? Having never heard of the brand This yellow (great colour if you ever miss-place it) , device is called a Sunroad Handheld GPS Navigation Receiver which incorporates a digital altimeter , barometer and compass locator.



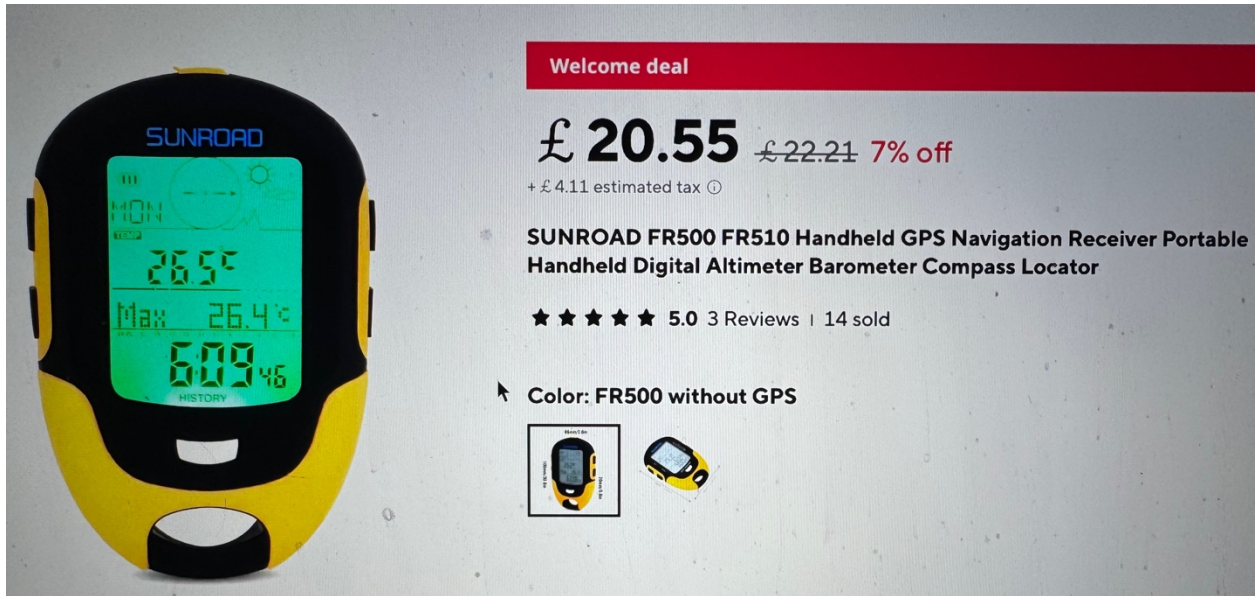
There are various models ranging from the FR510 to the IP44 and the K7B8. All three vary in price in a range which I found by google searching from £20.55 to £36 delivered.

The unit features a GPS they claim is accurate to within one foot , it has a handy torch and the lithium battery can be recharged via a USB port.

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Welcome deal

£ 20.55 ~~£22.21~~ 7% off
+ £4.11 estimated tax ⓘ

SUNROAD FR500 FR510 Handheld GPS Navigation Receiver Portable Handheld Digital Altimeter Barometer Compass Locator

★★★★★ 5.0 3 Reviews | 14 sold

Color: FR500 without GPS

So, with a weight of 0.14kg this thing is light. Easy to mount or you could use a lanyard and wear it around your neck. In my opinion I would try to see one first and then take a punt because this is cheap, affordable and might just do a job for you.

4 New Balloons.

Whilst at the Icicle Refrozen Balloon Festival, Nick Purvis from Cameron Balloons hinted at another Cloudhopper delivery being imminent. With thanks to Sandy Mitchell, it was possible to put two and two together and find out that the balloon in question is OE-SIW which is for an Austrian Client. Construction number of the craft is 12616 which I believe was built originally as a stock balloon.

5, Second Hand

There are always bits squirrelled away out there on the second-hand market. Trouble is before they are advertised, most are promised to a new owner or sold. For example, a Cameron Millennium bottom end recently surfaced with only 6 hours usage, but was gone in a flash. My advice, don't settle for second best and keep hunting for the gems that are out there, everything comes to those who wait eventually.

.6, Manufacturer / Event News.

As you can imagine, this time of year event news is both plentiful and out there. The biggest events in the UK are nearly full already with Slipstream Management informing us that both Longleat and the Midlands are fully subscribed which is no real shock when you see how fabulously they are run.

I am not going to post a list of events ; however, I would just like to thank the organisers of the Teuton Valley Balloon festival in America for graciously offering myself a sponsored entry to their event with a quite significant contribution towards costs. Unfortunately , due to conflicting interests I have had to decline the offer but wish them well with the event and acknowledge the significance of the tribute to Ernie who passed on . Nice touch.

The Holy grail of Hopper fans

When it comes to hopper fans , the subject matter is very personal and what suits one individual may not suit another. Of the older choices , I settled on the Ultramagic 3hp fan which whilst not being the cheapest has served me well over the years. I would just like to say I haven't yet tried any of the latest generation Cameron Wares and would look forward to "test driving" and reviewing one of them at a later date.

However, from back in the day, there is a phoenix of a fan. A beast that is so rare , practically nobody has ever seen it. There are iterations of this beast with lesser lungs in them but the fan concerned is to me , The Holy Grail of hopper fans!

Should anybody have one of these compact beasts lazing around doing nothing , I for one would buy it from you in an instant. What prey you say , is such a commodity? Well it is the compact, // square framed Thunder and Colt 5hp fan. Now I did express a topic on this very subject on the Cloudhoppers page and whilst there were some leads emerging from the conversation , not one lead to the unearthing of said "Ghost of a fan".

A couple of individuals had the lesser baby brother , the 3hp version but no 5hp examples emerged from the quest to find one.

So, World, the task is over to you. If you think you have said item, photograph it and send the evidence to me at the email address in this Editorial.

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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. Struggling this month to find anything apt so Ill dive back into my photographic library for something seldom seen.



OE-ZVT Um M-42 built in 2024

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Now , I make no apologies for the next batch of photos because Hopper photos in Alpine locations are simply divine, and to die for. Colour saturation against Snow is always a winner in my eyes and these two sets are simply irresistible.



Gerhard Eggenreich has been regularly updating us from Koussen in Austria whilst out enjoying OE-RAT

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What's not to like?

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Don't you just hate some people ?

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Meanwhile Peter Kelder has been to Filzmoos with PH-LFO,
his June 2024 delivered Cameron O-31.

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Meanwhile , Matt Joyce has teased us from Chateau D'oex Festival on day one, with this lovely home-built Swiss beauty. HB-QJJ is a Senn 12/900 hopper built in 2022 and is apparently c/n 002.

Photo credit MJ Ballooning.

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For continuity purposes , here is HB-QZT Senn 12/900 c/n 001

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Meanwhile in Ashton Court Park in Bristol mid-January

And Finally

I don't want to hark on about buymeacoffee.com/Cloudhoppers but your support will go a long way to supporting ambitions I have for the site and the Newsletter. Any contribution will be gratefully received and trust me, everything received will go back into the site, so please be generous within limits (no more than £12 for a year), or potentially a pound a copy.

Here we are at the start of January 2025 with the number of people subscribing still increasing in recent weeks, we find subscription to the Facebook page reaching over 4212 and still growing monthly. This is a great achievement with sustained growth as we start our 21st year of publicity for Cloudhoppers across

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the community. All are welcome but, **I would emphasize that content is strictly on hoppers and Duo-chariots and not “general ballooning” and those pesky adverts for constant Tee-Shirts are banned and anyone who “veer’s away” from the few rules we have, will be banned and their account will be deleted .**

Please send all submissions for future editions to Steve.roake33@gmail.com

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