

The Long Jump 2024  
Pilot: Dom Bareford  
Co-Pilot: Laurence Wigfield  
Balloon: Ultramagic 105 G-CDGF 'Blackmagic'  
5<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
Start: Baskerville Hall, Hay-on-Wye  
Finish: Bathgate, Scotland

LAURENCE:

When I told my friends and family I was planning a Long Jump, they all thought I meant the running and jumping into a sandpit type of long jump, not the infamous long-distance flight attempted by intrepid Balloonatics during the month of October. Since my first involvement, back in 2012 supporting Rob Bayley and Andrew Gregory in their winning flight I vowed that one day I would achieve this myself, so with 2024 being the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inaugural event, it seemed the perfect year to fulfil this dream. Knowing that any long-distance flight would require experience and someone with good radio etiquette, I suggested to Dom Bareford that he might like to join me, to which he agreed!

DOM: I didn't really have any plans to do a long jump this year until Laurence asked me in Hungary, I knew my availability wouldn't be great but if the right day came about my interest could be peaked. During the first week of October I had a phone call with Laurence where we discussed a couple of slots, I jokingly said the Saturday might be good if you don't mind flying over a lot of water! Then on the Friday I looked again, but this time a bit more seriously and I thought, we could actually do this. There was a strong southerly forecast with calm winds in South Wales for launch and possibly in Scotland for landing. The further west you flew the faster you would fly, but you'd also have to cross a lot more water...

LAURENCE:

Having agreed the date, we made the necessary arrangements for a long flight, plenty of fuel, plenty of food and a hip flask of whisky to toast our (hopeful) arrival in Scotland. The forecast and trajectories that Dom had been using suggested an almost straight-line flight from south to north, wanting to try and avoid as much airspace as possible we looked at a starting point in mid-South Wales which would take us up to the north coast and if winds and fuel allowed, out into the Irish Sea towards the south coast of Scotland.

DOM:

Laurence had found us an excellent launch spot at Baskerville Hall outside Hay-on-Wye, nice access and most importantly not too windy. We loaded up our 12 cylinders, 690L of fuel, transponder, immersion suits, life jackets, breakfast, lunch and a touch of bravery. We launched at 8:00am, an hour after sunrise, this was in the hope that we would land closer to sunset and therefore in slightly calmer conditions. The first part of our flight took us over beautiful mid Wales countryside, with scattered low cloud and fog dispersed in the valleys. We even flew very close to home for me, right over Welshpool, Llansilin and Llangollen.

LAURENCE:

The direction and winds were in our favour as we approached the North coast of Wales, we had been flying for roughly 3 hours and used around 260 litres of our total fuel, quick calculations and an "I'm up for it if you are mate" discussion saw us flying out over the Dee Estuary and Liverpool Bay. Dom was chatting to Liverpool ATC who were moderately surprised to hear a balloon was within their radar, but kindly diverted a Ryan Air plane coming into final approach as we skirted through their air space. It was at this point I realised that the small stretch of water that is the Dee Estuary was not what we had to cross and in the words of Bertrand Piccard whilst crossing the Pacific Ocean in Breitling Orbiter 2 'It is water, it is water, you take the next map, it is water, more blue water. We headed off on a voyage of no return.

DOM:

It was a bit of an eerie feeling spending so much time over water, but at no point did we feel worried, we had plenty of fuel and always had the option to climb and track further to East over land if we needed to land in a hurry. As we flew past Southport we were greeted by a coastguard vessel which followed underneath us for a while, we later discovered they were trying to contact us on the balloon frequency and had contacted Phil Howarth who blew our cover on Facebook! All good fun we weren't trying to keep it secret anyway. We were in contact with Liverpool Radar and after the coastguard found out we weren't in distress they headed back to shore.

LAURENCE:

We continued on, trying to maintain our average speed of 30mph/26knt and heading was a constant challenge and required small adjustments in our altitude all the time, the winds were fickle and a nice breeze would easily disappear at one altitude only to be found at another, which meant we were having to monitor the instruments at all times, which only added to the adrenalin of being over water for such a long time. We passed an offshore wind farm which was being serviced by a team of engineers, we wondered how many balloons they had seen fly past them before?

Passing Blackpool we could just about make out the Blackpool Tower standing tall on the beach.

Approaching Morecambe Bay and the spit of land at Hilpsford Point we started to bear westward following the coastline of the western Lakes, which was mildly disappointing as we were on track to fly over Scarfell Pike, the tallest mountain in England. As it happened the Lakes were clouded out and we had a much better view from the coast. It was around this point we started a game of Eye Spy, the obvious being Water, Sea, More Water, Some Land to our East, Some Mountains and Even More Water.

DOM:

Laurence was on the controls as we passed by the lakes, staying out over water we found our best speed of the flight, 42mph! We just passed over land near Whitehaven then straight back over water towards Solway firth. This was the only part of the flight we were over English soil! As we approached the Scottish coast, we decided to climb higher to take our track a bit more to the right, this was to take us towards a better area for landing but also if we could fly far enough we might be able to head between

Glasgow and Edinburgh airspace. We climbed to 6000ft and contacted Scottish information who were very helpful and stayed in touch with us all the way to Edinburgh.

LAURENCE:

The crew had reported that it was blowing a hooley in Lokerbie, so we decided to push on to somewhere that had a better surface forecast, not that we were afraid of a drag landing, but we didn't want to upset the champagne that we hadn't brought.... Fuel situation was good, and we had a few more hours of daylight so we continued our flight over the Scottish Lowlands towards Biggar and Lanark, at this point we were at our maximum altitude of 6500ft which rewarded us in stunning views of the scenery below us. As we left the Lowlands, we descended from altitude to gauge the wind speed closer to the ground, it was beginning to slow down to something that would be manageable to land in, but we were now heading straight into Edinburgh's control zone. Dom was at the controls at this point and brought the balloon down closer to ground to try and get as much left as we could to avoid any infringement. As we approached Biggar our direction backed westwards which was allowing us to steer clear of controlled airspace, however we were about to enter an outer stub with a 2500ft ceiling, Edinburgh ATC were slightly nervous we hadn't seen this and asked if we were hoping to transit at a higher altitude, we replied saying we would stay under the ceiling and plan to land outside of controlled airspace. As fate would have it, directly in our path as we maintained restricted altitude was another wind farm of giant balloon munching turbines, if we climb over, we would infringe airspace, and as we were squawking our position with ATC, we couldn't exactly breach it. The only options were to land or fly through it! 'Ok Dom, it's your balloon, you have control'. Masterfully Dom flew straight through the wind farm, cool as a cucumber.

DOM:

As we come to the last dregs of fuel the question is always, how much fuel do you leave in reserve when landing? We saw some cut fields up ahead which would coincide with us reaching about 10% on our last two tanks, which sounded good to me. ATC had been great through the last stages of the flight and even gave us a clearance to enter controlled airspace as we were skirting rather close to it, although we didn't need it. We stowed everything away and prepared for one of 'those' landings, but as we came down the wind had dropped right out and it was just a short bounce and stand-up landing, fantastic! We celebrated with a 'small' swig of whiskey to help the time pass on the long drive home.

LAURENCE:

Was I disappointed to not have the drag landing everyone expects? No not really, I've had plenty of those and things inevitably get lost or broken or both. A couple of hops and we achieved a stand-up landing, in a stubble field, next to an open gate – good work Dom! The crew who had been with us since Dumfries were on the scene within minutes. David disappeared to find a landowner whilst Dom and I enjoyed a tot of whisky to celebrate our flight. (Sadly we forgot to eat the Scotch Eggs we brought along as well).

David returned, having found the landowner who gave permission to retrieve the balloon. “Och, ye’ve flown all the way from Wales to land in my wee field, och, I’m so proud!”

The weather gods were on our side this day, allowing us to fly for 9 hours 36 minutes covering a total distance of 266 miles was incredible. It was a pleasure to be able to share it with Dom, thanks for agreeing to come with me and pushing me to commit last minute. Thanks to David Bareford and John Nicklin for crewing all the way, poor John thought we were going for a little flight, and he’d be home for breakfast.

To anyone thinking of a Long Jump, you must do it, you won’t regret it. Planning is key, be confident on the weather, direction and manage your fuel well. My advice is to just get on with it, you won’t regret it!

The original 1984 Rules of the Great British Long Jump are still true today, even with modern tech, better balloons and burners. It reads; ***‘Pilots are invited to stretch their minds, balloons and log books by making one or more long balloon flights in the month of October 1984. The idea is to encourage more of us to explore our limits and those of our balloons, to become more familiar with our load charts, air maps and radio frequencies, but not with the nurses in Outpatients in the nearest hospital!’***





12:37

37

Done

Real-Time Data



355°  
Heading

2300  
Altitude [ft]

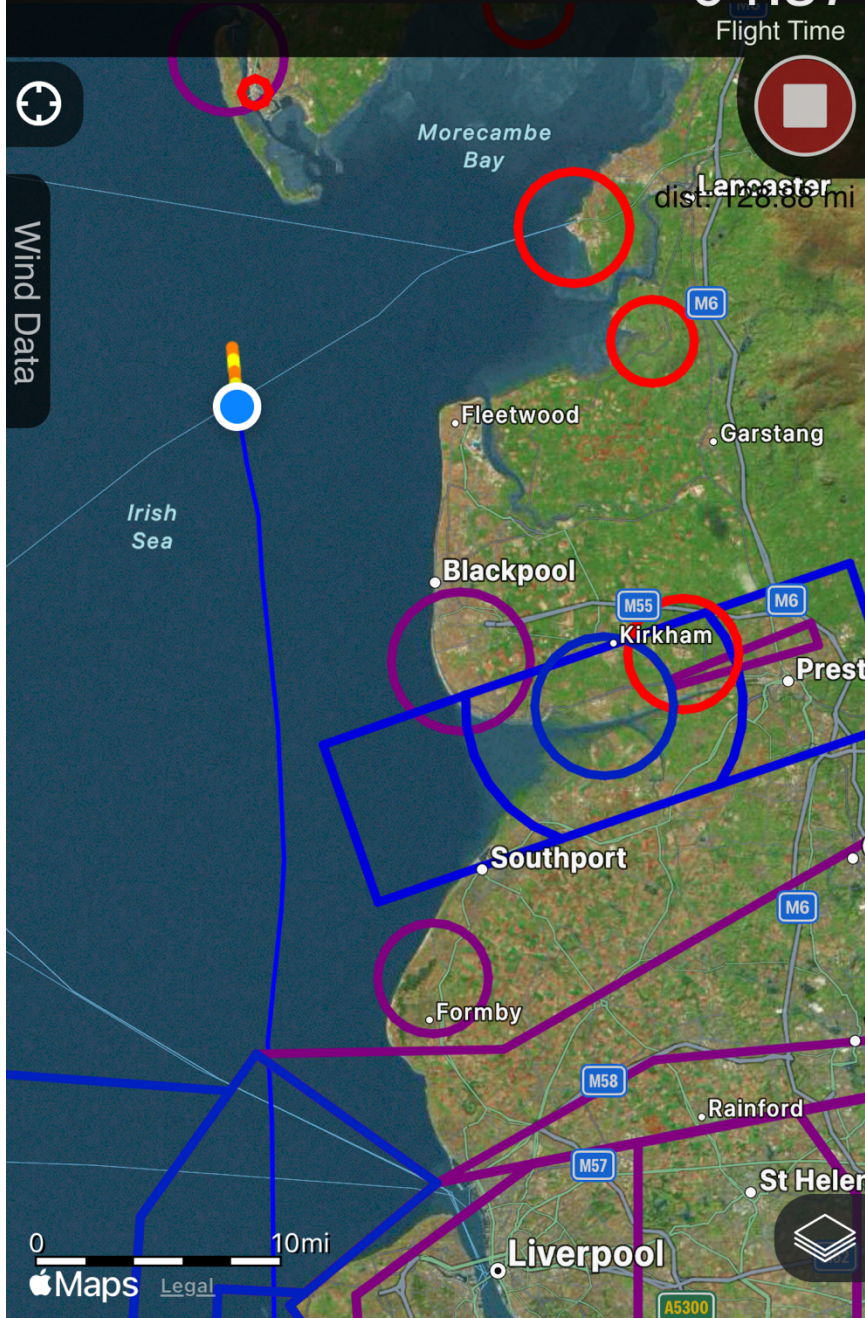
249  
VSI [ft/min]

25.7  
Speed [mph]

04:37  
Flight Time



Wind Data



Flight Log

Summary

Map

Real-Time Data



