

## Pothecary Corner

### Xelon – By Rainer Hoffmann

I've always had a problem with words that begin with the letter "X" – but I didn't let that put me off the Xelon by HQ Invento before I'd had the chance to try it out. At least I don't have to pronounce it here – I just hope I spelt it right? There are three kites in this range and pictured here is Roger from Solent Kite Flyers with 2 and 1 (2 is on the left of the picture). As you can see you get quite a lot of kite for your money (sorry ladies Roger's not included). There are only small differences in these two, in fact I was almost tempted to do a spot the difference competition.



In their sales blurb HQ emphasize how quickly and easily this kite can be assembled which is good because, as I may have said before – I don't do fiddly! There's a fair amount of bending to do with the spine so please make sure that all the rods are pushed firmly in to the ferrules and have stayed there. You might want to take just a bit more time and put a bit of electrical tape round each one as you put it together. After all, the kite costs nearly a hundred quid and you don't want repair jobs taking precedence over flying time. I liked the striking colours of mine (on the right) and would have like to have used the kit that came with it which gives easy stacking – but I only have the one.

If anyone else has got one the same perhaps we can get together at a festival or you could bring it along to one of our "Better Flying Day" events usually held at Stokes Bay. Once fully assembled the Xelon is quite a sturdy kite and flies easily and very steady in a wind above 5 or 6 mph. Even before you affix the tail (in a little more wind) the kite has great presence in the sky and is a bit of an attention grabber. I think I prefer this to the other kite both of which Roger and I have from the Hoffmann collection – the Bow.

### **The Tattoo 2**

This is definitely a sport kite for the beginner to the

mildly experienced in my opinion. It's one of those kites that make you look good no matter how good you really are.

I don't mean it's a poseur's kite but the uninitiated, just passing by, might well be tempted in to the sport merely by seeing some one flying this around late one summer's evening when only the faintest of breeze exists. You can float this kite around on the supplied lines and handles enjoying just the flying of it. It's not for complicated tricks – you will need to be experienced plus to be able to push this kite to its limits. Axles are there but roll-ups are a long way off for the beginner. I wouldn't give this kite to someone much under 14 to fly and I certainly wouldn't recommend the top end of 18mph given out by the manufacturer if you wanted to fly it next weekend too – I'm not sure that it has the strength of the HQ Bolero that I have been trying to break in the arena for the past 2 years.

The sail is Icarex (light winds) is also available in blue and white and is stretched out by four and five mm carbon rods. The 72 inch frame folds away in to a sturdy bag and retails at just under £70.00.



### Canard Wing

A simple thing, this one, that looks like it won't fly. But when you see it up in the sky you can just why it does with all the intrications (I just invented that word!) of tethered flight there for all to see – and agree with!

It's the sort of kite that you'd think was so simple, it wouldn't take long to knock one up yourself. Be careful here the very simplicity of it means that you have to get it just right or it will fly like pants. It's weird when you think about it just like Polo mints you have to have all the bits that aren't there to make it work – Go figure!

The one I have flies beautifully. We had it flying at a charity gig we did for young carers and only the most rolling of turbulent,



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stopping and starting, gusty winds that rattled through the surrounding trees, (you know just the sort that I mean don't you?) took it out of the sky.

From an idea by Ralf Beutnagel the 'Wing' is actually a square. If you measure the overall height by the width – they both come in at 78 inches (The mm doesn't always work on my tape measure). That's not including the drogue which comes with it of course. You need about 4mph (or the equivalent in litres) and just under forty quid to get this little gem of the ground. Well worth it in my humble opinion.

### Win a Kite

The competition trundles on – If you don't know already – you can win a Fury 85 in a colour scheme of your own choosing. Sponsored by Legendary kite maker and flyer – Carl Robertshaw and assisted by Kiteworld.co.uk - the competition allows you the chance to own a top of the range kite just by entering a kite related photo (with a theme of colour in mind) to our web-site found at [www.kiteworld.co.uk](http://www.kiteworld.co.uk) or by sending a print to Kiteworld – get their address from their advert in this magazine. None of the afore mentioned will have any influence on the judge's decision so bribery won't work. We decided to put the closing date back to the middle of October so that any new comers to the later festivals will still have the chance to enter – You never know, it might even spark some new interest. We have had entries from far and wide including the eastern block and even Las Vegas – we have had some pretty good ones and a couple of – well at least they entered! All will be shown on our site when it's all over. How are you guys getting on with the photo gallery? The secret is to click on the first photo then hover the cursor over the buttons until you see the one that says "End slide show" – Yes that's the one that actually starts it!!! – Typical of computers - eh?

### A Quick Flight

.....through the season so far. We've had a few private and the usual mix of charity gigs this year. Weymouth provided a damp start to the season. A better hotel this year did an earlier breakfast giving us time to get down on the beach and set up whilst no-one was around and we could make sure that us and Team Spectrum could get set up on the edge of the arena. It is still beyond me why year after year they still have the main arena right by the old Aquarium where none of the public can stand and watch. As far as the wind is concerned it's probably the worst spot on the whole coastline and this year another attraction (which was closed) had to be fenced off so that people could walk around it thus making it impossible to fly on 40 meter lines without hitting something when the tide was in. Then it rained – then it thundered! It seemed as if we were all going to wait around for better to come – and then I thought about all the people who had come here to see something. Marilyn spotted someone she new from our home town of Andover and I thought –

Blow it – the thunder has gone - we have waterproofs - I had my microphone working, lets get on and do something - we can give a bit of a show all on our own! The two girls (Marilyn and Mags) thought I was mad but soon entered in to the spirit of things and we were all chuffed to bits when we saw all those people lined up along the prom under their umbrellas and some, stood on the seats in the shelters straining to see. After that others followed



on and the festival was under way.

The usual Weymouth mini climate didn't happen and at one point I was enlisting the help of the Airheads getting them in turn to try and fly a kite, blindfolded, in no wind and trying to hit a target in the middle of the arena. I think the public were mildly entertained – I feel obligated to try to put something on. It must cost them, a fair bit to get there and then another six quid to park. At least we get a bit of help with expenses but I heard Bryan from Team Spectrum say that his fuel bill from Ipswich was nearly £80.00. Despite all that we had a good time, a great curry at Zaffran's and it was really nice to see every one again.

I heard whispers that things may be happening to liven up Weymouth - having observed a bit of a decline over the years I have to agree that it is beginning to need it. Perhaps a change of site would be a start?

**Basingstoke** – What a difference in the weather, had summer arrived? This was the best Basingstoke festival I can remember for a long time. A star studded line up of some of the best flyers and single line kite makers in the world treated us all to some stunning displays, both in and out of the arena.

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We were so pleased that what we do is different to everyone else as we always try to look at it from the inexperienced flyer's point of view and with my bits added in on the commentary of what is actually happening from the pilot's point of view – I think we added a different dimension – well we got some great feedback from this one anyway! A visit to our website will give a much better idea of what was going on that weekend and thanks to Roger Backhouse for his contribution of photos sent in.

**Blackheath** – Was, we hope, a learning experience for Lewisham council. They seemed a great bunch and the potential to make Blackheath greater than it ever was there in bucket loads.

There were so many things that were nearly right I am not going to go in to here for risk of sounding negative. Lots of notes were taken and I am positive that this is going to be THE kiting event of the year. Us invited flyers were very pleased with our accommodation right on the site and we found a curry house 200 meters away with food that rated as our all time second best - and we have sampled a few! The two days went well and Marilyn and I had a great time both in and out of the arena.

We look forward to being invited back next year – if you missed it this time be sure you don't in 2009.

**Southampton** - was hard work but very enjoyable and a fantastic learning experience. As a club member I was quickly given the job of running the arena for the day. That meant doing the commentary, organizing who went on when and then tearing around to make sure it all happened. Some of the other club members – Neil and Tony to name just two helped out when they could but they were involved with the rest of the members doing things like teddy bear drops, manning the gate, kite workshop and goodness knows all the other jobs vital to making the day a success. STACK held their competitions in the mornings and we were grateful to them for the brilliant displays they did for us in the afternoons. I had bought Mags a bottle of Champagne to celebrate her retirement from work and somehow that made it my fault she couldn't fly because she had fallen down the stairs and bruised herself after she had drunk it!!? The wind was good at Southampton and I managed to persuade her to fly in the team after doctoring the kites so they wouldn't pull too much. The BBC were there and wanted to film Team Flame and us for a documentary called Britain from the Air. I wonder if they will use the bit where I lost it completely and crashed in to Marilyn. We sorted out the tangle though, started over and all made that landing at the end all at the same time, right on the very last beat of the music.

The Southampton open cup was won by Chris Goff –

only just in front of some nice efforts from a couple of the younger flyers and a great display from a lady flying a Skydancer but Chris's routine with a rev performed mostly in amongst the crowd, had to be seen to be believed.

### Kite magnet.

We went along with the rest of the Solent Flyers to a private event for a local IT company held at their headquarters in the midst of massive parklands and loads of trees which did an excellent job of churning up a wind that changing through 180 degrees in direction.

Whilst we were setting up we floated out a lifter kite with a bit of laundry on it. Having taken our eye off it for some time we wondered why the other guys and girls were staring up in to one of the taller trees and having a bit of a discussion when we noticed our kite right at the very top. Now this is something I had not seen done before and my photos turned out rubbish, so I rigged up a photo to help explain what happened. The kite couldn't be pulled back out of the tree - pulling would only make things more stuck – but the kite was too high to be reached with poles and tree climbing was something I used to be good at when I was young. The only way now was to use a second kite to lift the first from above.



A simple idea but with the inherent risk of having two kites stuck up the same tree. By fixing a clip on the line of a rescue kite and letting the line of the stuck kite (on the left in the photo) pass through the clip it was just a matter of some skilful flying and a bit of line jiggling – well done lads!

**Dover** A long way for most British flyers situated down in the bottom corner of the country the Dutch and Belgian flyers probably had less distance than we did to travel. I can remember discussing travel and accommodation with main organized, Gerty, months before – just as car fuel prices were starting to leap up and I remember my words exactly! "The way things are going diesel could reach £1.20 a liter by the time of the festival" In fact it was £1.33! With the cost of travelling these days festivals could start to lose out as those who normally show up at nearly all of the events are forced to pick and choose. Kite festivals are going to have to concentrate more on local publicity to swell the numbers of people through the gate or squeezing through the hedge.

Dover is probably one of the strangest layout you will find at a kite festival. The main, fenced off arena was in an area all of its own some 150 feet above

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everything else going on. They had 3000ft height clearance from the CAA on this one so it didn't make any difference but I did wonder that if they didn't have clearance would the standard 200 feet have started from the bottom field or the top one?



We had lots of encouraging comments from this one. Like Southampton, I ended up doing most of the commentary – quite a few compliments on this too – Look out Andy and George (If I only had their knowledge).

At one point I was commentating on "The Crow man", helping him launch and taking a photo for the web-site – then he asked me if I could get the castle in the background as well – if I could – I would have whistled 'Dixie' too - who says us blokes can't multi task? We were asking if anyone wanted to fly team with us at Dover and we got a taker on the Sunday. Lee from new, Masters pairs champions "Wind Magic" flew our Conte Partiro routine with us after only two stick practices without music and a quick go in the arena with no tails or music. We would not normally attempt anything anywhere near as difficult as this with most any other flier but we knew Lee to be experienced and the way he picked it up was amazing!

The wind was low – and getting lower and I got took out by a single liner dropping down over the arena just after we got started but Marilyn took over the calling and they flew pairs until I got myself untangled. A hasty re-launch worked and we all got back in and finished on cue. Not exactly the prettiest of routines but those watching new what was happening, showed their appreciation - and shared in a sense of real achievement at the end.

You can find all the pictures printed here and many more on our web-site. We try to take a few good pictures at every event we attend but are often reliant on people sending us the ones they have taken. All photos gratefully received - please send to

us. I ended out taking loads of these works of art from Belgium – someone else took one of these as well with Dover Castle through the middle – It's been entered for the kite competition!

We are having another better flying day at Stokes Bay on Sunday October 19th 2008. 10.00am start till late in association with the Solent Kite Flyers.

There will be help offered for individual or pairs or team flying. Also the figures will be announced for the upcoming Southampton Winter league (Proposed date Sunday 9th November). Help with these given too. The Southampton Winter League is THE place to get you started - it is very low key - based on having some fun and beginners and novices are very welcome - as are the more experienced flyers who want to get some serious practice. Keep an eye on [www.closeencounterskites.co.uk](http://www.closeencounterskites.co.uk) 'News' or 'Diary' for updates

**Allan Pothecary**

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