

# Under Test



## The Voyager and the Alkro Bylight (the what?)

by Glen Everett



The guaranteed way to ensure you have a full crew is prepare to go ballooning without any...

So off we went trailerless; with the envelope in the boot, Voyager basket on the specially-built tray on the back of the Discovery (see last issue) and crewless; the Alkro Bylight in a holdall, only to find lots of willing crew on the launch site! However in the spirit of adventure we carried on with Plan A.

The Cameron Voyager is a collapsible basket that folds down to 480mm high, 1010mm long and 750mm wide. The bottom quarter is made of traditional wicker with the rest being zip-up, lightly padded cordura sides. Power is provided by a 'single that thinks it a double' that has been cut down in size to save weight and room. The basket and burner together are 17kg lighter than our conventional basket. However this was offset by taking our 'crew' with us strapped to the outside.

Due to the reduction in the number of coils, the main burner is noticeably more noisy than its grown-up cousins; however,

in use and due to the slightly lighter all-up weight of pilot and one passenger and two tanks (approx 120kg less than usual take-off weight), no practical power output difference is noticeable between the Sky or Magnum burners normally used under this envelope and, to be honest, I was more impressed than I thought I would be from the diminutive burner. As there are two hoses, the main and the whisper burners can be used at the same time from alternate fuel supplies for any double burn situations. My only complaint would be that the burner controls and pilot lights are smaller and more fiddly to operate with gloves than the chunky nonsense handles I personally prefer.

It all goes together very ingeniously and is well thought out and constructed, even to the burner which can be independently removed from the burner frame by removing two pins. The wicker floor has basket runners inside as well as underneath, so we used some cushion floor to seat the tanks without wobbling and to

prevent potential ankle/foot injury to us.

We flew with two standard 60-litre tanks. Two tall 60s would fit better widthways, but the tank rim of these would protrude 1cm above the height of the basket rim. I would prefer that to strapping extra tanks on the outside of the basket. Worthingtons fit better, but my opinion is you can never fly with too much gas, especially pre-harvest time! As the basket rim slides up the basket wires, the better solution might be to lengthen the poles holding up the sides by 3cm and shorten the burner poles by the same amount.

Pockets sewn on the inside of the cordura basket sides would be an improvement as the basket is tall but not spacious, and bending down to get anything out of a bag can be difficult with two on board, although it does ensure a snug fit for landing. As a matter of interest, under a 200-hour T&C77A at 26°C it used 10 litres to inflate and 60 l/h. I would guess its ideal size envelope is a 65.

It's a great piece of kit, even for everyday ballooning, and it doesn't take up much space in the garage either. Due to the cut-down burner and slightly padded corduroy sides it's not for on-the-limit flying; however, if you seek travelling or independence, or if lifting heavy gear is not for you, then this is.

Our crew for the flight was our Alkro Bylight — a folding moped, no less. It weighs 22kg and folds into a holdall about 2x2x1ft. We strapped it outside the basket to the rim of the Voyager, which means you need turning vents on the envelope to ensure you don't land on it. However, it is small enough to easily fit inside any conventional wicker basket should you not have turning vents. The saddle and handlebars are removed by flipping cam levers, and the chassis folds in half with a lever and a thumbscrew.

It's driven by a 48cc two-stroke engine via a centrifugal clutch and a gear on the rear rim of the decent sized wheels. You just twist the throttle and go... It has lights and so can be driven



Captions for pics on the right

at night, and can be legally be driven on a car licence with no CBT motorcycle requirements, as it has pedals, and can be also ridden as a bicycle.

The fuel tank is actually the inside of the frame, but it is totally sealed with a manual bleed screw to let air in but which can be shut for transportation, so there are no leaks should you turn it upside down — as long as you remember to run the carburettor dry. On the shopping list is a decent leather-bottomed bag to prevent the hot exhaust burning a hole in it!

It was a few hundred pounds to buy, £15 a year to tax and £100 to insure. Amazingly (scarily!) enough it does 30mph, which proved fast enough after a long flight to get back to the car left on the launch field and return with it to find our editor had just finished packing the balloon away... How much better can you get?!

Where can you get one? Well, when we were looking they were as rare as hen's teeth, ours being chassis 69 (made in Italy, sold around Europe and now out of production) although the retired caravaner we bought ours from has one other for sale. We've only found one current manufacturer of folding mopeds and that's di Blasi, who sell their smart but 10kg heavier (30kg) version for around £1000; see <[www.dibiasi.com](http://www.dibiasi.com)>. 🌿

