

Minutes of the Derby Medical Society, Thursday 21st November 2024
Derby Medical School Lecture Theatre

A Journey through Ballooning

Dr Dave Bareford, Consultant Haematologist and Ballooning Enthusiast

Apologies: None Received

Dr Sally Archer, President, welcomed everyone to this open meeting, the fourth meeting of the 2024-2025 season.

Minutes of previous meeting given by Dr McIntyre

Dr Archer introduced Dr Dave Bareford, a retired Consultant Haematologist. He is a renowned ballooning enthusiast with over 50 years of experience in ballooning.

Dr Bareford introduced his journey through ballooning. It started while studying medicine at Bristol in the 1970's and continued throughout his medical training as a pathologist. He reminded us that 'surgeons know nothing but do everything, physicians know everything but do nothing and pathologists know everything and do everything but alas 24 hours too late'.

He had been interested in aviation since school and gained his PPL before studying medicine at Bristol. His first experience in ballooning came with a chance encounter at medical school which started his passion. Already having a PPL made it easier to achieve his ballooning licence which he did in 1975. He joined in a syndicate to buy a balloon, Crepe Suzette, G-BCVA and then helped the remaining syndicate members gain their licences.

Dr Bareford gave a brief overview of the history of ballooning. Interest in hot air balloons dates back to 1783 with the Montgolfier brothers in France. It was unclear then how hot air resulted in elevation and it was thought of as a magic substance. They attached a basket and tried a flight with a sheep, a duck and a rooster in. It was performed before a crowd that included the king and queen at the royal palace in Versailles. This successful flight was then followed by the first untethered free flight with human passengers on 21 November 1783, exactly 241 years ago! Hydrogen filled balloons were also quickly developed around this time but given the fire risks there were predictably catastrophic accidents. In addition to recreational use balloons have also been used for military purposes. However the 'modern era' of ballooning came with new materials becoming available in the 1960's. Most balloons now use propane burners but still retain a wicker basket.

Dr Bareford had the opportunity to continue his medical training in South Africa in the late 1970's. He was initially lent a balloon but went on to create another syndicate to buy a balloon. His journey took him to Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg and he was able to complete a large number of flights. On his return he bought his own balloon and moved to Leeds.

Dr Bareford got involved in competition ballooning which became a huge part of his life. He explained some of the basic principles involved and how a flight can be made making use of both ground and air winds to follow a route and then at set 'targets' drop streamers with remarkable accuracy. Competition ballooning has enabled him to travel the world and

participate in international competitions with fellow enthusiasts. There are world championships every 2 years and various other international events. He has flown competitively in many countries of the world including the U.S.A., Jamaica, Jordan, Turkey, Australia and Japan. He has also flown all his 3 children out from the maternity hospital using the hospital car park as a launch site and shared pictures of the events.

Dr Bareford then took us through some of his experiences. Ultramagic is a Catalonian based manufacturer of hot air balloons and has organised some spectacular adventures that Dr Bareford has been involved with. These have included trips in Tanzania, Madagascar, Patagonia and a flights across the Andes and Kilimanjaro. There are particular challenges crossing mountain ranges given the altitude (often necessitating need for oxygen), the high speeds and knowing the distances limitations of the fuel supply.

Dr Bareford concluded his talk but observing about ballooning journey that 'I've no idea where I'm going but I am going to enjoy the journey.'

There was an engaging question and answer session. A vote of thanks was given by Dr John Charlton.

19 members and guests signed the register.