

The Cody Kite

It must have fallen to me to be the last man to be trained in kite flying. I joined the Air Battalion of the Royal Engineers in January 1911 or thereabouts. Kites and captive balloons were still in use and my first air experience was to be taken up in a balloon to about 400' & then swacked down to the ground by a gust of wind. Up again to 400' & down again with a smack was enough for Capt Waterlow, my instructor*. So we got out the kites.

Both balloon and kite used the same wire which must have held over 3000' of wire cable & was controlled by a motor.

There were three groups of kite. First to be sent up was the pilot kite on a comparatively light hemp cord. On the cord, a few feet below the end, was a stopper to hold the next kite

* The Kite-balloon had not yet been thought of.

The second kite was hitched to a runner which slid up the cord until it reached the stopper. Thus we had two pilot kites in the air about 400' up. If they flew steadily the lower end of the cord was hitched on to the end of the wire cable which had seven stoppers on it graded to allow seven kites to go up, each to their own stopper. These seven kites were known as the carrier kites & were exactly the same size and design as the pilot kites. The first carrier would go to the top stopper and more cable would go up. In succession more carrier kites would follow, each to their own stopper. Meanwhile the tension on the cable was carefully watched and the behaviour of the pilot kites also.

If the pilot kites ~~swirled~~^{swooped} - in other words began to turn in huge circles - all would have to stop. As each carrier went up the cable tension naturally increased and

with three such kites on the cable it was possible to send up a man. †

The man had a balloon basket hitched by a runner to the cable. Above him was the lifting kite, about twice the size of all the others. In his hands were two light cords which enabled him to vary the angle of the kite and with proper adjustment he could make the kite carry him up the cable. This was much like sailing a boat. At the required height he could lock his basket to the cable and then use his binoculars and telephone. I never got that far! It was much too big & heavy & never got more than 20'-30' off the ground. But Capt Broke Popham succeeded ~~in~~ 3000' using a team of artillery horses galloping along LaHans Plain.

To reiterate: careful watch on the pilot kites was extremely necessary. If they swooped the man was ordered down at once.

11.5.73

J.R.D.

"It must have fallen to me to be the last man to be trained in kite flying. I joined the Air Battalion of the Royal Engineers in January 1911 or thereabouts. Kites and captive balloons were still in use and my first air experience was to be taken up in a balloon to about 400' and then smacked down to the ground by a gust of wind. Up again to 400' and down again with a smack was enough for Captain Waterlow, my instructor. So we got out the kites.

Both Balloon and kite used the same winch which must have held over 3000' of wire cable and was controlled by a motor.

There were three groups of kite. First to be sent up was the pilot kite on a comparatively light hemp cord. On the cord, a few feet below the end, was a stopper to hold the next kite. The second kite was hitched to a runner which slid up the cord until it reached the stopper. Thus we had two pilot kites in the air about 400' up. If they flew steadily the lower end of the cord was hitched on to the end of the wire cable which had seven stoppers on it graded to allow seven kites to go up, each to their own stopper. The seven kites were known as the carrier kites and were exactly the same size and design as the pilot kites. The first carriers would go to the top stopper and more cable would go up. In succession more carrier kites would follow each to their own stopper. Meanwhile the tension on the cable was carefully watched and the behaviours of the pilot kites also.

If the pilot kites swooped – in other words began to turn in huge circles – all would have to stop. As each carrier went up the cable tension naturally increased and with three such kites on the cable it was possible to send up a man.

The man had a balloon basket hitched by a runner cable. Above him was the lifter kite, about twice the size of all the others. In his hands were two light cords which enabled him to vary the angle of the kite and with proper adjustment he could make the kite carry him up the cable. This was much like sailing a boat. At the required height he could lock his basket to the cable and then use his binoculars and telephone. I never got that far! I was much too big and heavy and never got more than 20'-30' off the ground. But Capt. Brooke-Popham ascended 3000' using a team of artillery horses galloping along Laffans Plain.

To reiterate: careful watch on the pilot kites was extremely necessary. If they swooped the man was ordered down at once."