

NAA NEWS

National Aeronautic Association

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Balloonist wins Harmon Trophy for transatlantic flight in wicker basket

Arlington, VA – David Hempleman-Adams of England won the 2004 Harmon Trophy for his solo balloon flight across the Atlantic Ocean, using just a simple wicker basket as a gondola. Hempleman-Adams' journey was historic because most long distance balloon flights are accomplished in enclosed capsules, instead of open gondolas that are exposed to extreme weather conditions.

His flight began September 26, 2003, in New Brunswick, Canada, in his small Roziere balloon; the flight progressed smoothly at first, but conditions deteriorated once he reached the eastern Atlantic.

Flying at an altitude of 10,000 to 11,000 feet, he dealt with freezing temperatures, severe icing on his balloon and sometimes whiteout conditions from snow and clouds. At one point, a build-up of ice on the balloon led to a rapid descent toward the ocean that Hempleman-Adams had to avert. The severity of weather forced the pilot to use more fuel than projected, making it uncertain he would make landfall rather than dropping into the ocean.

Hempleman-Adams finally did land in England on September 29, 83 hours after his takeoff—or about two-and-a-half times the duration of Charles Lindbergh's first solo transatlantic flight in an airplane. Because of the conditions, the low altitude and the nature of his balloon, Hempleman-Adams had to be awake and at the controls for the entire flight.

This is the second Harmon Trophy won by Hempleman-Adams. He earned the award in 2000 for a solo flight from Norway to the North Pole and back.

The Harmon Trophy was created in 1926 by Clifford B. Harmon, a philanthropist who used aviation as a means to promote international understanding and harmony. Originally, the trophy was awarded annually to the world's outstanding aviator, aviatrix and aeronaut (balloon or dirigible pilot); in 1969, a fourth category, astronauts, was added. Today, NAA administers the program and continues the tradition of naming winners in the ballooning category.

NAA is a non-profit, membership organization devoted to fostering opportunities to participate fully in aviation activities and to promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States. For more information on NAA and its award and recognition programs, visit www.naa-usa.org.