



**FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE
INTERNATIONALE
Ballooning Commission**

Hall of Fame

**Norman Pritchard
Inducted 2018**



Nationality: British

Date and place of Birth: (Year/Month/Day): 1929

Year and place of Death (Year/Month/Day): October 2004

Looking back on Norman's life is like looking back at the development of modern day ballooning. He took an active part in all aspects of the sport from the early 1970s right up until he died at the beginning of October 2004. From the first British National Championships at Castle Howard to the setting up of the British Balloon Museum and Library; the early days of the Icicle Balloon Meet and the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, Norman was there.

Norman was always good humoured, gentle and enthusiastic in all aspects of ballooning whether that be as a crew, an observer or working to preserve the history of the sport, He was been praised for his a warmth and helpfulness and his radiating smile will never be forgotten by those who knew him. He also was also amazingly good at gently deterring gatecrashers from entering the “British Embassy”.

It was in the early 1970s that Norman was bitten by the ballooning bug and along with a couple of work colleagues at IBM and three others they formed the Rocinante Balloon Group. Their balloon first balloon was a Thunder with a flexi-rigid burner frame, Velcro rips and required a “Cremation Charlie” to inflate it. The first member of the group to get his licence was Bernard Hockley who in June 1975 became the first British Champion and, with Norman as his crew chief, went on to compete in the World Championships in Albuquerque later that year.

Norman then went on to crew for Twilleys Goldfinger team which competed at the British Championships and at meets and events all over Europe. Graham Elson, a team member at that

time, remembers landing with Norman on top of the Alps in Switzerland, leaving him and his wife Elizabeth in a bog in the Masai Mara surrounded by lions while he went to fetch help and flying horizontally across a field whilst doing a running inflation with him after a heady French lunch..... It was all part of the adventure Norman loved, and why he enjoyed ballooning so much

In 1979 the British Balloon Museum and Library came into being. Norman, an ardent archivist, was in at the start. He served nearly 20 years as the Secretary before becoming Vice Chairman in 1998. He was instrumental too in setting up the balloon library at Cranfield and together with John Baker, published 'Balloons and Ballooning' in 1986. He later he published 3 booklets in his own right, 'British Records' and 'World Records' in 1993, and the 'BBAC Competitions Handbook' in 1994.

He was also in at the start of the Observer system for competition ballooning and he was always happy to help many novice competitors to understand the rules and work out the best way of measuring a marker. When he retired from IBM, Norman had more time to travel around the world as an Observer and later as a debriefer and his favourite places to visit as a competition official were Japan and Australia. It was during one of the many events he attended that his bedroom become known as the "British Embassy" and where he could be found pouring a very commendable Gin and Tonic (we would have expected nothing less of a President of a Gin and Tonic Club).

Norman worked as an official in more than 16 world or continental championships (both hot air balloons and hot air airships) and numerous other events. He has also acted as controlling observer for many record attempts including that of Per Lindstrand and Richard Branson to fly around the world and the Lightship speed record. He served as controller of the BBAC and CIA Silver/Gold/Diamond badge scheme from its inception. He also stood as the United Kingdom representative on the CIA Observer sub-committee and was a member of the CIA and BBAC Records and Awards sub-committees.

Norman had been a quiet adventurer all his life having been a sailor in youth. He had almost as many tales to tell about sailing as he did about ballooning. He spent the Second World War in the Australian Navy and while sailing west from New Zealand they somehow managed to miss Australia. Then there was the time he and a fellow sailor got lost in the fog sailing back to the UK from France....

Sadly Norman died in late 2004 following an illness of several months and his passing seemed like the end of an era in ballooning. He put so much into the sport while never becoming a pilot and was loved by one and all.

Honors and awards:

1995 The BBAC diploma for recognition of contribution to ballooning.



Norman in the middle of all friends in Motegi, Japan 2003



Norman and Hiromi Furukawa waiting for balloons at a FLY IN, Motegi Japan 2003