



FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE
INTERNATIONALE
Ballooning Commission

Hall of Fame

VINCENZO LUNARDI, Italy
Inducted 1998



VINCENT LUNARDI

Italy

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1759 Lucca – 31 Jul.1806 Lisbon, Portugal

Sport balloonist

Vincent (Vincenzo) Lunardi made the first balloon flight in England, from the town of Moorfields (near London), with the Prince of Wales in attendance. This was the first of a series of ascensions in Britain. He even flew in the presence of King George III. Among his notable flights, Lunardi reportedly ascended with a dog, a cat, and a pigeon in his brightly decorated hydrogen balloon. It is reported he and traveled 24 miles.

Image AAAIBM / Soukup & Thomas Collection

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Born: 1759 January 11

Died: 1799

Vincenzo Lunardi was born in Lucca on 11 January 1759 and, after having spent his childhood in the East Indies, and still relatively young he became secretary of Prince Caramanico, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Naples in England. He is known as author of the first balloon ascent in Great Britain carried out in the town of Moorfields, near London, September 15, 1784 in the presence of the Prince of Wales. This was the first of a series of ascensions in the Britain that made the Italian aeronaut well known and even brought him in front of King George III. He was forced to leave Britain because of a serious flight accident, but continued his work at first in Italy and then Spain and Portugal. In the Portuguese capital, in the convent of Italian Cappuccini, Vincenzo Lunardi died of illness in 1799, at the age of only forty, without having obtained the recognition he deserved and that he finally received many decades later.

Lunardi is to be considered in all respects one of the most important personalities in the Aerostatic history of all times and in all countries.

Lunardi decided to build a hydrogen balloon of the kind made in France by Jacques Charles. The envelope of the balloon, made of oiled silk, had a diameter of about 12 meters and a volume of

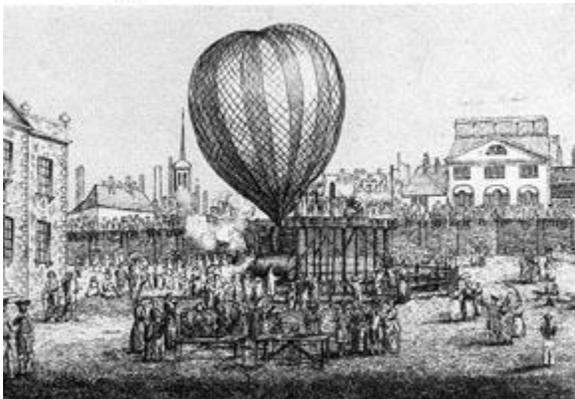
570 cubic meters. The balloon, very strangely, was not equipped with a valve on top which made him quite dangerous and difficult to handle.

The ascension took place in the early afternoon of 15 September 1784. The fuelling took all night and the next morning and was directed by George Fordyce a Chemist who was instructed to make the equipment for the production of hydrogen. The chronicles tell of over a hundred spectators gathered in Moorfields impatient to follow the event. These included, guest of honour, the Prince of Wales, that when the balloon began to rise, followed by the crowd with amazement, he took off his hat as a sign of respect and was immediately imitated by everyone that attended and watched the take-off in silence with a mixture of fear and scepticism. Lunardi took his place in the basket with a dog, a cat and a pigeon. According to Italian aeronaut, the balloon climbed to an altitude of about 4 miles (about 6500 meters). It's likely that this estimate is wrong, but it is certain that the cat suffered in the cold so much that Lunardi landed to rescue them and then finishing the flight which lasted two hours and 15 minutes. The landing took place at a location of Hertfordshire Ware. At the place of landing a stone still recalls the event.

Photographs:



Lunardi first balloon



Lunardi first take off



Lunardi second take off



Lunardi stone for the first landing

