Midlands AIR FESTIVAL

Friday 29th – Sunday 31st May 2026

Ragley Hall, Alcester, Warwickshire. B49 5NJ

Briefing Notes

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Our Ballooning Partners

Altitude Insurance (www.altitudeinsuranceltd.com)
Laura and her team provide many products and services including hot air balloon hull and liability insurance. Laura will once again return with some goodies for our teams, plus dinner for our glow pilots, more on that later!

Cameron Balloons (www.cameronballoons.co.uk)
Leading the world in the manufacture of lighter-than-air aircraft and fabric structures. This year sees the return of the Cameron Tethering Arena! We also thank Cameron's for their continued support and pilot goodies!

The Outdoor Pig Company (www.theoutdoorpigcompany.co.uk)
Returning to the balloonist's marquee, and living on the Ragley Estate, Rob and his team source local ingredients, it doesn't get better than that! Check out Flying High Café for all your hunger needs!

Westons Cider (www.westons-cider.co.uk)
Now in the safe hands of Helen Thomas, Westons Cider began in 1878 with her great-grandfather, Henry Weston. Based in Herefordshire, producing premium cider, Westons are once again kindly providing this year's classic landowners gift.

Stay Up To Date

All pilots have been added to the WhatsApp group for updates. We also have our webpage www.midlandsairfestival.com/pilotinfo which will also be kept up to date throughout the event. This also includes a copy of the briefing notes, as well as a link to the electronic landing form, so please make sure you bookmark it for easy reference.

Schedule

Thursday (Sunrise: 04:56, Sunset 21:14)			
15:00		Balloonist Area & Camping Opens	Balloonists Area
15:00	21:00	Pilot Registration	Marquee
17:00	22:30	Balloonist Café and Bar Open	Marquee
20:00	20:30	Overseas Refuelling	Balloonists Area

Friday (Sunrise: 04:55, Sunset 21:15)			
05:00	05:30	Pilot Registration	Marquee
05:30	06:00	Flight Briefing	Marquee
06:00	08:00	Mass Ascent	Airfield
07:30	10:30	Debrief, Breakfast and Refuelling	Balloonists Area
10:30	22:30	Balloonist Café Open	Marquee
12:30	15:00	Tethering	Cameron Arena
15:00	16:00	Refuelling	Balloonists Area
15:30	19:00	Air Display	Airfield
15:30	17:00	Pilot Registration	Marquee
17:15	17:30	Nightfire Briefing (Night Glow Teams Only)	Marquee
18:15	18:45	Flight Briefing	Marquee
19:00	20:45	Night Glow Set Up & Mass Ascent	Airfield
19:30	23:30	Debrief & Refuelling	Balloonists Area
20:00	21:45	Night Glow Teams Dinner	Airfield Marquee
21:15	21:45	Pyrotechnic Aircraft Displays	Airfield
21:55	22:25	Night Glow	Airfield
22:30	22:35	Firework Finale	Airfield

Saturday (Sunrise: 04:54, Sunset 21:16)			
05:00	05:30	Pilot Registration	Marquee
05:30	06:00	Flight Briefing	Marquee
06:00	08:00	Mass Ascent	Airfield
07:30	10:30	Debrief, Breakfast and Refuelling	Balloonists Area
08:00	09:00	Model Balloon Display	Cameron Arena
10:00	12:15	Tethering	Cameron Arena
10:30	22:30	Balloonist Café Open	Marquee
11:00	11:30	Model Aircraft Pyro Display	Airfield
12:20	15:05	Air Display	Airfield
15:05	16:05	Tethering	Cameron Arena
16:00	17:00	Refuelling	Balloonists Area
16:05	19:00	Air Display	Airfield
18:30	18:50	Flight Briefing	Marquee
19:00	20:30	Mass Ascent	Airfield
19:30	23:00	Balloonist Evening Meal	Marquee
19:30	23:00	Debrief and Refuelling	Balloonists Area

Sunday (Sunrise: 04:53, Sunset 21:17)			
05:30	06:00	Flight Briefing	Marquee
06:00	08:00	Mass Ascent	Airfield
07:30	10:30	Debrief, Breakfast and Refuelling	Balloonists Area
08:00	09:00	Model Balloon Display	Cameron Arena
10:00	11:35	Tethering	Cameron Arena
10:30	18:30	Balloonist Café Open	Marquee
10:25	10:55	Model Aircraft Pyro Display	Airfield

Sunday (Sunrise: 04:53, Sunset 21:17)			
11:35	15:05	Air Display	Airfield
15:05	15:55	Tethering	Cameron Arena
15:55	18:30	Air Display	Airfield
16:00	17:00	Refuelling	Balloonists Area
18:00	18:20	Flight Briefing	Marquee
18:30	20:30	Mass Ascent	Airfield
19:30	22:00	Debrief and Refuelling	Balloonists Area

Balloonists Access & Arrival

Gate A

Gate B

The dedicated gate for balloonists is Gate B (lifters.truffles.vitamins/SP 06982 54327), which is on the south side of the estate.

Please note that this entrance is beside a tenant's house, and therefore please ensure respect is shown, especially when arriving early in the morning, or late at night.

At times, this gate will need to close due to aircraft arrival and departures, however this will be advised via the Whats App group. The alternative entrance is Gate A (expel.card.decorator/SP 07931 56246).

Due to the high amount of inbound public traffic on the Saturday and Sunday, it will not be possible for balloonists to leave the site between the hours of 10:30 and 14:00 unless there is an emergency.

Upon arriving for the first time, please pull up in the disabled car park by the entrance to the balloonist's area and make available all tanks for inspection. You must arrive with full tanks, which will be checked and given a security tag to allow for refuelling of these tanks throughout the weekend, including after the Sunday evening flight. The P1 will also be given an identical wristband to denote they have had their tanks checked when they visit Teresa or Sally in the Balloonist's Marquee to register.

Parking & Camping

Parking is available directly outside the Balloonist's Marquee with overflow in the camping field.

Camping will be located in the adjacent field. Toilets will be in the built block with additional toilets also provided. Water & Showers will be located near the entrance on the fence line. Electric hook up is not provided and lighting towers/generators must not be used for this facility.

Pilot Registration

Please visit the Balloonist's Marquee **after having your tanks checked** to obtain your entry pack from Teresa or Sally.

Briefings

All pilots wishing to fly, tether or glow must attend briefings, **which are restricted to P1's only due to limited capacity,** will be conducted inside the Balloonist's Marquee.

We are pleased to also welcome new pilots to the event and where necessary a subsequent briefing will follow the main briefing for low-houred pilots depending on flying conditions.

Pilots who arrive late may contact Shiralee Colin for an individual briefing.

Laying Out

On Friday evening, balloons must not lay out beyond the runway for safety reasons – there are a lot of explosives laid out beyond here for the Nightfire finale! The runway will be denoted by black and white vertical boards.
For all other mass ascents, there are no restrictions, however please do position yourself closer to the audience where possible.

Vehicles will be allowed on the field as per the timings above and must never be abandoned. Any vehicle left on the field during times when it is "Closed for all Balloonists" will be moved by the organisers. By entering the event you agree to waive any damage caused in this process.

Balloons may take off when ready to do so after the briefing. Should there be a need to close the launch field, this will be done via airband radio on the ballooning frequency (122.480MHz).

Tie-offs and quick releases must be used when inflating and launching.

Take-Off

Every pilot must use a launch master to ensure that they are clear to climb. You may use one of our orange-jacketed officials or your own crew for this.

We may choose to impose a time when the launch field is closed for further take-offs, this will be communicated at briefing and via the What's App group.

Within a 1.5 km radius of the launch field the maximum climb and sink rates must be no higher than 200 fpm. Outside of this area, maximum climb and sink rates must be no higher than 1,000 fpm, or as given in the Balloon Flight Manual, **whichever is the lower**. Please note that these are the maximum allowed rates and good airmanship must always be maintained, giving due consideration to other balloons in proximity.

Listening Watch

All pilots must be equipped with an airband radio and maintain a listening watch on 122.480MHz. It follows that it is a condition of attending the event that you have an 8.33kHz spaced airband radio.

Airspace

Pilots are reminded of their obligations regarding airspace. Birmingham CTA at 2000ft is only 5km to the NE and inadvertent transgressions into airspace would be embarrassing and expensive, likely ending with your licence being shredded and the future of the event compromised. We have numerous landing possibilities in this direction and we will brief on these should the winds be in a direction with limited distance.

Debrief

Electronic landing forms are available by visiting www.midlandsairfestival.com/landingform what3words may be used as an alternative to OS grid reference and map number. We appreciate electronic debriefing will not be for all and therefore our usual paper forms will also be available in the Balloonist's Marquee.

Pilots must debrief in a timely manner by either means. If it is paper based, please hand the completed forms into Teresa or Sally in the Balloonist's Marquee. Teresa will also be monitoring electronic landing forms submitted to ensure everyone has debriefed before the next flight.

Landowner Relations

We want you to come back to a nice "clean map" next year. It is obligatory that every pilot carries an up to date marked up map and/or electronic mapping device. Martyn will brief which fields are available for landing within the estate.

Please ensure you are familiar with the BBAC Code of Conduct. Extensive work has been carried out with local farmers and NFU representatives prior to this event.

Any landowner issues must be discussed with the regional LRO (Martyn Jeynes) and progressed appropriately.

The event will have a marked-up map on display, however pilots wishing to purchase individual maps will require 150, 151 & 139. Note that marked up paper maps are available again, with adequate notice. See www.ballooningmaps.co.uk.

A landowner gift will also be supplied for each flyable slot.

Refuelling

Fuel will be available as per the times in the schedule above.

When refuelling, please ensure gloves are worn and mobiles are not used. **Tanks must be removed from the basket.**

There will be a drop off and pick up facility available if this is preferred. Please ensure you have debriefed prior to refuelling and please do not abuse this facility. Anyone found doing so will be required to leave the event immediately and need not apply in the future!

Refuelling will be in a cordoned off area on the edge of the Balloonist's parking area. Please always follow the direction of Steve Chatfield and Mark Thomas.

Tethering

Opportunities for tethering in the arena are available during the day, please see above for timings.

The Arena will be managed by Ben Williams, and at each morning briefing we will discuss who wishes to tether. If it has not been agreed at this briefing, that you wish to tether, please do not try to enter the arena. For safety reasons, only balloon teams tethering will be allowed in the Arena. All other balloonists are to remain public side.

No tethering or inflations (hot or cold) of balloons may take place outside of the Arena, unless it's on the launch field during a launch period.

All tethers, with no exceptions, must be conducted with a three-point system. Please ensure that tether lines are kept tight by adjusting vehicles appropriately.

Tethering on quick releases is not permitted.

Inspections

C of A's may be conducted during launch periods, on the launch field, without the need to request permission. Should you wish to C of A your balloon during the day, please advise Teresa or Sally at registration which day you wish to conduct your C of A and who the inspector is. During the morning briefing, Ben Williams will discuss Arena availability with Pilot's and Inspectors.

Non-Flying Balloons

Any balloons that do not have valid certification and are being inflated for display purposes, must not leave the ground. This means very short tether lines and plenty of ballast.

Balloons must also have public liability insurance. Balloons without insurance must not be displayed.

Documents

We will be conducting random checks of documentation throughout the weekend and would ask that you have this readily available to make the process as painless as possible.

Dogs

Dogs, other than assistance dogs, are not permitted anywhere on site. Notification of any assistance must be made to James in advance.

Nightfire

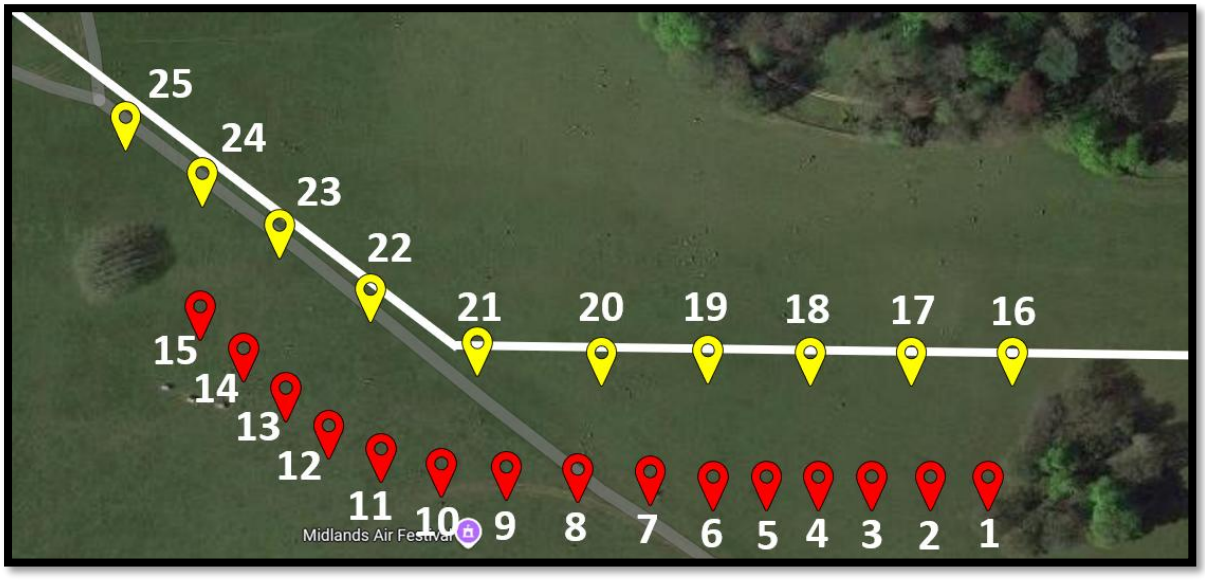
Friday evening is very technically demanding for the whole team, therefore please make sure you are very familiar with the below.

Glow positions are denoted by a mowed circle with a white spray-painted number in them.

We thank those teams who have volunteered to glow, the allocations are:

Envelopes					
1	Ian Chadwick	**6**	Neil Humphries	**11**	Tim Davis
2	Andy Collett	**7**	Richard Turnball	**12**	Caitlin Rich
3	Ashley Moore	**8**	Kris Parsons	**13**	Jerry Davis
4	Jonathan Harris	**9**	Liam Whitelock	**14**	Mandy Thompson
5	Griet Vereecke	**10**	Lucy Allen	**15**	Megan Berry

Baskets			
16	Alan Aldous	**21**	Connor Jones
17	Paul Coman	**22**	Rob Parr
18	Stacey Heard	**23**	Richard Simpkins
19	Christopher Hulatt	**24**	Matthew Smith
20	Ryan Johnson	**25**	Tara Taylor



With thanks to Altitude Insurance, once teams have set up, teams can proceed to the Pilot's Marquee, located near the parked aircraft for some food and drink while getting a front row view of Nightfire! Please note: tickets will only be provided for Pilot + 4 crew.

Balloons taking part in the glows are asked not to fly the same evening.

It is vital that there are no balloons (except glow balloons) on the field after 20:45. There can be no exceptions to this. The management team will be moving around balloons after 20:15, to ensure everyone is packed up if they have not launched.

Food & Drink

This year sees the return of local caterer, The Outdoor Pig Company, who sources all ingredients from close to the Ragley Estate. Please join us at the Flying High Café which will operate on the times above.

Four vouchers are included within your pilot packs. Any additional meals may be paid for direct with the caterer on the day.

Tea and Coffee will also be available throughout the day free of charge. Where possible, please bring a travel mug or flask to enable us to cut down our usage of single use cups.

2026 also sees the return of our popular Balloonist's bar marquee serving a mix of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks on tap!

Air Display

During the air displays the entire launch area and adjacent to the lake, must be clear and all Balloonist's must be in the Balloonist's area or crowd side. During this time Gate B will be closed and therefore Gate A should be used. Please do not climb over or part the crowd barrier, anyone found doing so will be asked to leave the event.

Site Access

This year our site map is interactive and can be viewed by clicking here.

Due to the air display, there will also be a road closure in force on the public road to the east of Ragley Hall (see interactive map). The closure will be in force from 13:45 to 19:00 Friday and 11:45 to 19:00 Saturday and Sunday.

Contact Numbers

Central Hub	Ballooning Control (Landline)	01789 549593
James McDonald	Director of Ballooning	07704 867686
Matt Mutton	Assistant Director of Ballooning	07808 008599
Shiralee Colin	Flight Director	07973 884392
Ben Williams	Safety Officer	07968 123165
Martyn Jeynes	Landowner Relations Officer	07855 930444
Teresa Witchell	Registration & Debriefing Officer	07757 464470
Airsec	Overnight Security (Landline)	01789 549596