

# Transatlantic flight to launch in province

Deborah Day and Mike Scholes will launch from Sussex Elementary

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KINGS COUNTY RECORD

"It's 10 days of camping in the sky."

That's how Deborah Day, of Sussex, England, describes a planned transatlantic balloon journey with Mike Scholes, also of Sussex, England, happening this summer.

Day plans to be the first female to be the pilot-in-command of a

transatlantic balloon flight, and Scholes the first blind crew member on such a flight.

The remarkable journey will see the pair launch from Sussex, N.B., at the elementary school on the target date of July 1, 2020. In the end, the two expect the journey might take up to 10 days before they land in the United Kingdom, but it depends on the weather, they said.

"Mike taught me everything I know, about ballooning," Day said in a Skype interview. "We wanted to do something that hadn't been done before."

"We sat there one evening and thought, 'yes, we can do that.'"

Scholes said he lost his sight in 2007 due to Leber's Hereditary Optic Neuropathy, a rare condition affecting 100 people – mostly men – in the U.K. every year.

That's why the pair are raising money for the charity Blind Veterans UK, which helped Scholes after he lost his sight.

Day and Scholes hope to get a corporate sponsor in time for the flight, which was originally set for 2019 but delayed due to a lack of helium availability. It will cost them nearly \$100,000 to get enough helium to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

They are hoping a corporate sponsorship will pay for the cost of the flight, they have already paid for the balloon itself.

The massive balloon they'll be flying, weighing in at 606 pounds is a Rozièr balloon.

According to their flight instructor Kevin Stass, it's "a type of hybrid balloon which has separate chambers for a non-heated lifting gas [in our case, helium], as well as a heated lifting gas [as used in a hot air balloon or Montgolfière]."

It was designed by Cameron Balloons in Bristol, England and measures 27 metres high and 17 metres in diameter. The gas cell is 77,000 cubic feet or 2,180 cubic metres. The cone is 15,000 cubic feet (approx.) or 425 cubic metres.

The balloon basket will be insulated, but won't have a capsule, which would wrap around the basket to keep them safe and warm and during flight. This is because it would be too difficult for Scholes to get out of the balloon in the event in an emergency.

Scholes said the Royal Navy provided the pair with sea survival training. "It's looking like a great challenge," he said.

The last transatlantic flight from Sussex was in 2003, they said, by David Hempleman-Adams who also launched from Sussex Elementary School.

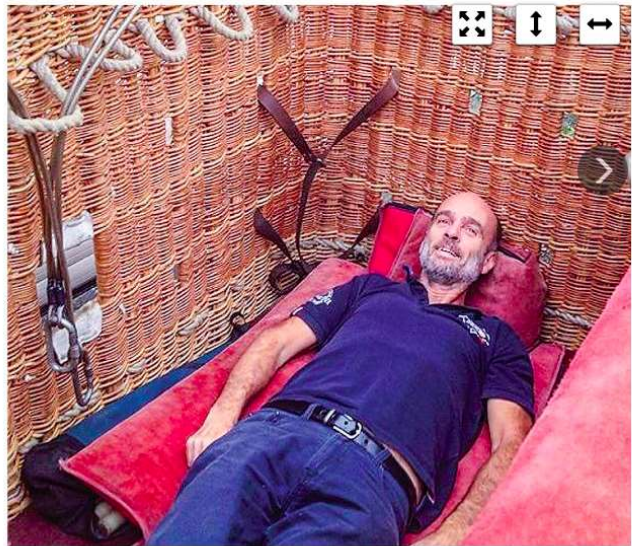
Day joked about being asked whether the trip scares her. Her response was "no, not at all" – something Scholes and Stass attribute to her strong nature, and sense of adventure.

"I think as it gets nearer, we probably will get more nervous," Day said. "You get those butterflies, you get that apprehension ... but these things are about controlling that apprehension, and just doing it."

During the voyage, they'll have 10 days worth of food and drinks with them, as well as drysuits, a hammock, nearly 70 litres of water, marine band radios, life jackets, and locators, among other items. A full list of the items on board can be found on their website.

There is an entire flight team participating on the ground, as well. This includes flight director Stass, meteorologist Luc Trullemans, launch master Bert Padelt, and ground logistics in Sussex, N.B. Ulie Fournier.

Stass said he'll be helping out the pair from home. He, Day and Scholes, will be in constant communication with the meteorologist to determine the flight's trajectory.



Scholes is the first blind crew member to make this flight. Day will be the first woman to be the pilot-in-command for the transatlantic flight.

PHOTO: SUBMITTED/TRANSATLANTIC BALLOON FLIGHT



Something important to both of them, they said, is doing the flight together.

"We're going to dance among the stars," said Day. "I think we're going to try to show ... that ordinary people can do out of the ordinary things."

Those interested in learning more about the balloon journey can find the pair on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and by using the hashtag #balloonthepond.