



Up, up ... and over to France

Don't look down: Drifting over Dover



By Vanessa Allen

IF it wasn't for the white cliffs of Dover, you could almost mistake it for a scene from the Oscar-winning animation *Up*.

Tied to a colourful cloud of balloons, Jonathan Trappe drifts across the Channel – and becomes the first flesh-and-blood adventurer to complete the journey with only helium to keep him aloft.

In the Pixar film, Carl Fredrickson strapped hundreds of equally bright balloons to his house to transport it from the U.S. to South America.

But yesterday, Mr Trappe took along just a wicker chair – albeit one kitted out with radio communication, satellite navigation, oxygen masks and an emergency beacon.

The 36-year-old dangled beneath 54 balloons for more than four hours to complete the 22-mile journey, taking off from Ashford in Kent and landing near Dunkirk in northern France.

His destination was a little less picturesque than Mr Fredrickson's Paradise Falls – he was forced to crash land in a cabbage patch after the wind blew him off course, to the bemusement of French gendarmes.

Mr Trappe, a trained pilot, said: 'The flight was outstanding, but it was a hell of a landing. I'm tremendously proud. It's an outstanding thing to do.'

'Right over the white cliffs of Dover in complete silence. It was tremendously



Life imitates art: Carl Fredrickson in Pixar's *Up*

CHALLENGE OF THE CHANNEL

- 1785: French aviator Jean-Pierre Blanchard completes first air crossing, in a hydrogen balloon
- 1909: Louis Blériot becomes first to cross in heavier-than-air aircraft
- 1979: American Bryan Allen uses pedal power to complete the first human-powered aircraft crossing
- 2003: Skydiver Felix Baumgartner completes 20-mile freefall in an aerodynamic 'wingsuit'
- 2008: Yves Rossy crosses at 220mph using jet-powered 'wing'
- 2010: 'Cluster balloonist' Jonathan Trappe uses 54 giant helium balloons to drift across

peaceful, tremendously beautiful.' The American reached a top height of 7,500ft and travelled at up to 25mph before descending by cutting away some of the balloons tied to his chair.

French police said they were 'surprised' by Mr Trappe's unorthodox arrival, but he avoided arrest after producing authorisation to land in the country.

Mr Trappe said the journey had fulfilled a childhood dream, adding: 'I think it's something that's shared across cultures and across borders.'

Just this wonderful fantasy of grabbing on to toy balloons and floating into open space.'

Why colleagues should keep their salaries secret

DISCOVERING how much a colleague earns might provide ammunition for a good gossip at the office water cooler.

But knowledge can be a dangerous thing, it seems. The longer term result of such information could be depression, despair and dissatisfaction with life in general, according to a study.

Researchers found that workers who compare their salaries tend to be less happy than those who are too shy to ask.

Professor Andrew Clark, who co-authored the report, said: 'Man may well be a social animal. But constantly looking over one's shoulder seems to make the world a less

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happy – and more unequal – place.' The study, published today in the *Economic Journal*, claims that 'all comparisons make people unhappy' – but warns that some are worse than others.

If you ask your better-paid colleagues how much they earn, their answer is likely to take the spring out of your step. But ask your friends and family and the result can be 'twice as painful', the researchers, from the Paris School of Economics, say.

This is because there is something called

the 'information effect' which softens the blow of discovering how much a co-worker pockets.

If they earn more than you, you can take some comfort from the chance that your salary could increase to the same level.

But, with friends and family, there is no such link to what researchers call your 'future income prospects'.

A worker on Britain's average salary of £25,000 might find out that their best friend, who works in a different industry, earns £100,000, but he or she will also know there is little chance of their own wage packet quadrupling.

The research revealed that about three-

quarters of workers think it is important to compare earnings. But salary sharers get lower scores on 'satisfaction scales' which measures 'satisfaction with life as a whole', 'feelings of depression during the past week' and feeling that one 'gets paid appropriately, considering efforts and achievements'.

Receptionists and corporate managers may want to pay particular attention to the warning before they chat to colleagues.

The range of salaries paid to full-time receptionists ranges from £11,900 to £21,600, while for corporate managers, the range is £20,180 to £79,720, according to the Office for National Statistics.