

The Heksebeest kite

George Webster

I first remember one of these kite some years ago flying in choppy wind conditions. At height it would look like a box kite with add-ons and it was only later that I realised it was a delta development.



picture 1



picture 2

Soon after deltas became widespread in the 1970's, designers began to couple the delta wing with a variety of 'cores' — boxes, sleds or conynes. The most inventive was Neil Thorburn who published *SuperKites I* in 1975, *II* in 1983 and *III* in 1991. His 1991 book mentions our own Jon Bloom for winning two competitions in a row with Neil's Pagoda — a triple conyne delta. As a member of the Early Modern American group of makers he used supermarket bags, square cut scrap timber and staples —not always easy to replicate in modern materials. However, it was Neil Thorburn who gave us the Stacked Deltas on a conyne core, and I own one made by the Blooms.

In Europe the main delta development was the Pyrodelta by Frank Schweimann and Christine Schwarting which put long floating tails to the trailing edge of a delta and produced something quite new. Karl Robertshaw developed the idea as the single tailed Serpent (which is getting close to the Thai Serpent design). There followed several multi-tailed commercial variants of which I think the F-tail was the first.

The Heksebeest was invented and developed from 2003 by Henk Breedland, amongst whose early influences were the Indonesian dragon kites which he saw as a child. Certainly the original design does have affinities to Indonesian (not Chinese) dragons. But the structure of this kite is quite different. It uses 3 sets of delta wings but these are of differing dimensions and are superimposed rather than stacked. The spreaders to leading edge connectors are complicated using cords rather than pockets. Plan 1 is included to give you an idea of the complexity of the layout.

Full plans are given in French in the Belgian NCB 166 and 167 (thanks Nest Lermont). Or try the website breedland.deds.nl . NCB 168 has details of the Helkat — a lighter wind development.

Any Heksebeest has considerable presence in the sky as the mainframe is roughly 3m by 2.5m and, although tail arrangements vary, 15m is usual. The kite can look much more like its stacked origins in translucent materials (see picture 3).

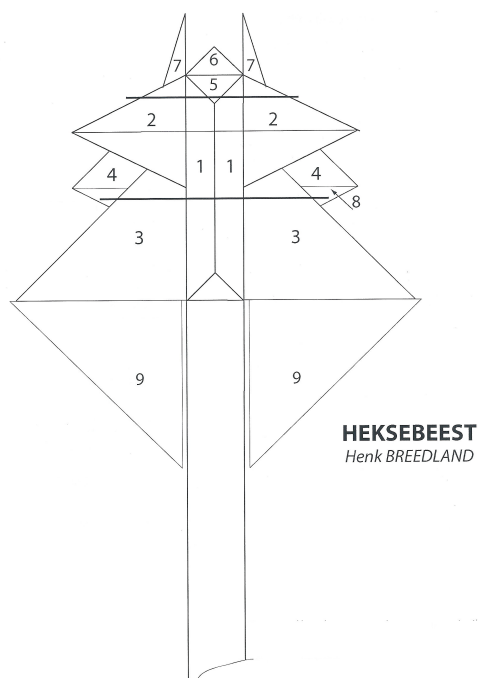


picture 3

A frequent modification is not to have 'ears'. Then when the construction is in block colours the origin of the name becomes less obscure. Apparently a small boy looking up at the kite in Picture 2 exclaimed that it looked like a 'witch's beast'. (Not a broomstick as I once thought; I've now learned that broomsticks were pan-European transport arrangements for witches.) I got the name phonetically from a Dutch flier as 'hexembaste'. I now know that the correct spelling is Heksebeest. Almost any dark coloured version does look strange and perhaps threatening.

So we have Henk Breedland to thank for a good lifter and a 'first up last down' kite. — a worthy addition to the other sparred kites which Dutch fliers have produced in the last 30 years: Knop Velthuizen's Genki, the late John Verheij's Double Parasled (which became the Power Sled, the entry-level kite hoist of choice), and Ton Oostveen and Helmut Schiefer's Circoflex. And we have Dick Toonen's boxes.

Acknowledgements: special thanks to Anne Gispén for Pictures 1 and 2, NCB for the plan and John Dobson for his editorial work.



HEKSEBEEST
Henk BREEDLAND

plan 1

The following article about Henk Breedland and the Heksebeest first appeared in NCB 166 (October-December 2013), the magazine of the Belgian Kite Club (Nouveau Cervoliste Belge). It has been translated by John Dobson and appears with the permission of Nest Lernout, the editor of NCB.

Henk Breedland was born and grew up in Assen. In the 1950's encountering a kite was quite an experience in the neighbourhood where he lived. This was mainly due to the fact that Indonesians were established in this area along with their culture, including the concept of the kite. Henk, as a 10 year old boy, had never seen such beautiful kites, ranging from small fighter kites to impressive colourful kites. It is easy to make contact with a different culture when you are a child, and he saw and learned how these kites were built. They used their own bamboo sticks and resin-coated rice paper which they brought from Indonesia or had sent to them.

Soon Henk started trying by himself to cut bamboo for assembling small fighter kites. After many attempts, he managed to make one that not only flew but was exactly what he wanted. If the kite did not fly well, he turned it into a static kite by adding a tail or tassels. This amused him greatly and later he began to make snake or dragon kites. The head was made of ordinary resin-coated paper and the kite had a resin-coated crepe paper tail. He was flying kites with tails of 15 to 20 metres in length! Later, he made kites like this for his little cousins and neighbourhood children and his own children. "But to be honest," Henk said, "it was me who got the most fun."

In 1991 he began to build kites again. Kiting was definitely in the air as there were many people who lived in Groningen who flew kites and especially stunt kites. He found it rewarding and bought a stunt kite. Subsequently, there were a lot of night flying kites to be seen at Kardinge [a nature reserve near Groningen – JD] where there were then no houses or small lakes. And information could be exchanged in the form of books and journals.

As Henk was into photography, his interest was sparked by a brochure about kite assisted photography. At one time, he had made a Tyvek delta which proved to be a remarkably stable kite even in strong winds. He began experimenting and added a keel tunnel. As this made it fly even better he was very gratified. Then he began to stack the deltas; it was the ne plus ultra! It was a historic moment when three stacked deltas flew as steady as a rock in the sky. They gave the impression that they could no longer be brought down. However, getting them there was particularly troublesome. It was very difficult to position them correctly in the sky and sometimes that didn't happen.

Henk Breedland then had the idea of attaching the six wings to a single keel so that each pair of wings had its own spreader giving the kite a total of three spreaders. Spot on! Henk was very enthusiastic with this construction. Finally, he had a perfect kite for photography, stable during flight in both low and high winds. Finally, he changed the dimensions of the wings so that each pair of wings could catch the wind. It is from this kite for photography that the Heksebeest was born because Henk Breedland had begun to work with colours and patterns and, of course, long tails. Small ears and eyes were also added and voilà: the Heksebeest.

There is a video [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_5pB_LsFMA – JD] where you can see a prototype Heksebeest. This green version is now in the possession of Henk Landlust and is one of the first models with the adapted wings.

Heksebeest was the name was given by some children who seeing the kite, said: "The kite looks like a heksebeest (witchy-beast)". Henk thought that the name was beautiful and suited it. He says: "When you see a Heksebeest in flight, you probably think it an Asian form. There is something oriental, mystical, about it. Perhaps it's because I subconsciously incorporated the model of the snake or dragon kites from Indonesia".

Other kite fliers also were enthusiastic about this model and they soon began to build very rapidly so that a competition could be held at Kardinge in Groningen. During a kite festival at Groningen there could be seen five or six. Henk Breedland: "As there was a lot of demand for a plan of construction of the Heksebeest, I sent it to the magazine *Vlieger*." Thereafter it very quickly spread abroad; in Germany, there is a passion for this model, and also in Great Britain and Belgium. During a kite tour in Turkey in 2003, our Turkish friends caught the virus and begin to build their own. As ripstop is hard to find there, they use plastic to make their kites, which does not diminish the quality of flight relative to ripstop.

On Henk's website, you can see how many different models already exist in the world. What is nice is that there is no pattern or size imposed. You can choose your own colour, size and shape. Changability is what makes this model so fantastic. Henk had not thought it would be such a success. He is very pleased and feels

some satisfaction to know that other people also have a lot of fun and that the Heksebeest has spread worldwide.

The Heksebeest is also known as the Breedland kite. The construction plan is available on <http://breedland.deds.nl/> . Its successor is the Helkat (cat from hell) whose plan is also on the website.

[Note: the construction diagram given in NCB 166 is incorrect in a number of ways. For an explanation of this and a better plan see the correction in NCB 167. The plan on the website is the latest published version. — JD.]