

BICC POITIERS RACE REPORT

Before concentrating on the race itself perhaps a little history of the city of Poitiers would be of interest, so here goes with the pocket guide to Poitiers.....

Poitiers was founded by the [Celtic](#) tribe of the [Pictones](#) and was known as the [oppidum](#) Lemonum before [Roman](#) influence. The name is said to have come from the Celtic word for [elm](#), Lemo. After Roman influence took over, the town became known as Pictavium, or later "Pictavis", after the original [Pictones](#) inhabitants themselves.

The city lies on the [Clain river](#) in west-central [France](#). It is a [commune](#) and the capital of the [Vienne department](#) and of the [Poitou-Charentes region](#). Poitiers is a major university centre. The centre of town is picturesque and its streets include predominant historical architecture, especially religious architecture and especially from the [Romanesque](#) period. Two major military battles took place near the city: in 732, the [Battle of Poitiers](#) (also known as the Battle of Tours), in which the Franks commanded by [Charles Martel](#) halted the expansion of the [Umayyad Caliphate](#), and in 1356, the [Battle of Poitiers](#), a key victory for the English forces during the [Hundred Years' War](#). [This should read English and Welsh as the Welsh longbow men played a crucial role in the winning of the battle]. Just thought I'd mention that.

Poitiers is strategically situated on the [Seuil du Poitou](#), a shallow gap between the [Armorican](#) and the [Central Massif](#). The Seuil du Poitou connects the [Aquitaine Basin](#) to the South to the [Paris Basin](#) to the North. This area is an important geographic crossroads in France and Western Europe.

The city's primary site sits on a vast promontory between the valleys of the [Boivre](#) and the [Clain](#). The old town occupies the slopes and the summit of a plateau which rises 130 feet (40 m) above the streams which surround it on three sides. Thus Poitiers benefits from a very strong tactical situation. This was an especially important factor before and throughout the Middle Ages.

So much for the history of the town of Poitiers, what of the latest BICC National race in the old bird programme.

The convoy of 2,667 Birds, an increase of nearly 40% on the 2014 entry, was liberated at 6.30 am on Saturday 13th June .

This is Race Advisor John Tyerman's preliminary report on the preparation for liberation.

"The 2,696 BICC Poitiers National pigeons were liberated at 6-30am this morning, (Saturday, 13th June, 2015) into good weather conditions, and cleared well. The wind at Poitiers is light NE but turning south west as birds progress through France. Channel is shown as clearing with shipping forecast showing WSW winds and channel light vessel recording wind strength of between 16/23mph".

And this is John's comprehensive report for the race:-

The BICC Poitiers National entry of 2696 birds saw an increase of around 40% from last year and for most fanciers it was a three to four hundred miles race. Our two Convoyers Trevor and Steve had a busy day collecting birds from the various marking stations, and both vehicles arrived at Horndean at around 7pm on Thursday evening. All the birds were then moved from the smaller lorry on to the larger transporter and again our thanks go to Paul and his team at Horndean for their help in transferring the birds and crates. This time there were no ferry problems and the birds went overnight from Portsmouth to Caen. They had a good run down to Poitiers arriving around lunchtime on the Friday.

I had earlier spoken with our Weather Advisor Steve Appleby who gave a good forecast for Central France for the race day, but made us aware of the adverse weather front lying across the Midlands area. This weather information was relayed to our Chief Convoyer Trevor Cracknell and it was agreed that if Poitiers was good we should go for an early liberation, bearing in mind the NE wind in France and the fact that quite a few members were flying over the 400 miles. I spoke with Mark Gilbert and Steve Appleby early on Saturday morning and although conditions were not perfect in certain parts of the UK it was felt that, as over 90% of our race area was to be clear a decision was made to liberate. Both Convoyers were in agreement and the convoy was liberated at 6-30am at Poitiers in good weather and a light NE wind. The birds cleared well and on the drive back to Caen, Trevor reported excellent weather with light winds and sunny conditions.

He later confirmed the return afternoon ferry crossing was calm with good visibility on the Channel. Here in Bracklesham Bay on the Solent it was a lovely sunny afternoon with fairly strong SW winds. Obviously in some places the weather was not entirely perfect and it was noted that on a certain pigeon chat site, there was criticism of our decision to liberate as the MNFC and others had held over in France. However our birds

had at least 350 miles clear flight path in good weather and over 90% of our competing members were not flying into the poor weather that affected the Midlands and further north. We had 280 first bird verifications from Wales to Norfolk and beyond with many members flying over 400 miles and pigeons recording good velocities. The race advisory team and Convoyers stand by their decision to liberate. Well done to Wicky, Kirk and indeed all the Bullen Family on a much deserved win.

John Tyerman

Mark Gilbert.
(BICC Race Advisors)

Steve Appleby our weatherman gives the following weather information for the day of the race.

Weather Report

At first light over Poitiers the view was one of broken cloud and blue skies. This allowed John Tyerman to switch on the green light with the BICC convoy being liberated at 06:30. The flight path through France and the channel to southern England was also under broken cloud and sunshine. In England a weather front producing rain did affect Wales and the Midlands. All other BICC regions were experiencing varying amounts of cloud but generally conditions were very good. Winds over central France were mainly light and variable but from northern France onwards a west south westerly air flow became available to the convoy. The buoys in the channel recorded wind speeds of about 15 mph again from the west south west and visibility was excellent.

Steve Appleby.

The following report is based purely on members' first bird verifications. The final result may well differ.

With the strong westerly influence in the wind for the fourth race in succession it was envisaged that the eastern members would have a field day and so it turned out, with the exception of a lone battler into the Centre section clocked at the Croydon lofts of Pau International winners D Bullen and son which recorded 1430 ypm to win both the centre section and the Open. This is what the Bullens had to tell me of their latest win with the BICC following on from their great triumph in the 2011 Pau International race:-

"Firstly we would like to congratulate all the section winners and the convoying team for the great condition our pigeons returned in all the races in the BICC. Our winning Pigeon is a yearling late bred cock. Bred by K. Roberts and Son of New Addington, from his Glyn and Gavin Buckley and Frank Bristow stock. The Young Cock was only trained as a baby and this was only the third race of his life. The first race was a training race from France. His second race was from Tours, where he was fourth central section, 30th open. Today was its third race of its life from Poitiers. He was raced on widowhood having been paired in March and sat eggs (No rearing). We have made a few changes to our lofts this year, allowing more fresh air into the lofts and also changing our corn to 80% country wide corn. We have seen a huge improvement in our birds. We would like to thank Ray Roberts and Dean Garret for all the friendly banter and keenness throughout the year. We've now named the cock 'Sienna's cloudy day boy'."

Congratulations lads on yet another remarkable performance achieved when racing a modest number of pigeons to a small back garden loft.

The runner up in the Open but winning the East section was clocked at the Chelmsford lofts of Alex MacKenzie on 1428 ypm. Alex and brother Tony are passed winners of the BICC and a couple of years back beat near neighbour David Coward Talbot's pigeon into second place – winning the race by a second decimal. This is what Tony MacKenzie had to tell me about their latest performance:-

"Our season started later this year due to Alex being unwell at the beginning of the year. Our pigeon is a two year old widowhood cock. It's breed is Reynaert x Janssen . He was our first bird the first race , and 20th Fed . And our 2nd bird from Falaise this year with the BICC . He has been a consistent pigeon as a yearling and a two year old. This will be a good tonic for Alex , after having a pacemaker fitted a couple of weeks ago.

We would like to congratulate D Bullen & Son for winning the race."

Close behind the MacKenzie timer on 1427 ypm to take 2nd East section and 3rd Open was one to Basildon fancier Charles Simmons Esquire. Charlie clocked a two year old widowhood cock that has had three inland races plus Falaise, Alencon and Tours with the BICC this season. In the Tours race he finished at 37th Open. Bloodlines are Peter Van der Merwe.

The Dunton, Essex partnership of D & B Price come in next at 3rd section 4th Open vel 1424 ypm. Their timer is a two year old late bred widowhood cock. He was unraced and not even trained as a baby and only lightly trained last year as a yearling. The Poitiers race was only the third race of his life! However, what he lacks in experience is more than made up by his winning genes. His dam is a daughter of Southfield Melissa Mark Gilbert's Hens International winner whilst his sire is a son of the great "Wings Down" one of the best long distance races ever to cross the English Channel.

Kevin Foster of Longfield Hill got one on the clock to record 1421 ypm to finish at 4th East section 5th Open. Kevin had this to say:-

" Firstly congratulations to Dave [Wicky] and Kirk Bullen , another great win to add to their National an International successes over the years , probably the best small team loft in England . My first pigeon is a 3yo widowhood hen She was my. 2nd bird from the BICC Falaise race this year. The sire is from the Bullens being a double grandson of Reggies Boy 1st NFC Dax 5th international Dax . The dam is from Martin Greatham in Essex a direct daughter of his 10th Open NFC Tarbes in 2010. Following closely behind the hen was a 2yo chequer widowhood cock who was in the BICC result from Alencon a couple of weeks back. His sire is from Geoff Cooper being a full brother to .1st international Agen. The dam is from Mark Gilbert and is a direct daughter of 1st NFC Saintes x a son of Euro Diamond . I sent 12 and had 11 by 5 pm on the day."

The partnership of C, G & P Breen come in next at 5th East section 6th Open with a bird on 1416 ypm. The Breens timer is a widowhood cock of Mike Ganus bloodlines via Steve Noonan of Border Lofts. He was 25th Open in the recent BICC Tours race and returned in excellent condition. The partners had 5 home form 5 sent

The well known Fontwell partnership of Crammond & Langstaff take 2nd Centre section 7th Open with their first on the clock doing 1414 ypm. This widowhood cock was probable 5th Section NFC Messac the week before Poitiers, The two year old cock is from the ultra successful Bosua x Van Osch lines which have performed so well over the last few years for the partnership, His Sire is a full brother to Spartacus 1st Open NFC Messac and his Dam is a full sister to first Open BICC. The partnership would like to thank the conveyer Trevor Cracknell for his care of the pigeons because be it either the BICC or the NFC the birds always arrive home in very good condition.

Horsham fancier Ian Flanagan comes in with a four year old to take 3rd Centre Section 8th Open vel 1411.3 ypm. This is what Ian had to tell me about the race:-

"I'd like to start of by saying well done to D Bullen and son who are likely winners of the Poitiers race. My pigeon is a Vandabeele dark chequer 4yr old, bred close from the Shadow lines and gifted to me by Clive Turner as a young bird. Clive always gifts me some good young birds every year, so thanks Clive. The cock is raced on widowhood, racing back to his hen, usually he sees his hen for 20 minutes before basketing but this time I had shut his nest box off for a couple of days and opened it up the night before and then give him his hen. He has been a fantastic pigeon winning the club from Tours and some good positions in the BICC races, 102nd open Falaise 2013 , Alencon 224th Open 2013, 181st, Falaise this year with this Poitiers race being his best position in the BICC. He will now stayed paired up with his hen who is also bred from the Shadow lines and hopefully produce some nice late youngsters. I sent two pigeons to this race with my second one coming back later in the afternoon, with both arriving back in good condition".

Mr & Mrs Eamonn Streatfield are in the shake up once again with a bird on 1411.02 ypm to finish a likely 6th East section and 9th Open. The partners clocked a three year old dark chequer widowhood hen of Jan & Tom De Raaf x Van Reet bloodlines. She has had three club races and all of the BICC races this season and has won 4th section 62nd Open Falaise and 12th Open BICC Tours in her earlier races with the BICC this year.

Another "regular" comes in next at 7th East section 10th Open- none other than Micky Watts of Southminster in Essex. Micky's timer was bred by his good mate Terry Bentham and is of Vandabeele bloodlines via M & D Evans. He is a two year old and was sent driving his hen to nest.

That's the top ten in the Open done and dusted so let's now look at the successful fanciers in the other sections.

The North Central section winner was clocked by the partnership of Maples & Wratten vel 1307 ypm. This dark, white flight cock is a Brian Denney x Jos Thone bred by John Searle. The dam is a Brian Long Jos Thone hen called Pauline and sire is a Denney Tuff Nut pigeon. The cock has been a consistent performer for the partners from a yearling. As a yearling he went to Poitiers and this year he's been to every BICC race being the partners' first pigeon out of Tours. At exercise around the loft in the week before basketting he showed that he was on good form. The second pigeon clocked could be 4th section on 1126.4 ypm is a Leo Van Rijn hen crossed with a Graham Owen from Wolverhampton pigeon.

Second North Central section on 1175 ypm is one to I Carezza who clocked a five year old Jan Aarden cock sent driving his hen to nest.

Third North Central section on 1160 ypm is one to D Lyden & son who clocked a two year old widowhood cock of Alf Jones Sofferl bloodlines bred by Rod Oakes and bought by the partners at a Fed breeder / buyer sale . He was at Falaise with the BICC earlier in the season and was then set up for a tilt at Poitiers.

The top three in both the Centre and East sections have been covered in the review of the top ten Open prize winners so we'll move on to the winner in the North East section which also takes 27th Open on the provisional result and was clocked by Mr & Mrs Roger Strowger to record 1364 ypm. This one is a blue w/f cock bred by Roger's good friend and former Lerwick King's Cup winner, Barry Wigg of the Wigg Brothers partnership. The bloodlines are Janssen Van Den Bosch. The section winner was at Alencon with the BICC taking 9th section 67th Open and put in a 12 hour shift to home on the day from the BICC Tours race of two weeks ago. Roger had eight of his ten entries home on the day and has asked me to pass on his congratulations to Bullen & son on yet another win with the BICC.

Runners up in the north east section are P Meades & son with a bird on 1352 ypm. This is a yearling hen of Busschaert bloodlines sent sitting 3 day eggs .The same family bloodlines have won 1st NE section Alencon 4th NE section Tours this year. Both are yearlings and they have won 1st Alencon, 1st,Tours and 1st Poitiers in the club this year.

Third NE section was clocked by Keith Latham on 1308 ypm. Keith's timer is a two year old J L Roberts Delbar cock sent sitting 5 day eggs having previously been raced on the widowhood system in the early part of the season.

Over in the west of the country the pigeons had to battle against a strong westerly wind with the West section winner recording 1329 ypm clocked by Peter Atherton and this one looks good enough for 51st Open on the provisional result. The section winner is a two year old Janssen hen sent sitting 16 day old eggs, her first of the season. She is a previous winner of 1st club Carentan. Peter feeds the birds by hand on a Beyers Gaby Vandenaabeele mixture at the beginning of the week changing to a stronger mixture of Versele Laga Superstar Plus as basketting day approaches.

Paul Murrell of Dorset comes in with one on 1316 ypm to take 2nd West section. Paul clocked a two year old widowhood hen of Busschaert x Peter Van de Merwe bloodlines . She had just one race as a yearling returning to the loft badly injured. This season she had two preparatory races before Poitiers the last one being with the BICC from Alencon.

Geoff and Catherine Cooper maintain their good run of form featuring in the top three of the section for the fourth time in four races this season with their first bird doing 1315 ypm. Geoff and Catherine clocked a 2 year old latebred widowhood cock. As a yearling he flew the programme as far as Messac 243 miles. His sire is a brother to Farmer Sparey, 1st Bordeaux Combine and his Dam is out of a sister to Farm Boy, the sire of Farmer George 1st International Bordeaux

The Birtsmorton partnership of T & J Davies also have an excellent record in BICC races and this season haven't failed to reach the first three in the North West section, topping the section on a couple of previous occasions and doing so again here with their first bird recording 1259 ypm. Jeremy had the following to say about his latest section winning pigeon:-

"We have Topped the North West Section for our 3rd race running in the BICC. Since joining the BICC in 2014 we have flown 7 races with them and have won the NW section 5 times being 2nd & 3rd in the other two races. Our first timer GB12 N22926 Blue Cock on the semi widowhood system. He was not allowed to rear only sit eggs in 2015 and showed his hen for 40 minutes before the basket.

The Dam of the winner is from a father daughter mating the nest sister to the Dam of the 2015 BICC NW Tours winner from Jimmy which was paired on to his own daughter that won 1st Section J NFC Tarbes flying 617 miles on the day in 2008 which was paired back to Jimmy who won five 1st prizes and five 2nd prizes before being put to stock and now is the Father of the loft. Jimmy is no longer fertile but Jeremy put to stock most of his sons & daughters which are to 5 different hens and these will be bred off half-brother sister matings over the next few years. Two of my best breeding hens were from this Father daughter mating couple which get crossed out with various cocks. The 08 Blue father / daughter mating hen has bred many channel winners to different cocks two being 2011 bred no 28 , 29 No 29 being 1st NW section BICC Tour 2014 28 being 5th section Tarbes 2014 NFC. And now 1st Nw section Poitiers 2015. These two 08 hens just keep throwing channel winners out. I sent 12 birds with 4 on the day with low cloud and drizzle the last 40 miles they really did have to dig deep with 7 more the next morning making it 11/12 on a trying day. The first 9 birds back are all from children or Grandchildren from Jimmy and have saved our backside on most channel races. The birds are fed on a homemade feeding mix high fat and proteins while it's on the cold side, dropping the protein when the weather warms up. We use Jeremy's pigeon tonics in the water and on the feed which is given daily.

A big thank you to the marking team in Evesham and the convoyers who again did a sterling job with a difficult decision to liberate but the right one. Congratulations to open winners and the other section winners.”

Booth & Roper of Tewkesbury are another partnership who enjoy their BICC race experiences and here they finish at 2nd North west section vel 1250 ypm. Trevor and John clocked their very consistent 5yo widowhood grizzle cock bred from Brian Sheppard stock from the lines of Boy Wonder and The Legend. This bird was followed five minutes later by his daughter who was 1st NW section, 2nd Open from the Falaise OB race last year. They also timed another daughter on the day. These three "Sheppard" birds will now go to the NFC Tarbes race. The partnership had three birds on the day and a full house the next morning. Up to this point they have only dropped one pigeon in this season's races. They would also like to congratulate the winner and all section winners. Job done.

Mr & Mrs G Lloyd finish off the first three in the section with a bird on 1198 ypm. This was the first race with the BICC and the partners were pleased to get five of their six bird entry home by early morning on the second day. Their first in the clock is a latebred yearling hen sent sitting 8 day eggs. She is of Louella Leo Pronks bloodlines and was having her fourth race of the season at Poitiers.

Well that's the penultimate Old Bird National race over with, now onwards and upwards for the ultimate test of man and bird – THE INTERNATIONALS starting with the Pau International on 20th June.

Good luck to all who compete and let's hope I'll be reporting on another British International race winner.

Gareth Watkins



The Bullens-&-Ray-Roberts breeder of 1st Open Poitiers



D Bullen & son 1st Open BICC Poitiers



Alex & Tony MacKenzie prov 1st East section 2nd Open BICC Poitiers



Charlie Simmons 1st Open BICC Agen International 2012 and provisionally 3rd Open BICC Poitiers 2015



Kevin Foster 5th Open BICC Poitiers



Colin Breen 6th Open BICC Poitiers with grand children



Nigel Langstaff and Ian Crammond provisionally 7th Open BICC Poitiers



Ian Flanagan with son Owen, Ian was 3rd section 8th Open BICC Poitiers



Eamonn Streatfield 13th Open Alencon; 2nd Open BICC Tours . 9th Open Poitiers so far in 2015



Micky Watts 1st Open BICC Guernsey OH's 2014 & 3rd Open BICC Alencon and 1st Open BICC Tours
10th Open Poitiers 2015



Maples & Wratten 1st NC section Poitiers



Paul Murrell 2nd west section Poitiers, 1st west section Alencon in 2015



Peter & Andrew Meades 2nd North East section BICC Poitiers



Peter Atherton 1st west section BICC Poitiers



Roger Strowger 1st NE section Poitiers & 3rd NE section BICC Tours in 2015



T&J Davies 1st N Wsection Tours; 1st NW section Alencon
1st NW section Poitiers & 3rd NW sect Falaise 2015



Rita Goode loading the pigeons at South Ockenden