

BICC Alencon OB 2019

Winning first open in the British International Championship Club from Alencon on the 11th May was the family partnership of Mr & Mrs W Cowper & Son from Cliffe Wood in Kent. The birds were liberated at 10:15 into a North West wind and Steve Appleby reported that from first light the Alencon region was plagued by low cloud and patchy rain arriving from the Cherbourg peninsula. Both he and Mark Gilbert were hopeful that this inclement weather, which was moving eastwards, would clear Alencon and open up the flight path. Indeed as they monitored the cloud movement, they could see the clearance would arrive at the race point in time to liberate. At the home end Bill was expecting a holdover as the eastern side were experiencing heavy showers, which from eleven o'clock came more regular and after about five hours he was thinking nothing would make it home on the day. However the rain did not prevent his four year old widowhood cock from racing home to his hen even though he was soaking when he arrived and from an entry of 15 birds Bill had 11 home on the day with one more arriving whilst I was there at lunchtime the next day. When he verified his pigeon he did not receive the usual confirmation email, which he put down to the clubs new website but in fact there was a problem with his own computer so did not know he had won the race until a fellow club mate told him it was on the BICC Website which came as a surprise to Bill as the pigeon had flown through rain so he thought he might be behind on the day. He has kept pigeons all his life, following on from his father and grandfather who both also raced pigeons. His son Michael is the fourth generation who, from a small boy has helped his Dad around the loft which was soon formalised as a racing partnership, and as Michael is a shift worker, it works well for them both. To complete the family involvement his mother Barbara, is actively involved in the running of the 25 member strong Medway Racing Pigeon Club, being Secretary, Treasurer, Ring Secretary and Chief Raffle organiser, with Bill being clock setter. Pigeon Racing is truly a hobby for the whole family with the love of the pigeons continuing over four generations.

They race their pigeons on a semi widowhood come roundabout system as for the first few weeks the hens stay at home waiting for the cocks to return to allow the yearlings to get used to the system, before being separated again after the race. The hens will begin racing themselves around the middle of May and at that time the roundabout system goes into full swing. During the week the hens go out for an hour each morning and evening followed by the cocks with the young birds flying out during the day. Obviously that takes up 5 or 6 hours every day just flying the birds out during the season but they manage to share the workload between them and on Sundays all the race birds are allowed an open hole to "do as they please" They feed a good racing mixture from Colin Fagg in Sittingbourne with the hens fed in troughs and the cocks fed individually in their nest box measured by the spoon.

Race birds are coupled around the middle of February and allowed to rear youngsters before being parted after a few days training down the road. After the first race they do not road train and Bill has used this system all his life. He cannot see much point in early breeding during December as he considers they lay much better as a team in the spring and can be widowed at the right stage. They normally rear a team of around 40 young birds although they have a few extra this season. Now called "Billy Mike" their winning bird has previously won from Poole with many other top positions and was bred from a Leo Van Rijn cock acquired from Adrian Duggins in Matlock. The sire is a Dirk Vervoort from the Antwerp Union who sent a few youngsters over with Colin Fagg to auction, and with Dirk being a nephew of Flor Vervoort, they bought a few to try against their own family of birds which Bill has cultivated over many years. All their birds, for the past 23 years, are based on Flor Vervoort bloodlines with any introductions from the same base as Bill takes careful consideration to keep the bloodline going.

They now have a great presentation weekend in Bournemouth to look forward to and I wish them continued success for the rest of the season to come. Following on from the first paragraph, I shall continue with the report from our weather adviser Steve Appleby who supplied the usual photos of the conditions at the race point. "The picture over looking the sea was taken from Jullouville on the Cherbourg peninsula at 09:36 am. The satellite image captured at 10:30 clearly identifies the poor

weather moving eastwards. This was confirmed by the convoyers who were pleased to see the vast improvement in the weather on site as the cloud started to break up. Although the conditions were good, liberation was delayed a short while as the convoyers reported a bank of heavy black cloud directly ahead on the line of flight. This obstruction soon moved away to the east allowing liberation to be affected at 10:15 into broken cloud and blue skies. Winds were light from the northwest all the way to the French coast when they became fresher over the open sea. The channel was clear and data received from the Channel Lightship gave wind speed of 15 knots (about 18 mph) and direction NNW with visibility at 27 miles. One or two heavy showers did develop in the afternoon mainly in the south east of England."

On finishing for this week can I ask once again that all those who are in the top three of each section of the Alencon result to send me a photo with details of their birds to biccpressofficer@gmail.com or to call me on 01530 242548 or 07792 356330. I need your help to compile these reports as it is much easier for you to contact me when you are free to do so, rather than me to try to contact 18 individuals in the hope that they are available at that time, Chris Sutton.