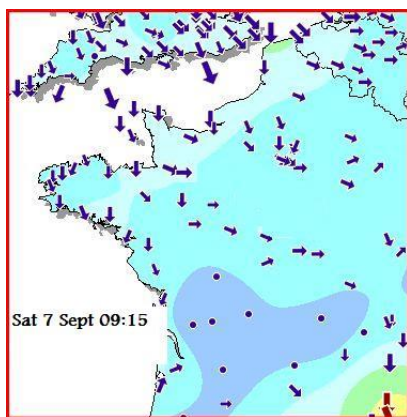


BICC Fougères YB & Any Age National 2019

The final young bird race of the season for the British International Championship Club took place on the 7th September from Fougères which incorporated the final old bird race to run concurrently. A total of 218 members sent 1953 youngsters and 122 also entered 614 old birds. The weather adviser Steve Appleby said “The main factor influencing the flying conditions for this race was the northerly element in the wind over the channel. Although winds were light WNW at the race point, the change in direction to a 15 mph fresh NNW across the channel certainly affected the result and this wind direction, although lighter, was also sustained over England. Early on the channel was under varying cloud formations but as the morning progressed the clouds soon dissipated with blue skies developing. Visibility was more than 20 miles as seen from the various webcams along the French coastline. Well done to all the pigeons making their home lofts in a tough race”



The winner of the young bird race was Dave and John Staddon who have had a fantastic second season racing to the new loft location based at the home of Dave and his wife Caroline, with their son Alfie now taking an interest in the pigeons.



Dave Staddon & son with BICC 1st Open Fougères Young Bird National 2019

Taking Provisional 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, & 5th West Section and 1st Open BICC Fougères YB their loft is has been in outstanding form. Dave said he was lost for words when they discovered they had won the race as their friend Mark Gilbert called to congratulate them, he was closely followed by Mark Bullied so the computer was turned on to see for themselves.



They thought the cock had made a good speed but after seeing the result from the NFC race earlier, with both winners being in the east, they feared the worst. It must be an amazing feeling to know that your young cock had basically broken away from the convoy, straight from the transporter and headed for home more or less on his own. There were only 51 birds in the west section, so he had little or no help from drag and certainly none from the wind. John Staddon has been racing pigeons for over 60 years and says it's his best ever young bird performance. Who am I to argue. The cock was bred from yearlings in their race in which both parents were bred by their friend and part-time advisor Mark Gilbert, from a batch of 12 youngsters acquired to race, bred from some of Mark's own race team. The sire was their first bird from the BBC Bordeaux National this season taking 56th Open in a very strong west wind. He is from a full brother to the famous "Ironman" which is from a son of Jelle Jellema's "Orion" when paired to a hen who Mark bought after finishing 15th International Barcelona 21,169b which is also Jellema bloodlines. The mother of the National winner was from a son of Cor De Heijde "Naomi" 6th International Barcelona 20,669b & 72nd International Barcelona 25,224b and a daughter of Jelle Jellama's "Romee". So Barcelona blood all through the pedigree, yet with the right management and a slice of luck they can win from the sprint to middle distance races. Dave had been waiting for a cock to put in a special performance so that I could name him "Archie" after his son, who is the pride and joy of both him and his wife Caroline and is the apple of his Grandad's eye too so "Archie" it is.



Dave & John Staddon 1st BICC Fougères Young Bird National 2019

Dave said "This is our first season racing two year old and yearlings in our new loft. Our birds have raced brilliantly all season both old and young. It began with 2nd Open CSCFC Coutances OB, 1st & 3rd Section G 6th & 8th Open NFC Cholet OB, 2nd West Section BICC Cholet, 1st, 2nd & 3rd West Section 1st, 2nd & 3rd Open BICC Cholet OB, 47th, 50th, 56th, 64th Open BICC Agen, 1st WOESRC Coutances OB, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th WOESRC Yelverton YB, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th WOESRC Yelverton YB. 1st & 2nd WOESRC Yelverton, 1st & 3rd West Section BICC Guernsey YB, 1st Open CSCFC Guernsey YB, 3rd Open BBC Fougères YB, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th West Section 1st Open BICC Fougères, 1st Thames Fougères Gold Ring winning £1500. All but three of our young bird team have flown the channel at least twice.



The young birds are darkened and go to every WOESRC combine they can before and in between their channel races. They are fed identically to our old birds on a variation of

Versele Laga corn depending on the conditions, it's not what you feed but how you feed it. They are allowed to pair or do as they please and are given an open loft all day while I am at work but we try to motivate them for the bigger races. This cock has not shown and was racing to the perch, but since his return has been showing to a hen and who knows he may have been looking at her in the days before the race, but we certainly didn't see it. This has been a particularly good batch of young birds, they have trained well right from the start and have been unstoppable in racing. I would point out though that contrary to popular belief, these young birds have never really ranged off. The longest I can remember them going is for about 20 mins but as I say, they have not put a foot wrong training or racing. We think we are now in a good place in our breeding loft as apart from this race we have hardly lost a pigeon training or racing this year. We hope to send a team to Sennen Cove with the combine this week and the Thames Messac Open Race the following week. One last bit of interest for other fanciers. At the end of April, the whole team went down with young bird sickness and it was the most severe case we have ever had. We even lost six birds which we have never had previously and even the national winner was badly affected. He became very ill, to the point where I thought he was on his way out I went to put him down a couple of times but resisted. He eventually pulled around, but it took him a long time to recover. I thought he would be lost on his first training toss, but he has never been late in any toss or a race and now he has paid our patience back in spades. So, you just never know unless you give them a chance. All the best to you all for the rest of the season and the winter period ahead."

As usual with the BICC young bird races an old bird race was flown in conjunction and the winner was Mr & Mrs A Sparks in Gravesend.



Andy Sparks with the 1st Open BICC Fougères Any Age National 2019

Painter and Decorator Andy had just returned from working in London when I arrived in the late afternoon and as he made us both a cup of tea, he told me the history behind

“Westcourt Lofts” and the Sparks family pigeons. Right behind his parents’ home was Westcourt School, although it has now been replaced with a modern housing estate, and Andy would visit every day to tend to the pigeons and continue racing from there, not having a loft at his own home. When the school was knocked down and some of the roofing tiles were reused on the shed, it followed that it was to be called Westcourt Lofts. His late father raced pigeons all his life and the three sons Tommy, Michael and Andy followed on with the family interest. A family of Busschaert pigeons had been developed over many years with his father purchasing the originals and introductions came via Louis Coormans and Frans Zwols which his brother Tommy Sparks bought. Andy raced ten from his brother this season and six of them have flown the programme winning four of the eight club young bird races. There are also one or two white grizzles in the loft which are Roland Janssens via Premier Lofts, and Andy said a very good blue cock came from them winning ten 1st prizes in the club and five 1st Federations. But he also has an eye on the International races so has recently bought in Padfield lines from the House of Aarden.



The winning hen now called “Calandy” is of the old Busschaert lines which was raced in the old bird races and was sent with the young birds every week. She has had twelve races this season including six channel races of which three were with the BICC and was sent to Fougères with a thirty day old young bird helping her to sit the next round of eggs. Andy was going to remove all the babies in the loft after the Guernsey race but decided to leave them with their parents for one last race, which he thinks helped motivate her to win in a less than ideal race.

After they passed away Andy moved into his parents’ home and has very nearly finished renovating it for him and his wife. During the season he would be working on their home in his free time so the birds have been on open hole for twelve hours every day. They were

flying so well each day one of his club mates thought he would struggle to keep the form going, but Andy said they were very contented and although he is normally more regimented with the birds, he did not have much choice this season.

He went back to basics and finished the season with 41 of his original 44 young birds, won four young bird races in the club and topped the BICC from Fougères with just one job remaining, a new loft which will be called "Calandy Lofts" with a future in the distance races.

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