

British International Championship Club



St Philbert National Provisional Race report

25th May 2024

St Philbert is situated between Tours and Nantes and is a small village in the north-west of France. The Saint who gave the village its name is also responsible for naming the filbert nut, or hazel nut, as we now call it. The reason for this is that the filbert ripens around the same time as the Saint's feast day, which is on August 20th.

This was the BICC's third National race of the season, where 366 members sent 5,031 birds.

This was well up on last season's race where 238 members sent 2,797. The birds that were liberated at 7.00 am on Saturday 25th May.

Following on from over 6,000 birds at Alencon, this race also produced a great birdage



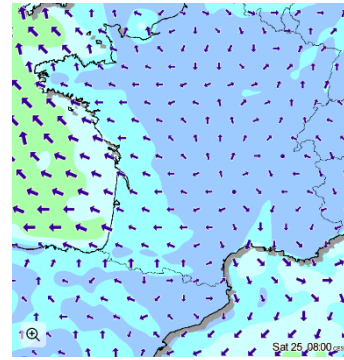
The transporters at the liberation site

Of those 5,031 birds, each section sent the following: In the South Centre, 171 members sent 2,371 birds, South East, 85 sent 1,207, South West, 61 sent 831, North Centre, 18 sent 226, North East, 17 sent 253 and in the North West, 14 members sent 139 birds.

The weather/race report

Steve Appleby, the BICC race and weather advisor, provided the following report:

We were fortunate with the weather for this BICC race from St Philbert as both the west and east sides of France were under poor weather conditions. The race control team were concerned about the approaching cloud from the west and the loss of the liberation sky. At 07:00 hours liberation was affected under broken cloud and sunshine which extended up through central France and across the channel. The birds cleared the site immediately into a very light south easterly wind which was sustained throughout their journey through France and across the channel. Visibility in the channel was exceptional 11 miles and more as recorded by the met buoys. An excellent race resulted, and returns were reported to be very good.



Wind flow Map

This report is based on member's first bird verifications and the final result may differ.

The Provisional Open winner, taking 1st South West Section and winning a BENZING - Gantner Pigeon Systems GmbH system was Lee Luscombe of Liskeard over 291 miles on 1631.

Lee is from Liskeard in Cornwall and is well known in pigeon racing circles as the Loft Manager at the House of Aarden Stud, owned by Steve and Lesley Wright. When I spoke to Lee, he was on Cloud 9 after winning the race, and when I told him he had won a new Benzing system he was well pleased! He said he was thinking of getting one, and this was the icing on the cake.

Of course, Lee is no stranger to winning with the BICC, having previously won 1st and 3rd BICC in 2012, when racing with his father, Steven, in Plymouth as S Luscombe. Lee got married to Stacy in 2017 and moved to Roche in Cornwall, where he flew successfully, firstly as Lee Luscombe and then as part of Team Luscombe and Wright, regularly topping NFC Section Q.

Lee moved to his current location in 2021, and it has been a slow process trying to break his team and then trying to rebuild a team capable of competing in the Channel racing.

The BICC St Philbert winner is one of the broken pigeons, originally raced at Roche. Now named Weemere Deirdre, after Lee's wife Stacy, because she never moans about the time spent down the loft doing the birds. Weemere Deirdre was bred by the House of Aarden by Steve and Lesley Wright. She is part of a 'cross for racing' experiment that Steve and Lee were trying. The sire, a son of Champion Padfield's Blue Badge, 2nd BICC Barcelona, when paired to Champion Padfield's Iron Lady, 4 times in the clock from Barcelona, was paired to a Stuart Wilcox bred daughter of Champion Nosey, the winner of 5 x 1st Club, including 2nd Section, 2nd Open CSCFC Messac from 2,749 birds, 1st Section, 3rd Open NFC Messac from 6,500 birds.

Deirdre has proven her versatility, having flown Ilkeston from 200 miles on the north road, as well as Pau, just outside race time in 2023.

At the end of 2023, Lee was unhappy with how his birds had performed so he started a programme of continuous improvement, looking at every aspect of what he was doing, including the team's health, the loft design, feeding, training, etc.

Firstly, the health of his team. He took various samples and swabs and got these thoroughly tested and examined by Donal Barry and his team at the Pigeon Testing Laboratories in Ireland. Following Donal's advice, Lee gained a better understanding of gaining and maintaining optimum health and has developed a regime to facilitate the health and well-being of the team.

The design of the loft was altered, to ensure good ventilation, without the draught that was robbing the birds of their form and condition. Lee also reviewed his use of the various pigeon products and specifics. Understanding the importance of providing a balanced diet including appropriate levels of vitamins and minerals, Lee looked at his programme and realised that many products contained

combinations of the same vitamins and minerals. Therefore, a minimalistic approach was adopted, ensuring that vitamins and minerals are now provided, without overdosing. Lee does not break his pigeons down and therefore the birds are fed on a strong widowhood mix, as he believes fit athletic pigeons need energy.

With a new loft management system in place, the 2024 season started with a single 12-mile training toss. No further training was provided because of the constant attention of the local birds of prey!

The birds are raced on roundabout, with the intention of building up to Pau. However, it is difficult for Lee to condition his birds, due to his working commitments as the House of Aarden Loft Manager. As such the birds are only exercised once a day, in the afternoons. However, under the new regime the condition of the team has been gradually improving throughout the year. With racing returns generally being better than average at every race. In recent weeks the team have shown their well-being during home exercise by completely disappearing, ranging like youngsters for 30-40 minutes, and their typical exercise periods being between 75 to 90 minutes. Furthermore, the hens have often been mistaken for cock birds at exercise by visitors, due to them clapping and gliding like cock birds.

Lee closely monitors the condition of his team and looks for those coming into form to target specific races. Weemere Deirdre was sent to St Philbert as part of a team of 8, with the other 7 being yearlings having their first Channel race. Therefore, from the perspective of experience, Deirdre was very much the team banker for the race. Lee has found that his race birds are more motivated if the cocks and hens are put together on the Wednesday afternoon, before basketing on Thursday. In this way, Lee feels that the birds are more settled and keener to get home.

On the day of the BICC St Philbert Race, there were several visitors to the lofts to see the birds come home. He said, 'We started watching seriously at around 12.00 and by 12.10 we saw the name Staddon appear on the Benzing Live Leader Board. A few minutes later, the name of Mark Gilbert appeared, and we knew that we had about 10 minutes to get a good one. It was a wonderful feeling when a pigeon arrived, did a small lap of honour before hitting the trap, and trapping smartly at 12.14.45.'" At St Philbert, Lee said that he knew he had an overfly on the top performing lofts of D & J Staddon and Mark Gilbert, so he knew immediately that he had a good one. He continued, "Winning a National brings all sorts of emotions that are difficult to explain, to say I am on Cloud 9 would be an understatement! Looking to the future, Weemere Deirdre is now destined for a career in the stock loft, where she will be blended with the finest Jan Ardens and Franz Zwols lines to form the basis of my future race team."

Finally, to his credit, Lee has organised the Cornish Autumn Challenge One Loft Race that will take place with the Plymouth and District Federation in October. This should be a cracking event considering the birds are now being raced by a BICC winning Loft Manager.

Can I thank Lee for sending an excellent race winners report.



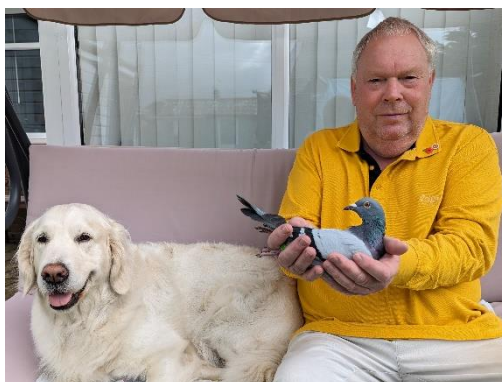
National winner Lee Luscombe



Weemere Deirdre

The Provisional South West Section Winners

2nd South West Section, 2nd Open were Mr & Mrs M King of Blandford Forum over 255 miles on 1616. Mel told me, 'Congratulations to the winners with an excellent bird that was on a mission that day and congratulations to all the section winners. Our first bird is a yearling hen raced on the celibacy system and is again from our well-established Vandenabeele based family. Her sire is our winner of 1st Open BBC Guernsey 2023, which was bred from a double grandson of our original Shadow Daughter, half-brother – half-sister pairing when paired on to a DTR of DE - Chateauroux 1st Nat Chateauroux KBDB when he was paired to a DTR of Tgoedje of Rudi De Sear. The dam of our Provisional 2nd Open winner now named Stourcrest Medusa – The 2nd, is a 1st Federation winner and is out of a son of Olympic 599, son pre-Olympic, and DTR of, New Tours x Black Lola from Rudi De Sear. The grand dam on the hen line is a G.DTR of Rainman & Tgoedje of Rudi De Sear. Our thanks go to all the markers and officials that help bring us these National races.'



Mel King

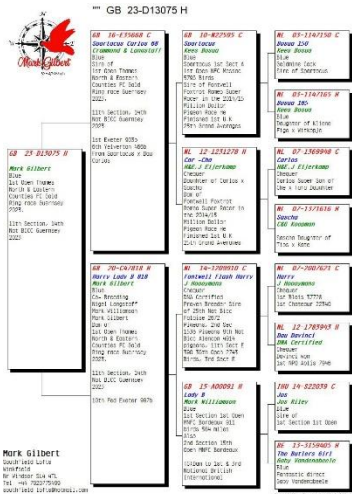
3rd South West Section, 3rd Open was Barry Nurse of Plymouth over 275 miles on 1615. Barry Nurse timed GB21B50451 at 12.00.03 to take 3rd spot.

The Provisional South Centre Section Winners

1st South Centre Section, 7th Open were Wearn Bros & Neilson of Ramsdean over 252 miles on 1594. The partnership timed GB21B29644 at 11.38 to win the section.

2nd South Centre Section, 8th Open was Mark Gilbert of Winkfield, Windsor over 281 miles on 1586 Mark said, 'She is a yearling hen and was our second pigeon and about 15th Open from the BBC Fourges race last week. We sent 270 birds of which 20 were middle distance birds, the first 6 birds to the loft were from the 20 middle distance birds. We were very pleased with result as we did not think it would be possible to do well to our loft in the east wind, showing you need to send whatever the wind. I'd like to thank the convoyers, as the birds returned again in excellent condition.'

3rd South Centre Section, 10th Open was Mr J M Fisher of Wimbourne over 250 miles on 1584. A delighted Jim said, 'I am a new member to the BICC and St Philbert was my first race, so to be 10th Open was very special for me. The pigeon was bred by Brian Johnson from his Leo Herman family, and these are racing very well for me. I sent 16 and got 13 home, so overall I'm very happy. I would like to say that the marking at Southampton was very efficient. My birds all returned in good condition so well done to the people who look after our birds while in their care.'



Pedigree of Mark Gilbert's bird



Jim Fisher's bird

The Provisional South East Section Winners

1st South East Section, 31st Open was Mark Bulled of Harlow over 301 miles on 1538. ‘Firstly, thank you to the fantastically well organised Colchester Marking Station and the officials of the BICC for all their hard work in getting our birds to France,’ said Mark and he continued, ‘My winner is a yearling widowhood cock having his first channel race. His sire known as the Magic Mealy was 3rd NFC Messac 6700 birds and 11th BICC Tours 5000 birds both times beaten by loft mates. He is also sire of 6th BICC and 8th BBC. The dam I bought from Colin Fagg from his Fougères NFC winner of 9500 birds. And can I say a big thanks to my big mate Micky Sontag for taking the birds to the marking station for me.’

2nd South East Section, 50th Open was P Jackson & Son of Bromley over 278 miles on 1515. Lee timed GB21N49168 a grizzle hen. He said, ‘She has been a consistent hen for us racing on a celibate system this year and she went to Alençon in the BICC and arrived late on a very testing day. She recovered well and she has previously won 30th Open NFC Coutances the year we won the race with Lady Langham. She is bred down through my Jos Thone x Hitman lines and we are looking forward to sending her to the next race.’

3rd South East Section, 73rd Open was Colin Draper of Yalding over 265 miles on 1482. Colin reported that his bird looked really well coming back from her first Channel race. She was raced on the roundabout system and is a yearling, Frans Zwols pigeon.



Mark Bulled



Lee Jackson



Colin Draper

The Provisional North Centre Section Winners

1st North Centre Section, 78th Open was Richard Chambers of Rugeley over 378 miles on 1480. Richard said, 'The pigeon that won 1st Section for me is a 2-year-old hen, who raced up to Messac last season as a yearling and this year went to 4 inland races and the Alencon race two weeks ago. These races are her set up for the Agen International later in the year. She is bred from 2 pigeons I brought in, the sire is a blue cock called, Blue Legacy from D & J Staddon. He already had bred many top performance pigeons including, 22nd Open Agen 2 x 1st Section CSCFC as well as many others. Her dam was a pigeon I bought from H & P Archibald who was half- sister to, The Proof through her sire Tom Tom, when paired to a daughter of, Pete's Dream. Unfortunately, this hen got out of the loft last season but has left her mark at least on the loft. The hen was sent sitting 4- day old eggs and she arrived home in great condition after flying 378 miles in 7 hrs 30 min which is excellent preparation for the International season to come.'

Can I pass on my thanks to the convoyer who once again has done a great job in looking after the pigeons and congratulations to all of the section winners and also the overall race winner and wish everyone all the best for the rest of the season.'

2nd North Centre Section, 82nd Open was Dominic Gruzelier of Houghton Conquest over 323 miles on 1477. Dominic told me that this pigeon is a home bred hen of his old lines, called Second. He explained why, 'She was 2nd Section last year by a second beaten by loft mate, 2nd Fed this year beaten by a second and now 2nd again! She was raced on widowhood and I had 17 out 19 on the day.'

3rd North Centre Section, 139th Open was McBride & Shearsby of Corby over 353 miles on 1399. The partnership said, 'It was a dark cock we timed at the weekend, who is a Menne and Daughter pigeon we purchased in a charity auction from Brian and Angie Garnham. He was on his second channel race of the season feeding a large youngster and looking at his hen again. Last year as a yearling, he was trained on my training group trailer, that I run for fanciers in this area, went down to Southampton and was put in the first race of his life at 352 miles. He then went to 356 then 467 and then put away for the year. This year, his first training toss was from 55 miles and on that day, I'm convinced my cocks were hit on liberation. My hens were liberated 20 mins later and they were all in the loft when I arrived home and I never saw a cock bird for 4 hours, they were coming all day and the next and I lost 11 cocks in total, 5 had done the three Channel races last year.'



Richard Chambers



Dominic Gruzelier



McBride & Shearsby's pigeon

The Provisional North East Section Winners

1st North East Section, 254th Open was Dave Downing of Newmarket over 335 miles on 1217. On what proved to be a difficult day with early rain and full cloud cover in the eastern part of the UK, Dave Downing from Newmarket followed up his Alencon section win two weeks ago with another 1st NE Section. His timer this time is a 4-year-old Hardy Kruger hen. This hen won 1st Section NFC Coutances as a young bird but has been lightly raced since, being used as a widowhood hen and just competing in the end of season old hen races. Until this year that is, when Dave decided to race a team on roundabout. She is bred from a direct pair of the original Kruger bloodlines purchased from Premier Lofts – the sire out of Ribery and the dam Vialli x Messi with this pair having now bred 3 x 1st section National winners and numerous other club winners. Dave first introduced these Krugers in 2014 from Premier lofts and supplemented these with directs from Hardy Kruger to cross into his Vandenabeeles to produce a team for these middle-distance races.

2nd North East Section, 257th Open, were Joanne & Alan Hacon of Great Yarmouth over 366 miles on 1209. Alan said, 'The pigeon, GB20H16371, is chequer w/f, who also took 3rd NE Section from Guernsey in 2023. The sire, a dark chequer, Herman Van Da Weyer hen won 8th Open, 5th NE Section BICC St Philbert 2020. The dam is a Busschaert, who's sire was 1st Fed Nevers. Well-done Dave Downing for coming first and thank you to Clayton for transporting the pigeons to the marking station.'

3rd North East Section, 274th Open was Jonathan Palmer of Ipswich over 334 miles on 1176. Jonathan explained that he has flown on the same system as last year, dry widowhood/chaos and the birds were not paired pre-season. He said, 'My bird is a full brother to my first bird from BICC St Philbert last year. The bird I timed this year was also my section winner from NFC Tarbes last year. I think this race should set him up nicely for something longer after flying 8hours 20 mins.'



Dave Downing



Alan Hacon



Jonathan Palmer

The Provisional North West Section Winners

1st North West Section, 37th Open was M & C Lee of Alfrick over 346 miles on 1528. Improving on his position from Alencon, Mickey reported that his section winner, GB20 Z35224 was a blue cock, sent unpaired this season. He is a Huberts x Jimmy lines purchased from a RPRA young bird sale in 2017. He sends congratulations to all winners and thanks to Mick Howard for transporting the birds to Gwent marking station.

2nd North West Section, 43rd Open, were Mr & Mrs W Lewis of Kempsey over 341 miles on 1523. Bill reported, 'Lightning strikes at last and we are able to send some details on our pigeon which won 2nd North West Section in the St Philbert race. May we start by congratulating our long-standing

friend Micky Lee who flies in partnership with his wife Chris as M & C Lee. It could not have happened to a nicer couple and Mick has had his hands full the last couple of years looking after Chris 24/7, which has restricted the time he can spend with the pigeons. Once again well-done Chappie let's hope you can do it again in the not-too-distant future.

Now on to our pigeon, he is a 2020 bred but has only been sent to Guernsey on the South as we had not signed up to fly from the Continent until this year, and what a lot of time and effort and paperwork it is. I am finding it more and more of a problem with my eye sight being limited because pigeon racing is 95% observation and 5% perspiration.

In the picture with the pigeon is an ex-pigeon fancier Keith Baldwin who I lost contact with over 50 years ago. His parents kept the Gas Tavern Public House and Keith kept pigeons there and the local pigeon club soon moved their HQ to the pub. They were allowed to erect a 40 X 12 feet wooden building with electricity to be used by the club for shows, meetings and sales. They were the good old days for sure. In our late teens Keith and I where great pals having a common interest in pigeons, cars, and the other 'birds'. They say a friend in need is a friend indeed and he certainly was the good Samaritan when I had a bad car accident. He helped me survive the trauma but we lost contact when we both started families, until he finally tracked me down via my brother about 6 months ago and I found out that he has been living in California in the US of A for the last 30 years having initially gone to the East Coast with the Morgan Motor Company to work on the cars as they were in great demand at the time in the Sunshine State. The Morgan Car company is still in operation in our birth town of Malvern, Worcestershire.

Back to pigeons and it seems that racing has become very erratic this year with large gaps between birds, we have experienced this in training with birds taking twice as long to come from training tosses and with birds returning with gaps in their wings and tail feathers missing. The same seems to be happening on race days, maybe raptors are scattering the pigeons which causes them to take detours to avoid being on the menu, like Russian Roulette. This did not happen years ago but there does not seem to be a great deal we can do about it, so that's life I suppose.

We will finish by saying how nice it was to be in the company of Mike Jackson at the BHW Gala Evening and Presentation in Blackpool where he showed how to party strutting his stuff on the dance floor. Keep up the good work as Press Officer of the BICC.'

3rd North West Section, 53rd Open was Martin Williams of Hereford over 340 miles on 1511. Martin said, 'Firstly congratulations to Lee Luscombe on his win. My 3rd Section winner is a two-year-old hen on the roundabout. Her breeding is my old family of Roodhooft x Sablon.'

As the race progressed, I had the feeling that I hadn't put the right birds in for a fast race. The only one that was suited to this race was this two-year-old hen. Even then, I did think it was asking too much of her as she went to Fougères with the BBC six days before. She was my first bird from there, taking 7th Section, 42nd Open provisionally. She flew 600 miles in six days. This line has been very consistent for me over the last few weeks, taking 1st Section BICC and 6th Section NFC. My returns were very good, having 15/16 home. '



The Provisional Top Ten Open Positions:

1st L Luscombe of Liskeard on 1631.225, 2nd Mr & Mrs M King of Blandford Forum on 1616.827, 3^{rs} Barry Nurse of Plymouth on 1615.947, 4th Lanahan & Gerard Loft 1 of Poole on 1607.062, 5th D & J Staddon of Ditchheat on 1604.766, 6th G Treharne & Son of Nantyglo on 1598.113, 7th Wearn Bros & Neilson of Ramsdean on 1594.621, 8th M Gilbert of Winkfield, Windsor on 1586.342, 9th Wojciech Blachut of Trowbridge on 1585.328, 10th Mr J M Fisher of Wimbourne on 1584.085.

Next Race

The next race is Nort Sur Edre on Saturday 6th June which will be a joint race with the BBC and CCFC. This race is also being sponsored by BENZING - Gantner Pigeon Systems GmbH, with a brand-new state of the art clocking system up for grabs.

After this, the International race programme kicks off with the first race from Pau on 21st June and remember, marking will take place at Sunbury and Southampton. Also, the next old bird National will take place from Guernsey on 6th July, the great Barcelona weekend.

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