

## **BICC Falaise National Race Report**

Following a weekend of glorious sunshine across much of the UK, where many fanciers were waiting for pigeons in their shorts, the British weather did what it does best and threw us a real curveball for the opening race in the BICC calendar. As the week wore on in the build-up to the weekend, the weather gods did not do much to promise us a good quality weekend.

As marking day loomed, it became apparent that Saturday was going to be the best day for a liberation and despite many local federations cancelling their inland racing, the BICC had made the decision that the race would go ahead as planned and marking commenced at the Wednesday stations of Evesham and Chirk, the newest station on offer for BICC fanciers.

Once the numbers had filtered through from the 17 marking stations we knew that 2,652 birds were making the trip down to Falaise, South of Caen and in a South Easterly direction from the Cherbourg Peninsula, in the Normandy region of France. One interesting fact about Falaise is that it was the birthplace of William the Conqueror, and the medieval feel still surrounds the town today.

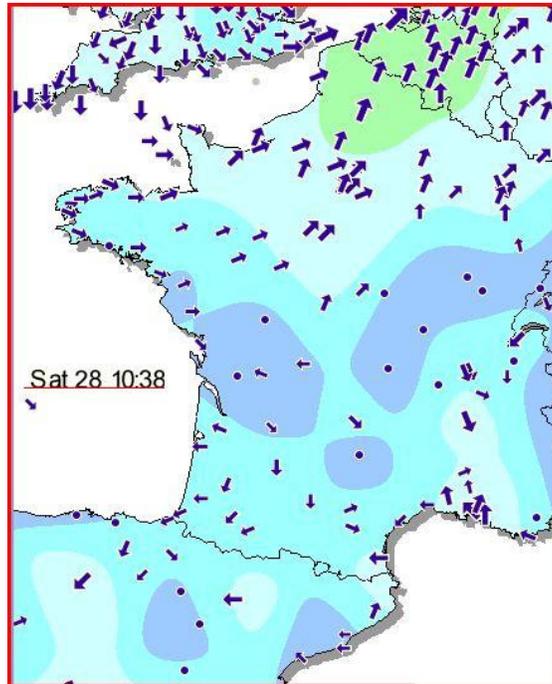
Due to the immense race programme we have within the BICC it was decided to divide the Press Officers role into two. Gareth Watkins had done a superb job of covering the full season, winners and all, along with the help of Chris Sutton. Now it is down to Chris and me to carry on the incredible work that Gareth put in over the seasons as the Press Officer for this great club. Our plan is to allow Chris to cover the winner in depth in the week after the race, along with publishing the initial Provisional result, with a full Race Report being seen a week later which I will put together with assistance from Chris in the photography stakes! This gives us time to get all the information together to put a substantial report in place and recognise those fanciers and pigeons which have made it towards the top of the standings in full detail. The reports will recognise the first 10 in the Open result and the first 3 fanciers in each Section. Please help and assist where possible when we are requesting information from you, the only way to get the recognition you deserve, and your pigeon deserves, is to supply the information we need to get it all together. So here we go.

Firstly a few words regarding the difficult decisions that had to be made regarding the liberation and the race itself, firstly from Steve Appleby, our weather adviser, and then from John Tyerman and Mark Gilbert, the Race Controllers.

### **WEATHER REPORT**

This first B.I.C.C race of the season saw less than ideal weather conditions. The main reason for this is the position of the jet stream which is responsible for the below average temperatures for this time of year, reaching only a maximum of 13C. Fortunately, a window of good weather opened up allowing liberation from Falaise. The satellite images showed broken cloud and sunshine at the race point, extending all the way to the French coastline. Most of southern England and the Midlands were under a blanket of cloud that persisted all day. Images from the rainfall radar showed some light rainfall, mainly in the Midlands. Heavy cloud was identified moving up from Southern France, threatening to lose the good weather conditions at the liberation site. Early on, the weather over the Channel was mainly cloudy with some blue sky and visibility soon improved 5 to 10 miles. You can see by the wind flow image that there were light westerly winds over Northern France whilst over the Channel they were light but more north-westerly affecting the centre, and changing to south-westerly over Dover area.

The convoyers Trevor and Steve were pleased to report a liberation sky at Falaise. Our Race Controllers John and Mark reviewed the overall situation and gave the go head for liberation at 8.15 am.



The Release

### **Race Advisors Report for Falaise National.**

With the first BICC National scheduled to be flown from Falaise on Saturday 28th April, all eyes were on the weather forecast and early indications were not good. Steve Appleby our weather advisor had been monitoring the charts very closely and both myself and Mark had lengthy conversations about the weather for the Falaise race. Although the unfavourable forecast affected the entry, members still mustered around 2600 birds and they were marked and collected at the various venues before both transporters arrived at Horndean

on Thursday evening en route to the Portsmouth/Caen overnight ferry. The birds arrived on site at Falaise early on Friday morning and were later fed and watered.

As members would have seen the weekend weather forecast was not good for several days but fortunately a window of opportunity arose around 8am on the Saturday morning when the sun broke through giving a liberation sky at Falaise. This window of good weather extended some 40 miles up to the coast at Caen and with no fog or rain in the channel a decision was made to liberate, after Steve had carefully consulted his weather charts. At 8:15 am the birds were liberated into blue skies and sunshine and they cleared well. Winds were shown as light SW in the channel and the first 3 winning pigeons were all recorded by member of the Eastbourne Club, so well done to them. Although the weather was not perfect in parts of the UK we had around 228 first bird verifications and returns overall seem to have been very good. Thanks to Sue Gore for the early morning weather and channel update in the Eastbourne area.

John Tyerman and Mark Gilbert  
BICC Race Advisors

One can only assume that the light South Westerly winds, coupled with the location of Falaise, allowed the Open Result to be dominated by the East Section with the first 9 verifications happening over that side.

### **OPEN**

As we know following Chris Sutton's excellent report last week, the winners of this first BICC National of the season, in **1<sup>st</sup> Open**, are the Daws of Eastbourne. Chris covered everything that you could possibly want from a **1<sup>st</sup> Open** report last week and the result for "Command Performer" was exceptional, well done to all concerned.

**2nd Open** is Douglas Grant, pipped on decimals for his second BICC win after a Guernsey success in a previous season. The hen trapped like a bullet says Douglas and he can have no complaints with the effort she put in to get home. Raced on a semi-roundabout system, the birds do not see the opposite sex all week and are simply left together for part of the day on return from each race. The hen in question has tacked the Channel before, going as far as Messac in 2017, and her breeding is a little bit of a mystery, having been bred by a club member who has now sadly passed away. What Douglas does know is that the influences of Jurgen and Caroline Josch are in the pigeon, which are two names you will read a little more about shortly.

**3rd Open** was taken by Fred Hutton of Eastbourne, and how's this for a lucky story, I'll let Fred explain.

"She was bred to go to the RPRA OLR in 2016, but I got the breeding times all wrong and she never went. She was trained but raced very little in 2016. She raced in 2017 and took a club card, until she was hit by a hawk and lost half of her tail that finished her for that year. She was paired in 2018 but I took no babies from her, as a cock got in her nest box, started fighting and broke her eggs. For this race I took her away from her cock for 4 days and she only seen him again when she came home from the Falaise race."

So, the pigeon that should be in a One Loft Race end up taking **3<sup>rd</sup> Open** for you in the first National Race of 2018, get your lottery numbers picked Fred! The sire to this hen was a

Janssen bred by Sue Baker of Brighton but killed by a hawk this year, and the dam was bred by Fred, through lines of Jurgen and Caroline Josch, through their South African One Loft race car winner. Interestingly the dam of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Open pigeon was Fred's 2<sup>nd</sup> bird home on the day, maybe you've struck gold there Fred?

A familiar face in the BICC results is Robbie Harris, he clocked a yearling to be **4<sup>th</sup> Open**. The pigeon was bred by John Chipperfield. On the sire's side, it is down from a superb Barcelona performer from the continent, 69<sup>th</sup> national from 13,161 birds, 79<sup>th</sup> National from 11,806 birds and 387<sup>th</sup> National from 13,021, all races from Barcelona! It was also 15<sup>th</sup> National St Vincent from 1,557 birds and 72<sup>nd</sup> National Perpignan from 8,041 birds. The dam of the pigeon is from I Roobol of Holland, another top distance man, winning 1<sup>st</sup> International Perpignan.

**5<sup>th</sup> Open** and continuing the East Section theme is Keith Weller, who clocked a wonderful looking blue cock as can be seen from the photographs. Keith sent me some incredible detail on the preparation of this pigeon for the Falaise race as can be seen below, and wanted to express his thanks for what the BICC is doing to facilitate these races.

"I would like to thank everyone who helps organise these races with the BICC for the great job they do, especially the race controllers. Not because they make the right call but because they have the courage to take on such a responsible task where they are often in a position where they are easily condemned if they do liberate and vice versa condemned if they don't. Also thanks to John Chipperfield and his dedicated team of helpers at the Chestfield Marking Station. Sometimes it seems as if John is undertaking half a dozen tasks at the same time. Many thanks to them all.

My winning pigeon is a bird bred down from a couple of birds I bought from The Ace Loft of Frank Zahra. He is quiet, medium sized bird who goes about his business in the loft paying little regard to me. That is until my hand enters his nest box. Then all hell can break loose and he becomes very defensive. If I remember correctly, as a young bird he had two short races. One of about 73 miles and another of 96 miles. As a yearling, he had four races up to roughly the 100-mile mark. This year he was ear marked for the BICC Falaise race and had two preparation races. The first from Bedhampton which is 73 miles to me, where he was my first bird back to the loft; the second race from Lyndhurst 96 miles where he was my third bird back to the loft. This year he has been flown on the widowhood system. On arrival home from Falaise, his first time across the water, on landing he stumbled and you could see immediately he had given everything he had got to get home as quickly as possible. I don't mind how tired they are on reaching home, to me that shows they have given all their best. However, I like them to recover as quickly as possible, which he did. And I am still, on this Monday morning, basking in his glory as I take the photograph of him in his nest box."

A very emotive description from Keith on the joys of clocking a great pigeon from a prestigious race.

**6<sup>th</sup> Open** is John Cowlin. A huge thanks to John Gladwin for sending me an email as below;

"John Cowlin's first pigeon is a Formula 1 lofts Frans Zwols and she is proving a top-class hen. As a youngster she won 8th Open Thames and 8th open BICC and this year as a yearling she has had 3 races winning 3rd and 5th club Hullbridge, and 4th and 5th open Thames before winning 6th Open BICC yesterday. She is direct from the ace breeding cock

“70” who is responsible for many winners and top performers at National, Classic and Combine level. “70” in turn is from the old lady 06/716 inbred to “Micky Boy” who is still breeding winners at 12 years old. The dam is another top breeding hen, “Argon Girl”, which is dam and grand-dam of many top pigeons for us and others.”

Well done to John C and thanks to John G again for helping me out with this!

**7<sup>th</sup> Open** are the Mahoney Brothers who provided me with the following information regarding their clock bird.

“As we haven't raced a young bird for the last six years, our pigeon had his first race as a yearling and he flew the channel 4 times last year gaining 9th Open East of England Continental Club (555 birds) in one of those races, this was his second race of this season.

His sire was bred by Steve Profit (UNC Convoyer) and was out of the “Paddy Cock”, 1st & 2nd Up North Combine, when he raced as Mahoney, Nixon & Profit. On the dam's side, she was bred by our brother Jim and was out of Planet Bros x Albert Babbington (Van Den Bosche) x Ron Williamson (grandson Heartbreaker X Daughter Heartbreaker).

We would like to congratulate everyone who got pigeons on this tough day, especially the various section winners.”

**8th Open** is J Burmby from Witham who sent 6 birds, scoring with a 2014 blue hen. Unfortunately, we have no contact details at all for Mr Burmby, if you would like to contact me we can certainly get the information of the pigeon and make sure it gets highlighted in future write-ups. We are doing our very best to recognise as many people as possible but it can be hard to track some people down! Remember, if you are one of the first 10 on the Provisional Result in the Open, or in the first 3 in the Section then please get in touch so that we can put the information together.

**9<sup>th</sup> Open** is Dennis Brown of Dover, a BICC hotbed. I was delighted to hear that the prize-winning hen is a Jan Aarden x Kenyon, some real old distance lines coming to the fore in a sprint race at the end of April, just shows what some of the older blood can do! The hen had been to Bedhampton this season already and is raced on a semi-widowhood/roundabout type system. This race is part of the standard season for the hen and all being well she will be marked for Alencon with the BICC in the coming weeks. She is very keen to get back to her cock and despite the temptation Dennis resisted basketing her the week after Falaise, favouring a return to the Channel at Alencon. Dennis races with his local club and the BICC, he actually had a better race from Falaise this week than he did with the local Federation inland, this appears to have been the case in a lot of the country on this strange weekend for racing.

**10<sup>th</sup> Open** and **1<sup>st</sup> Centre Section** are D & J Novis of Brighton. Their 3-year-old widowhood cock is part of a team of 12 widowhood cocks that are specifically for Channel racing with the BICC, the BBC and the local South Coast Federation. Raced on a traditional widowhood system with no break-down, the cock reared a single youngster before going onto widowhood. It was then simply 4/5 tosses before racing, 1 or 2 more in-between the first

couple of races but the week before Falaise was the first week that the team had no tosses and then this happened, so no more training for now! Out of 5 sent James tells me that he is now just 1 short. The next plan is a bit of rest for the team and then back with the BICC to Alencon.

### EAST SECTION

As we mentioned earlier on in this report, the race had a very Easterly feel to it and the Top 3 scoring fanciers in the Open all came from the East Section, so we have already covered all of this.



3rd East Section and 3rd Open Falaise for Fred Hutton



Keith Weller 5th East Section and 5th Open Falaise pigeon

### CENTRE SECTION

**1<sup>st</sup> Place** in the section was D & J Novis who picked up 10<sup>th</sup> Open and their details are mentioned above in the Open highlights.

In **2<sup>nd</sup> Place** in the Centre Section are L & M Dyer, I am indebted to Guy Reed for sending this information over to me.

“Here is a brief report on the winners of 2nd Centre Section from the BICC’s first National of the season from Falaise. This dedicated and deserved winning partnership L & M Dyer of Nettlestone achieved a velocity of 1318 YPM, with their blue bar hen bred in the loft from birds off local fanciers. The sire was from G Rann, from a son of Southfield Supreme x a Gdt of Joe Rayburns Champion Gwen, and the dam via Dave Green. This result was a much-needed boost after Lee discovered a fox had broken into his stock loft in the early hours of Saturday morning, resulting in the destruction of several birds.”

Keep your chins up lads, a great result on a testing day, hopefully goes some way to removing some of the pain you must have felt looking into the lofts on Saturday morning.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place** in the Centre Section was Mr Jackson, unfortunately the contact numbers that we have for Mr Jackson aren’t correct and we have endeavoured to get some details. So, if you are reading this Mr Jackson, please give me a call on 07375 463263 and we can give your pigeon the recognition that it deserves. What is that it was 2-year-old chequer cock, one of an 8 strong team sent by the man from Brighton.



James holding 1st Centre Section and 10th Open BICC Falaise

### **WEST SECTION**

With the wind against them, it was always going to be a tough day out into the West of the club, and so it proved with just the first 4 verifications breaking 1100YPM. In **1<sup>st</sup> place** is Peter Atherton of Portishead, timing a 2-year-old hen at 212 miles. I’ll let Peter tell you a little more about the hen;

“This hen is flown on roundabout, she is let in with her cock night before basketing. She is fed Versele-Laga and Matador corn. Her mother won the section with BICC from Poitiers in 2015. She has had 2 races this season Lyndhurst & Bedhampton with the West of England South Road Combine. I would like to thank Jackie Stone for sending the details in for me.”



Peter Atherton 1st West Section Falaise 2018



**2<sup>nd</sup> place** on the result goes to Geoff and Catherine Cooper of Peasedown St John. No major introductions needed here. A massive thanks to Catherine for sending over this information for us;

“We had four drop together after flying 194 miles and all on the same minute. The first pigeon clocked is a two-year-old widowhood cock. His sire is a son of Farmer George, 1st International Bordeaux, and his dam is a half-sister to one of our top racers, Farm Boomerang, who arrived at the same time as this cock. All the birds had two training tosses of around 20 miles, then two inland races of 45 and 69 miles before being basketed for Falaise. Now, they are being exercised once a day but weather permitting they will now be going out twice a day. Thanks to John Tyerman and Mark Gilbert for doing a difficult job this weekend.”

A “Geoff and Catherine Special” followed up from here with the next 3 positions all being claimed by the Peasedown St John outfit. So, the final result for Geoff and Catherine shows them taking **2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> Section.**

Catherine again gives a summary of the 4 birds which dropped together on this testing day for the West Section

“Four birds all landed together, racing well to the loft, likely to be 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> section. Of the four birds, two were grandsons of “Farmer George” 1<sup>st</sup> International Bordeaux and two were grandsons of “George” 1<sup>st</sup> NFC Tarbes.

Anyone of them could have been first but only one can be and the first clocked was a two-year-old cock whose sire is a son of “Farmer George”, 1<sup>st</sup> International Bordeaux when paired to a daughter of “George” 1<sup>st</sup> NFC Tarbes. His dam is a half-sister to Farm Boomerang who is an excellent racer for us.

The second bird on the clock is another two-year-old cock, the sire is a son of Brockamp's Marseille 09, 1<sup>st</sup> International Marseille, the dam is a daughter of “George” 1<sup>st</sup> NFC Tarbes she is also a half-sister to “Carla Page” 16<sup>th</sup> International Pau.

Third on the clock is a four-year-old cock called “Farm Boomerang”. He has been a consistent racer, being in the top few of the section many times from the International races and twice having won the Greater Distance Single Bird nomination race from Agen International. Boomerang's sire is “Euro Star” and his dam is a daughter of “George” 1<sup>st</sup> NFC Tarbes.

Fourth timed was a three-year-old cock, his sire is son of “Farmer George” 1<sup>st</sup> International Bordeaux and his dam is a daughter of “Misty”, another top racer winning several top 10 National prizes including 1<sup>st</sup> Section St Vincent.”

**3<sup>rd</sup> fanciers** to clock in the West Section and in **6<sup>th</sup> Place** in the Section are Dickinson and Newton of Locking. The blue cock was clocked just after 1:30pm and recorded 1143 YPM, the partnership tells us a little more here;

“This bird was bred by Dave Vowels of Street. He was sent to this race driving to nest, in preparation for this race he had 2 inland club races from approximately 60 miles. As a young bird he won 17th section G 134th Open NFC Coutances and as a yearling he was the first bird to the loft from both BICC Poitiers races.”



3rd and 5th West Section Falaise and Coco the Dog



Geoff and Catherine Coopers 2nd West Section Falaise 2018



Farm Boomerang - 4th West Section Falaise



John Harris Phil Newton Steve Dickinson 6th West Section Falaise

## NORTH EAST SECTION

Up into the Northern Sections and the North East Section proved to be real battle, with just one bird breaking through 1000 YPM. The **1<sup>st</sup> Place** bird belongs to Steve Surrey of Wisbech, a gallant 2-year-old dark cock that Steve gives us a brief overview of here.

“Walter Docx pigeon. The sire was given to me by Ray Brown of Darlington. The dam is bred by McCardle and Archibald of Liverpool and is the dam of many club and federation winners. This cock having only his 2<sup>nd</sup> race of the season, flying 261 miles.”

An amazing pigeon and Steve should be really congratulated for being brave, sending the cock on such a weekend in his 2<sup>nd</sup> race of the season, Steve must really know his birds.

Mr and Mrs Barker of Great Yarmouth clocked a 2014 hen to be **2<sup>nd</sup> Place** in the Section and here is what they have to say about this game hen.

“This 2014 Blue Chequer Hen was bred by us from a pair of long distance youngsters purchased the previous year from Wignall/Barnie of Denton, Manchester. In 2016 she flew Clermont and Le Mans and in 2017 she flew Falaise, Poitiers and Agen with all races homed on the day except for Agen when she was late. For this Falaise race she was entered on the natural system sitting 19-day old pot eggs and put up a gallant performance to endure the conditions on the day for the longer distance fliers.

We would like to thank the Ness Point marking station, R Saunders for taking the pigeons to Diss and G Debbage and A Batterbee from Browston Hall F.C. for setting and checking the clock.”

Nice to see some natural hens putting up performances like this against the mass of widowhood flyers we now seem to have around.

In **3<sup>rd</sup> Place** in the North-East Section is the Cook and Taylor partnership. This blue hen was sent on roundabout and is no stranger to the limelight as she is previously a winner of 1<sup>st</sup> Section Countances in the NFC Old Hens race. A Soontjen pigeon, she was bought as a youngster from a breeder buyer sale and is bred by Dudley Holmes.

## NORTH CENTRE SECTION

Topping the section in the NC is Paul Loom of Wyboston, a very pleasing day no doubt for Paul and you will find out why in a moment, Paul tells us a little here about his **1<sup>st</sup> Place** bird.

“This pigeon has always been there in the back ground but has really started to come into his own. He is paired to my double section winner who has now been retired and the cock flew home to two youngsters (let’s see how the youngsters do this season).

Really didn't think I would do this well this year, due to losing the main partner in the B&P partnership."

Well it hasn't started too bad at all Paul! God luck at Alencon, can you nail the double?



Paul Loom 1st North Centre Section Falaise

Always a familiar face in the BICC results for the North Centre Section, John Black of Hitchin, clocking a three-year-old pigeon to be **2<sup>nd</sup> Place**. John sent me through this information about the bird.

"Morning John, my name is John Black and I fly in the NC section. The bird I got from Falaise is a three-year-old Dark chequer widowhood cock bred by Paul Loom of Wyboston, he's been a consistent bird for me with several top ten section positions in National races over the years. I'd like to congratulate all section winner, especially Paul Loom on winning the NC section and for breeding my 2nd section winner, it wasn't an easy day for us up in the NC section as we had rain all day but pigeons being pigeons, some still got home let's hope we see some more on Sunday."

What a great day for Paul, clocking the Section winner himself and breeding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section winner!



John Black 2nd North Centre Section Falaise

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place** in the NC goes to a fancier close to myself, Tim Collier over in Coventry. When I spoke with Tim he said that this 2013 widowhood cock was a bit of an “old plodder” but he was very glad to see him arrive on Saturday! Tim feels it was a solid decision to get the birds up and away on Saturday as he thinks it could have been a little sticky for the rest of the week. Tim has 3 back from 6 but we both discussed the fact that we can all see the forecast and we all knew that it was going to be a very testing weekend, ultimately, it’s our choice whether we send or not. Tim was in hospital earlier this year and had purchased a lot of Versele-Laga young bird corn, and that’s exactly what this cock has been raced on, maybe a new feeding system for your old birds now Tim! Bred down from an old family of birds from Bill Underwood of Kenilworth, the birds in the Collier loft have a big ask as they go to the first BICC race after just two inland races from Bath under their belts, it should certainly find the good ones, and maybe the odd “old plodder” which can sometimes be needed in races like this!



Delighted Tim Collier with 3rd North Centre Section Falaise

## NORTH WEST SECTION

Surely one of the more challenging areas for clocking pigeons on a weekend like this was the North West Section? Well try telling that to the partnership of Booth and Roper, **1<sup>st</sup> Place** in NW Section, flying 232 miles. The information that follows came direct from John himself.

“We originally had decided not to send. The weather outlook was awful and marking at Evesham was Wednesday night. But on Thursday morning the decision to send after all was taken, so we rang June Mears to let her know we were on our way to the Newport marking station. The first pigeon was a chequer white flight cock bred from Biss /Jan Aarden lines. This bird has been very consistent for the us. He is a pigeon that is very well regarded by us and his grand dam was a good hen in MNFC races gaining top 100 placings from Tours and Bordeaux. Seven out of ten birds were home on the day, one home the next morning. We would like to thank everyone at Newport marking station for their help and efficiency.”

Superb returns flying over to Tewkesbury, I am sure this is what can happen when a fancier puts his or her mind to it that they are going to really try and compete in National racing. Keep on sending, keep on trying and eventually the good ones will start to come through to give you a reliable team of pigeons at the top level. It's not easy, it needs patience, but I am sure it will come.



Booth and Roper 1st North West Section Falaise

In **2<sup>nd</sup> Place** are M & C Lee of Worcester, flying 245 miles. They sent 7 and only had 1 on the day on what was by all accounts a freezing cold day down in Worcester, but have had another 4 work in during Sunday. The one that did come is a real stalwart, having been 20<sup>th</sup> Section NFC Tarbes in 2016 and flying from Tarbes in 2017. The plan is to try and get him back there this year but as we know, with hawk issues and so forth, that is easier said than done! The partnership has lost 3 to hawks this year already. Due to having too many pigeons and being a little behind in breeding, the race cocks have just been raced celibate this year, flying to their nest boxes, with the young bird team just coming from the stock birds. The cock that is 2<sup>nd</sup> Section comes from Martin Williams of Hereford, his Jan Huybrechts pigeons being a major influence in the cock's pedigree.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place** in this section is somewhat of a milestone, the first pigeon clocked from The Eclipse Club which is being supported by the Chirk Marking Station. I am indebted to Alan Shinton for sending this information over to me.

“Hi John, this is some information about Craig’s two-year-old chequer pied hen. She took some minor club cards as a young bird and as a yearling this hen took 19th Section J 134th Open Old Hens Coutances in the NFC.

This was the first-time Craig has ever sent with the BICC, having joined the new Eclipse 650 club and taking advantage of the new marking station which has encouraged people like Craig to have go at these purist nationals.

As he doesn’t have ETS Craig spent his afternoon hovering between his conservatory and his loft, keeping an eye on the early times as they were updated on the internet. Seeing the two early times in the NW section in Tewksbury and Worcester Craig knew an estimated time when he could expect them to arrive.

He was fortunate to be at the loft when the hen appeared, rather low, and trapped, timing her in and then verifying to see his position appear on the first update to record a provisional third NW section and first inaugural Eclipse 650 club. The hen was paired on March 5th, allowed to sit for ten days before removing her and the eggs and putting his birds on the roundabout system which meant she didn’t rear any youngsters.

Prior to going to Falaise she had two tosses and one 88-mile race and then sent to the BICC. Her dam is from a pair of pigeons that Craig purchased off the internet direct from Alwyn Hill, the cock was bought from Gavin Graham of Cumbria and is believed to be along the lines of “Islas Rainy Day Boy” distance pigeons when crossed with Alwyn Hill pigeons.”

And there we have it, the first BICC success for the Eclipse fanciers, long may it continue!



Craig and Son Tommy holding the 3rd NW Section Falaise pigeon



3rd NW Section BICC Falaise for Mr C Gough

Finally, I strongly believe that the pigeon of Hourihan and Crowder of Croxteth deserves some recognition. Finishing in **4<sup>th</sup> Section, 324<sup>th</sup> Open**, this game 5-year-old blue cock was clocked after just over 10 hours on the wing to be the furthest flying pigeon clocked on the day. Again, Alan Shinton provides the information for me.

“Paul Hourihan is 4th NW Section BICC and 2nd Eclipse Club with longest flying bird timed on the day. The pigeon is a blue cock, GB 13F 41999. He was broken out from Paul’s old loft in 2013 and he was his 2013 best young bird winning a Hereford mid-week race and scoring on three other separate occasions between midweek and Saturday racing. Having moved him along with nine other yearlings to the new loft they were all raced inland without worrying the judge. The ten were then all sent on the channel a total of six races from Fougères out to Niort as yearlings. This blue cock timed in every race and never had a night out but only scored a prize from Fougères which was 3rd club 20th Amalgamation. The following year as a two-year-old he would score three times which included winning the club from Monmouth and taking 2 Amalgamation positions.

To date this cock has been 13 times across the channel and has never yet had a night out. His sire is a direct son of “Gallileo”, (out of the young couple) and his dam is a granddaughter of Gaby Vandebéele’s “WittenBulk”.

What an impressive CV that cock has got Paul! 13 times across the Channel is no mean feat for any pigeon, let alone up into the Liverpool area.

Well done to all who clocked on an immensely difficult day for pigeon racing. We can only hope and pray for better weather and improved racing conditions in the coming weeks. Nevertheless, there were still some stellar performances which have been documented here as you can see, and no doubt there will be many more gallant efforts from our feathered friends in the BICC Nationals to come, as well as the International races which aren’t all that far away! Alençon awaits this coming weekend, a solid race point for fanciers to have a go at and hopefully the conditions hold fine as they have done for the Bank Holiday weekend.

Just a couple of housekeeping issues to finish off this first race report for the new season. Firstly, when it comes to verifying your first bird, can you please verify either online OR on the lib-line number, but not on both! It causes massive confusion for Carol Francis, our hard-working secretary, and her helpers that she sometimes has on board, and we want to make

Carol's job as easy as possible so she can concentrate on what she does best, which is provide you all with a swift result.

Secondly, it has been noted that at the South Ockendon marking station it has been very difficult when loading all the pigeons onto the transporter. The station can get very busy and there have not been enough people hanging on and helping out when the transporter arrives. The team at Ockendon offer a superb service and I can assure you they are immensely passionate about the BICC and providing members in that area with an opportunity to send their birds, so why not hang on, have a chat with the guys and girls and give them a hand. Many hands make light work!

All that is left for me to say is congratulations to all the prize-winners, especially those clocking into the more difficult areas of the country on such a testing day. I hope this race report lives up to expectation, following several years of superb reporting from Gareth Watkins. As always, Chris Sutton and I are on hand to give YOUR successful birds the credit they deserve. The better the information that is supplied to us, the better the report. Take a look at the write-ups for Craig Gough and Hourihan & Crowder, they are brilliant! I cannot take any of the credit, it was all down to Alan Shinton as I mentioned. Why not ask someone in your local area to come and out something together to send into us if you have a stellar pigeon, someone with a bit of flair, then we can keep on improving these reports as the season progresses. I will always try my best to get the very best information onto paper and I am sure it will improve when I get to know you all better, but if you do have someone who can assist and add that little bit of a personal touch, it goes a long way.

Good Luck to everybody at Alencon, I look forward to speaking with many of you over the next couple of weeks.

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