

BICC Agen International Race Report

Agen has long been a successful hunting ground for the British Section of the International and it remains one of the best supported International races across the UK and indeed the continent. Situated between the French powerhouse cities of Toulouse and Bordeaux, and around 50 miles North of Tarbes, the French racepoint has become more recognised as a true International racepoint with each year that passes.

A huge amount of birds were basketed for this year's edition of the Agen International, just shy of 25,000 in fact. This was very slightly down on last year and encompassed birds from France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and of course the UK contingent, of which there was close to 700 birds. With a beautiful forecast up through France, the Agen birds were liberated into blue skies with easterly and north easterly winds forecasted for the race-course, again giving hope to the UK fanciers that today could be "their day."

The NFC Tarbes race was liberated around the same sort of time, but it appears the Agen birds got much the better of things, whether this is down to the assistance of the convoy or some other reasons nobody will ever know I guess? So, whilst the International as not to be conquered this time by a flyer from these shores, the returns were solid, and a fascinating race ensued. Some stellar performances will be witnessed in these next few pages so grab a coffee, maybe some biscuits, and enjoy reading about some of the most fascinating subjects in the UK pigeon world, International race performers.

In true World Cup fashion Mark Gilbert nailed the hat-trick! Three BICC victories on the bounce, what an unbelievable achievement. A tough Poitiers race followed 2 weeks later by the British Section for the Pau International and now Agen, what a true giant of the sport! As always, we look at the other super results achieved by the flyers on these shores.

BRITISH SECTION OPEN

2nd Open and 2nd Centre Section goes to Tony Hounsell. A great race for Tony and he tells us of the preparation and the breeding of his game hen.

"I would like to say a big well done to Mark Gilbert on another fantastic win. Also, all those people that timed in and the hard-working team at the Ash marking station, and especially George Willett for taking me to Ash.

My first pigeon was flown on a jealousy system and last year she came 7 days late from NFC Tarbes and she had been hawked. She had 3 races this year with the BICC before going to Agen, namely Alencon, Cholet and Poitiers, being my second bird in the clock each time. Her breeding is from my Cattrysse family and I've named her Evie after my granddaughter who was eight on Sunday, she loves helping me with the birds!

My second pigeon is a Van Wanroy of Black Giant lines, she had a couple of races with the NFC before going to Agen on roundabout. I would like to say well done to my ex-club mates Jimmy Wearn & Eric Neilson on winning Tarbes National and Ritchie Thomas who was 6th Open, 3rd Section on a very hard race.”

Keep Evie interested Tony, she could be the next International superstar on the pigeon scene with a bit of luck!

With the Centre Section and the East Section sharing the first 10 places in the Open, there was always a good chance that Mark Gilbert would score another place or two at least, and two it was! As well as taking the first prize Mark also clocked two other birds in the Top 10 to take **3rd Open, 3rd Centre Section, and 7th Open, 4th Centre Section.**

I had a chat with Mark and he tells me that the second pigeon he clocked from Agen, now 5 years old, is $\frac{3}{4}$ Brockamp and $\frac{1}{4}$ of his own Southfield Supreme lines, blood will tell as they say! This pigeon has now secured a Merit Award we believe, for being 3 times in the First 15 of the British Section in International races, what a pigeon.

Next up for Mark was a 2-year-old blue cock which is a Grandson of the famous Starlight. This cock was at NFC Tarbes as a yearling and has now announced himself on the International race scene, I'm sure Mark will be expecting much more from this boy in the future.

4th Open, 1st East Section, and 8th Open, 4th East Section, back in the top positions for the 2nd International race on the bounce is David Hales. I briefly managed to speak with David whilst he was waiting for Barcelona but needed to catch up with his friend Duncan who is a massive asset to the Hales loft. Unfortunately the contact details I have for Duncan did not work and I hope to get this resolved in the coming weeks.

5th Open, 2nd East Section is Barrie Myhill of Dover, a hot-bed of International racers. Barrie tells me that this pigeon was denied his hen for a couple of weeks prior to going to Agen and before basketing was allowed with another hen, this certainly seems to have done the trick! A Jan Aarden pigeon, the parents were purchased from the House of Aarden, he was raced on a semi-roundabout system and had two inland races prior to going over the Channel with the East of England Championship Club. Then it was off to Agen to win 5th Open, great result from solid preparation.

6th Open, 3rd East Section and again in the International frame is Dean Childs of Wickford, flying 532 miles with a 2-year-old that has already had some work this year as Dean will tell you about now.

“My first pigeon which is 3rd Section and 6th Open in the British Section from Agen was bred from my number 1 stock pair, Chalice King and Chalice Queen.

This pair are already responsible for breeding 1st National St Vincent, 4th National Poitiers, 23rd National Poitiers and now 6th National Agen! Chalice King also is the father of last year's Pau National winner for me Chalice Darcey!!!

This hen now named Chalice Olive had already had 5 Channel races this year in preparation for Agen and was sent looking at her cock bird."

Wrap that pair up in cotton wool mate, you don't get many like that in a lifetime so cherish every single one you get. Superb flying again from Dean who has really hit the big time in the last couple of years.

9th Open and 5th Centre Section are Mr and Mrs Kendal of Wantage. I spoke with Paul for a few minutes and discussed his Agen pigeon in detail. When speaking with legends of the sport, with Paul having raced for 55 years he certainly knows his stuff, it really does get the cogs turning, we know so little about these birds really don't we! And I think the man or woman that can find out just 1% more than the rest of us has a huge advantage and good luck to them, they deserve it for outing the efforts in. Anyway, Paul tells me that the 5-year-old dark cheq widowhood cock that came for them has previous form from places such as Messac here he won 1st Club, 1st Federation, so clearly no slouch. This year he had one inland race, Carentan with the federation, Cholet with the BICC and Ancenis with the NFC. Raced on a widowhood/roundabout method, to top it off the cock is a son of the Kendals NFC Tarbes Winner! There you go, all in one. A superbly bred pigeon, raced by extremely good fanciers, given the chance to shine and develop, then put into the International arena to do the business, simple!

10th Open, 5th East Section is Bill Knox, flying under SR and WH Knox. Bill is passionate beyond belief about the BICC and its always great to report on these men and women that work so hard to make sure the club runs as well as it does. I got some quality information from Bill, as highlighted below.

"Hi John,

The pigeon is called "Second Chance" and is so named as she was lost on her first toss as a young bird and returned to me 9 months later in prime condition. I assumed some kind soul had been looking after her! Her results since that time have been as follows;

2014 Flew Lillers, Canappeville, Pithivers and St Vincent

2015 Flew Boves, Pithivers, Agen where she was 107th Open and Marseilles where she was 7th Open BICC

2016 Flew Boves, Pithivers and Marseilles where she was 8th Open BICC

2017 Flew Boves, Fonteney, Agen where she again scored, 55th Open BICC and Marseilles

2018 She has flown Canappeville twice and now Agen, taking 10th Open

If she lays in time I shall send her to Marseilles. Her picture is in the 2016 handbook as part of the Europa cup team. She has always been raced natural and was sent to Agen with a 10-day youngster. She is always very keen in this condition and she is bred down from my old,

predominately Kirkpatrick family. As far as feeding is concerned I feed Vanrobaeys four season at £9.95 for 20kg and tic beans at £7.25 for 25kg so each 20kg works out at £8 and this is hopper fed.”

CENTRE and EAST SECTIONS

The first 3 in each section in the Centre and East Sections have already been covered within the open result of the British Section so we will move on to the other sections. It is extremely pleasing to say that birds were clocked in all other sections, including the three Northern Sections. These are not easy races at all so to get pigeons in race time shows the character and commitment of both the pigeon and the fancier, there aren't any duffers get through!

WEST SECTION

The West Section has seen several names crop up on a regular basis this year, some real big-hitters in the UK pigeon world. It is surely one of the most competitive areas for long distance International racing in the UK. You will see from the first three fanciers who clocked into the West Section that we are talking about real household names.

In **1st Section, 11th Open** are the team of Brooks Brothers and Wilcox. It's been a super year for the partnership so far and I have had my fair share of reporting on them in the first few BICC races, it doesn't seem to be slowing down at all. I guess when you put top fanciers like this all together in the mix then you'd like to think that some top results are going to come through, and recently they certainly have. Stuart Wilcox has been spot on with the information he has been supplying so far this season and I was not left disappointed as this info came through for me.

“We timed a two-year-old cock now called “Mendip Joshua” for our first section win as Brooks Brothers and Wilcox from Agen. Joshua had a pretty low key first two seasons however in the last 6 weeks he has hit top form winning 19th Open BICC Cholet, 26th Open BICC Poitiers and now 11th Open Agen. He is classically bred, his sire is down from Isla's Rainy Day Boy 1st International Pau and his dam was 2nd Section Agen in 2017 and she is bred down from Shapway Annie, 1st Open BICC Carentan and Farm Boy, both parents came courtesy of friends Dave and John Staddon. We sent 3 and had 2 in good time, both returning in excellent condition.”

Well, having been influential in the breeding of the Section winner, I guess it was only fair that the Staddon duo got their own moment in the spotlight over in the West Section. So **2nd Section, 14th Open** is a yearling from D and J Staddon. And it wasn't there only yearling as Dave tells us here!

"We are delighted with our bird's performance in this prestigious international race. At our number 2 loft at my house, we only have yearlings in the old bird race team this season. We entered 12 and were delighted to time 5 on the winning day in a very, very hard race. We look like winning 2nd, 4th, 8th, 9th & 11th section 14th, 23rd, 31st, 40th & 52nd Open all with yearlings.

All birds were sent on chaos widowhood and despite the hard race all were in terrific condition and could have easily flown on which is a positive sign for the future. Our first bird was a blue hen bred from a son of Mark Bulled's Legacy when paired to a daughter of Bill & Beryl Lewis's 6 times Tarbes Champion Freelands Gem.

Our 2nd bird a chequer hen who previously won 13th Open BICC Poitiers and is bred from two birds we bred ourselves for stock. The sire is bred from a son of Legacy paired to a daughter of Freelands Gem, the dam is bred from a son of Freelands Gem paired to a daughter of Legacy. So, inbred to these two Tarbes Champions.

Our third hen is bred from a son of Freelands Gem when paired to our best Mark Gilbert hen Rosie. She is the dam of G-Force & Evie, 20th, 22nd, 42nd, 82nd Tarbes NFC 3rd Open Saintes NFC 1st sec BBC Bordeaux etc.

Our 4th bird a dark chequer cock is bred from Winter Gem bred by Barry & Pete Winter. He is from Pearler a full brother of Little Gem 1st NFC Tarbes. Winter Gem a full brother to 8th & 42nd NFC Tarbes at over 700 miles. The dam was bred by ourselves and is a full sister to John's Joy 2nd Sec 10th Open Tarbes NFC on the day flying 15 hours 21 mins on the wing.

Our 5th bird a red hen is bred from a gift bird from our pal Andy Parsons from his very best Tarbes pigeons when paired onto a daughter of our own G-Force and Gina-G.

At the time of writing, we still have 5/12 but we are hopeful more will return when the heat drops. Congratulations to our great pal Mark Gilbert on another sensational national winner, Poitiers, Pau & Agen nationals all won for this master fancier in 2018.....don't let the knockers grind you down Mark. Well done to all section winners especially Brooks Bros & Wilcox who won our section with a bird bred by Rob from our bloodlines and also Dave (Fine Arts) Young who won 7th Section with a bird we bred for him. All in all, a very good day at the office."

And yet more big-hitters are in **3rd Section, also claiming 16th Open**, Geoff and Catherine Cooper. Geoff and Catherine clocked a two-year-old chequer white flight cock who is a full brother to the hen which won 2nd section Pau International last week. The sire is a son of Mark Gilbert's Marseille cock and the dam is very good breeding, daughter of George 1st Grand National Tarbes who is responsible for many top winners. Flown widowhood he has had all BICC National races where he has always been consistent. Catherine tells me he has previously won club and combine positions.

NORTH EAST SECTION

A familiar name at the top of the tree over in the North East Section, A&T Wright securing the Section win with the only bird in race time in the Section. Strong supporters of the International races within the BICC, the pairing are winners of British Section Marseilles in recent times and continue to put up string results in these tough races. Allan tells me that this pigeon is a half-brother to the Marseilles winner and the breeding of the pigeon is a sire which is a Freialdenhofen pigeon and the dam which is a Guy Baerts pigeon. The cock has been across the Channel three times already this year and has now gone and put up this gallant performance from Agen.

NORTH CENTRE SECTION

Reporting on the winner of this Section fills with me a sense of happiness and encouragement, as John Black clocks again for **1st North Centre Section** in an International race, just a week after doing the same thing from Pau! John sent me these few lines confirming the details of the pigeon.

“The bird I got for Agen was a two-year-old Grizzle cock sent sitting ten-day old eggs, Sire is a 2011 Grizzle from Marley Westrop gifted to me as a baby for Catherine, Marley new she liked Grizzles. The Dam is a Blue pied bred by Johnny Chipperfield in Kent.”

I’m not sure I’ll be reporting on John for the Barcelona race but may well be having another chat with him for the Le Mans National which is taking place on the same weekend. Hope I haven’t jinxed that now John!

2nd Section is Mr and Mrs Smith, I am grateful to Russell Bradford for sending me over the following information.

“We were delighted to time from the Agen International, a distance of 584 miles, with our four-year-old cheq pied hen sitting 14 days. She had flown Bedhampton & Poole with the local club and then Cholet with the BICC. The hen is a Kipp cross Meritman pigeon, with the Kipp Sire from Mr. K. Burton of Spalding and the Dam is Geoff Cooper lines via Graham Groom of Burton Latimer.”

When pigeons are clocked from races like this less than 30 miles way from your own front door, which is the case for me, it certainly gets the juices flowing, maybe one day!

NORTH WEST SECTION

The North West Section continues to go from strength to strength, in no small part due to the efforts of the Eclipse 650 Club, with men like Alan Shinton and Cliff Davenport amongst many others really putting in the hard graft to allow these members to get their birds into these prestigious events. The best thing of all without doubt is the amount of success that has come their way in such a short space of time! And Agen has been no difference with

Steve Parkinson taking the honours of **1st North West Section**. I managed to get the highlights of Steve's performance on email via Alan Shinton.

"He is a small dark cheq cock GB15N04625 and he started the season on roundabout with 3 inland races with my local club Crewe Premier, then his first channel race was from Alencon with Eclipse 650 in the BICC, followed by a hard Cholet race with Eclipse 650, again in the BICC. Then into Agen International which is my first International race. He was bred by myself from Padfield brothers stock, a son of the St Vincent, paired to a sister of my Tarbes section L winner 2017. I again would like to thank the organisation of the Eclipse 650 club officials and members who have enabled myself and others to attempt international racing. I congratulate all members who took part another hard race."

Having now reported on two International races, the sense of achievement felt by some of these flyers, regardless of their previous pedigree in these races, is beyond description. 25,000 pigeons in this race.....just let that sink in for a moment.... With I guess around 90% of the convoy heading up in to Belgium, Holland and Germany. It's quite incredible when we hear of people clocking pigeons into the UK, I think we do take it for granted somewhat now. After several International it seems to be a little "normal" now for people to clock from an International, but that shouldn't be the case. Each and every one of these birds that has made it into the clock, whether that is Mark Gilbert's winner or Steve Parkinson's "lone soldier" up into Crewe, should be equally applauded and congratulated on their efforts, as should the men and women who have prepared them!

By the time you read this report the greatest race on the continent, Barcelona International, will have been and gone, and no doubt some superstars will have been unearthed, both in Europe and hopefully here into the UK as well!

Keep those wings beating and keep the sun cream slapped on, it's going to be a scorcher for the next few weeks, let's see which fanciers are most "on fire" come the end of July when we will start to wrap up proceedings for the old bird season.

John Ghent

Joint Press Officer BICC