

NEHU Clermont Queens Cup 06/06/2009
Provisional Top Ten – 15,270 pigeons

Sponsored by Bamfords Top Flight, South Tyneside District Council, Unikon & the
Grimley Family of Spennymoor.

1. P Stobbs & Son	Medomsley	- 1376.40
2. D Blakey	Trimdon Village & Fishburn	- 1372.62
3. Harper, Son & Fenwick	Wheatley Hill	- 1368.59
4. Burton & Son	Wallsend Central	- 1366.14
5. C Clarke	Trimdon Village & Fishburn	- 1364.01
6. N Cadman	Railway Institute	- 1362.74
7. Snowdon, Son & Spence	Tow Law	- 1362.73
8. G, T, & E Ingledeew	Coxhoe	- 1361.65
9. J Ward	Craghead	- 1355.30
10. F Richardson	Croft	- 1354.70

Since it was first flown for in 1963 the Queens Cup has always been keenly contested by the membership of the NEHU and 2009 was no exception. The members of the NEHU sent a total of 15,270 birds to the UK's biggest middle distance Channel race of the season conveyed by the four racing organisations within the NEHU, the Up North Combine (11,505 Birds), West Durham Amalgamation (2,221 Birds), Durham Combine (888 Birds) and the New North Amalgamation (656 Birds). The race itself was steady but fair and provided a perfect finish for the membership with all four racing organisations represented within the first 8 open places.

The membership of the NEHU are supported for the Queens Cup by their usual sponsors these are:

Bamfords Top Flight, who provide prizes in the form of cash and corn.

South Tyneside District Council who provide a Unikon ETS for the winner.

Unikon (Deister Electronics) who again have provided a new Champ system for first open.

In addition for 2009 there is additional sponsorship for both the Queens Cup from Clermont and the Bourges Classic from the Grimley family of Spennymoor to the level of £100 to each Open winner to celebrate the centenary of the families involvement with pigeon racing in the North East. While this report was being finalised it was particularly pleasing to see that Bob, Anne, Michael & Vicky won 1st Durham Combine Maidstone on the Saturday following the Queens Cup to keep up the families name at the forefront. Congratulations to the whole family on both the Centenary and the Combine win, and a big thank you for the sponsorship.

The members are also competing for the J A Swainston Trophy for 1st Opposite Sex to the winner and the Amtrak trophy for the best 2 Bird Average.

A big thank you to all our Sponsors for their ongoing support from the Officers & members of the NEHU.

The Liberation took place on the 6th of June the 65th Anniversary of D Day and the pigeons were away at 09:30 into an East Wind. Initial expectations were that the pigeons would be hitting the bottom of the NEHU around the 8 hour mark and initial reports via the jungle drums indicated this was actually the case, although this was later discounted as the pigeon spotted diving into the loft in question was a late returnee from the previous week! Technology is all well and good on a race day but nothing can be relied upon until the clocks and paperwork are checked and pigeons verified.

Winning 1st West Durham Amalgamation and 1st Open NEHU Queens Cup is a loft that I reported as coming back with a bang in my previous notes after taking 2nd & 7th Open NEHU Folkestone Classic on the 9th of May against 36,790 this being the loft of Paul Stobbs and Son (Paul Junior) of the Consett Federation & West Durham Amalgamation.

Since Folkestone Paul Stobbs and family have certainly not stood still with a First WDA Arras with the same Hen that was 4th WDA Folkestone and now possibly the ultimate prize in the NEHU 1st Open Queens Cup.

As I reported earlier the whole Stobbs family are involved with the pigeons, Paul, his Father Billy, Brother Mark & Paul's young Son, Paul Junior and all were present when the winner was verified to share the moment as a family and it is obvious they are all working as a team to help achieve Paul's aims within the sport.

In his article in the 2009 Squills Paul's good friend Nigel Laycock mentioned that Paul Stobbs would rewrite the record books in the West Durham Amalgamation as he rated him that highly. Well he was not far wrong as Paul and family have won three out of the last four WDA races and a total of Five x 1st WDA from the last Seven races flown.

I paid a visit to the home and loft of Paul Stobbs and Son in the Company of the NEHU President, Secretary & Photographer to gather some information and to witness the verification of the winner as I decided that such an outstanding set of performances deserved more detail on the methods used, given that the whole of the NEHU is buzzing with numerous versions of how these results are achieved and how the pigeons are managed & housed, quite a few versions of which originate from people that have never visited the lofts or spoken to Paul and his family.

The winner of the Queens Cup from Clermont is a fantastic handling blue hen with Club, Fed & WDA turns including 33rd WDA Folkestone earlier in the season. Christened "Surprise Surprise" she was named such as the Queens Cup was a surprise win for her as she was initially prepared for the Bourges Classic race due to be flown on the 19th of June & is pooled up in the local Show Race, such was her condition in the days prior to basketting for Clermont the decision was taken to strike while the Iron is hot and take advantage of her "super form" while there she was selected to go as one of the main candidates for Clermont. However I have now handled her twice since her win and on the Sunday after the race the form spot on her keel was so pronounced she is obviously untouched by her efforts and Paul is still debating as to whether to enter her to win her originally targeted race from Bourges or not. At three years of age she is in the prime of life and is bred from a Gift Cock from Ian Stafford (formerly of Annfield Plain, now looking forward to competing in the UNC

at Skinningrove). This cock was bred direct from “shieldsy’s Cock” that Ian purchased back at Shield Bros Clearance sale.

This Son of the “Shieldy Cock” was paired to a hen purchased from Davy Barron’s sale at Doncaster in 2005 which was bred direct from the Goldmine producer which is a Red & White Cock a full brother to Bants Choice which is 50/50

Busschaert/Sootjen (his mother Mercury is also Grand dam of Paul’s 1st WDA Arras & 1st WDA Clermont & 2nd WDA Folkestone winner “Bob’s Choice”).

This time the Red & White Cock was paired to a Van Reet hen bred from the Taylor Cock (5 x 1st Fed) and a daughter of the Vosse Wittekop.

Usually the Red & White Cock is coupled to a direct Vervloesem Hen and they have churned winners out and the current count stood at 12 different Fed winning children of this pair. The winning genes are certainly dominant in this pair.

The Stobbs team are housed in a stone built loft (formerly stables) which have been converted into a loft the majority of fanciers can only dream of.

Built of reclaimed stone with a slate roof (rather than the usual pan tile) incorporating glass sky lights, it has been recently added to form a U shape with a new South facing extension, no expense has been spared as it is lined and insulated and then the internal walls have been plastered over. A false floor has also been installed with a ply surface and floor grids are used in the sections and a tiled floor runs throughout the corridors. The environment within the loft is controlled to maintain a constant temperature of 20 degrees C and humidity is kept around 50%, given the materials the loft is constructed from this is felt necessary to achieve top condition.

The water supply to the loft is filtered and each section has its own independent piped water supply.

Full spectrum daylight tubes are installed and are switched on for the old birds between 08:00 am and 18:00 to give the pigeons and fancier the impression it is bright and sunny no matter what the conditions outside (and given this loft faces North it is almost dark if the lights are switched off).

All sections are fitted with automatic boxes supplied by Bernard Hermes of Germany and a corridor runs the full length of the whole loft. The grills are lifted every two weeks from the floor and the waste removed but the electronic boxes allow time to be spent monitoring the pigeons and identifying what makes individuals tick.

Trapping is via open doors and the pigeons hit an internal landing board at about waist height fitted to the internal corridor doweled wall and are recorded via the Unikon ETS installed.

The new Southerly run contains the 2009 young bird team at the moment and will house the old bird team for 2010. The Easterly run contains the stock section with an Aviary on the front and a further two sections with the Hermes boxes that was until 2009 used to house the youngsters from weaning until a week before the first race. These sections now house a team of long distance pigeons being brought along slowly by the Stobbs family for 2010. Based upon children of the best proven long distance winners available, they have been educated both privately and with the Wednesday pigeons to ensure they get some miles under their wings and can learn to think for themselves in a small convoy.

The other run of the original race loft faces North and is 14 metres long by 3.3 metres wide and has the facility to be split into up to six compartments. Split 60/40 for hens

and cocks relative to the size of the team of 45 hens and 30 cocks. With some of the luckier cocks being paired to two hens.

Raced on total widowhood the old bird team are worked hard, in fact they are not exercised round the loft once racing starts, they are trained morning and evening from Scotch Corner (35 minute fly) twice a day. There are odd variations and tricks used to exploit jealousy and the territorial instinct, if necessary the partners are changed for the cocks mid season as according to Paul's good friend Ian Stafford a change is as good as a rest.

Weather and the previous weekends race will dictate when in the week the training regime starts. The plan at the start of the season is that the pigeons race each week unless being set up for a WDA race or unfit/injured.

For those that do not go to the weekends race there is a 90 mile toss from Barnsley to blow the cobwebs away (either in the batch or singled up if being set up for a specific race).

Feeding for the old birds is hopper fed maple peas early week to provide protein for muscle repair and then onto Vanrobaey's Super Special No 12. No seeds/peanuts etc are used as the fat content is provided by the use of oils on the corn.

Gem Matrix & Beyers Deli mix are provided fresh daily. Vitamins are used and emphasis is placed upon Vitamin B6/Riboflavin/B3 as they help metabolise Carbs/Fats/protein.

The first pairing takes place in January and all rear (some are foster parents to youngsters from the stock team), some pairs are then split while others are given a second mate and site for a short period and these hens are then raced dry.

The best hens are raced in a section of their own and are denied access to it in the week and have to perch on V perches in another section until the sliding door is opened to their section.

All the pigeons have a regular 3 weekly health check up and depending upon the results the treatment suggested is used. (obviously if something is to occur between checks the relevant treatment would be used).

In previous seasons the Sunday after the last Channel race would see the old birds moved into the East facing sections and the youngsters moved into the North facing sections, this season will see the South facing section used. Young Cocks to the old hens sections and young hens to the old Cocks sections. At this time the youngsters can pair and carry on as these please within the loft but are never allowed to rear.

The first race is missed to allow the team to settle but they certainly come out from the blocks for the rest of the season, two weeks prior to the Young Bird National the youngsters are split cocks/hens and are on celibacy until a couple of days before the National when the old birds are re introduced into the loft to couple with the youngsters.

From Weaning the young bird team are hopper fed maples and then on the first of June the youngsters are placed on a lighter mix (Dufky 48) to encourage more vigorous exercise and for the flesh to obtain the correct colour after the high protein diet. After 4 weeks they are then placed upon the same Vanrobaeys Super Special (No 12) that is fed to the old bird team.

Prior to racing the youngsters receive a comprehensive education and once racing starts are never exercised round the loft, they just get trained am & pm from Scotch Corner a 35 minute fly

Winter time is a time of rest for the family and the pigeons and the team are hopper fed maples and allowed to relax and recuperate after the effort of the season and the moult.

The origin of this phenomenal middle distance team of pigeons is the best available descendents of the Jos Soontjen imports from 89,90 & 91 via Nigel Laycock, Frank Sheader, Davey Barron & Dennis Blakey complemented with the Staf Van Reets and Jos Thone lines of Ian Stafford.

The winner of 2nd Open Queens Cup and also a Gold Medal for 1st UNC is Dennis Blakey of Trimdon Village & Fishburn H.S. with his “Controversial Queen”, this 2 Year old Blue Willy Thas x Janssen hen has previously won 2nd Club, 2nd Fed as a youngster after a dicky trap so again has a touch of previous form.

Bred from a Willy Thas Cock bred by the “Chip Shop Boys” Phil & Neil Bates from Bagilt in North Wales from a pair of direct Willy Thas paired to a Dolby Bros Janssen hen bred from a son of “27” paired to a daughter of “07”

Dennis races a team of 24 pairs on Total Widowhood which occupy 24 feet of his 32 foot old bird loft and these are exercised separately for 45 minutes twice a day. The youngsters occupy 16 foot of his 24 foot long young bird loft and a team of tumblers live in the remaining 8 foot long section.

Dennis has to pick his team for Club Racing as there is a 20 bird limit for Old Birds and a 30 bird limit for Youngsters in the Club which limits his choice of what can be sent to compete in the club weekly.

Dennis has flown in the area for 25 years in different clubs over the years but now only competes in the one club. He has no preference as to the distance raced but wants working races between 1100 & 1400 YPM.

The best recent Combine turns include 20th UNC Folkestone and 23rd NEHU Open in 2008 against 45,989 pigeons, 42nd UNC Lillers (1) 2008 19th UNC Newton Abbot in 2007 and 53 UNC Folkestone in 2007.

The feeding system is straightforward with the pigeons broken down and then brought up as simply as possible. 4 widowhood mixes are obtained and mixed together buying enough for the whole season. The brands change each season as Dennis sources the best on the market each season and obviously this can vary from season to season.

The stock team are shared with Davey Barron and housed in Ashington. With the main bloodlines being Soontjen & Vervloesem with the influence of the old Busschaert line in brothers to Bants Choice coming to the fore. The previously mentioned Red & White full brother to Bants Choice being Grandfather to Paul Stobbs Queens Cup winner being a prime example.

A little concerned the pigeons were not right Dennis took them to visit Micky Betts at Doncaster for an evaluation of their condition on the Monday before marking and the verdict was they would not be far away at the weekend – was it the influence of

“Mystic Micky” or the 80 mile training toss that gave them that little bit extra to get in front on the Saturday???

Taking Third Open Queens Cup is partnership of Harper, Son & Fenwick with their 2nd UNC Silver Medal Winner “Shearer”.

The partnership consists of Robert “Mopsy” Harper 58, his son Lee who is currently occupied with other birds and Mr Fenwick who moved onto pastures new. However the worker behind the partnership is 50 year old Terry Purvis “The Grafter” as described by Robert who is recovering from a triple by pass and is currently “The Brains” of the organisation!

They provisionally win “The Danish Cup of Friendship” within the UNC as this lofts recent performances are as a result of genuine friendships within the sport.

Winning 1st Wheatley Hill HS, 2nd Trimdon Fed, 2nd Section 5, 2nd UNC and 3rd NEHU Open Clermont Queens Cup is “Shearer” (I will not make any cracks re Shearer & winning in case the NEHU Bourges winner is clocked within sight of St James Park and I get lynched on my loft visit!).

“Shearer” originates from a Soontjen cock from Graham Calvert of Bedlington through “the brothers” paired to a hen from Ray Callendar’s Powderhall Busschaerts x a Frank Sheader Soontjen. A big thanks to Ray as the Busschaerts from Ray have been reliable winning stock for this loft for the last 30 years. Incidentally Ray Callender won the Queens Cup in 1983 from Eastbourne with Powderhall Lisa when the Channel racing was stopped.

“Shearer” is a good honest pigeon with 3 x 1st Club, Fed and Fed turns.

The co Winner of the Danish Cup of Friendship is “Jimmy” named after a good friend of Robert Harpers who passed away recently. Bred from a pair of gift pigeons from Caine Bros & Son of West Auckland he is “a real un”, in the last three UNC races he has :

65th UNC 25,446 birds – 71st NEHU Classic 36,790 birds

48th UNC Lillers 18,088 birds

10th UNC & possibly a Top 25 Queens Cup position against 15,270 birds. (possible Olympiad Candidate there if he keeps this up!).

Robert & Terry have a team of 16 widow cocks, 8 widow hens and 14 pairs of naturals to race and 70 youngsters are reared.

They are on a partial break down and then on good gear on a Monday nights feed. Flying to allotment gardens these lofts have been through hard times but good friends have put Robert back on his feet and this result is a massive lift for the lads for their hard work and a testament to the friends locally and other fanciers they do not know that rallied round.

A fantastic performace on the day was put up by the loft of Burton & Son from the Wallsend Central Club in the Newcastle Federation to win 1st NNA and 4th Open Queens Cup.

Winning the Durham Combine is the loft of G,T & E Ingledew from Coxhoe H.S in the Mid Durham South Federation doing 1361.65 ypm.

Once again congratulations to all those lofts who scored from Clermont throughout the NEHU and again a big thanks to our Sponsors for the Queens Cup, Bamfords Top Flight, South Tyneside District Council, UNIKON and the Grimley family of Spennymoor.

Next on the agenda is the Blue Riband race from Bourges, scheduled for Friday the 19th of June when the members of the NEHU will be flying a minimum of 530 miles for the Southern boundary of the Union to 600 miles plus for the dedicated fanciers and outstanding distance pigeons flying into Northumberland and the Scottish Borders.

The NEHU