

BRITISH BARCELONA CLUB – VIRE NATIONAL

That was a good and eventful start to the season with a large entry and new marking stations at Penkrige and Stevenage everything started a day earlier than normal for the new season. The baskets as normal had been excellently prepared by Barrie Simmons and the lorry complete with baskets was collected from its storage location at Clutton with its first port of call on Wednesday being Salisbury where with the assistance of the club secretary the bulk of the baskets were offloaded and positioned ready to commence marking the following day. The new driver and convoyer, Darren Hatcher and Nigel Rigiani then proceeded onto Stevenage to meet up with the IC's of the Walkern marking station Mike and Edna Shepherd where they dropped off more baskets and the marking station requisites. Final port of call and overnight stop, arriving a lot later than expected was to the home of Richard Spooner and Ann Sandolwycz where an excellent meal awaited them after a long day.



The Loft and Garden of Richard Spooner



Marking at Penkrige

The next morning once again an early start this time from the Penkrige marking station where marking under Richard and Ann's direction started smoothly at 0800hrs finishing at 1000hrs which allowed the lorry to depart for Stevenage (Walkern) at 1030hrs. The lorry arrived at Stevenage two and a half hours later and the Walkern contingent was loaded for onward transportation to Salisbury. With the timings now established we have decided to alter the timings of future markings at Stevenage which for the Messac, Poitiers and Fougères races will now be from 1000hrs to 1300hrs which will reduce the waiting time for those helping at Walkern.

Meanwhile at Salisbury with in excess of 2200 birds to mark the secretary arrived at 1045hrs to find that a queue had already formed well in advance of the 1200hrs start time. The BBC are kindly blessed with many helpers who quickly set up three marking stations for rubbers and another three for ETS which allowed marking to commence well ahead of the proposed start time. Everything progressed smoothly if not slowly at times, my apologies to those who waited along time in the queue the fact that the dreaded wing stamp had been re-introduced for this season did not help. With so many fanciers now using ETS future markings will see an increase in dedicated ETS marking tables at the expense of rubbers. The 1500hrs finishing time soon came and passed with marking eventually completed by 1545hrs in time for the transporter arrival time which was expected at 1600 hrs at which time we heard that the vehicle had broken down about 30 miles from Salisbury. Fortunately local committee man and mechanic Brian Adamson rushed to the scene and conducted temporary repairs allowing the lorry to limp in at approximately 1800hrs. With the diagnosis, a faulty starter motor, a replacement was eventually procured and collected from Fareham and fitting finally completed by 0300hrs once again thanks to the efforts of Brian, daughter Louella, Nigel and Darren.

Obviously the Thursday evening ferry was missed but this allowed plenty of time to feed and water the birds before finally departing on the Friday ferry. To everyone involved so far including the helpers at all three marking stations our sincere thanks to you all for your efforts which contributed to making the race the success it turned out to be.

Well onto the British Barcelona Club's first National race of the season which was well supported by its members with 329 sending 2,714 birds. After a one day holdover the birds were liberated by convoyer Nigel Rigiani into clear sunny skies and a light Southerly wind. With the wind in the Channel and on the mainland North East the birds would have to fight to maintain their line and a hard race was forecast. As expected the conditions favoured those in the West of the country with the winning bird recording a velocity of 1280 timed to the Weymouth loft of Martin Hayne who after a five year break from racing pigeons had only joined the club this season and in his first race takes **1st Section B and 1st Open** -



Martin outside his main racing loft



"Breakaway Boy"



The main racing loft

Martin sent 4 birds to the race; 2 cocks and 2 hens. The winning pigeon is an Ad Schaerlaeckens x Heremans-Ceusters yearling cock. He currently only has a small team of Old Birds as this was his first season of regular racing after not participating fully for a number of years due to other commitments; so he therefore had to be selective about which races he entered. All the race team had been well schooled though as youngsters and were sent to all points of the compass ... Wherever he could get them!

Martin is a member of the Central Southern Classic Flying Club and Portland Homing Society and this year also became a member of the BBC and Crossways Flying Club. In preparation for the race, this cock had been sent 3 weeks on the trot to Littlehampton and had performed best when there was a head wind as there was on this race. He had estimated that a good time would be between 11:30 and 12:00. The bird arrived returning from the west of his loft, circled once and trapped straight away to the great delight of those watching. He has since been named as "Breakaway Boy" as he did just that. Timing at 11h:49m:52s he had hoped that it was a good time but did not realise how good until BBC President Dave Whitefield called to say he needed to verify the pigeon. It was then an anxious wait until the clock was read and the velocity was confirmed.

At present, including the race team, he has 43 pairs of stock birds. All were paired in mid December and have been breeding youngsters for the Somerset One Loft Race. The winning pigeon has bred 2 rounds of Swap Shop pigeons and there are a further two rounds the same way bred as Breakaway Boy also entered as Swap Shops in the Somerset loft. Two weeks before the race, the race team were separated and then re-paired shortly before basketing; the winning pigeon was sent driving his hen hard to nest.



Views of Martin's garden and lofts



This year, for the first time he has been following Bamford's feeding programme and feeding the race team Bamford's Cool Racer. This was a good decision as the pigeons are in fantastic condition. He is a great believer in using only natural products such as Orego Stim particularly during the breeding season, but does treat for Coccidiosis and Trichomoniasis at the beginning of the year and only if he feels that they need it during the race season. All birds also receive fresh grit and minerals daily.

Martin would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people that have helped and encouraged him during the past year when it would have been easier for him to have left the sport, for restoring his interest and enthusiasm and would particularly like to thank Terry and Jane Williams of the Somerset One Loft Race.

2nd Section B, 2nd and 17th Open in our shortest National race were the winners of last year's longest race Frank and John Halstead of Kington Magna. Their 2 year old blue widowhood cock is of the Reynaert/Bosua bloodlines. The sire is a G.son of Figo and was chosen at Blackpool by John from the Herman Beverdam stand, whilst the hen was bred by good friends Crammond and Langstaff of Fontwell from their original Kees Bosua bloodlines. This cock now known as 'Nyland Brave' had been 16th Open from BBC Lamballe 1327 birds as a young bird and was also 2nd Section 4th Open in the Gold Ring on the same day.

At Vire he was the loft's main pool bird and was nominated in everything mainly due to the fact that he was the last bird in to the loft on 2 or 3 occasions on the final few days before basketing. He earned the name 'Brave' because the Halsteads have experienced major hawk and falcon trouble recently and the widowhood cocks dive through the traps after exercise at the earliest opportunity – but this one had lingered outside bravely.



John Halstead

Nestmate to 'Brave' was sent to the Sun City race in South Africa 2008 and in one of the 'Hot Spot' races finished 6th UK 69th Open from 3883 birds. Twelve birds were entered for Vire and all 12 were home on the day. This 2nd National brings the tally to 2 First and 2 Second Nationals for F&J Halstead in the last 3 seasons and all these winning pigeons were flown on John's Widowhood system to the same 10'6 x 6' compartment in the tiled roof loft shown in the photograph.

The race birds are still fed Versele Laga food, Super widowhood, Gerry Plus and Depurative, and a few red skin peanuts. They are exercised twice daily for 30 – 50 minutes each session



John's Widowhood Loft



Granddaughter Nicole holding 3rd Open Nat Vire



Phil Hutchings Loft

3rd Section B and 3rd Open was Phil Hutchings of Bradpole who was trying out his ETS clocking system for the first time. People keep saying these ETS systems give fanciers an advantage well it certainly helped Phil. His two year old blue widowhood cock (seen in the hands of granddaughter Nicole) was timed to record a velocity of 1254 and in the process also winning 1st Weydor Specialist Flying Club which is a nomination club based at Weymouth.

This cock had previously won a club race from Fougères as a young bird. The bird was bred from: Sire - a Jan Arden from the Ponderosa UK Stud, Weymouth and chosen for Phil by Tony Haynes. (The race winner's father).

Dam was a Cattarese bred by fellow fancier, Clive Harrison of Troytown, Dorchester and given to me at the time as I was short of hens for my widowhood cocks however she proved herself as a really good stock hen. Unfortunately she was lost this March to a hawk attack. The winning bird has always been very consistent but this is the best result yet.

4th and 9th Section B, 4th and 10th Open were Poole fanciers Mr & Mrs Brian Crutcher who timed two cocks at 11:51:19 and 11:53:10 to record velocities of 1248 to take **4th Open** and 1236 to take **10th Open**.



1st Section C and 5th Open – was that top Bristol fancier Nigel Templar who is never far away when the big races come around. His pigeon, a two year old blue widowhood cock, has previously won a couple of prizes in the club but this was the first time that he had been sent to an open race of this caliber. He is of the Dirk van Dijck lines from direct Gerrit Lahuis birds that were purchased in 95 as young birds. The dam is a g/dtr of the "Kannibaal" when paired to the "Zitter" and she has bred Nigel some excellent birds to win the section in the NFC and many other good positions. She is the dam of one of Nigel's best pigeons the "Gerrit" which was three times in the results in National races.



Nigel clocked his first bird at 13 07 26 closely followed by two hens which were timed at 13 10 05 these two should take **3rd and 4th Section C, 11th and 12th Open**. Both are from his Bosua cock the "Bull" a son of "Porky" and "Marbella" when he was paired to a daughter of Harm Fredevelds "Boy" and "Queen".

Nigel sends his thanks and congratulations to the convoyer and to the BBC in recognition of the good condition of his birds on their return.

5th and 13th Section B, 6th and 19th Open were Poole fanciers **John and Trevor Fisher** who timed two of their Leen Boers : the first a blue hen at 11:51:52 to record a velocity of 1245 and take **6th Open** and the second a blue pied cock at 11:55:57 to record a velocity of 1220 and take **19th Open**.





6th, 7th, 8th and 11th Section B, 7th, 8th, 9th and 15th Open – were Mr and Mrs Mark Gower of Fordingbridge who clocked three pigeons in eleven seconds and another not far behind to take **15th Open**. These were all hens flown on a roundabout system the first a five year old Vandenbeebe hen bred from a M & D Evans hen and a Woodlands farm stud cock, she has been a very good hen winning many prizes including 1st Sect 87th Open NFC Cholet 2007 & 18th Open NFC Alencon 2009. The second bird was a blue Janssen being a granddaughter of his BBC Bordeaux winner, this one is also a good pigeon having won 2nd sect NFC Saintes 2009. The 3rd was a blue w/f hen and is a daughter of his CSCFC Guernsey winner.

2nd Section C and 10th Open – was the Worton fancier Bobbie Brown who timed a two year old late bred at 12:49:30 to record a velocity of 1234. He nearly took Bobbie by surprise as he had only just switched on his ETS and took the back board away from the trap when he heard the tell tale thud on the landing board. Because he was a late bred as a yearling he was raced lightly inland and only had one channel race from Lessay. This year prior to this race he had been to Portland, Chale and Vire with the Wiltshire Continental Flying Club and had been Bobbie's first bird from Portland, second from Chale and 5th from Vire.



The Sire of this bird won 1st Section, 6th Open BBC Poitiers in 2008 and the Dam was a consistent young bird when raced in 2005, she was bred from a bird given to Bobby by Crowley and Green in 2002. This bird was an excellent racer for Bobbie and is still in his stock loft. Having checked my records I was not surprised to discover that the Dam of this pigeon was "Crusher" who is the G Dam of the two birds that won 3rd and 5th Open BBC Barcelona for me in 2009.



In **14th Open** position we have the ever present Charlton Marshall fanciers Mel and Sue King who time a blue Vandenbeebe hen flown on their round about system this one is closely followed by the Swindon Stalwarts Ernie Smith and Darren Baker who timed a chequer cock to take **16th Open**.



1st Section A and 18th Open – are the New Milton partnership of Berry and Matthews who have a remarkable record - since moving to New Milton three years ago they have entered five BBC races and have won the Section three times. The winner this time was a chequer widowhood cock called “Scar” a son of their top racer “Merlin” who won 3rd S.M.T Combine twice from Nantes and Bergerac and was the only bird on the day from Tours in the club. These Jack-Le-Grande Janseen were bred down from their good friend the late Bob Ashman of Hagley.

They have practiced widowhood flying for the last 41 years and in this race sent 7 widowhood cocks and all were home in approx 1 hour.

20th Open was a two year old blue white flight Roger Maris widowhood cock flown by Crowley and Green of Compton Bassett. This cock is rapidly becoming one of the stars of the loft having previously won 3rd Open CSCFC Lessay last year as a yearling and has already this year won a 1st Club earlier in the season from Minstead.

As he is basically a sprint pigeon with the other eight birds in his section of the loft he will be prepared for the NFC St Malo race in a fortnight’s time and the rest of the team will be sent to the BBC Messac National. These Maris pigeons were obtained from Petron lofts in 2007 and are superb at the shorter distances up to 250 miles.



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2nd, 3rd and 4th Section A, 52nd, 54th and 56th Open were the Portsmouth loft of Mr and Mrs Garry Moody who flying natural had three pigeons come together. First in the clock was a Silver Shadow Van Loon hen bred by Tug and Heather Wilson of Gosport this hen has been very consistent as she was 2nd Club, 5th Fed (2000+ birds) earlier this year beaten by a loft mate and had also previously figured in the top five in the fed. The second pigeon was also a Silver shadow Van loon hen who had won 15th Fed (3,100 birds) from Vire last week in the Solent Fed and the third bird was a blue bar Maurice Matthews cock who is bred out of a 2nd Open CSCFC Guernsey winner.

1st Section E and 36th Open – was Eric Jones of Telford who timed his red cock at 15:21:34 to record a velocity of 1188 and top the Section. This two year old cock was bred by Mr Graham Bailey from parents that originated from Telford fanciers D Ellams and Davies & Preece.

Eric would also like to say a big thank you for all the hard work put in during the season to his brother Barry Jones (pictured on the left of the photo, holding the second pigeon they timed in) and also to Mr Graham Bailey.





1st Section D and 162nd Open was a delighted Stuart Sheffield of Old Windsor who timed a Dk Cheq W/F Soontjen cock bred out of stock purchased from Frank Sheader which had previously won from across the channel. Stuart was grateful to have good friend and BBC Patron Mark Gilbert come around to verify his Section winner.

1st Section H and 192nd Open was Jersey fancier Paul Davies who timed his 9 year old blue cock called "No Fear" named because he was the only Channel Islands member that had no fear of sending to Vire.

"No Fear" is a marvelous racer and has won 26 x 1st in Club, 8 in the top 200th Open in BBC races including 78th Open Poitiers and 117th Open Bordeaux as an 8 year old when he must have been in his prime as he also won 1st Channel Island's Combine from Jarnac.



1st Section G and 214th Open was a fancier whose name continually crops up several times during every season that of Sandhurst flyer Eric Higinbottom who once again wins Section G in the BBC. This time with a blue three year old cock who was not raced as a young bird but just trained from the coast several times a distance of 40 miles. As a yearling he won 19th Open BICC Alencon, as a two year old he won The Lion Brewer Midweek and then in his first race this season he wins 1st Section G with the BBC. Not a bad pigeon to have around and well bred with both parents, bred by Peter Fox Syndicate Lofts: The Sire the lines of Young President X Alpha 2 and the Dam a daughter of Ferguson X Elisia.



Well that's the end of my report on the BBC's first National for 2010 and what an excellent race it turned out to be much better than one could have expected with the weather conditions that prevailed at the time. My congratulations to all the winners and my thanks to all those fanciers who kindly verified the Section winners. Also a special thanks to Race Controller Eric Ilsley who got it spot on and also to the Convoyer Nigel Rigiani and driver Darren Hatcher – the condition of the returning birds were a credit to your care.

The Convoyers report follows:

Convoyer's Report

For the first time in the history of the BBC we have two new marking stations at Walkern and Penkrige and I would like to thank all those concerned in the running of these stations especially Mike and Edna Sheppard and Ann and Richard Spooner for all their help.

Marking went very well at both stations but on the way back to Salisbury we had problems with the starter motor after refueling and with a quick call to fellow committee member Brian Adamson working through the night and into the next day we were able to catch the ferry from Portsmouth on Friday evening with the birds being feed at mid day whilst repairs were under way.

Arrived at Vire at 07:30 on Saturday to low cloud and over cast after discussions with race controller Eric Ilsley it was decided to hold over due to rain on the mainland.

The birds spent a quiet day relaxing in the shavings as they always do in wicker baskets with hardly a sound coming from them until feed time at 4 o'clock.

Sunday dawned bright and sunny with a light southerly wind at the site, after consultation with Eric it was decided to lib at 08:35 with the birds clearing to the north immediately, but on arrival at Caen my concerns grew when confronted with a strong NE wind and the sea covered with white horses it looked as though it was going to be a very stiff race so you can imagine my relief when I received a call from our Secretary telling me that they were doing 1200 + ypm which meant that the birds must have beat the wind due to an earlier lib.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate all concerned your birds were a credit to you especially to the section winners and to the race winner Martin Hayne a perfect win for a real gentleman of the sport.

N Rigiani