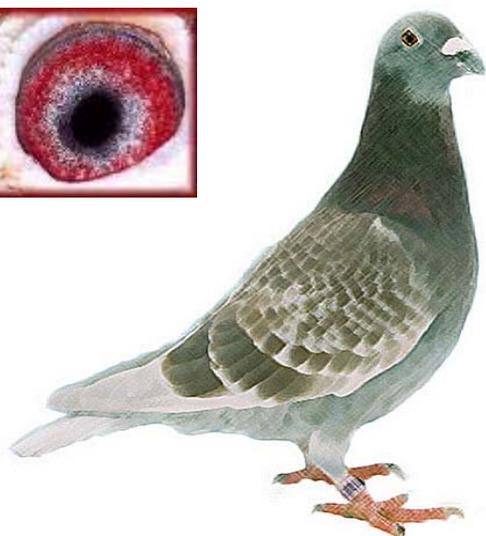


# MONTH BY MONTH with Chris



Champion "Tracey's Red" winner of the N.W.C.C. Hall of Fame and over £5,000 in his racing career, for Chris Knowles of Woodley, Stockport.



## December and another year comes to a close/beginning.

As I write this article the final monthly for 2009. there will be some lofts in the UK with youngsters hatched or chipping. It has never been my policy to breed so early and with the recent heavy snows and freeze, I am glad. The last of my YB team from 2009 which, were raced to the 350 mile mark in September, supported by controlled light conditions, are just growing their last flights now and should be all done by mid Jan. 2010.

My stock birds have been enjoying the benefit of an extended light period during December, building gradually until reaching 22.00Hrs. This triggers their body clock and hormones inducing them into the breeding cycle. The hens have been given some assistance with extra calcium in readiness for their egg laying and this will help to reduce the stress on their bodies, as will reducing their weight prior to pairing. Over the years that I have raced Ybs under controlled light conditions and in races as far as 350 miles with the NFC, my observations have led me to a conclusion that the ideal time for the laying of the eggs is around 12<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> January and in some cases up to around 12<sup>th</sup> February. I have found that by the first week of September, youngsters born from such a cycle are in perfect wing condition when combined with cessation of any darkening from 21<sup>st</sup> June. If you use the earlier articles that I did for PP you can see how I prepare my nests and follow the season through, hopefully the pictures that I took and included will assist.

Should old acquaintance be forgot,  
and never brought to mind ?  
Should old acquaintance be forgot,  
and old lang syne ?

CHORUS:

For auld lang syne, my dear,  
for auld lang syne,  
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

And surely you'll buy your pint cup !  
and surely I'll buy mine !  
And we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

CHORUS:

We two have run about the slopes,  
and picked the daisies fine ;  
But we've wandered many a weary  
foot,  
since auld lang syne.

CHORUS:

We two have paddled in the stream,  
from morning sun till dine;  
But seas between us broad have  
roared  
since auld lang syne.

CHORUS:

And there's a hand my trusty  
friend !  
And give us a hand o' thine !  
And we'll take a right good-  
will draught,  
for auld lang syne.

CHORUS:

**Robert Burns 1788**

## Looking back on 2009.

When I look back on the 2009 season, I am pleased with the way that the pigeons have flown. I finished the season with 11 x 1<sup>st</sup> prizes and numerous 2nds & 3rds etc. As I have been in the process of developing a young team which, will hopefully equip me for racing with the NFC over the next few seasons, I did not race my youngsters of 2008 and those yearling cocks did not have their first race, until the club programme had progressed to 150 miles. The yearling hens began at 130 miles and both sexes were raced to 200 miles with a few hens crossing the channel and won minor prizes at 300 and 400 miles behind my older cocks. My 2009 YBs were all raced to 200 miles, with a selected few going to 350 miles. I was the only loft in the Northern Section of my Federation, Saffs. Moorlands & Dist. Fed. to top the Open of the Fed. flying 50 miles further than the short droppers and I was fortunate enough to do it both inland at 150 miles and on the channel at 387 miles both with old birds. The youngsters flew consistently well but did not manage a first,

finishing second on numerous occasions until we got to 350 miles when I was fortunate to win the Eccles 2 Bird from Fourgeres 354 miles, when only two birds were time on the day. This was a most pleasing win, as I also won this race the last time that I sent in 2007 following a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in 2006.

My main aim in 2010 is to put my team to the ultimate test at NFC level and fulfil my goal following two seasons rebuilding my team for NFC races. Only time will tell if I have got the quality that I believe that I have in this young team and a good helping of patience and self belief will also go along way to assisting.

## Blackpool on the horizon!

It is only a matter of weeks now before another Blackpool weekend will be upon us. As always I am looking forward to the social side of this event and to meeting numerous friends from across the UK and Europe, in what has to be the No. 1 social event in pigeons within the UK and perhaps the world. I attended the Old Comrades show at Doncaster in early December and although it is a day out, it is a stark reminder that the "real event" is Blackpool.

I must admit my dislike to the number of sales that now take place over the Blackpool weekend and feel that they detract from the charity sale that is traditionally held there. However, attendance at these sales is optional and as such it is not difficult to avoid them. A welcome addition to the show in recent seasons for me, has been the introduction of the show for Fancy Breeds. I know fanciers who take the time to go around this event but never do a tour of the show birds, even though they contain classes for racers.

The great thing about Blackpool is that whatever your interest, it provides ample choice and entertainment for all who journey there.

## The sport in general 2010

As 2010 arrives, I wonder what changes for the better are we likely to see in our pigeon racing in the U.K. Will organisations do anything to change the growing problems associated with YB racing? For example; better designed transporters, less pigeons in baskets, combined old/young bird races, statutory rest period for drinking before liberation, professional liberation guidelines to encompass technical data like temperatures etc. Will the NFC listen to it's members who are raising concerns about the numbers of birds being put in baskets at races like Saintes, where depending on the marking station it concerned, has been said to vary by as many as 10 birds per basket. It is to be hoped so because if the organisation which should be the gold standard for U.K. racing can't lead by example, then their future is not bright and it will cast a detrimental shadow over other smaller organisations.



No doubt you have formulated your plan of attack for the 2010 season or are perhaps still in the process of doing so. Well there is one thing for certain in this game, if you don't know where you are heading, you will probably end up there. Planning doesn't have to be a written document with infinite detail but having goals and the methods and systems to support their achievement, are essential. Once again the goals need to be achievable and should show some level of improvement on previous achievements or repeat of those held in most high regard. These kinds of words are written about all walks of life, especially business and are oh so easy to pass over with a laugh but the reality of life today is plain for all to see, if you can't be bothered then someone else will be and then it's all up hill from there.

I don't know if you have seen any of the newly released DVDs of late but there are certainly a few items on the Menu worth consideration and a look at. For me, two of the most prevalent factors in racing today, must be the control of feather moult and feeding. All the champions of today have these two factors spot on and will be doing all they can to ensure that they stay abreast of any development in these fields. When it comes to grain it isn't always the dearest that is the best nor indeed what the pigeon needs, in many cases we are back to the man (Company) who seeking to make optimum profit and marketing is surely playing a huge role in this in pigeon feed. Just take a close look when you walk around Blackpool at the grain stands and make a note of the vast range of so called mixes, named after everything you can think of from famous fanciers names to a season of the year like "winter mix". Wild birds have a simple agenda, Grow new feathers and Survive. Just like they do in spring, mate, rear young and continue the species. Whatever the season food is governed by availability and survival is very closely linked to that and "survival of the fittest". With these simple facts of nature staring us in the face, I think we would be foolish not to consider the benefits of building "natural selection" into the development of our lofts of pigeons and gear our methods and selection criterion, to the goals that we set for ourselves. The coming season will be like all others past and future, it will contain some highs and some lows and some things will about as we expected. From all we do, from success and from failure, yet another opportunity to learn will present itself for recognition !!

Look at the new season with an open mind and keep your system simple. Shortcuts are wrong turnings in this sport and secrets usually belong to someone who is seeking a profit. Treat your pigeons well, work them hard and let the basket be the adjudicator when you are not sure! Every race has a winner but there is no prize to be won worth more than the reward provided by truly honest and consistent pigeons !



Good friends are like stars; You don't always see them but they are Always there !

Enjoy your pigeons!  
All the very best for  
2010 !!

*Chris Knowles*