

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB

Kings Cup – Saint Allouestre

2015 has been a much better year for racing pigeons than 2014 and while the entry for the King's Cup race was only very slightly up on last years, returns were much improved with over 350 birds on the day and many more on the second day. While last year's King's Cup race had the highest entry since 1996 and this year's increase I think there is a movement in Ireland to a return to distance racing. With the good returns this year from all three French races there will be a lot more experienced pigeons about for 2015, which can only be a good thing.

The birds were liberated at 6.15am on Friday 3rd July in a light east, south-easterly wind which was to turn south, south-easterly on route. We knew therefore that this was going to be a fast race and those who had gone to work on the Friday faced a race of their own to get home in time for the birds arriving. 766 members had entered a total of 2,833 pigeons to compete for the most coveted prize in pigeon racing in Ireland – the King George V Challenge Cup. They were also competing for a total of £33,856 in pools and prizemoney. When word of early times began to filter through it became apparent that the early times were Herbie Thorpe in Ashbourne racing in the Boyne Valley club and Brendan Morgan in Coalisland who timed at 1.55pm and 3.30pm respectively. When the results were announced it was Herbie Thorpe who was the clear winner on a record velocity of 1632. The Harkness Rose Bowl for the best two bird average was won by Milliken and Brady from Lagan Valley who timed two birds almost together to take 19th and 20th Open. There was only one Hall of fame winner this year - Dando and Bennett Beach Park whose bird was 196th Open in 2013, 18th Open last year and 171st this year. The Joe Doheny Cup for the Single Bird Challenge was won by John Downing. The race was sponsored by Frazer Animal Feeds and we are very grateful to them for their continued sponsorship of this race.

1st South Section, 1st Open H & C Thorpe Boyne Valley, Vel 1632, Flying 426 miles, Winning £3,695, King George V Challenge Cup, and J Cullen Memorial Cup for 1st East Coast Fed member

The winners of the King's Cup this year are Herbie and Caitlin Thorpe, Boyne Valley, a club that can now boast two consecutive King's Cup winners as last year's winners B & P McEvoy are also members of this competitive club. While last year's winner recorded a velocity of 654, Herbie's winning velocity was 1632. Having been 34th Open in the Yearling National last year Herbie was determined to improve upon that this year. He attended the Irish National Flying Club prize night last year with the McEvoy's and said that he would like to go back this year to collect a trophy himself. Well they don't come any better than this Herbie! Herbie started to race pigeons as a young lad 27 years ago in the Dublin North East club, as they had a successful junior section.

This year's King's Cup winner is a two-year-old pied hen sent to the race sitting on a three-day-old youngster. She had been raced on the roundabout until after the Skibbereen National at the end of May and then paired with this race in mind. The sire is from Gerry McCourt and is out of his 'Rocket' hen, winner of the Young Bird of the Year Award in the Irish South Road Fed in 1998, while the dam is from Davy Hutchinson, Ashfield, a former National winner himself, and is down from 'The Imprezza'. She had

seven inland races this year including, 1st club Owenahincha (173 miles), Bude, and Penzance when she was 3rd club. She was timed in the Yearling National last year but was just outside the prizes. She was trained every day when racing inland and then rested until the Bude race. She received no further training after that. Feeding is Versele Laga PLX and they are given as much as they want as they are worked hard. Herbie is well known in the Boyne Valley area as he runs his own transporter and he was overwhelmed by the messages of congratulations he received following the race. Herbie told me that he is indebted to his loft manager and friend Kenneth McMorro for all his help. He also receives great support from his partner Gill and his kids. I believe Caitlin has become an expert with the scraper.

1st North section, 2nd Open Brendan Morgan, Coalisland, Vel 1550, Flying 488miles, winning £605 and the Nelson Vase for the 1st RPRA member after the winner of the King's Cup and the NIPA Trophy for 1st NIPA member

In 1st North section, 2nd Open is Brendan Morgan of the Coalisland club timing at 3.30pm for the 488 miles fly. Brendan is a relative newcomer to the sport having just started to race in 2011, although he had pigeons back in the 90s when he was a young lad. He used to visit club mate on race days to wait for the pigeons and he got the bug to race again. When Mickey Hamilton went out of pigeons Brendan got pigeons from him and these have done very well including 5th and 6th Open NIPA Talbenny and 21st Open NIPA Bude in 2014. He followed that up this year with 4th Open NIPA Bude and 96th Open St Malo the week before the King's Cup. Brendan said that Mickey was very good to him not only with the pigeons he gave him but also with the good advice he provided. Brendan had a very consistent season in 2014 and was just pipped for the section Fancier of the Year in the old birds.

The pigeon winning the North section here and taking 2nd Open is a two-year-old smokey hen, racing roundabout. Prior to basketing for this race she saw her cock for 20 minutes, which is longer than he would normally show them. The sire is a Lefre Dhaenen which was bought at a sale in Lisburn while the dam, a Busschaert was bought at a sale in the Grosvenor club in Belfast on behalf of the late Frank Toner. This two-year-old hen got every race this year except Bude and St Malo and she was in Roscrea on the day of the St Malo race. She was given seven tosses before the first race and no further training after that as the birds are flown around the house mornings and evenings. She had always been a steady racer and her brother won from Mallow last year. When Brendan got back from the clock station he had another bird home to take 197th Open, although he lost an hour with this one as his system doesn't have a continuous timing facility. He followed this up with 18th Open in the Friendship National a week after the King's Cup.

2nd South section, 3rd Open D Barry Boyne Valley, Vel 1514, flying 419 miles, winning £1,492, the Gilliland Cup for the first IHU member after the winner.

3rd Open goes to another member of the Boyne Valley club, Donal Barry. Originally from Cork, Donal started racing there in 1973 and has been racing on and off since. Donal now lives in Ratoath, in Co Meath, north of Dublin. The pigeon timed here is a two-year-old hen sent sitting on a four-day-old youngster. She had flown through to Penzance as a young bird and to the Yearling National last year. This hen wasn't raced this year at all but she had been trained constantly on her own from Cork (150

miles) four times and two weeks prior to the King's Cup from Arklow (55 miles) three times a day for five days. The week before basketing she was rested and wasn't let out of the loft at all. The sire is a direct son of N Black & Son's 'Rocky', when paired to his half sister. The dam is off the Lloyd Bros of Wrexham's great Busschaert hen, 'Number 13', who has bred many winning birds for them including 4th North Coast Classic One loft race. Donal is a firm believer of regularly testing his pigeons to make sure that they are in the best condition possible, and he doesn't believe in blind treating the pigeons for various ailments if they don't need it. To this end Donal went about setting up his own testing laboratory which is now fully licensed and regulated with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.

2nd North section, 4th Open N Weir Loughall, Vel 1505, Flying 480 miles, winning £1245 and the McCloud Cup for 1st Yearling in the King's Cup result

4th Open goes to the Loughall lofts of Nelson Weir. This loft has been in tip top form all year having won section E in the NIPA three times including twice on the same day from Roscarberry and Roscrea when he was 1st and 2nd Open NIPA from Roscrea. The pigeon timed here is a blue yearling cock that was 49th Open NIPA St Malo the week before this race, so that was over 900 miles in 8 days. Nelson said that he was in such good form on returning from St Malo that he just had to go back. He has now been called 'Just a Boy' as he is still so young. His sister, another yearling, was 25th Open Friendship National on the Friday just following the King's Cup. Breeding is very much their own old breeding which is from Tracey Andrews, Brighton. A pigeon similarly bred to this one was 2nd in the Penzance Jubilee Classic with the NIPA in 2012. The cock at 4th Open here won twice as a young bird. He was raced roundabout for the earlier part of the season and then was down on eggs for the French races. Nelson doesn't usually train the birds much after the racing starts as they exercise well at home. Feeding is a Versele Laga widowhood mix. Nelson said his daughter Cindy has been a great help this year and she does most of the scraping

3rd South section, 5th Open J O'Brien Laytown & District, Vel 1503, Flying 427 miles, winning £1766

3rd South section, 5th Open goes to Jason O'Brien of the Laytown & District club, a wonderful result for Jason as this is the first time he clocked a pigeon from France. Jason has been racing on and off since 1984. He went to Denmark in 1996 and returned in 2000 and has been racing since. The pigeon timed is a two-year-old blue cheq w/f cock sent sitting on a five-day-old youngster. This year he had two inland races, then 2nd Talbenny where he was 2nd club. After that he was trained from Malahide (20 miles), where Jason works and he was able to let the birds up in threes and fours. The sire is from Burns Bros, Comber and is from their 'Dolly' lines. The dam is from the late Peter McEntegart, Drogheda and is from his French lines. The bird wasn't raced as a young bird but was trained to Arklow (65 miles). Last year he was in the Yearling National but just missed out on the prizes. This year Jason noticed that he was in great form coming up to the French races and opted for this race to send him to. Feeding is Beattie's Number One and Versele Laga Star Plus. Jason asked me to thank all the fanciers who called to congratulate him and to pass on his congratulations to the winner, Herbie Thorpe.

4th South section, 6th Open Moran & Mooney Stillorgan, Vel 1498, flying 401 miles, winning £457

We go to the Stillorgan club in Dublin for 4th South section, 6th Open to the lofts of Terry Moran & Paul Mooney. This is the first year that Tony and Paul have been in partnership and this was a wonderful start to that partnership. The day of the race was actually Terry's birthday and he reckons he won't get any

better birthday presents than this. He had just got home from work and was settling down to a cup of tea in the back garden when the pigeon arrived and it was fortunate he was home as the bird didn't register as it went in so he had to drop his tea and run to catch it to put it over the pad again. The pigeon timed is a blue yearling cock sent sitting 14 days on eggs. The breeding is Lindelauf through Richard Budd from Burton on Trent and these birds have done well for them this year. He had all the inland races except for the Skibbereen National this year plus Talbenny. Terry and Paul trained the birds with Andy Kelly to Baltinglass (35 miles). The week before the King's Cup they were 16th and 49th Open East Coast Fed from St Malo. The birds started off on the widowhood but as they were short of hens they were paired up after a few weeks and stock birds were used to mate with the racers.

5th South section, 7th Open S Fitzgerald Oldcastle, Vel 1490, flying 462 miles, winning £931 and the Billy Ingle Trophy for 1st Irish South Road Federation pigeon in King's Cup

5th South section 7th Open is Stephen Fitzgerald of the Oldcastle club in Co Cavan. I think that this is the first time that a pigeon from Co Cavan has featured in a National result and with a few fanciers there showing an increased interest in National racing I'm sure it won't be the last. The pigeon timed is a yearling hen sent sitting on a ten-day-old youngster, which was given to her on her return from Penzance. This was only her third race ever as she wasn't raced as a young bird. Her first race was from Pilmore Beach and then she had Penzance before being sent to the King's Cup. While not raced as a young bird she was well trained. Stephen likes to train them from the east coast and would take them to Drogheda (45 miles), Balbriggan (50 miles), Dublin (60 miles) and Bray (70 miles). She had the same again this year prior to the Pilmore Beach race, including some single tosses. The sire is Van Loon and the dam is Flor Ingle, both from Ken Perry, Northside RPC. Stephen originally raced in the Northside club before moving to Cavan. Feeding is 60% barley and 40% racing mix before racing, with the racing mix increased as the racing progresses. The birds are hopper fed from Penzance with sunflower seeds and peanuts added.

3rd North section, 8th Open M Ewbanks Banbridge, Vel 1484.80, flying 470 miles, winning £2,093

We move to the Banbridge club for 3rd North section, 8th Open to Mark Ewbanks. Mark is another one of a batch of and coming fanciers who is making a name for himself in pigeon circles. The pigeon timed here now known as 'Hannah', is a five-year-old hen racing on roundabout. This one is from Mark's number one stock pair. The sire is a Soontjens x Van loon from clubmate P Byrne, while the dam is Mark's good hen that was timed twice on the day from the King's Cup including 17th Open, before being put to stock. Her sire is a grandson of R Carson & Son's Dinard winner. He is also a grandson of Jim Biss' 'Bend', Pau Grand National winner. There is also Davy Hutchinson, Ashfield Soontjens lines here too. This is her third time in the King's Cup. In 2012 having been 2nd club, 54th Open NIPA Bude, she went on to take 22nd Open King's Cup. In 2013 she returned from the race badly hawked and just out of the result. In 2014 she was given a year off and put back on the road this year to take 8th Open. This year she was given inland races up to and including Roscarberry, and then Bude when she was 1st club, 201st Open NIPA. It was then that Mark knew she was bang on form. After Bude she received a couple of tosses from Skerries with Timmy Mawhinney on Saturdays. Feeding is a high fat diet and protein is added when Mark thinks they need it.

6th South section, 9th Open, J Downing Stillorgan, Vel 1484.64, flying 395miles, winning £383

We go back to the Stillorgan club to the lofts of John Downing for our bird at 6th South section, 9th Open. This bird is a two-year-old blue hen sent sitting 10 days on eggs. This bird was a gift bird from John's

neighbour Peter Kennedy of the Shankill club in Dublin. Unfortunately Peter passed away three weeks ago. The pigeon, now called 'Kennedy' as a fitting tribute to Peter, is the winner of the Single bird Challenge. The dam is an extreme distance hen while the sire is from Carson Lyons, Hillsborough, and flew France four times for Peter. Although quite late bred this two-year-old hen had two or three races as a young bird. Last year she flew Penzance and was 13 hours on the wing but she returned so fresh that John knew she had something about her. That was her only channel race before the King's Cup. This year she had six inland races as far as Skibbereen. John trained the birds prior to the first race and then they were just flown at home. She had one 10 mile toss two days before basketing for the King's Cup and flew north to south into a head wind. Feeding is Beattie's Champion Supreme from Bill Davies with a few peanuts added for a few days before the race.

4th North section, 10th Open Fleming Bros Crumlin, Vel 1484.09, flying 487 miles, winning £533

4th North section, 10th Open are Jimmy and Ian Fleming, racing as Fleming Bros from Crumlin, Co Antrim. The Crumlin club has a super record from French racing and was the home of such well known National racers Bob Harkness and Kirker Porter. Jimmy and Ian themselves come from a family steeped in Irish National Flying club success as their father won the Friendship National in 1973 and also a Young Bird National in 1953. They have been NIPA section B Fanciers of The Year in five out of the last seven years and were second Open NIPA young bird Talbenny a couple of years ago. The pigeon timed here is a two-year-old cheq hen sent sitting on eggs 13 days and with her first flight half way up. Her sire was purchased from Geoff Kirkland while the dam is Huybrecht x Deweerdt from E & A Morris from Liverpool Fed. This year the hen had four inland races and the first Talbenny. She was in Roscrea on the Saturday before basketing as Jimmy and Ian felt she needed a toss. Always a steady racer she was in the top two or three birds to the loft in a few races. She was trained very little with just a couple of ten mile tosses. Feeding is Versele Laga widowhood throughout the racing season.

I would like to all who helped with photographs. I would also like to thank all those who helped at the marking station and the clock centres, and Frazer Animal Feeds for their sponsorship of this race.

Brendan McLoughlin

INFC Press Officer