

2015 BHW/INFC Single Bird Challenge

2015 was the fourteenth running of the Single Bird Challenge and I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the members of the INFC, to thank the editor and staff at the British Homing World for all their help and in publishing all the entries and challenge results over those fourteen years, making the Challenge the fantastic event that it now is.

The Challenge in 2015 had 535 entries and the race itself was very successful with great returns and lots of challenge birds being recorded. The birds were liberated in St. Allouestre at 6.15am in blue skies and a light south east wind.

In first, winning £500, was J. Downing Stillorgan, vel. 1484 and a fantastic 9th Open, the winning 2yr old blue being called "Kennedy", after Peter Kennedy who bred her for John. Her Sire was from Carson Lyons, Hillsborough and Maze, and was actually Peters' Challenge bird while the Dam was extreme distance breeding. Sadly Peter passed away three weeks before the race and never got to see what she had achieved. Reared later in the year she was rushed a bit in her training but never made any mistakes and had a couple of young bird races impressing John. As a yearling she flew up to Penzance where she was in the Open prizes, flying 12 hours on the wing, again impressing John on her condition when arriving home. In preparation for the King's Cup she had 5 inland races and was sent sitting 10 days on eggs being very keen on the nest.

In second place, winning £400, was T. & A. Ford from Edgarstown timing a 2yr old blue ch w/f hen called "Katie", vel. 1459 and 16th Open. Interestingly the first four in the challenge were all hens with nine hens and six cocks in the fifteen prize-winners. "Katie" is called after Tommy's granddaughter and is Kipp breeding from Frank Sheader. She had a few races as a young bird and was 6th section 10th open in a very tuff Truro as a yearling. For her preparation races for the Kings Cup she had three inland plus Bude. She spent most of her time in the young bird section and paired to a young cock behind feed bins and was sent to the race sitting 12 day eggs.

In third place, winning £300, is R. Fox, Ballybrack, vel. 1393, 16th open with a 2yr old blue hen called "Libby", her breeding is mostly Delbar with a touch of Janseen. "Libby" was raced as a young bird up to Penzance and as a yearling up to the yearling National from Sennen Cove. In the run up to the King's Cup she had two inland plus Bude and was sent sitting chipping eggs.

In fourth place, winning £200, is a bird which can only be described as an iron pigeon, a 2yr blue ch hen called "Lady Patricia" raced by one of the top National lofts in Ireland, Malachy Maguire & Son Newry. Malachy is a previous winner of the challenge in 2005. Her breeding is Malachy's old lines of Home Alone, Portavogie Lass and Kuyper Van Geel lines. She had most races as a young bird and again flew most races as a yearling plus St Malo where she was in the prizes. Then as a 2yr old again some inland plus, wait for it Bude, Penzance Classic, where she was well up, St. Malo again in prizes, King's Cup, vel. 1379 and 46th open, and finally Quimper where she was outside the prizes. Like most of Malachy's she was sent on her first young bird of the year seven days old.

In fifth place winning £100 is Gordon Kirkpatrick Dromara with a 2yr old blue ch cock vel.1349, 66th open, the first cock in the result. Gordon is the only fancier to have won two Gold Medals as well as three Hall of Fames. He also raced one of the greatest long distance pigeons ever in Ireland called

"Hermes". Gordon's blue ch cock is bred from a pair of N. Black & Son birds, he was not raced as a young bird but lightly trained up to 20 miles. As a yearling he had two inland plus Tallbenny and Penzance. Before going to the big race he had three inland plus Tallbenny and was sent to the race sitting 12 day eggs.

In sixth place, winning £50, is H. Boyd Randlestown with a 3yr old black pd hen, vel. 1311 and 88th open. She is bred from Harry's own lines, her sire was in the prizes in the King's Cup and has now bred two to do the same. Harry's hen had Pilmore Beach and Rosscarberry as preparation and was sent sitting a four day young bird.

In seventh place, winning £50, is the hard working INFC secretary Trevor Topping and Son timing a 2yr old blue cock vel.1286 and 101st open. The blue cock contains Harkness, McCartney, Walkingshaw lines plus a bit of Jackie Waring. Raced to Penzance as a young bird just missing the prizes as a yearling he flew up to the Yearling National where he was 101st open, as you can see very close to a Triple Crown. In preparation for the Kings Cup he had three inland up to Rosscarberry sent to the race sitting four day eggs his mate actually beat him home.

In eight place winning £50 is one of the East Down Combine's top partnerships McCartan & Woodside, Crossgar, with a 5yr blue pd hen called "Dawn Surprise". Her breeding is mostly Soojten, her dam won a merit award from the King's Cup and was also 24th Friendship National. "Dawn Surprise" was not raced as a young bird and only lightly trained, as a yearling she was raced up to Tallbenny. In 2013 she was then 20th open St Malo and in a hard race she was 3rd open St Malo 2014. Before she went last year she had three inland plus Tallbenny, in all her races she was flown roundabout.

In ninth place winning £50 is Wes Jackson, Harryville, with the only yearling in the result, a mealy cock called "Tim" vel. 1167, 161st open. Wes is a previous winner of the Robinson trophy, also with a yearling. "Tim" is of a Stassart hen while the sire was a gift from Bertie Blair. Raced as a young bird up to Skibbereen and Penzance nationals. Last year he had nearly all the inland races plus Tallbenny also a couple of comeback races and a couple of long tosses so he was certainly fit. He was sent to the race sitting eggs seven days.

In tenth place, winning £50, is David Coulter Glenavy with a 5yr old blue hen called "Olivia" vel. 1162 and 164th open. Bred from Harold Elliot and Kevin Henderson birds" Olivia" has been a consistent racer and was 80th open Quimper 2013. "Olivia" had two inland races plus Bude and was sent sitting 16 day eggs.

In eleventh place, winning £50, is Dando & Bennett, Beechpark Social, with a 4yr old blue cock called "Blue Boy" vel. 1146 171st open, "Blue Boy" also wins a Hall of Fame for three times in the National prizes. The dam was from Brian Carson from his 3rd Open Skibbereen while the sire was a Soojten from Roy Bothwell who has bred a few good birds for other people including myself. "Blue Boy" was raced a few times as a young bird and as a yearling flew up to Penzance where he was clocked in the prizes. In 2013 he was 196th Kings Cup, 2014 in a very tough Kings Cup he was 18th. In preparation for the race he had two inland plus Tallbenny and was sent sitting 12 day eggs.

In twelfth place wining £50 is Francis Simpson, Banbridge with a 4yr old red hen vel. 1136, 177th open. Francis's hen was bred from a pair of birds from John Baird containing Walkingshaw blood,

being bred late she was not raced or trained as a young bird. She has flown steady since then and last year before she went to the big race she had three inland plus Tallbenny, and was sent sitting eggs twelve days.

In thirteenth place winning £50 is Seamus Curran, Newry with a 2yr old blue ch hen vel.1136, 178th open. Her sire was a Busschaert while her dam was Van den Bosche. Raced natural as a young bird she had a few races again as a yearling a few inland plus Tallbenny. In preparation for the King's Cup she had four inland plus Tallbenny and was sent to the race sitting 12 day eggs.

In fourteenth place winning £50 is Reid Bros & McCloy, Cullybackey, with a 2yr old blue ch cock, vel .1120, 187th open. Harry had a great year at National level winning the Sam Buckley memorial Cup, best two bird average Yearling National and the Darragh Cup, best average Yearling National and Quimper National. The breeding is Harry's uncle's Reid Bros old lines, raced natural as a young bird he was raced up to Tallbenny and as a yearling he flew up to Penzance. Last year he had four inland plus plenty of private training before being sent to the race sitting 12 day eggs.

In fifteenth and final place winning £50 is G. Boyle & Son, Colin, with a 2yr old Blue ch cock, vel.1110, 191st open. Bred by J. McGuire he came to the Boyle loft as a young bird and stayed, he was then raced up to Penzance young bird National. As a yearling he had a few inland and was 130th Penzance Classic. Last year he had all the inland races plus Penzance and was sent to the race sitting 10 day eggs.

Other challenge birds timed in the open result were, Martin Black, Grosvenor (vel.1079, 216th open), D. Mawhinney & Son, Beechpark (vel.1071 223rd open), J & C Delaney, Greenhills (vel.1051, 231st open), Aiden Hyde Gilford (vel.1044, 234th open) and A. Neill, Laurelvale (vel.1024, 246th open).