

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB

YEARLING NATIONAL FROM SENNEN COVE 2016

The Irish National Flying Club's Yearling National was held on Wednesday 8th June this year. Once again there was a good entry for this very popular race in the racing calendar. In the end however the overall entry was down from last year with 823 members sending 4325 pigeons to compete for £33,086 compared to last year when 852 members sending 5188 birds to compete for £35,530 in pools and prizes. This was much the same as the 2014 entry which saw 5243 birds entered.

The birds were liberated in Sennen Cove at 9am in a light north westerly wind. There was early morning fog along the Irish Coast but all forecasts gave this to clear as the day progressed. Unfortunately for many coastal areas the fog remained throughout the day. In spite of this the positions were easily filled on the day with many more birds recorded on the second day. The winners were Barry Smyth & Son from Rathnew, with Mick Conlon & Sons from Banbridge taking 1st North section and 4th Open. The race this year was sponsored by H Beattie & Son and we are very grateful to them for their continued sponsorship.

1st South section, 1st Open Barry Smyth & Son Rathnew, Vel 1294, flying 201 miles, winning £788 and the Nelson Corry Trophy

The winner of the Yearling National sponsored by H Beattie & Son this year is Rathnew's Barry Smyth & Son Jake from an entry of just three birds. This is only Barry and Jake's second year racing and this their first time competing in the Yearling National. Barry's brother Tommy has raced pigeons for years in Wicklow and while Barry always had an interest in pigeons it was only when Jake found a young stray two years ago that Barry's interest was re-ignited and they talked about getting some pigeons. Tommy was first on hand to give them a few birds to get started and then several members from both Rathnew and Wicklow clubs gave them young birds last year and the rest as they say is history. Barry and Jake ended up with 28 young birds at the end of last year's Young Bird programme and they still have 14 of these left at the end of this year's Old Bird programme. This was in spite of losing eight birds in November last year when their loft was blown down in the middle of Storm Barney. Their good friend Brendan Kennedy was with them within two minutes of the loft's destruction and helped to save most of the birds that were trapped under the loft. Once again the fanciers of Rathnew and Wicklow rallied round and helped him out this year again with young birds.

It was quite fitting then that it was Brendan Kennedy who reared the National winner here. The sire is a Houben from Keith Somers Tallaght & District while the dam is Josh Thone from Michael Reilly Wicklow town. The National winner is a blue w/f cock sent to this race chasing his hen. Last year the young birds got all the first half of the race programme and this year, 'Jake's Lad' as the National winner is now called got all the inland races and this was his first channel race. Barry and Jake fed Merrimans corn up to the 3rd or 4th race and then switched to high Velocity corn from Sheldon Leonard.

2nd South section, 2nd Open McCann & Whelan Bray, Vel 1272, flying 215 miles, winning £2884

2nd Open goes to McCann & Whelan from South End Bray club in Co Wicklow. The partnership is Brendan McCann and Conor Whelan. Brendan was actually 7th Open in this race in 2009 when racing on his own. Young Conor has been racing with Brendan for three years but the partnership was only officially formed this year with the name change. The pigeon timed here is a grizzle hen now named 'Snowdrops' which was raced on the roundabout system. The breeding is from L & K Buddle, Dover winners of the BICC National from Pau in 2009 (545 miles) and from Narbonne (557 miles) in 2014. 'Snowdrops' is bred down from the 1st Open Pau pigeon and their 2nd Open Pau pigeon in the same race. The bloodlines of 'Snowdrops' also include 'Cameron's Snow Queen', winner of the London and South East Classic Club's Diploma of Merit for being 3 times in the top 50 in the Open. 'Snowdrops' had all the inland races as a young bird and this year had all the inland races plus Bude where she was 9th club. Brendan and Conor knew when she came home that she was ready for the National. She had four short tosses before racing this year and after that all pigeons are flown for an hour morning and evenings at home.

3rd South section, 3rd Open R Callan Castlebellingham, Vel 1265, flying 273 miles, winning £1856

3rd South section 3rd Open goes to the lofts of Dickie Callan, Castlebellingham. Dickie is also a member of Dundalk North End and Dundalk Invitation clubs but pays his INFC membership through Castlebellingham. The pigeon timed here is a blue white tipped hen now named 'Zachary's Girl' after Dickie's grandson. Breeding is Vandenabeele on the dam's side from M & D Evans. Dickie missed ringing the dam so she was put into the stock loft. The Sire is from double National Champions, N Black & Sons Dromara and is from their top class team of distance birds. 'Zachary's Girl' was unraced as a young bird but trained with Ron Williamson three times per week. This year she only had two races before the National, from Fermoy and 1st Talbenny. She was raced on the roundabout at the beginning of the year then paired up and she was down on eggs when she lost her mate, but was re-paired and sent to the National sitting tight on all 4 eggs. Dickie had planned to Nom one of the cocks but when he went to check on his team for the National on the night before marking this hen nipped him as he went to take her off the nest and held on tightly. He knew then that she was keen so put her in the Nom and she duly obliged by winning £1856.

1st North section, 4th Open M Conlon & Sons Banbridge, Vel 1258, flying 296 miles, winning £613 and the James McGrugan Memorial Cup for winner of the section not winning the Open.

1st North section, 4th Open goes to former Friendship National winners Mick Conlon & Sons from Banbridge. In contrast to the race winners Mick started racing in 1956 with the 1985 King's Cup winner Jackie Crossan. The partnership broke up as both got married and moved to separate locations away from Banbridge. Mick went on to win a Gold Medal in 1993 for 4 times in the King's Cup result, having been 26th Open in 1990, 14th Open in 14th in 1991, 89th Open in 1992 and 69th Open in 1993. The pigeon timed here is a blue cock bred down from the Gold Medal winner and like the Gold Medal winner is

small in stature. The parents are both yearlings who were paired together to keep the line intact. The Gold Medal winner is responsible for many top pigeons, including Aiden McAteer & Son's Gold Medal winner who was a grandson, Raymond McCracken's Hall of Fame winner who was a granddaughter and N Black & Sons Red Mick and Blue Mick who were both twice in the prizes in King's Cup. The blue cock was raced on the roundabout at the beginning of the season but was paired with the Yearling national in mind. As a young bird he was raced natural and had only a couple of races. This year he had five races, two of them inland and then both Talbennys and the Yearling National. The pigeons didn't have a lot of training this year but when they were on the roundabout the hens were given an open trap one day and the cocks the next day. When they were paired all the birds were flown on the open trap every day.

2nd North section, 5th Open P Murray Killyleagh & District, Vel 1209, flying 298 miles, winning £1084

We go to the Killyleagh & District club in Co Down for 2nd North section, 5th Open to the lofts of Paddy Murray. Paddy had a great race here with three birds clocked before 5.45pm on the day, taking 5th, 59th, 150th Open. As a result Paddy was the winner of the Sam Buckley Memorial Trophy for the best two bird average. The pigeon timed here is a blue hen sent sitting ten days on eggs. This hen was 1st Section F with the NIPA from Fermoy as a young bird on a velocity of 1204. Her velocity here was 1209 so these races with velocities in the low 1200's obviously suit her. Her dam is a blue hen from pigeons that Paddy got from his cousin in Wales, A Murray & Son from Brymbo who were winners of the Queen's Cup in 2013. The Queen's Cup is awarded by the Welsh Homing Pigeon Union (WHPU) annually to the pigeon with the most meritorious performance(s) over 300 miles in races organized by a WHPU affiliated organization. His positions to win the Queen's Cup were 7th North section Brussels (360 miles), 1st North section, 4th Open Kinzweiler (425 miles) and 1st North section, 21st Open Meckeheim (464 miles). The dam is a Frank Sheader Soontjens. The blue hen had five races as a young bird and this year she was given three inland races but was well trained with John and Viv Abernethy to Navan, Castlebellingham and Balbriggan. In the week prior to the National she was in Balbriggan 3 times. Paddy's second bird was a mealy cock that was 4th club from Talbenny having previously been 9th club from an inland race.

4th South section 6th Open L Donnelly & Son Finglas, Vel 1203, flying 229 miles, winning £678

We go back South to former winners of this race Liam Donnelly & Son Owen from the Finglas club who were winners of this race in 2009 when they also picked up the Samuel Buckley Memorial Cup having had their second pigeon at 28th Open. The pigeon timed here is a cheq hen raced on roundabout and has been a consistent racer. She flew the whole programme as a youngster and this year she was specially trained for this race. Liam and Owen started the season with 24 yearlings and had 19 going into this race with 6 of these home in race time. The breeding of the hen timed at 6th Open is ¾ from their good friend Safet Duran, Blanchardstown from his Jan De Wijs stock from the Lindsey Lines crossed with De Rauw Sablon pigeons. Safet was 8th Open Yearling National in 2012 and again 8th Open in 2014, with both these races like this one won in Rathnew, by PJ Snell and Ron Fewings, respectively. The other 1/4 of Liam and Owen's hen is from their own good cheq pied hen that topped the Irish South Road Fed twice and was 17th Open INFC Old Bird Skibbereen National in 2009. Feeding is Champion Supreme

from race sponsors H Beattie & Son which Liam and Owen get from Tommy Nelson. Liam and Owen asked me to pass their congratulations on to the winners Barry Smyth and Son.

5th South section, 7th Open J Doheny Malahide & District, vel 1201, flying 229 miles, winning £172

7th Open goes to Joe Doheny Malahide & District. This loft needs no introduction as Joe has a host of National wins behind him including National Champions in 1981 and 1987, King's Cup winner in 1982 and 2002, Friendship National winner in 2011. Add to this Joe won the Miller Gold Cup in 1969 and 1987 and was runner up in 1972, 1976 and 1982. He was won the Old Bird Derby in the South Road Fed in 1976, 1977 and 1978, the latter being a very difficult race with only 5 birds in race time and Joe was 1st and 2nd. Joe has cultivated his own family of pigeons since 1962 but they are mainly centre round the pigeons he got from Billy Walkingshaw, Killyleagh. It is now 50 years since Joe timed his first pigeon from France in 1966. The pigeon timed here is from this family and was a hen racing roundabout. She had three races as a young bird and this year had three inland races plus 1st Talbenny. Joe had a bad toss early last year with the young birds but this one showed promise then by being home half an hour before any of the rest. Joe had a great race here with seven birds clocked on the day.

3rd North section, 8th Open McComb Bros Killyleagh Central, vel 1192, flying 298 miles, winning £276

8th Open goes to McComb Bros Killyleagh Central club who were 1st North section in the Skibbereen Old Bird National result last year. The partnership consists of brothers Bobby and Joe and their nephew Paddy. They have had a good season so far and among their leading positions were 1st, 3rd and 8th Open East Down Combine from Thurles and 11th Open East Down Combine from Skibbereen Classic. The pigeon timed here is a black cock that was on roundabout but paired with this race in mind and was sent sitting 10 days on eggs. The sire is from S & K Duke of Crossgar and Killyleagh and is from their Van Wildermeersch x Van de Weyer lines. The dam is Soontjens from pigeons obtained from Gerard Adair Crossgar and Ian Moxham Larne. The parents of the dam are responsible for many prizewinners in the McComb lofts both in the East Down combine and the NIPA. The granddam was timed in the Sennen Cove Classic with the NIPA in 2015 to take 7th section F in NIPA. As a young bird the black cock had most young bird races and had all the inland races this year. The birds are trained with Paddy Byrne Downpatrick to Dundalk racecourse (40 miles) three mornings a week and Bobby said they have had great tosses all year.

6th South section, 9th Open E E & S Kavanagh Arklow Utd, vel 1186.65, flying 190 miles, winning £132

9th Open are E, E & S Kavanagh from the Arklow Utd club. This partnership consists of Edward Kavanagh and his son Edward and daughter Siobhan. Edward Junior started with the pigeons about ten years ago but like a lot of other young people has emigrated to Australia. The pigeon timed here is a cheq cock racing roundabout. The sire is Kilpatrick x Westcott through Gaffney Bros Arklow. The sire was twice a winner from Bude as well as numerous other positions and

was retired to stock after an injury. The dam was a gift bird from the late John Healy of Newcastle, Co Wicklow, from Malachy Maguire & Son Newry lines. The dam was their best channel bird the previous two years and was then put to stock. As a young bird the pigeon timed here had all the inland races plus the Penzance Young Bird National when he came home just outside race time. This year the birds had all the inland races before the channel but Edward and Siobhan decided not to put their Yearling National pigeons across the water this year before the National. They really try to concentrate on the channel racing and see the inland races as nothing more than training tosses for the channel. In the relatively short time they have been racing they have won the channel averages a few times in Arklow.

4th North section, 10th Open John Trotter Laurelvale, vel 1186.57, flying 299 miles, winning £657 and the Charles Ingle Memorial Trophy for 10th Open Yearling National

10th Open goes to John Trotter of Laurelvale in Co Armagh. John's pigeon a blue hen was sent to this race sitting on chipping eggs after having been on the roundabout for the early part of the season. This hen raced well last year and was first bird to the loft three times including the young bird Talbenny. Her nestmate was first to the loft five weeks in a row this year. The hen herself had Rosscarbery and two other inland races this year, including Fermoy from which she won the Gilford Show prize. The dam is from G & A Tomlinson Derbyshire and is down from 'Lammy's Gem', winner of Gold Medal from Falaise as a yearling in a very hard race and also Messac (370 miles) again in a north east wind. The sire is from John's own family of J P Gevaert Van Schorisse. The granddam was a terrific stock pigeon having bred at least 30 winners, while her nestmate was a terrific racer having been 1st Open NIPA from Kilkenny in 2004 with 33,000 birds competing having been 3rd Open the previous week with similar numbers racing. John likes to train his own birds and takes them for an 18 mile toss twice a week with an odd toss with Ron Williamson. In the week prior to the National John took the birds for their usual toss on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and each day when he came home checked the ETS to see that the hen was the first bird recorded every day.

I would like to thank everybody who helped with photographs for this report and to all the fanciers who give me an insight to their birds and racing methods

Brendan McLoughlin

INFC Press Officer