

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB - FRIENDSHIP NATIONAL

The Irish National Flying Club Friendship National was flown from Quimper in France on Friday 8 July. The birds were liberated at 6.30am in a light north westerly wind so velocities were well down on last year when the leading velocities were well over 1700yph. Despite marking taking place on the morning of the King's Cup race the entry was pretty close to last year with 246 members sending 1,134 birds compared to the 2015 entry when 288 members sent 1,170. The birds were racing for £5,868 in pools and prizemoney with the Friendship National sponsored by H Beattie & Son.

1st Open Rev TAB Sawyers & Son Banbridge , Vel 1154; Flying 447 miles, winning £175 and the Friendship Cup

The winner of the Friendship National this year is Wesley Sawyers of the Banbridge & District club in Co Down, racing as Rev TAB Sawyers & Son. The winning pigeon has been named 'Mourneview Tom' after Wesley's late father. The Sawyers' loft is a household name among the distance fraternity in Ireland and beyond as they regularly feature highly in National results. They were winners of the prestigious Harkness Rosebowl in 2013 for best two bird average in the King's Cup having taken 11th and 16th Open. This National winner was bred for the job in hand with an outstanding pedigree. The dam is a daughter of Gary Benson's Hall of Fame hen 'Champion Jean', when paired to a son of 'Dolly' a Hall of Fame winner for Burns Bros (3rd in the result here). The grandsire of 'Dolly' was a direct Geoff Hunt pigeon as was Wesley's Gold Medal winner 'Helen', for 4 times in the prizes from the King's Cup. The sire of the National winner is a Van Reet from Jeff Greenaway Dromore, and this cock has bred a host of Derby and National prizewinners for both the Greenaway and Sawyers lofts. 'Mourneview Tom' is a three-year-old cock sent to this race sitting on a week old youngster. He was 4th North section, 44th Open Yearling National in 2014 and was Wesley's second pigeon in last year's King's Cup but was just outside the prizes. His half brother has been in France four times taking prizes twice in the King's Cup and he was twice in St Malo but was outside the result from one of these races. As a young bird 'Mourneview Tom' had three young bird races, as a yearling three or four inland races, Talbenny and the Yearling National, as a two-year-old he again had three or four inland races, Talbenny, 5-Bird Fermoy and St Malo and this year he had three inland races, Talbenny, 5-Bird Fermoy and Quimper. Between Fermoy and Quimper he was trained with both Tom Cairns and John Abernethy to Balbriggan and had a few private tosses from either St John's Point or Strangford when he was singled up. Wesley asked me to pass on his thanks to Gary Benson, Paddy Burns and Jeff Greenaway for the pigeons that bred his National winner

2nd Open, and 8th Open G Calderwood & Waite Shankill & Dist, Vels 1147 and 1099, Flying 464 miles, winning £1936, the British Barcelona Club Trophy and the Henry Beattie & Son Cup for best two bird average

2nd and 8th Open this year are George Calderwood and William Waite from the Shankill and District club in Belfast. As a bit of background to the partnership George is William's father-in-law and they have been racing together since 1994. George had been racing on his own from the early 60's while William had as a young lad raced for a while in the now defunct Brookfield club. While the partnership may not be a household name on the National stage they have certainly made their mark racing in the Old Bird

Derbies with both The Ulster Fed and the NIPA (they are also members of the Ligoniel club). In the 22 years they have been racing together they only failed once to time in the Old Bird Derby with the Ulster Fed and they timed two that year with the NIPA. Their first pigeon is a two-year-old cock sent to this race sitting seven days on eggs. The sire is Janssen down from one of their own pigeons that flew France five times, while the dam is down from a pigeon they had on loan from clubmate Barry Telford. This bird has always been a good racer. As a young bird he had most inland races picking up a few club prizes, then as a yearling he again had most inland races with a few more prizes and went on to make the prizes from Penzance. This year he was in the prizes from Skibbereen and 2nd Talbenny but more significantly he clocked at just after 5am on the second day from St Malo to take 6th Open Ulster Fed. Throughout the season the birds are trained privately to Newry (30 miles) twice a week and then when not at channel races they get a 60 mile toss to Skerries on the Saturday with Tom Cairns.

Their second pigeon at 8th Open here is another two-year-old cock, this one sent to Quimper sitting 14 days on eggs. The sire is Kirkpatrick from Geordie Davison Up North Combine, bought at a charity sale organized by Paul Gregg, while the dam is off their own pigeons which are mainly of the Janssen lines. This cock had similar racing to their first bird but had the NIPA's Sennen Cove Classic instead of St Malo.

3rd Open Burns Bros Comber Social, Vel 1144, Flying 453 miles, winning £60

In 3rd Open we have the Comber lofts of Paddy Burns racing as Burns Bros, another well established and popular distance loft. The partnership was originally brothers Paddy and Hughie but when Hughie passed away Paddy decided to retain the partnership name in respect to his late brother. The pigeon timed here by Paddy was a two-year-old cheq w/f hen now named 'Trish' after Paddy's very supportive wife. The hen was sent sitting on a youngster that had just hatched an hour before basketing. The sire is off the 'Rosebowl Pair', winners of the Harkness Rosebowl in 2006 when they were 11th and 40th Open King's Cup. This cock has bred many pigeons to take prizes at National and club level, while the dam is down from 'Dolly' whose lines are contained in the winner of this race (see above), and in the sire of 'Trish' as 'Dolly' was one of the two birds timed to win the Rosebowl in 2006, the same year she won the Hall of Fame, having been 21st Open in 2004, 33rd Open 2005 and 40th Open in 2006. Bear in mind she was also 28th Open East Down Combine from Lamballe in 2004. 'Trish' was nicely set up for this race, having had one inland race and then 2nd Talbenny when she was 3rd club. Following that she had 8 tosses from Annagaskan and 2 from Balbriggan. She was even in Annagaskan on the day before basketing. Paddy had another superb French race here with two other birds in the result at 22nd and 67th open.

4th Open I Parkes & Son Armagh, Vel 1143, flying 453 miles, winning £536

The Armagh lofts of Ivan and Stephen Parkes are having a year to remember. Having topped the Open result from the Skibbereen Old Bird National in May they are 4th Open here from Quimper. Two top ten finishes in National racing in any year is no mean achievement. Ivan and Stephen timed their two-year-old blue hen at 6.08pm and followed this up with another at 7.35pm taking 28th Open. The hen at 4th Open was sent sitting ten days on eggs. Breeding is Willy Thas from Geoff Kirkland with both sire and dam having been bred by Geoff. The sire is a brother to 'The Snake', one of Geoff's best pigeons, while the dam is off a brother of 'The

Snake'. As a young bird the two-year-old hen had lots of racing and was 1st club, 85th North section, 105th Open Young Bird National Skibbereen. As a yearling she had most inland races and a couple of channel races. This year she was set up for this race and had only one inland race, both Talbennys, Bude and Penzance. Always a consistent racer she was 7th club from Bude.

5th Open P Dunlop Edgarstown, Vel 1134, Flying 456 miles, winning £257

Paul Dunlop Edgarstown is 5th North section, 5th Open here. Anybody who follows distance racing in Ireland will be well aware of Paul's record from our French races. Paul is the proverbial small team man with a small team and he works long hours as a lorry driver, however year in year out he features highly in the French results even though he generally only sends five or six birds to each race. This year was the first time since 2004 that he wasn't in The King's Cup result, and there were some difficult races in that time. Indeed Paul had two other birds in the result here at 61st and 76th Open. The pigeon timed here at 5th Open is a two-year-old dark cheq hen sent to Quimper feeding a week old youngster. Her sire is a nestmate of the hen that won the Silver Medal for 4 times in the result from the Friendship National. He is also a brother of the cock that was 2nd Open Friendship National from Portsmouth in 2007. The dam is the grandmother of the sire. As a young bird the hen wasn't raced but was well trained., as a yearling she had two inland races plus a Talbenny and this year she had one inland race which was the Roscrea comeback race and both Talbennys. After Talbenny she was trained from Skerries (70miles) with Ivan Mawhinney.

6th Open L & S O'Neill & Sons Larne, Vel 1124; Flying 477 miles, winning £31

We go to the Larne club in the north east of Ireland to the lofts of L & S O'Neill and Sons for our 6th Open bird. The partnership consists of Liam and Stephanie O'Neill and their sons Martin and Gareth. The partnership has decided to concentrate on National racing which they find suits their work and family commitments. Having been 76th in the King's Cup last year they were delighted to follow that up with 6th Open here. The pigeon timed here is a yearling cock that was racing roundabout, and was allowed to see his hen for 24 hours prior to basketing. The sire was bred by their good friends Gibson & Dickey, Cullybackey and is direct Stickers-Donckers, while the dam is a direct P & J Boal, Van Herk. As a young bird he had four inland races, and this year he was raced roundabout from April. The team were given two 50 mile tosses and then sent to the third race. They were flown at home morning and night from then on, with the cocks and hens racing on alternate weeks. This cock had three inland races, 1st Talbenny, Bude and Penzance Classic and was always consistent without making the prizes. Feeding is Beattie's Champion Supreme which is fed to appetite morning and night. The O'Neills asked me to thank Donal Barry for his help with the pigeon's health and Davy Black for his help this past couple of years.

7th Open R Cassells Edgarstown, Vel 1111, Flying 457 miles, winning £31

We go back to the Edgarstown club for our 7th Open bird to the lofts of Richard Cassells, the winner of the Penzance Young Bird National in 2008. Richard is also a previous winner of the French Diploma in 1991 after finishing 4th in the Friendship National and 20th Open in The King's Cup. The pigeon timed

here is a two-year-old hen sent sitting to Quimper 8/10 days on eggs. The dam of Richard's pigeon was his National winner, whose sire was Van Wildermeersch from John Dowey, Laurelvale, while her dam was Soontjens from Alan Capper. The sire is the old bloodlines of John McMullan from Glenarm through Cyril Hughes of Laurelvale. As a young bird this bird had most inland races as she did as a yearling when she also had Talbenny. This year she had a few inland races, 1st Talbenny, Bude and Penzance. While not winning she was always a consistent racer. Between Penzance and Quimper she had a couple of tosses from Cavan (70 miles), and throughout the racing season the pigeons are all brought to Cavan every Wednesday weather permitting.

9th Open A Darragh Cullybackey, Vel 1093, Flying 483 miles, winning £31

We head northwards to Cullybackey for our 9th Open pigeon to the lofts of the 1986 King's Cup winner Alan Darragh. Alan has a prolific record at National racing having also won the Yearling National in 1989 and again in 2010 when he took the first 3 positions, the Friendship National in 2003, the Old Hens National in 2005 plus many other top positions. The pigeon timed here at 9th Open is a three-year-old cock that was just going back down on eggs as he had lost his hen and was re-mated. His sire is inbred to 'Swallowbrae Lad' the 1989 Yearling National winner and 'Champion 05', 1st Open NIPA Skibbereen Old Bird Derby. This cock has bred a lot of good French pigeons. The dam is a stock hen from Alan's own old stock. The cock timed here was clocked from St Malo last year but was just out of the prizes. As a young bird he had every inland race, as a yearling he had most inland race and 3 channel races, much the same as a two-year-old plus St Malo and this year he had half of the inland races, Talbenny, Penzance and Quimper. All Alan's pigeons being prepared for France get one or two tosses from Skerries (90/100miles) and he had a terrific race here with other birds taking 41st, 62nd, 95th and 99th Open.

10th Open H Silcock Dromara, Vel 1092; Flying 448 miles, winning £141

The top ten is completed by the Dromara loft of Harry Silcock at 10th Open. I suppose the best way to introduce Harry is to say that he is Davy Black's father-in-law yet he has a great record in his own right. I know that Harry gets a lot of help from both Davy's wife Janice and their son Andrew. When I spoke to Andrew to get the details for the report he was keen to point out that his mum did most of the work with the pigeons. The pigeon timed here at 10th Open is a three-year-old grizzle cock sent to the race on chipping eggs. The sire is from N Black & Sons' stock loft while the dam contains bloodlines from both Alan Darragh, Cullybackey and Mr & Mrs Bobby Stevenson, Dromara. The three year old cock was a latebred and had no racing as a young bird but was well trained. As a yearling he just had inland racing, as a two-year-old he had three inland races, 1st Talbenny and Quimper where he was 71st Open and this year he had the same preparation as last year. He had a comeback race from Fermoy between Talbenny and Quimper and other than that he was flown at home mornings and night.

I would like to thank all who helped with photographs for this report, all those fanciers who allowed me an insight into their birds and preparation for the race. Thanks also to all who helped at the marking centre and the clock stations, and thanks again to H Beattie & Son for their sponsorship of this race.

Brendan McLoughlin

INFC Press Officer