

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB YEARLING NATIONAL FROM SENNEN COVE

The Irish National Flying Club's Yearling National was held on Wednesday 7th 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 just slightly down from last year with 706 members sending 4264 pigeons to compete for £33,086 compared to last year when 823 members sending 4325 birds to compete for £35,085 in pools and prizes.

The birds were liberated in Sennen Cove at 6.45am in a westerly wind which was due to turn south westerly on route. The race was won by J Douglas & Son Lurgan Social with B Slakalia best in the South section. The race this year was sponsored by H Beattie & Son and we are very grateful to them for their continued sponsorship.

1st North section, 1st Open J Douglas & Son Lurgan Social, Vel 1360, flying 305 miles, winning £1463 and the Nelson Corry Trophy

The winners of the Yearling National sponsored by H Beattie & Son this year are Lurgan's Martin and Kevin Douglas racing as J Douglas & Son. The 'J' in the name is Martin's late father, Jimmy but Martin like a lot of other fanciers wanted to retain the name. Martin and Kevin are very popular and well known fanciers throughout Northern Ireland and are regular attendees at the various shows and functions throughout the year. They had a lot of success last year with their 1st North section from the Skibbereen Young Bird National being the highlight. There were also Young Bird Fanciers of the Year in the highly competitive section 'E' of the NIPA. The pigeon timed here to win the National is a chq pied cock racing widowhood, although he had lost his hen two weeks previously. The National winner, timed at 1.20pm was a gift pigeon from Joe and Sharon Flood, from the Fortfield club in Belfast. It was one of four that Martin and Kevin got from the Floods last year. Another one was 5th Open NIPA Young Bird Talbenny last year. Training is generally Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from Annagassan (35-40 miles). Martin and Denis Lyness train together, with Denis taking 3rd Open here. This is another major honour for Martin and Kevin from an entry of 3 birds from an overall entry of 4,264 with many lofts sending 20 birds.

2nd North section, 2nd Open O Fitzpatrick & Son Gilford, Vel 1358 flying 298 miles, winning £1100

2nd Open goes to Michael Fitzpatrick racing as O Fitzpatrick & Son. Michael started racing with his late father Owen but decided to retain the name after his father passed away. Michael told me that he definitely got the racing pigeon bug from his father who had won a couple of Opens with The NIPA years ago. Michael had a great race in the Penzance Young Bird National last year with 5 birds in the Open result at 44th, 48th, 49th, 52nd and 85th Open. He had four more in the result here taking 40th, 225th, 289th and 300th Open. The pigeon timed at 2nd Open here is a Blue Pied cock, reared in May last year. It had only one young bird race but has had all the races this year prior to the National, just narrowly missing out on the prizes from 2nd Talbenny. The sire Van Widermeersch down from a gift pigeon from Darren Thompson, Tandragee, while the dam is a Vandenabeele that was 3rd in the Penzance Classic in 2011.

The breeding on this side is from a gift bird from Des Breen Gilford. Michael races roundabout and the birds are trained from Balbriggan with Ronnie Williamson.

3rd North section, 3rd Open D & B Lyness Lurgan Social, Vel 1357, flying 303 miles, winning £473

3rd North section 3rd Open goes to the Lurgan Social lofts of D & B Lyness who were 9th Open in the Penzance Young Bird National last year. Nowadays it's just Denis as Benny unfortunately passed away a few years ago but like many lofts in the same circumstance Denis decided to retain the name. Denis has had a fair degree of success in National races over the years. Having been 2nd Open Skibbereen Young Birds in 1977, he has also been 6th Open in the Yearling National and 6th Open in the King's Cup, in a race that also saw him take 40th Open. Like the bird at 9th Open in the Young Bird National this is another Willy Jacobs Grondelaar from the Mr & Mrs G Delaney stock. Denis' birds got off to a slow start this year so he paired them up after the fourth race and saw a steady improvement after this culminating in his success here. The pigeon timed here is a Blue Pied hen sent to this race sitting 8-10 days on eggs. Denis and Martin Douglas are good friends and as reported they train together from Annagassan which is a popular training location along the east coast between Dundalk and Drogheda.

4th North section, 4th Open R Bell & Sons Edgarstown, Vel 1355, flying 301 miles, winning £640

4th North section, 4th Open goes to Ronnie Bell and his son Jason from Edgarstown, who were 2nd Open in the King's Cup in 2014. The pigeon timed here was actually reared two doors from me by John Trimble & Son of Annalong, who were 57th Open in this race themselves. The sire is one of the Bell's own pigeons which is off Ronnie Williamson's 'Nicky's Pride', 8th and 11th Open King's Cup. It bred their 2nd Open King's Cup bird and another that was 25th Open King's Cup. The grand dam of the pigeon timed here is a half sister to Willie Neil's 1st Open St Malo and 2nd Open King's Cup bird on the sire's side. On the dam's side the pigeon timed here is a Jacobs x Massenhoven from Mr & Mrs Gerald Delaney, Dromore. It's dam is a full sister to 'Oroory Surprise', winner of 2nd National, 7th National, 11th National and 4th Inland Classic. The bird at 4th Open here was 1st club from the Roscarberry as a young bird and has had four inland races this year plus 1st Talbenny. Training is twice a week with Ron Williamson from Balbriggan (50 miles) and feeding is from Cyril Beattie.

5th North section, 5th Open P Hope Edgarstown, Vel 1345, flying 301 miles, winning £155 and the Sam Buckley Memorial Cup for best 2 bird average

We stay in the Edgarstown club for the 5th North section, 5th Open to Paul Hope whose second bird was 14th Open to win the Sam Buckley Memorial Cup for the best two bird average in the Yearling National. Paul had a great race here with seven birds on the day and three on the second day. His third bird was 38th North section, 81st Open. The pigeon timed here is a Blue W/F hen sent to the National sitting 16 days on eggs. Breeding of this one is Andre Roodhooft from Jeff Greenaway Dromore and is a grand daughter of the 'Not for Sale' cock. Paul would like to take this opportunity to thank Jeff for breeding this bird. As a young bird she was a steady racer without winning any prizes but this year she showed

better form and won a couple of minor prizes in the Edgarstown club. Wayne Kennaway is a big help to Paul and does the training which is either from Annagassan or Newry.

6th North section 6th Open A & T & J Houston Lisburn & Dist, Vel 1339, flying 306 miles, winning £438

6th Open goes to Alan, Timothy and Jolene Houston from Lisburn & District. Alan is from a long line of pigeon fanciers and Timothy and Jolene are his son and daughter. Alan's brother Dan is also a great help around the loft. The pigeon timed here is a blue cheq cock racing roundabout. The breeding is Willy Can Herck x Van Loon and these pigeons are winning out of turn in inland racing. They are all bred from one cock and two hens so are very inbred. This year the birds really took off on the channel with the Houstons taking 1st, 3rd and 6th club, 1st, 4th and 10th section D, and 3rd, 34th and 99th Open, 1st Talbenny, and 1st, 2nd and 4th club, 3rd, 10th, 23rd and 38th section., 2nd Talbenny. Another one from these lines had 7 x 1sts in the club, taking 5th and 8th Open in the process. This particular bird had no previous prizes but was very consistent. One of six that was sent to the National, they had four in the prizes at 6th, 195th, 196th and 292nd Open. The birds are given a few tosses at the beginning of the season and are then flown at home for half an hour morning and evening.

7th North section, 7th Open T Fitzpatrick Wilton Cross, vel 1338, flying 302 miles, winning £155

7th Open goes to Tommy Fitzpatrick, Wilton Cross, another fancier with a good return here with five out of eight home. Tommy is a relative newcomer to the sport and joined Wilton Cross about 20 years ago. Tommy has no family background in the sport so is grateful to all those who offered him advice over the years. The pigeon timed here is a Blue Bar cock, racing on the Natural system and sent to this race sitting on a 5 day old youngster. The breeding is from Maurice Wilkinson and Jeffrey Douglas with some wonderful French distance lines here. The grandsire of the pigeon at 7th Open here was 2nd Open St Malo in 2010. Another bird from these lines was 26th Portland and 28th St Malo, while Cyril and Hilary Beattie's 2nd Open King's Cup bird in 2013 contained similar bloodlines. The dam has bred 10 x 1st prizewinners. The cock at 7th Open here didn't show as either a young bird or on the land this year but he was in Tommy's first couple of birds from both Talbennys. Tommy has been consistent in this race having been 92nd Open last year and 97th the previous year. Training is basically from where Tommy is working and that could be anywhere in Northern Ireland.

8th North section, 8th Open Bingham & Seaton Ligoniel & Dist, vel 1333.7, flying 313 miles, winning £125

8th Open goes to Bingham and Seaton of Ligoniel & District in Belfast, winners of the North section in Skibbereen Young Bird National in 2015, when they also won the Gloria Hunniford Trophy for best average (north section) for the two Skibbereen Nationals, having been 8th North section in the Old Bird National. The partnership is Lee Bingham and Billy Seaton. At the beginning of the season the partnership suffered a bit of a setback as a Goshawk had entered their natural loft and had killed a couple of birds. The survivors had to be left for a few weeks to allow them to settle again. The pigeon timed here was in that loft and so has only had a few races this year. A mealy cock he was sent to this

race sitting on a 3 day old young bird, having returned from Bude on the Saturday before to a chipping egg. The sire was a gift from Bill Gilmore, Shankill who had topped the Ulster Fed two years in a row from St Malo. The dam is down from 'John Boy', winner of Roscarberry Young Birds with NIPA. Training is with Brian Foulis and Mark Johnston.

9th North section, 9th Open T McClean Annaghmore, vel 1333.2, flying 303 miles, winning £615

9th Open is Annaghmore's Tommy McClean. In my first year as PRO for the INFC in 2011 Tommy was 7th Open in the King's Cup. He has also been 9th Open Quimper Friendship national in 2012. Tommy originally raced in Newry in the Niblock and McClean partnership who won five Opens in the NIPA including a Young Bird Talbenny. They were also 2nd Open Penzance Young Bird National. The pigeon timed at 9th Open here is a Blue Soontjens cock bred by Jim Newell Annalong who also bred the pigeon that was 7th Open King's Cup in 2011. This one is down from Jim's 'Blue Thunder' lines. This yearling cock flew every race this year including both Talbennys, Bude, Yearling national and then Penzance. As a Young Bird he was a steady racer without winning any major prizes. Tommy trains with Stanley Best to Clogherhead (40 miles) four times a week, with cocks and hens going on alternate days.

10th North section, 10th Open D & R Turkington Doagh & Dist, vel 1331, flying 324 miles, winning £1696 and the Charles Ingle Memorial Trophy for 10th Open Yearling National

10th Open goes to Dessie and Robert Turkington, a father and son partnership from Doagh & District club. Dessie's father was a pigeon man and raced as Turkington and Robinson in Ballyclare. They were prolific racers and won the Penzance Open with the NIPA in 1980 and 1981. The pigeon timed here is a Chequer cock that had no nest box and no hen. He was unraced as a Young Bird but had all the Inland races this year and was 10th club Roscarberry as well as 208th Open Skibbereen Old Bird National. He had never been across the water before the Yearling National. The sire is a Leo Van Rijn from M & A Johnston, Ballylesson and is called 'Brother Joshua'. The dam was a gift from Mr & Mrs Brian McNeilly, Doagh and is a sister to 'Matthew', 2nd section, 2nd Open in this race in 2013. She is also a sister of '24', a winner of 6 races for Mr & Mrs McNeilly. The breeding is Leo Van Rijn x Van Den Bosche. In the run up to the Yearling National the birds were trained Saturday to Balbriggan with Tommy Cairns, Tuesday to Hayes Pipes, Wednesday to Ardee with Ivan Mawhinney, Friday to Hayes Pipes and Saturday to Balbriggan with Ivan Mawhinney.

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

I have had to put the Skibbereen Old Bird National report on hold as the result is currently under appeal

Brendan McLoughlin

INFC Press Officer