

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB - FRIENDSHIP NATIONAL

The Irish National Flying Club Friendship National was flown from Lamballe in France on Monday 10th July. The birds were liberated at 6.15am in a light west, north westerly wind so velocities were well down on last year and a difficult race ensued with only three birds timed on the day and only 16 in race time. The race team reported that "the weather at the race point was perfect with clear skies and very little wind. There were a few light showers south of Penzance and the wind was light north westerly for most of the route. The Line of Flight contacts were all happy with the conditions in their areas". With marking taking place early on Saturday morning and at short notice the numbers were slightly down from last year with 201 members sending 875 birds. The birds were racing for £4,556 in pools and prizemoney with the Friendship National sponsored by H Beattie & Son.

1st Open C & H Beattie Gilford, Vel 904; Flying 443 miles, winning £175 and the Friendship Cup

The winners of the Friendship National this year are the popular partnership of Cyril and Hilary Beattie from Gilford who are actually the race sponsors for this race. Cyril and Hilary have a great record in this race having been second on two occasions and have also been fourth. They have also been 2nd Open King's Cup with many other leading positions in both races. The winning pigeon is a two-year-old blue bar hen sent to the Friendship National sitting on a 12-day-old youngster, with the cock just beginning to look at her again. The breeding is superb with the dam being a daughter of their 2nd Open King's Cup in 2013 when paired to a pigeon bought at Cyril's late father's sale. The 2nd Open King's Cup bird was a Maurice Wilkinson pigeon. The sire's side is also from former National champion Maurice Wilkinson and was bought at a Charity Sale which Cyril and Hilary ran in The Seagoe Hotel for the Meningitis Trust. Maurice put a card up for this sale and the card turned out to be the grandfather of the National winner here. The hen was flown on the roundabout up to 2nd Talbenny when she was re-paired. Her last race was from Corrin in June. Most of Cyril & Hilary's training is privately with Sean Curran due to their business commitments and they find this a great help, and is no further than Annagassan (35 miles). The hen's last toss before the Friendship National was from Dundrum in Co Down, when she was tossed with two others, who she left and came home on her own showing good signs that she was on form and keen for the National.

2nd Open, J Greenaway Bondhill, Vel 900, Flying 447 miles, winning £844, and the British Barcelona Club Trophy

The 2016 National Champion John Greenaway, Bondhill is 2nd Open here with very little separating the first two birds. John has a terrific record racing from France and won the Old Bird Derby with the NIPA in 2000. Two years later he won his first Hall of Fame with 'Iron Lady', 9th, 19th and 64th Open King's Cup, with 'Iron man' winning a Hall of Fame in 2011 and the Gold Medal for 4 times in the result from the King's Cup in 2013, having been 145th Open, 241st Open, 34th Open and 159th Open. The pigeon timed here is a five-year-old cock that was having his fourth Friendship National race. The first two times he was out of the prizes but he was 38th Open having timed at 8.20pm. This year he was timed at 8.19pm for 2nd Open. The breeding again is exceptional as it is down from the old 'Iron Lady' lines. The actual sire of the bird timed here is a brother to 'Iron Man', the gold Medal winner. The 2nd Open bird was raced

roundabout right through and had four or five inland races this year. He hasn't been on the channel this past two years apart from the Friendship national races as John firmly believes that experienced pigeons don't need to go on the channel. Birds are flown for an hour in the mornings and feeding is from Beatties. I know that John was the subject of some friendly banter from his mates following the King's Cup race but this was the perfect comeback.

3rd Open Gregory Bros Rathnew, Vel 853, Flying 349 miles, winning £224 and the John Miller Logistics Cup for the 1st member in the section not winning the Open

In 3rd Open we have the Rathnew Lofts of Tommy and Rodger Gregory racing as Gregory Bros. Since I have been Press Officer there have been very few years when I haven't featured the Gregory Bros. They are prolific racers from all distances. They were 6th Open in this race in 2011 and the breeding then was quite similar to this one, being mainly from their own stock of Soontjens, Delbars and Staf Van Reets. The grandfather of this one is Jeff Greenaway's 'Back to Back', winner of 1st club, 1st Section D and 12th Open NIPA Bude on a Monday and then on the Saturday he was 1st club, 1st Section, 2nd Open NIPA Sennen Cove. The pigeon timed here was a yearling hen sent to this race on chipping eggs. As a young bird she had the full inland programme with the East Coast Fed, and this year was raced on the roundabout earlier and had six inland races. She was sent to the Yearling National and returned with a slight injury so was left for a few weeks. When they noticed that she was exercising freely with the other birds she was given a few training tosses then 2 more inland races before the Friendship National. Training is four x 20 mile tosses per week weather permitting with two private tosses from Dublin and two from the south with Eric Kennedy from Courtown in Wexford.

4th Open Glen Buckley & Sons Annaghmore, Vel 703, flying 447 miles, winning £490

4th Open goes to the Annaghmore lofts of Glen and Johnny Buckley who took the exact same position from the King's Cup a few days earlier. The pigeon timed here is a two-year-old hen sent to the race sitting on a 2/3 day old youngster. Timed at 7.05am on the second morning this hen can't have been too far away the night before. The sire is Vandenabeele while the dam is a daughter of their 2nd Open King's Cup bird that also won a Hall of Fame and a Triple Crown with some superb performances. Bred from Glen and Johnny's own Soontjens family she was 88th Open Penzance Young Bird National in 2008. As a yearling she was 29th Open Yearling National and 2nd Open King's Cup. As a two-year-old she was 201st Open from Vannes to complete the Triple Crown and then in 2010 she was 73rd Open Vannes. She started the year on the roundabout and had a few inland races followed by two Talbennys and Bude. Training throughout the year is mostly with Stanley West from Clogherhead (40 miles) twice a week. Then they are privately trained in the last few weeks before the French racing. Glen said that his daughter Suzanne's has been a great help around the loft this year.

5th Open Speirs & Campbell Cookstown, Vel 701, Flying 464 miles, winning £442

We go west to the Cookstown lofts of Speirs and Campbell. Racing together for over 40 years the partnership is made up of Jim Speirs and Tommy Campbell. They have a great record from the French races and were winners of the NIPA Old Bird Derby from St Malo in 2015. The pigeon timed here is a two-year-old black cheq hen sent to this race sitting on eggs for 10 days. Again the breeding is top class, with the sire being a son of Jackie Waring's Gold Medal winner from the King's Cup, through Christopher Bell, Cookstown. The dam is down from their own old lines which contains a lot of the late Jack Gilmour lines. Jim and Tommy's Gold Medal winner with the NIPA was also based on these lines and what a record he had, 13th Open Dinard 1998, 51st Open St Malo in 1999, 31st Open Sartilly in 2000 and 66th Open Lamballe in 2001. The hen timed here had very little racing this year as she sustained an injury in one of the early races from Tullamore. After that she only had a Fermoy when she was their third pigeon home and Penzance Classic when she was second bird to the loft taking 42nd Section A with the NIPA. Training is all private training from Castlebellingham (50 miles) and she was there three times in the week before basketing for this race.

6th Open T Marshall & Son Newtownbreda, Vel 684; Flying 441 miles, winning £31 and the Henry Beattie & Son Trophy for Best 2 bird average

We go to the Newtownbreda club just outside Belfast, to the lofts of Tom Marshall & Son for our 6th Open bird. In a race with so few birds in race time Tom and Colin had three birds in the result at 6th, 12th and 16th. They also got another bird just outside race time. Tom and Colin have a tremendous record from France and were 2nd Open King's Cup in 2011. They have also been winners of the East Down Combine Old Bird Derby on five occasions. They also picked up a Triple Award in 2013 for a bird three times in the prizes from the Friendship National, having been 82nd Open 2011, 82nd Open 2012 and 38th Open in 2013. The bird timed here was a yearling dark cheq hen sent to the Friendship National sitting 10 days on eggs. She is very much of Tom's own old distance lines, being ¼ De Baere and ¾ Desmet. She had only two young bird races and this year she had Fermoy, Mallow, Skibbereen and Talbenny with the East Down Combine plus two comeback races with the NIPA. Tom's second pigeon was a two-year-old from his own lines while his third bird was a gift from Thompson Bros of the Maze. This one arrived with half a tail and half a wing having been hawked on the way home.

7th Open Donnelly Bros Millvale, Vel 516, Flying 429 miles, winning £244

Former winners of this race Donnelly Bros of the Millvale club in Newry are 7th Open. Richard and John have the great distinction this year as being the only loft in Ireland to time in all three French races. They were 2nd Open NIPA St Malo, had three in the King's Cup result at 90th, 119th and 147th Open and now 7th Open here. The pigeon timed here is a three-year-old chequer cock sent to this race sitting on a youngster that was 6/7 days old. He is a grandson of their 2008 Friendship National winner on the sire's side when paired to a bird of Tom Marshall & Son. The dam's side is John Greenaway's 'Iron Lady' lines. The 2008 Friendship National winner was a daughter of 'Classical Lad', winner of the 2004 Penzance Classic with the NIPA. 'Classical Lad' was a direct son of 'Champion Northwest', winner of 5 x 1st NIPA Open winners for Richard & John. This three-year-old cock was timed in this race last year around the same time but just missed out on an Open position. He was however, 13th Open North/South Fed. In

preparation for this race he had a couple of inland races, 2nd Talbenny and Bude. Most of the training is midweek to Castlebellingham with Ivan Mawhinney and weekends to Skerries.

8th Open D Coulter Glenavy, Vel 449, Flying 446 miles, winning £218

At 8th Open we have David Coulter from Glenavy, who has had two good races in a row, having clocked on the day from the King's Cup to take 131st Open and had another the next morning to take 184th Open. The pigeon timed here is a yearling cock again with impeccable breeding. The dam is 'Olivia', a hen from Harold Elliott that has been in the prizes three times from France, having been 82nd Open Friendship national in 2013, 164th Open King's Cup in 2015 and 42nd Open Friendship National in 2016. 'Olivia's sire and dam were 180th and 150th Open King's Cup in 2010 and were from the old Irish distance bloodlines. The sire of the pigeon timed here is from Kevin Henderson and is down from his 6th Open King's Cup bird. Another similarly bred bird has been 13th Open St Malo Old Bird Derby. The yearling cock timed here was unraced as a young bird and this year had two inland races, Talbenny and Penzance when he was 5th club, 48th Section E and 201st Open NIPA with 6, 235 birds competing. Training is Ivan Mawhinney and then as the French races approach David does a lot of private training from Bray (100 miles) and also from Ardee, Killeel, and Ardglass.

9th Open K O'Brien & Son Individual South, Vel 404, Flying 363 miles, winning £31

We go to Dublin to the lofts of Keith and Alan O'Brien for 9th Open. Keith and Alan have decided to concentrate on the distance races in recent years and are making great progress in this regard. In 2015 they entered three birds in the Miller Gold Cup race from St Malo and timed all three on the day. They have gone to some of the leading distance racers in Ireland to purchase distance bloodlines to see them into the future. The pigeon timed here is a two-year-old chequer hen sent to this race sitting on two babies that were three or four days old. The sire is from N Black & Son Dromara and is down from their 1st Open and 2nd Open King's Cup birds on the sire's side while the grand dam was 51st Open King's Cup. The dam is Hansenne from Terry Tregoinning through Art Kelly, Skerries. This bird was also unraced as a young bird. This year she had two inland races from Dunmanway and then trained from Arklow (40 miles). Keith and Alan like their yearlings to have two channel races preferably from Penzance.

10th Open G Adair Crossgar, Vel 352, Flying 431 miles, winning £31

The top ten is completed by the Crossgar lofts of Gerard Adair who has placed his focus on French racing in the past three or four years. He had a really good King's Cup race having been 47th, 102nd, and 195th Open. The pigeon timed here was a yearling. No further information is available at time of going to press.

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