

JOHN RODWAY of RUSHWICK

1ST OPEN BICC GUERNSEY 1 YOUNG BIRDS

Since becoming Press Officer for the BICC there are a number of fanciers who I have had to speak to on a regular basis when compiling the race reports, such is their consistent level of success in BICC races. John Rodway of Rushwick, a small town to the south west of Worcester is one of those “ever presents”. In the 2015 first Guernsey young bird and Any Age race John’s little chequer hen, sent as John so modestly put it “just for the experience”, came up trumps and beat the rest of the 1,700 youngsters in the competition to finish at 1st North West section and 1st Open. The following is a brief report on John and his pigeons that includes details of his young hen’s National winning performance.



John Rodway 1st Open Guernsey YB

“Out of the Blue”

GB15P45674

**1st Sec NW 1st Open British International
Championship Club Guernsey Y/B 2015
Raced by J Rodway, Rushwick**



John Rodway's 1st Open Guernsey YB

John started in the sport in 1965 and the first major influence on his development as a pigeon fancier was his father. His first loft was just a basic structure with no fancy gadgets and to which he raced his team of pigeons, using what was then the universally practised natural system. This first loft was located at his then home in the village of Malvern Wells.

The present loft, to which he has raced his birds for the past 27 years, is a 16 ft x 8ft two sectioned structure. In addition to this, he also has a small 8ft x 6ft loft to house any “overspill” from the larger loft.

The larger of the two lofts is fitted out with grid flooring whilst John employs the tried and tested deep litter system in the smaller loft.

Approx 70 birds are housed at the moment, that is old and young and John usually breeds about 40 young birds. Most of these are bred late July/ August onwards and are not usually raced or trained in the year of their birth.

The birds lead an entirely "natural" lifestyle as both the old and young are housed together and are never separated.

As a result of the fact that John is reluctant to race his young birds and does not in any case breed from most of the old birds until late in the summer he has no set date for mating the old birds.

The preparation of the racers prior to the first old bird race consists of a number of short tosses from 15 miles. There is no forced exercise here either, as the birds are left to do as they please with no set pattern of exercise times. This laid back approach is also carried over into the training of the birds. Some weeks John might give them a toss at 15 miles. Sometimes he jumps them straight off the loft in to the race since he has lost many good birds to birds of prey when training.

When he does train, he usually only goes as far as Gloucester with the occasional trip just south of Gloucester.

There is no special preparation of the birds before a National race. The usual practice is to select those inmates that seem to be in the best condition at time of basketting.

Young birds are treated with care in their first season as John only wants to educate them in a virtually stress free environment. Some seasons he hasn't raced any young birds but if he does he usually only club races them just for education.

FEEDING.

All birds are fed by hand. There is no set time and no set amount is measured out. The birds are simply fed as much as John feels they need. The feed is of high carbohydrate make up of mainly cereal grains with a low protein content. Red stone grit and minerals are also used regularly. John does not alter the feeding regime in the build up to a National race. They just get the same mixture with no frills attached.

THE BIRDS.

There are no fancy strains housed at Rushwick as most of the birds are of mixed bloodlines and the birds are allowed to select their own mates.

Using these very much laid back methods of minimal interference in the husbandry and breeding of his colony John has, in the past, clocked prize winning pigeons from Pau, Tarbes, Palamos and Barcelona. John's mantra is "don't dwell on the past look to the future".

His ideal pigeon would be of medium build with good feather quality although he admits that he has had small birds and large built pigeons that have scored for him but he does have a sneaking preference for hens for racing.

Not surprisingly, given John's approach to the sport, he does not have a specific programme of medication and rarely uses any supplements with the birds.

When asked if he had any views on how the sport can be improved and how we can attract new members into the sport, this was John's answer.

"This is a difficult one. Times have changed and young people's interests have changed to more technological orientated things. My youngest adult daughter has always been interested in the birds since a youngster but would never go in to the sport. Children usually follow their parents in to the sport (as in my day) but not quite so with the modern generation. However the sport does need young blood in order to survive."

That then is the background to John Rodway's path to success with the BICC. A very down to earth, no nonsense, practical approach to the sport of pigeon racing that is totally devoid of any fancy theories but grounded in sound common sense. It has stood him in good stead for more than five decades and I don't think anything will make him change his approach now – and why should he. If it's not broke there's no need to fix it!!

Gareth Watkins



John Rodway's Racing loft