

THE MULTI NATIONAL WINNING PARTNERSHIP
of
D HEYWOOD & SON of LAINDON.
1st OPEN BICC GUERNSEY 2 Young BIRDS 2015

I have long admired the outstanding performances of the Laindon, Essex partnership of Dave and Gary Heywood. The father and son partnership had previously won 2 x 1st Open NFC and 4 x 1st Open BICC, so it came as no surprise when they clocked their young dark w/f cock to win 1st Open BICC in the recent young bird National to notch up their fifth BICC Open win.

A loft report on these highly successful and extremely likeable fanciers was therefore a priority, and after a few IT problems I eventually caught up with Dave and Gary at the Epsom Show. The following article is the product of that meeting.



129a_Gary-&-Dave-Heywood 1st Open BICC Guernsey 2 YB

"John James"

GB15N17238

**1st Sec NW 1st Open British International
Championship Club Guernsey Y/B 2015
Raced by D. Heywood & Son, Laindon.**



©Chris Sutton



1st Open BICC Guernsey 2 YB for D & G-Heywood

THE BEGINNING.

David Heywood had his first pigeons in 1965 and son Gary joined his Dad in partnership in 1975 when he was just eight years old.

Early influences on the aspiring Gary were local fanciers Tommy Tomkins, Phil Wood, Lou Harding and Jimmy Richards plus of course his Dad Dave.

The first loft was a simple 12 ft structure which housed a total of 9 pairs of pigeons. However, since moving to the present location almost 30 years ago the lofts have developed into far more impressive structures.

The main racing loft now measures some 54ft in length and contains six sections that house the team of 48 widowhood cocks. The 80 or so young birds reared annually are housed in a separate 18ft loft. The main racing loft faces south so has the benefit of the sun throughout the day. The widowhood hens are housed in a section of the young bird loft and this section has an aviary attached. The 20 pairs of stock birds are housed in a separate loft.

MANAGEMENT.

During the racing season the lofts are cleaned daily but in the off season only the boxes and perches are cleaned daily as the partners then use a deep litter of wood chips on the floor with any moulted feathers removed at regular intervals.

All birds are mated at the same time, be they racers or stock birds. This is usually the first weekend following the Blackpool Show in January.

However, with a greater emphasis on long distance International racing in the future, the partners may adjust the mating dates of the long distance candidates to have them in optimal condition for their target races in late June, through July and into early August.

Once their domestic duties have been completed and the babies weaned off the cocks are exercised at home until they attain a level of fitness that Dave and Gary are happy with and then they get no more than five short training tosses out to 30 miles, always returning to find their hens awaiting them. These trainers always take place in the two weeks before old bird racing begins.

Once this initial early season training is completed the cocks get no more road work but are exercised around home twice daily. The morning exercise always take place as soon as the sun comes up as the partners firmly believe that the air is much purer at this time of day and the birds subsequently benefit a great deal from it.

Dave and Gary also believe that rest is just as important as exercise when conditioning their team. The cocks are fed individually in their boxes.

YOUNG BIRDS.

Young birds are well educated in the year of their birth and Gary always insists that they must have been trained down to the south coast, a distance of 60 miles before they enter a race basket for the first time.

The darkness system has been employed for quite some time now and once the youngsters begin to show their sex they are separated and then raced on the "sliding door" system for the remainder of the young bird season. Gary maintains that the darkness system does not have any bad effects on the birds' subsequent racing careers, as they have won many top prizes with yearlings that have been on the darkness system as young birds.

The partners are heavy feeders and as such the babies are never hungry. Young cocks are usually stopped after they have had three inland races, but the young hens are raced weekly throughout the programme and this might entail a couple of trips across the channel in the year of their birth.

The feed for both widowers and young birds is selected from the Versele Laga Plus range of mixtures with the appropriate mixture from the range being fed to widowers, stock birds and young birds.

The strength of the racing mixture fed is adjusted to suit the distance of the race to be flown.

Club racing is now almost exclusively used to condition the race team in preparation for the National channel race programme.

THE BIRDS.

The pigeons that have brought such consistent success at National and Classic level are a mixture of John Gerard's Hartogs, Mandelaerts and "Figo" bloodlines, with new introductions of distance bloodlines including Van De Wegens, Etienne Maerlien and Hugo Battenburgs.

John Gerard has consistently supplied good pigeons to the partners and in recent years some really "handy" pigeons have come from James Parker of Reading. In fact "John James", the winner of 1st Open BICC YB's, is bred from a stock cock emanating from John Gerard and a hen bred by James Parker hence the name. Here's the detailed breeding of John James:-

He is bred from a son of a pigeon called "Lourdes", a Van de Wegen which won 1st St Vincent National with 16,000 pigeons competing. This cock was loaned to the Heywoods by John Gerard. The dam of the Guernsey winner is a hen from Etien Mierlaen lines bred down from "Perpignan Lady" 1st Long Distance KBDB Champion given to Dave and Gary by James and Peter Parker of Newbury. With breeding like that he couldn't fail!

Dave and Gary like to inbreed these various bloodlines for the stock loft with crosses being used in the race team. These methods usually result in the partners' favoured type of pigeon which is small to medium sized with silky feathering.

SOME TOP RACERS.

Below I have highlighted some of the top pigeons bred and raced by the Heywoods in recent years.

"Gary's Lad" a blue pied cock and winner of 1st Open BICC Falaise, also 2nd Open BICC Gellainville, 1st Fed Blandford and grandsire of 1st Open NFC.

"Birthday Boy" Chequer Cock winner of 1st Open BICC Poitiers.

"Tours Lad" winner of 1st Open LSECC Yearling Derby from Tours plus 1st Open BICC National. He is also sire and grandsire of 1st Open NFC winners.

"Bergerac Dream" a blue cock of Hartog bloodlines and winner of 1st Open LSECC Bergerac.

"Young Gwen" a black hen and winner of 1st Open LSECC Guernsey.

"John Joe" a Hartog stock cock bred by John Gerard is sire, grandsire and great grandsire of birds to win 1st Open NFC, BICC and LSECC.

"Diane's Choice" winner of 1st Open LSECC Tours Yearling Derby.

"Celebration Lass" winner of 1st Open NFC Fougères.

The above are just a small example of the quality of birds housed by Dave and Gary, the pigeon portraits that accompany this article more than adequately demonstrate the depth of quality of pigeons housed at the Heywood lofts.

MEDICATION AND SUPPLEMENTS.

The pigeons are regularly tested for all the common ailments with droppings and crop swabs sent to a pigeon vet. Any treatment required is only administered on the vet's advice. The birds are however, vaccinated for Paramyxovirus each year as this is compulsory.

The race birds have access to multivitamins twice weekly with Naturaline also given via the drinking water once per week every week throughout the year. This is often mixed with garlic. Garlic oil and brewers yeast are also added to the corn throughout the year.

Top class pigeons bred and conditioned by top class fanciers. Congratulations both. I look forward to meeting up with you both again in Bournemouth.

Finally my thanks to Chris Sutton and Keith Mott for the photographs that accompany this article.

Gareth Watkins



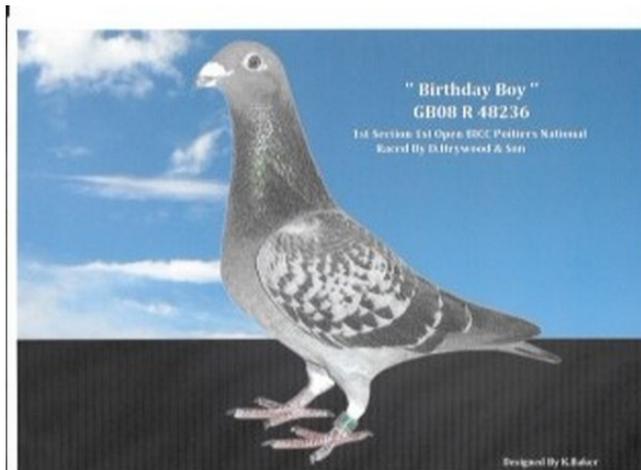
Racing lofts of Heywood & son



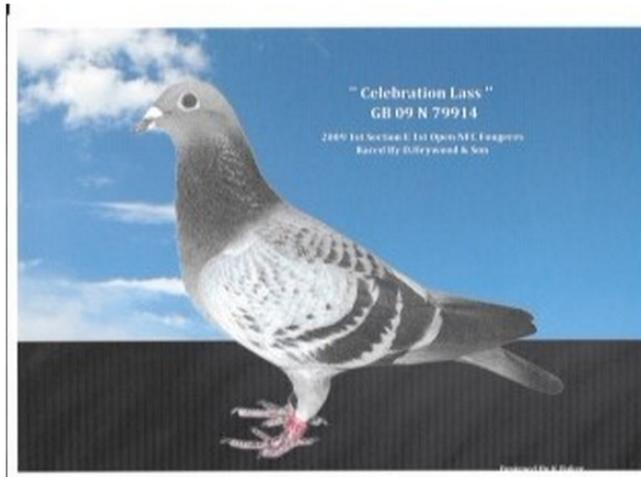
Lofts of D Heywood & son



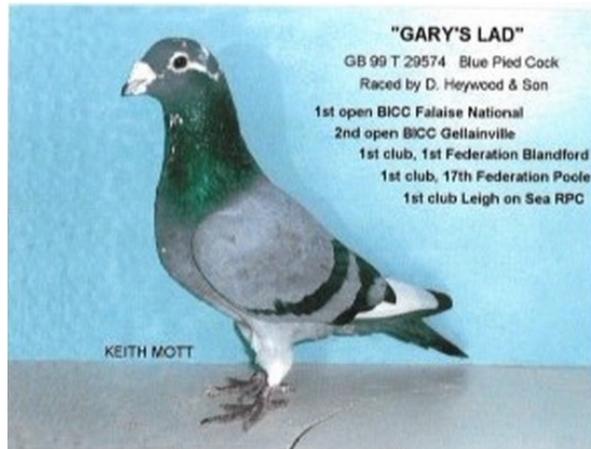
Widowhood section



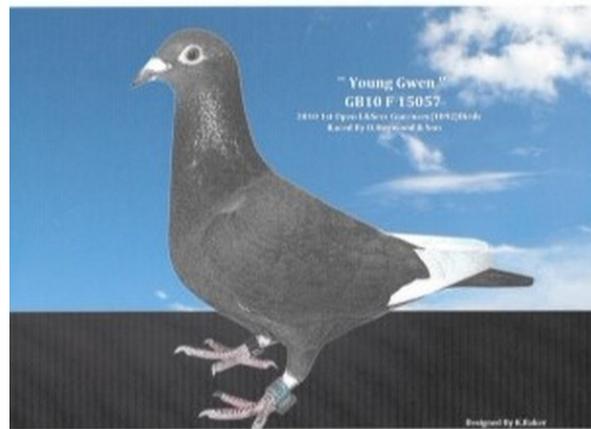
Birthday Boy another of Heywood & son's winning pigeons



Celebration Lass of D Heywood & son



Heywood & son winning pigeon



One of D Heywood & son's winning pigeons