

T & J DAVIES

1st OPEN BICC GUERNSEY 2 OLD BIRDS 2015

The partnership has only been a member of the BICC for a short time, but in that limited time they have recorded a remarkable level of success, winning a total of 6 x 1sts section out of 9 starts in BICC races. On a lovely sunny and warm autumn day, yes they do happen, I set out with John Ludlam, transport manager for the day, to visit the Birtsmorton lofts of T & J Davies, although Jeremy is now the sole active partner as his Dad passed away some time ago.

The set up is a really professional one with a superb loft set in idyllic rural surroundings with a huge lawned area to the front.

Jeremy started his pigeon racing career as a 15 year old in 1989. This came about as a result of his friendship with schoolmate Timothy Drinkwater. Timothy's brother, Tony Drinkwater, was and still is the Secretary of the local pigeon club Malvern S.R.F.C.

Jeremy's first loft was a 4ft by 5ft shed that remains in situ to this day and which now houses his daughters' 3 pairs of Reds.

There have always been pigeons at the present location as previously either Jeremy or his late father raced there.

THE LOFT.

The present loft is 70 ft long consisting of 7 sections with 2 large aviaries affixed to the two sections at either end. A three feet wide corridor runs along the front of the internal sections allowing access to each. The walls of the loft are insulated in an attempt to maintain a constant internal temperature when the loft is closed up at night. French hemp horse bedding, which is bone dry, is used as a floor dressing in all sections. Jeremy has tried many things but he always goes back to the horse bedding for preference. The loft is cleaned out every couple of days in the winter and daily during the racing season.

Jeremy no longer races young birds but he does give them a good education on the road in their first season. This normally amounts to a dozen or so trainers out to 20 miles in the months of September and October. As a result he winters around a 100 birds in readiness for the following racing season. There is now a greater emphasis on marathon racing and as a result he now houses more pigeons than he would normally as the testing process of the new bloodlines is still ongoing. In addition to the race birds there are also 30 pairs at stock but the plan is to bring this number down in the next 2 years once their progeny have been thoroughly tested.

MANAGEMENT.

Jeremy is the loft manager for the RPRA One Loft Race and so, as time for the care of his own birds is limited, the system is kept as simple as possible. The old birds are raced on what Jeremy calls the "split door chaos system". In fact there is no set system as Jeremy believes that the birds need to be motivated as much as possible and not get bored, so he keeps them on their toes so to speak by "variations on a theme".

The race team are usually paired around March 1st each year and all go together at the same time with the hope that they will hold the form well into the season.

In preparation for the old bird season yearlings might get 12 trainers up to 20 miles before the first race and the older birds usually have around 6 tosses prior to their first race. The club races are used to train the birds to break from the main batches.

Jeremy has found that when they are right, the birds will fly willingly around home and as a result he rarely has to make them exercise.

When mated at the start of the season they will have open loft for 3 hours a day and are shut out for one hour during this period. Once the birds have been separated, each sex is allowed out for 90 minutes and shut out of the loft for the whole of that period.

FEEDING.

The birds are fed both by hopper and by hand and they are allowed to eat virtually as much as they want if being worked and raced hard.

Jeremy makes up his own mixtures from feed bought from BJB feeds and Hereford Courts Farm feeds. However, he does have a base mix which he "dilutes" by adjusting the barley content. 10% poultry layers pellets are added to the base mix all year round.

Depending on the distance to be flown and the weather conditions prevailing , Jeremy will raise or lower the barley content of the feed in the build up to a National race. He no longer uses peanuts but in order to increase the fat content he adds micronized linseed meal. This is used in conjunction with Jeremy's own oregano oil.

BLOODLINES.

Recent introductions have been in the form of marathon stock bought in from top National and International flyers, plus others from Steve and Lesley Wright at the internationally renowned House of Aarden Stud. Jeremy's current winning bloodlines are the "Jimmy" pigeons that come through the famous breeder "Jimmy", a pigeon bred by Jeremy's father.

Jeremy likes to inbreed and line breed and then he will cross them with another inbred line. If this proves successful then he will put them back into the line. The best two breeding hens at present are from a father daughter mating of "Jimmy" with his daughter that won the section from Tarbes flying 617 miles on the day in the NFC [see accompanying photo]. The 2015 BICC Guernsey winner is from one of the above mentioned hens. By using these methods Jeremy aims to produce his ideal type of pigeon which is small to medium in size, with good balance, a perfect throat and wins first prizes.

Jeremy's late father, who was also his best friend, was a great influence on his career in pigeons as he was a natural stockman who used to farm mink before going on to run a waterfowl sanctuary. His knowledge with livestock was second to none and he was also a wizard in formulating diets. Another fancier who Jeremy has a lot of respect for is Chris Gordon from Pontefract in Yorkshire. Chris's knowledge with pigeon health is exceptional and Jeremy admits that he has learnt a lot from Chris and cannot thank him enough. In his quest for more knowledge on the sport Jeremy takes notes from other top National and International flyers as he has found that little tips picked up from here and there can bring top prizes. He firmly believes that the fancier who thinks he knows it all will stop moving forward!

PERFORMANCES.

Since joining the BICC in 2014 the Davies team of racers has won the North West section no less than 6 times from 9 starts, culminating in winning the 2015 BICC Guernsey Any Age race with "Timothy's Dream". This obviously has given Jeremy the most pleasure in recent years. In this race he also had 8 pigeons feature in the top 23 of the Open result which proved that the whole team were on song. Winning 3rd Open, 12th Open, 21st Open in the MNFC in 3 separate races in 2015 also went a long way to wet the enthusiasm for further attempts at National competition.

Some of the most memorable pigeons that spring to Jeremy's mind when recalling top pigeons of the past few years are "Jimmy" who was a super racer and winner of five 1st prizes before being put to stock where he proved an absolute gold mine. Three super cocks being grandchildren off him have been put to stock including "Timothy's Dream" the BICC Guernsey winner. "Jimmy's" daughter won the section from Tarbes as a 2 year old flying 617 miles on the day. This same hen also came to win 72nd Open NFC Tarbes as a Yearling!

MEDICATION & SUPPLEMENTS.

Jeremy has developed his own brand of supplements and tonics which he gives to his own birds with remarkable levels of success. He also uses brewer's yeast and micronized linseed meal. The birds are vaccinated in the winter for Paratyphoid twice - 3 weeks apart. Moxidectin is used as a wormer - 3 times a year. Jeremy also has blood samples taken and droppings tested if he thinks that there is any underlying problem with the birds.

VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF THE SPORT.

I'll let Jeremy give his views here in his own words:-

"We ourselves can help to save the sport. If every one of us managed to get someone interested and then to go on and join the sport we would double the membership at a stroke. I would like to see the profits from Blackpool show used as a reward scheme as an incentive with current members to encourage new members to join and if successful then be rewarded financially in some way. This works with a lot of companies as a recruitment reward bonus scheme. If set up correctly with we would have many new members join each year with a pyramid effect. The new members could also be backed up financially in their first year from the proceeds of Blackpool show and other governing sources."

My thanks to Jeremy for answering my questions and allowing John and I to visit and handle his top class team of pigeons.

Gareth Watkins



Racing loft of T & J Davies



Birds enjoying the autumn sunshine in the aviary



One of the cocks' sections



One of the hens' sections



One of the YB sections



The main corridor giving access to all sections

"Timothy's Dream"

GB12N22801

**1st Sec NW 1st Open British International
Championship Club Guernsey 0/B 2015
Raced by T & J Davies, Birismorton.**



@Chris Sutton



T & J Davies's 1st Open Guernsey OB



The RPRA One Loft loft at Jeremy's