



***Bob and Wendy Hill and Daughter of Downend, Bristol.***

***1<sup>st</sup> Open BICC Falaise Any Age race [Old Birds] 2016.***

***The final race of the 2016 BICC race programme took place from the French town of Falaise in early September. An interesting fact regarding this race point is that William the Conqueror was born in the castle that overlooks the town.***

***Be that as it may, the race itself proved to be a bit of a “tester” to say the least so far as the young bird entry was concerned, and yet the old birds seemed to cope much better with the Northerly wind on the channel. Weather conditions, apart from the light Northerly wind in the English Channel were absolutely perfect, with sunshine, broken cloud and unlimited visibility over the whole course of the race.***

***The overall race winners proved to be the outstanding multi National winning Preece Brothers and sons partnership of Cwmtillery high up in the Welsh Valleys, whilst the winners of the Old Bird race, flown in conjunction with the young bird event, proved to be the Bristol family partnership of Bob and Wendy Hill and daughter Rhiannon of Downend, a suburb of Bristol.***



***Bob Hill of the Mr & Mrs Hill & Daughter partnership  
1st Open BICC OB Falaise race***

*The following article is based on an interview with the Hills that I hope will be of interest to the reader.*

*When did you start in the sport.*

*I first became interested in the sport in 1974.*

*Who was your first major influence.*

*My first influence in the sport was Alan Ryan who was a work colleague of my father's at Avonmouth docks in Bristol.*

*Can you give brief details of your first loft, birds, management etc.*

*The first loft was a 16 ft x 5 ft structure containing 3 sections. The birds housed were gifts from Hartcliffe and Withywood club members. At that time the birds were raced on the natural system.*

*How long have you raced to your present location.*

*I've been in the sport now for 23 years.*

*Can you give details of your present loft set up i.e. overall dimensions , orientation , number of sections etc.*

*The present racing loft is 22 ft x 8 ft with four sections and faces north west. Our stock loft is 8 ft x 6 ft facing north east with an aviary to one side and on the front.*



***Racing Loft***

*Do you use deep litter, grids or clean daily/regularly.*

*The racing loft is cleaned twice daily. We use a form of deep litter in the stock loft with the nest boxes and perches cleaned once daily.*

*How many birds do you keep:- stock. racers, young birds.*

*We have five pairs of stock birds, 16 pairs of racers and usually rear about 35 young birds annually.*



*Stock Loft*



*YB Aviary*

*What system do you use to race the birds e.g. widowhood, round about, natural etc.*

*The old birds are raced on the widowhood system and the young birds are raced natural.*



*OB Loft*



*Hens Section*

*When do you mate your stock birds, racers.*

*All birds are paired up at the end of February.*

*Do you mate the birds you intend for the longer races at a different time to the other racers.*

*No – all are mated at the same time.*

*What is the preparation of the racers prior to the first old bird race.*

*The old birds are kept in the loft all winter from end of September until the end of March because we have a problem with sparrowhawks during this period.*

*The racers are then given their liberty at the end of March, and have 2 x 6 mile training tosses prior to their first race.*

*Do you force fly your birds during exercise or are they left to do as they please?*

*When we consider the birds are fit, we put a flag up to enable them to fly for at least an hour.*

*How often do you exercise the race birds.*

*Cocks are exercised twice daily, hens once a day, young birds also once a day.*

*How often do you train the race birds before and during racing.*

*The old birds are given two training tosses before racing and none during racing.*

*How far do you usually train.*

*We usually train old birds about 6 miles and young birds go approximately 15 miles.*

*Is there any specific preparation for the birds before National races.*

*No we carry out the same routine throughout the season and then select which birds we think are in the best condition and keenest to go to the Nationals.*

*How much racing do your young birds receive and how many training tosses do they have in the year of their birth.*

*We would race them every week, however young bird sickness usually disrupts our young bird season. The young birds are given about 12 training tosses prior to the start of the racing programme, out to 15 miles – then three tosses a week at 15 miles.*



### **YB Section**

*Do you race your young birds on the Natural system or Darkness/light system*

*We race the young bird team on the light system.*

*How do you feed the racers, stock birds, young birds – hopper /by hand. How do you gauge how much they need at each feed.*

*The old bird racers are fed by hand. Stock birds are hopper fed and the young birds are also fed by hand until one bird goes to drink.*

*What mixtures do you feed.*

*We use the Versele Laga range of mixtures with Versele Laga Super Star Plus and Versele Laga Energy Plus for old and young bird racing. Versele Laga Start Plus is used for breeding and throughout the season in the stock loft. The racers are also given Countrywide No. 1 mix and Beyers barley.*

*Do you feed any differently in the build up to National races.*

*No - we keep to the same routine at all times.*

*What are the main bloodlines that you house now and which lines have proved the most successful.*

*We have found that M&D Evans Vandenabeele bloodlines have proved most successful at stock especially the bloodline coming down from Eisenhower.*

*Do you line breed, in breed outcross when breeding. Which method has been most successful.*

*We have found that outcrossing has proven most successful for us.*

*Is there any fancier who has helped you more than any other.*

*We have had invaluable support from NFC King's Cup winner, Joe Raeburn over the last 18 months.*

*Can you give an outline of your many top class performances and those that have given you most pleasure.*

*In 2015 we were 1<sup>st</sup> section, 2<sup>nd</sup> open C.S.C.F.C. Guernsey old hens. In 2016 we have won 1<sup>st</sup> section, 49<sup>th</sup> open C.S.C.F.C. Coutances old hens. And 1<sup>st</sup> section, 1<sup>st</sup> open Falaise any age race with the B.I.C.C.*

*We have also topped the West of England Combine in September 2011 and the Bristol Federation on numerous occasions.*

*Can you give details of some of the top pigeons that you have raced.*

*The hen that won the 2016 Falaise any age race with the BICC is a first cross from a great grandson of M&D Evans' Eisenhower x a Van Reet hen who was 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> West of England Combine from Littlehampton (4,500 pigeons approximately).*

*Do you have any views on how the sport can be improved and how we can attract new members into the sport.*

*We believe that there should be greater promotion of the sport via the National press, media and social media as many people are unaware that the sport exists. Funding should also be made available.*

*Do you have a specific programme of medication.  
No- if it's not broken then there's no need to fix it!*

*Do you use any supplements such as vitamins etc.*

*Should medication be necessary, the birds would be given multivitamins for two days.*

*Do you feed any supplements in the build up to long distance / National races.*

*No we keep to the same routine of good clean corn.*

*How does your ideal pigeon look/ handle.*

*Good pectoral muscles, not deep keeled.*

*If you could only use one product / supplement what would it be.*

*Matrix grit.*



*An Andrew Beer oil painting of one of Bob Hill's grandfather's winners from the 1930's*

*Straight and to the point. Well done Bob, Wendy and Rhiannon on your National win with the BICC and lets hope there are many more enjoyable moments for you in the sport.*

*Gareth Watkins*