



F Hall & Daughters of Worthing.

1st Open BICC Agen International.

Fred Hall, the subject of this loft report, is a highly successful fancier, who has consistently reached the heights with regard to success at club, Federation, Combine and National level.



However, on Tuesday 4th July, 2017 yet another impressive item was added to Fred Hall's list of wins, a 1st Open in the BICC Agen International race competing against more than 25,000 pigeons from

all over the UK and continental Europe. Not only did Fred's pigeon win the BICC race, it also finished at 61st Open in the provisional International race result.



The following is a report based on an interview with Fred shortly after his pigeon's epic flight.

THE BEGINNING.

Fred started racing in 1968 as a 16 year old, in partnership with Alan Johnson. The young lads joined the South Sussex 5-Bird club that flew with the Solent Fed, even though at the time they did not have a loft or pigeons to put in it!! The club membership could boast some of the best National flyers in the area at that time so prizes were hard earned. The club was run by one of the best officials Fred has come across in his time in the sport, a lady by the name of Vi Maskell who ran a very tight ship. Amongst some of the early successes that Fred can recall was a win from Guernsey with young birds plus a number of prizes in other races but mostly over the channel.

At this time Fred encountered his first major influence since starting in the sport and this was Ken Abbott, who Fred regards as probably the best National flyer locally at the time. A friendship was struck which has endured to the present day. In fact Ken Abbott has taken three of Fred's four National winners to the marking station for Fred! It was

Ken who convinced Fred to send to this year's Agen International so Ken remains an important influence on Fred right up to the present day.

THE LOFT.

Fred's first loft was 10ft x 5ft made out of tongued and grooved timber from old school classroom partitions. It consisted of just two sections one for old birds and one for young birds, no mob flying in those days. Management at that time was basic clean food and fresh water with medication unheard of. The birds at that time were mainly Ken Abbotts with some Cattrysse from a Mr Black of Loch Lomond, Scotland.

Fred has been at his present location since 1999 racing broken old birds and winning 1st Combine Nantes in his first year there with "Foxgrove Princess" a blue Jackson & Andrew hen.

The present loft is timber framed with a brick outer skin measuring approximately 44ft in length by 9ft wide. This consists of a stock section and aviary, one 24 box widowhood section, one 12 box widowhood section and a small section for widow hens or roundabout hens. There is also a young bird loft 18ft x 8ft wide split into 3 sections. The main loft faces north and the young bird loft faces south east.



Stock birds and young birds are on corn cob deep litter while the race cocks sections are scraped out twice a day when racing. The young bird

lofts are not cleaned at all from the time that the young birds go into their section until they finish racing.

Fred tries to keep the number of stock birds down to just 12 pairs but, as he says “ it keeps creeping up because like everyone else I am always looking to improve the stock loft”. He started this year with 33 race cocks and usually keeps about 60 to 70 young birds.

MANAGEMENT.

The main racing system is widowhood with the cocks although he has tried roundabout but with working and having no one to help with the birds he found it difficult to find the time to exercise everything and so prefers to keep it simple and race right through the programme on widowhood.

Stock birds and one section of widowhoods are mated at the same time enabling Fred to float stock eggs to the racers from the stock pairs. He then mates the second section of racers a week or two later. The date of pairing varies from year to year due to holidays or weather. This year they were paired on 5th January and the 20th January.

Prior to the first race Fred likes to have the birds exercising for about a month gradually building them up to 45 minutes per exercise period. If it is too cold or dark in the mornings he will exercise them only in the evenings until end of April. The widowers will then be repaired and trained on the drive for a week - everyday if possible.

When at home exercise Fred will use a flag to keep the cocks flying if necessary. The cocks start off at 20 minutes and are then built up to 45 minutes within a week. Once they have put in a full 45 minute shift they are allowed to do as they please for the last 15 minutes.

Race birds are exercised in the evenings only until the end of April then morning and night for 1 hour thereafter.



Before racing begins the cocks are trained about six or seven times. During racing it depends on whether Fred thinks they need one or two trainers, if so he will give it to them, but on the whole he prefers the birds to come into natural form.

Old birds are trained from 10 miles out to about 28 miles and young birds the same but the young bird team are trained more often to give them experience.

There is no differential preparation for National racing other than getting time on the wing for the pigeons in preparation for the specific target races. Fred assumes that most fanciers will agree that it is getting harder to prepare birds with the amount of hard races encountered from the short channel races in recent seasons.



YOUNG BIRDS.

Fred doesn't take young bird racing too seriously these days. The babies probably get about 15 to 20 pre racing training tosses and 1 or 2 in between races. The usual practice is for the young hens go to 1 or 2 channel races and the young cocks to 2 or 3 inland races. All young bird racing is undertaken on the natural system with no darkening.

FEEDING.

As regards feeding, the old bird racers are fed in their boxes with depurative in the mornings and a good racing mix in the evenings. There is always some food left in their pots which is removed at night so that Fred can feed different food to those birds that are going to races and those that are to stay at home.

Stock birds are fed in a hopper but not filled as they are topped up morning and night. Each nest box has a pot in the box once the young birds are ringed.

Young birds are fed in the corridor once a day in the evenings after exercise. The amount varies between 1 ounce and 1 and a quarter ounces per bird depending on appetite. The feeding is changed to twice a day before young bird training begins so that Fred can train both in the mornings and in the evenings.

Fred started feeding Vanroebays mixtures a couple of seasons ago and has been well satisfied with these mixtures since their introduction.

The feeding system for old bird racers is as follows:-

On return from the race they have depurative Saturday and Sunday with protein powder and cinnamon mixed in. Then depurative in the mornings and racing mix in the evenings up to 5 days before the target race when the feed is changed to racing mix and fats mix both morning and night.

BLOODLINES.

The main bloodlines now housed are Jackson & Andrew, George Carteus and Syndicate Lofts, and Fred finds it very difficult to say which are the best lines. He has had the Jackson & Andrew pigeons since 1993 and they have won all before them including 1st NFC Pau. The George Carteus pigeons were introduced in 2002 and the first young birds bred from them won the Guernsey Open and £500. Others of this line have won 6th NFC Messac, 90th NFC Tarbes 161st open NFC Tarbes, 1st BICC Agen, 61st provisional International; 19th open LSECC Tarbes. Syndicate Lofts lines have been responsible for 2nd section NFC Fougères; 2nd section 16th open BBC Fougères; first 4 in the Fed from Falaise etc. So they have all contributed to the loft's success.

Fred believes that overall, out crossing is the most successful method of breeding but feels that you do have to inbreed to protect certain lines. One fancier that helped him more than any other in obtaining his present bloodlines was Barry McNicholas. At the time Fred was racing Barry's Hermans and Albert Tarleton Janssens in the early 90s when they went down with Salmonella. He tried to carry on with them but they were finished so Fred asked Barry to find him the best fancier he could to source new pigeons. Barry came back with the name of Jackson & Andrew and what a find they proved to be as Fred reckons that they were the best team of pigeons he has ever seen.

PERFORMANCES.

I'll let Fred give you an idea of some of his most notable successes:-

“Some of my best performances over the years in National and Classic racing include:-

1st & 2nd open BICC Le Ferte Bernard; 1st open NFC Pau; 4th & 18th open LSECC Tarbes 2 sent only 20 birds on the day; 1st open NFC Alençon; 1st Open BICC Agen [provisionally 61st open International]; 1st Combine Nantes; 1st Combine Rennes etc.

A few details of my pigeons :-

“Foxgrove Duke” 1st, 8th, 19th, 68th open BICC.



“Foxgrove Baron” 2nd, 8th, 23rd, 105th open BICC.



“Foxgrove Princess” 1st Combine Nantes.



“Foxgrove Prince” 1st open NFC Pau.



“Foxgrove Black Night” 1st open NFC Alencon.



“Foxgrove Carteus” 1st open BICC Agen.”



Not a bad track record that!!

With regard to improvements that can be made within the sport Fred believes that most Federations should stop going over the channel and just nominate through one of the Classics or National clubs with any age racing on the land from May onwards.

MEDICATION & SUPPLEMENTS.

On medication apart from the vaccinations, Fred’s birds get a 10 or 14 day treatment against paratyphoid once a year, with yellow spot applied on basketing and a respiratory treatment about a month before Tarbes. On the food he gives Cinnamon and Protein powder. The drinking water has Immune booster, Iodine tonic, Vita-Pro, plus Honey & Lemon juice added at various times but if he had to choose just one it would be the honey and lemon combination.

That’s it then, the methods of a top class fancier of many years standing who has gained success over a long period of time at all levels of competition. Congratulations on your latest BICC win Fred. See you at Bournemouth!

Gareth Watkins