

## ***A VISIT TO THE SOUTH COAST.***

***The weekend of 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October saw Ray Strawbridge and myself journeying to the South Coast of England and more specifically Bracklesham Bay in West Sussex. Our purpose to meet up with BICC President John Tyerman and BICC Vice President John Wills on the eve of the autumn gathering of the BICC committee at Ash.***



***ICC President John Tyerman and V President John Wills***

***Saturday morning dawned wet and misty here in the South Wales Valleys. At 8 am I was sat on the train that would take me to Cardiff before joining a second train to Newport. Amazingly, both trains were on time and a little after 9 am I was joining Ray for the journey down to Sussex.***

***By the time we arrived at Junction 13 on the M4, our turn off for the continuing journey south, the cloud began to break up and soon we were bathed in sunshine for the remainder of our journey.***

***Unfortunately we failed to make our rendezvous with Tony Cowan as his timing and lack of accurate directions made us pass like “ships in the night!” Not to worry all was sorted by the next day.***

***At 12.15 pm we were pulling up outside the home of John and Linda Tyerman and a lovely lunch awaited us, kindly prepared by Linda. After a quick chat we were soon out among the birds in the Tyerman’s sun drenched garden.***

***John has raced the old Scottish Kirkpatrick’s for many years, the family originating from John Carmichael of Lauderdale in the Scottish Borders. Over the years some Eric Cannon pigeons have been added with great success but the base family remains the old reliable Kirkpatrick’s that have stood the test of time over many generations.***

*The birds were coming through the moult well and the main colours seemed to be reds and mealies along with some blues and blue chequers. All looked well, none more so than the old Barcelona Cock, who was still filling his eggs and rearing youngsters at 17 years of age.*



***One of the sections for racers at the loft of John Tyerman***

*The following is a précised version of an article I wrote featuring the Tyerman loft after a terrific performance in a recent Agen International race.*

*“This article could just as easily have been titled “When the going gets tough the tough get going” a fact that will become apparent as you read on.*

*John Tyerman, a retired police officer, has enjoyed many successful years racing pigeons to various parts of Scotland and the South East of England. However the 2011 season must have been particularly pleasing for John and his devoted wife Linda, as for many months he had to endure chemotherapy along with all the ghastly side effects that treatment entails. Nevertheless, with Linda’s help, he has come through the dark days and enjoyed great success with his pigeons in the races*

*that mean most to him – long distance classic racing from Southern France and Spain. The following report sets out to detail John's beginnings in the sport, his methods and the development of his family of long distance racers.*



### ***THE LOFT.***

*John's first loft at Earlston was a wooden structure just 16 feet long with 3 sections. The first birds were gift youngsters from John Robertson, John Carmichael, Andy Wilson and pigeons from George Kean at Annan. These birds were all predominately Kirkpatrick based with many reds and mealies. They were fed mainly on farm beans, wheat and maize obtained from local farms. Flown on the natural system the birds had a twice daily exercise routine and they would be expected to fly for at least one hour morning and evening and this was increased to around 3 hours a day as the longer distance races approached.*

*After many moves associated with his career as a police officer, John settled at his present location in 1999 having raced pigeons with no little success into the Dorking area between 1977- 1999.*

*At the present time there are three small timber lofts and a larger 26 ft timber loft at the present location. One loft measures 12ftx6ft with the other two measuring around 8ft x6ft All have pent roofs and contain*

*a selection of nest boxes as in the main the birds are flown on the natural system.*

### **MANAGEMENT.**

*There are a number of lofts positioned around an immaculately kept lawn- thanks to John and Linda's daughter Angela!*

*The birds are kept on a deep litter system of wood chips named `easibed` or the new `comfy bed` as this litter is heavy enough not to blow about. Perches and nest boxes are cleaned on a daily basis during the racing season, but less frequently in the winter months. Any droppings that accumulate under perches are removed regularly so that the litter appears as a dry grey carpet. John also uses a ministry approved disinfectant and all sections and floors are sprayed each week. At the present time John has around 100 birds, 20 of which are stock birds.*



*As mentioned in the opening paragraph, John has suffered a severe bout of ill health over recent years and as a consequence has greatly reduced the number of young birds bred each year.*



***Dave Farr, John Tyerman and Ray Strawbridge at John's loft***

***John normally races the old birds on the natural system. However, in 2011 as he was receiving treatment over a period of months he found that it would be simpler to keep the old birds separated. As a result the race birds were put on a form of celibacy/roundabout system. John found this much easier and less work overall, as the cocks were simply `locked out` twice a day for one hour and they behaved just like widowers `clapping off` and constantly active .The hens on the other hand were `flagged` for one hour in the afternoons when the cocks were back in the lofts. Results prove that the birds certainly adapted well to the change of system!***

***All birds, both stock and racers, are usually mated at the same time, around mid March as it holds the moult for the longer races. This late mating also ensures that there are no young birds cluttering up the lofts before April/May!***

***Pre season training for the old birds is usually several tosses along the south coast out to 30 miles plus a number of spins north from Petersfield in Hampshire.***

***A double peregrine strike on liberation at one of these tosses cost John 8 birds with four others returning with permanent injuries to wings and eyes. In future John intends to stick to coastal training with the occasional one from France. In fact John recently took 5 birds to France and singled them up from Tours and all five were back home safely by nightfall.***

*Under normal circumstances the old birds, when being raced on the natural system, would be force flown morning and night for the cocks and mid day for the hens- each exercise period being 60 minutes in duration. During the 2014 old bird season the birds were flown on the natural system and had an open loft for all of the daylight hours with no forced exercise and only a limited training program of one 30 miler mid week and the occasional 15 mile toss from John and Linda's son's home if convenient.*

*As the long distance National/ International races approach John likes to ensure that the long distance candidates have had enough preparatory work and flying time on the wing. He prefers distance hens sent sitting 10/14 days on eggs, and has won many good prizes with birds sent in this condition. The birds seem to shine and have good feather condition as they acquire a great bloom just resting on the nest. Over the past few years the Tyerman young birds have had very little work, other than for a few youngsters that John may select to send to the YB National. In 2010 the young birds never saw a basket due to his illness, but in 2011, as yearlings they raced well on both north and south routes from Wakefield to Bordeaux/Bergerac and losses were minimal. John's Bergerac Classic timer in 2011, winning 93<sup>rd</sup> Open from 1,216 birds went from Wakefied on the north to the Classic. In fact, 4 north road yearlings were sent to Bergerac and John got three home, so not racing them as young birds did them no harm. It certainly didn't do John's winner of the 2011 CSCFC Tarbes race any harm as she was unraced as a young bird, had a few races on the north road as a yearling and was then turned south having just two short channel races before being entered in the Tarbes race at 500+ miles to be clocked on a very dirty day to win 1<sup>st</sup> Open CSCFC. John firmly believes that he would lose many more if they were raced as youngsters.*

*The general rule is that if the babies hold their feathers, they will be well trained to 60miles, with one or two scatterings, returning singly and hopefully a little wiser then they are set aside for the yearling stage. Any racing undertaken by these babies will be on the natural system. Although John appreciates that to be competitive in young bird racing you have to have the babies on the darkness system.*

### **FEEDING.**

*John normally hand feeds but will often use hoppers filled with farm beans which can be closed at any time if the need arises. If he has to go away for any length of time he usually leaves the bean hoppers open*

*and has found that the birds only take what they want and seldom overeat . Young bird feeding during racing is rigidly controlled but the youngsters receive sufficient food and will always enter the loft when called. Stock birds have hoppers available most of the time.*

*In addition to farm beans, various Gem mixtures from Brian Wall are incorporated into the birds' diet including Gem Royale and the new Blobby mix. When racing, Gem Royale mix is favoured for Channel racing. A large percentage of farm beans are fed during the winter months and these are purchased in bulk so as to ensure the quality throughout the year as John also adds beans to the racers' diet if he thinks they need "bulking up". Beans also rear good young birds. The only other additions to the birds' diet is a small percentage of peanuts, sunflower hearts and canary seed fed in the nest boxes in the final build up to a long distance race.*

### *Medication.*

*John has in the past treated preventatively for canker, cocci worms etc before breeding and racing. However, in 2014 he has not treated the birds for anything other than the compulsory Paramyxo jab. He believes that salmonella/paratyphoid is the silent killer of form in racing pigeons and is not easily detectable. As a result he now treats with a preventative and this year also vaccinated the race team using the Chevita "s" vaccine. Great use is also made of Gem multivits and also Gem Impact that contains B 12 and iodine. Brewers yeast is also used, mixed to a paste and added to the corn, allowed to dry and then fed to the birds*

### *THE BIRDS.*

*In 1977 on his return to the UK after a spell in Hong Kong John went back to John Carmichael in Scotland and had the very best young birds from all the Carmichael champions such as Lauderdale John, Lauderdale Princess etc and also some of the old Gardiner of Lockerbie Kirkpatrick lines from Andy Wilson of Dumfries. Andy remains one of John's best friends in the sport and although Andy no longer races he loves to breed quality pigeons for others to race. Over the intervening years the Tyerman family of birds has been blended in with very few introductions. However, John has exchanged birds regularly with another good friend, Richard Howey of Northampton. These have the same family base bloodlines as they also originate from the Carmichael pigeons as Richard was also a great friend of the late John Carmichael. An interesting fact emerges from this blend of*

*Carmichael pigeons raced by John and Richard. In the 2005 Tarbes National John timed two pigeons on the day, to be in the result, one at 21-30hrs and another at 21-50 hours both birds flying over 15 hours on the wing. Richard also timed his good hen named `After Time` in total darkness flying 620 miles on the day. These three Carmichael/Kirkpatrick pigeons were the only birds on the Tarbes National result flying after 9-30pm that night, showing the vigour of this true long distance family.*

*John Tyerman's policy of pairing the best performers together has been adhered to over the years and this has paid off with some excellent performances in National, Classic and BICC Internationals achieved more often than not in difficult conditions.*

*In 1994 through a friendship with Ron Dodd, John was given the opportunity to purchase three pairs of the very best racers as stock pigeons from the late Eric Cannon of Wormley in Surrey. More Cannon pigeons were added over the years and some of these were blended into the old reliable Carmichael family. Others were kept pure and they have given some very good results both pure and crossed. Sadly Eric Cannon died shortly after suffering a stroke but he was without doubt, one of the sports long distance legends, whose birds continue to do well for many other fanciers today.*

*At this point I think I'll let John explain his breeding policy:-*

*"I like to retain the winning lines and in recent years my top performance birds like "Rainbow Lady" who won many distance prizes including 1<sup>st</sup> Open Bromley Anglo French Open race from St Jean de Luz (545 miles) timed second morning at 7-15 in the rain. She left me with some outstanding birds and in 2011 her grandson won 1st Open in the "Barcelona Challenge" race flying 625 miles to the McGee/Tyerman lofts at Hericourt in France. In 2011 I was also 16th and 23rd open and have previously won 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, Open in the 625 miles Barcelona Challenge race, which proves to me that my old Carmichael family will more than hold it's own in the stiffest of competition".*

*Here's how John relates his second win in the Barcelona Challenge race in 2013.*

*"It was a long wait in the heat of the day and we had almost given up when my little blue chequer hen landed at 8-15pm (UK time) to give us all a great boost, especially when a 2nd bird arrived some 3 minutes later. Two very game and exceptional hens. As we now know it was to be one of the hardest Barcelona races ever recorded. My winning hen Blue Chequer GB 10N 84688 is a grand daughter of my old 'Barcelona cock' who won 7th then 5th BICC Barcelona*

*International 661 miles, and also 15th BICC Perpignan International. He was also the grandsire of my CSCFC Tarbes Classic winner (520 miles) when only 4 were clocked on the winning day. He in turn is down from my 'Dorking Supreme' winner of 20th open NFC Pau and 22nd open LSECC Pau and 'Rainbow Lady' a superb distance racer who won 1<sup>st</sup> open St Jean de Luz and many other top positions. It would be true to say that the winning blue hen "84688" is steeped in the very best of my long distance lines from my Carmichael/Kirkpatrick family that I have flown successfully for the past 30 years in all levels of competition. She carries very similar bloodlines to 'Brackbay Barcelona' my previous 2011 Barcelona Challenge winner."*

*All John's current performance pigeons contain the well tested distance bloodlines of his old red Pau hen 7 times Pau, "Rainbow Lady", "Decimal Lady" who won 2<sup>nd</sup> Open LSECC Bordeaux beaten by a decimal for 1<sup>st</sup> Open and "Dorking Supreme" who won 21<sup>st</sup> Open NFC Pau and 22nd open LSECC Pau, prior to being retired to stock. The good "Barcelona Cock" (now at stock) mentioned above, won 5th BICC Barcelona International, (661 miles to UK) 15<sup>th</sup> Open BICC Perpignan International and again 7<sup>th</sup> Open BICC Barcelona - he is a double grandson of both "Rainbow Lady" and "Dorking Supreme" so the winning genes have been passed on. John breeds to the winning lines and this has proved successful for him over the years.*

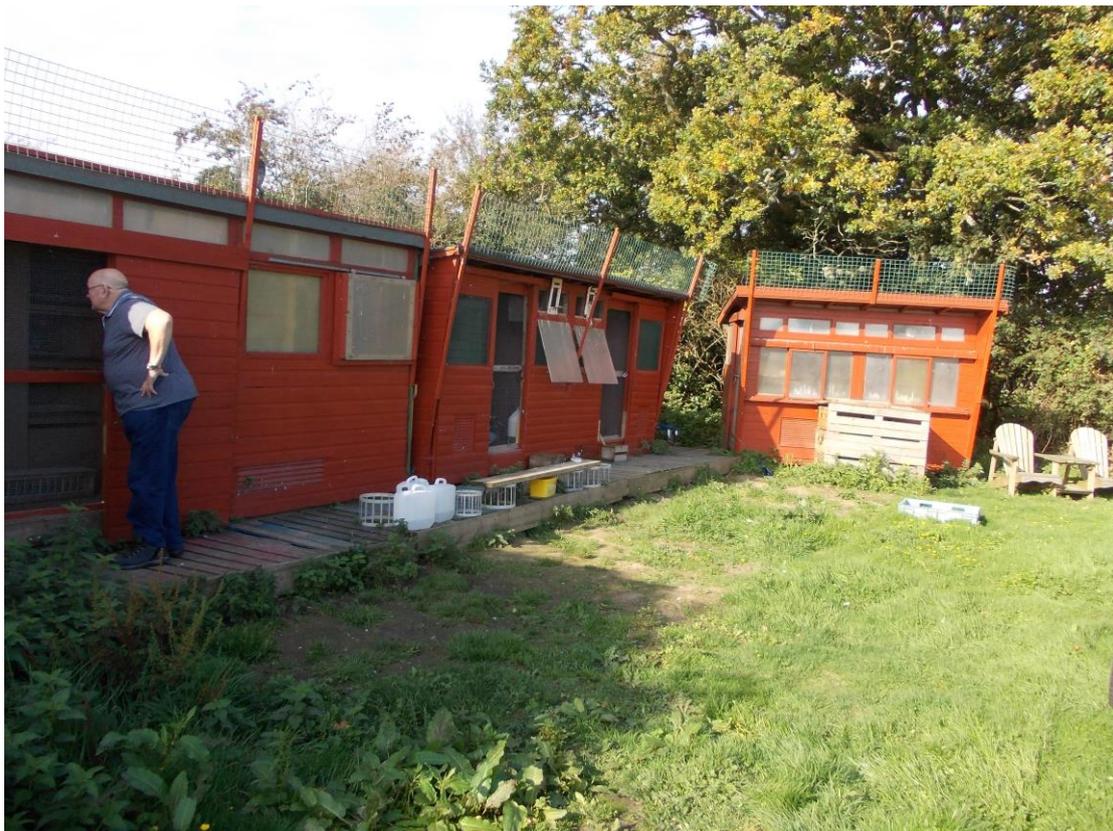
*John believes that good pigeons come in all shapes and sizes. However he prefers a well balanced bird, with good feathering and "apple bodied". He used to be a great believer in eyesign and most of his best pigeons have what he terms "good eyesign".*

*I won't bore readers with a long list of the Tyerman wins over the many years that John has been involved with the sport. Nevertheless I should point out that he has won well over 150 prizes/positions in Classic, National and BICC International races. The most recent win being 1st open CSCFC Tarbes in 2011, when only 4 gallant pigeons were clocked on the winning day. John also won the 2011 "Barcelona Challenge" one loft race at Hernicourt in France with a red Carmichael cock timed at 10-23am on the 2nd morning flying 625 miles. Tyerman pigeons, as mentioned above, have also been 8th, 9th 10th, 16th and 23rd in this Barcelona event, showing that this family of pigeons will hold their own against the very best. The good hens "Rainbow Lady" 1st open Bromley Anglo French open from St Jean De Luz, "Dorking Supreme" 21st NFC Pau and 22nd open LSECC Pau and "Decimal Lady" 2nd open LSECC Bordeaux Classic have left their winning genes in the current family.*

*There you have it – the methods of a top class fancier who has been winning in long distance classic and National races for the best part of 40 years to various locations. These wins have been achieved, in the majority of cases, with the good old tried and tested Scottish Kirkpatrick family of pigeons that have stood the test of time for the last 80 or so years and in the hands of fanciers of the calibre of John Tyerman they will no doubt continue to do so, well into the future.*

*I should also point out that John is not only President of the BICC but also race advisor and is kept busy throughout the season compiling weather information to aid the convoyer Trevor Cracknell in his decisions to liberate. So as you can see, quite apart from being a top class fancier, John also puts a great deal back into the sport.”*

*The next port of call was to another stalwart of the BICC and something of a long distance legend having won 1<sup>st</sup> Open BICC on at least six occasions in International races – none other than John Wills.*



*The New John Wills loft set up*

*John's successes have also been achieved at a number of locations as he tends to move around a lot!*

*In the early years he had great success in club, Fed and Combine races to his home loft in West London. He later moved out to Frimley in Surrey and this is where his great long distance wins were achieved with the BICC.*

*In recent years he has lived briefly in Sunbury on Thames before decamping in 2016 and pitching up on the South Coast at Bracklesham Bay, where he has quickly established his new loft set up. As a result of the frequent moves over the past few years, John has not had the opportunity of building a team of long distance pigeons in any one location. However, it is hoped that his move to his present location will give him the opportunity of developing such a team with age on their side so that he can once more enter with confidence, a team of pigeons in a long distance International race.*

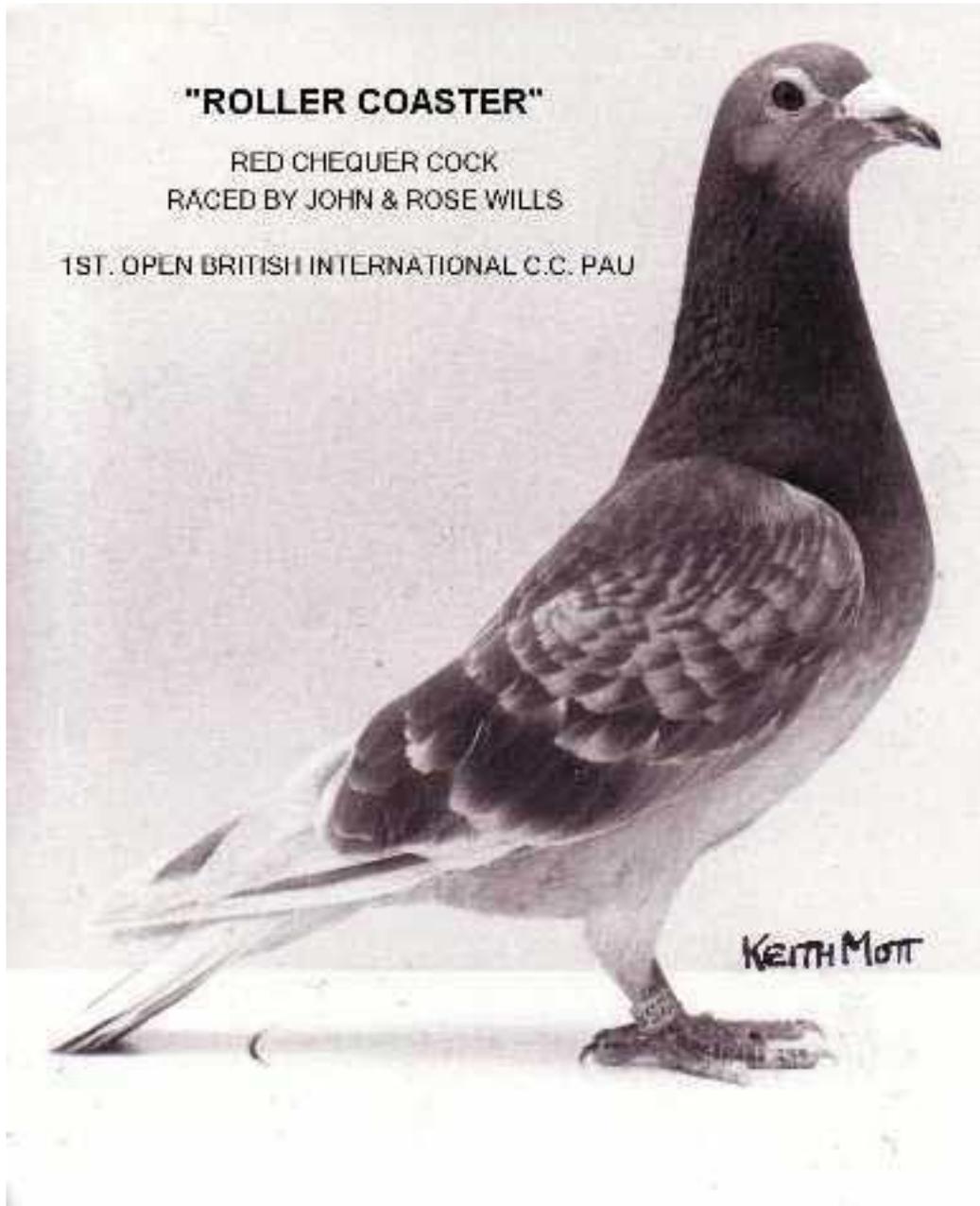


*John Wills and Ray Strawbridge at the new Wills loft set up*

*The new set up consists of three lofts, two for young birds and a third for stock birds. These are positioned at the edge of a field with a marvellous entry path across open fields. The present stock loft will be used for the old bird race team in 2018 as John intends to build a new stock loft during the winter months to house the 12 pairs of stock birds that he brought down with him from London.*

*Young birds were raced for the first time to the new location in 2017 and he was left with 90% of his original team after undergoing an extensive training program followed by three or four races out to 120 miles on the north road. The intention is to take it easy with the yearlings in 2018 with a just a few short channel races to give them experience. Hopefully in 2019 as two year olds they will be taken out to 400 – 500 miles to be followed by the long distance Internationals as three year olds in the 2020 season. Well that's the plan.*

*When mentioning the 2017 crop of youngsters I should also mention the fact that Mark Gilbert gifted John a substantial number of babies to help set him up at his new location. These were augmented by the addition of further gifts from John's other good friend Brian Leadbetter from the Midlands. The rest of the 2017 young bird team were bred down from John's old established long distance family of A. E. Shepherd pigeons from Ian Benstead of Capel in Surrey and the great racer breeder "Roller Coaster".*



*The following is a condensed version of an article I wrote on John when he was living at Frimley.*

*“The origins of the present day family of pigeons can be traced back more than 100 years to birds of the A.E. Shepherd strain which were winning long distance races from Lerwick and Thurso with the mighty London North Road Combine in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, I think it would be true to say that one of the foundation stones of the present day Wills team was a red chequer cock bred in 1978. This pigeon, later named “Rollercoaster”, was to prove to be not only a terrific long distance racer, but also a prepotent breeder, as nearly all of John’s subsequent long distance winners after 1978, exhibit his genes in their make up.*

*Now this is where John Wills was to prove to be inspired in the selection of his foundation stock, as he subsequently mated Rollercoaster to introductions from Ian Benstead, thus strengthening the Sheppard influence in his “embryonic family”.*



***Britannia another of John Wills' BICC International race winners***

*Ian Benstead was a top class long distance racer who was also a race horse trainer. Amongst his horse racing clients was A.E. Shepherd whose family of racing pigeons had won 1<sup>st</sup> LNRC from Lerwick or Thurso on six occasions between 1930 and 1937. Ian was amongst the major purchasers at Sheppard's entire clearance sale and these Sheppard pigeons were to prove invaluable in the continuing long distance successes of the Benstead and subsequently, the Wills lofts.*

*John mated Rollercoaster with Benstead hens and also with hens bred down from his old “West London” family of pigeons which contained the bloodlines of “Butlers Hill Queen” who won 1<sup>st</sup> NFC San Sebastian; “PrioryPride” 1<sup>st</sup> LNRC Thurso 1947 and birds from Tubby Tate, George Lovell and Arthur White with some Slabbinck Cattrysse thrown into the melting pot for good measure*

*The Benstead pigeons were however to prove to be the dominant influence in the further development of the Wills family as more introductions were made from Ian Benstead right up to the time that Ian retired from the sport.*

*That then is a brief outline of the origins of the present day family of pigeons raced by John Wills. I say family as they truly are a well defined family of birds that look and handle as one. The cocks are just above medium sized with noble looking bold heads and extensive wattle development, superb feather quality and outstanding eyesign. The hens were just below medium sized with excellent eyesign and feather quality and both cocks and hens exhibited excellent skeletal structure – fine boned and as strong as spring steel with not a weak back in sight. Incidentally, some of the hens could quite easily be mistaken for cocks, as they too possessed bold heads and large wattles like the cocks. Another characteristic of the family was the wing structure, - when opening the wing it appeared as if the wing would extend forever with the last three flights long and narrow with large gaps between*



*JohnWills'-Ian's Way 2nd Open BICC Barcelona*

*John has produced this family by inbreeding to the best performance pigeons. He is particularly keen on mating his best hens to one of their best sons in order to fix the genes, the emphasis being on the word **BEST** as he does not believe in inbreeding for the sake of inbreeding, it must be for the purpose of strengthening and consolidating the family gene pool, based on racing or breeding capabilities. When introducing a cross into the family John immediately mates it to his best pigeons.*

*He then keeps the offspring that most resembles his own family and pairs it to one of the best of the old family. The resultant offspring from this pairing, which is in reality  $\frac{3}{4}$  old family and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cross, is then tested on the road.*

*Once he has produced the raw materials to work on the road, John is not in too much of a hurry to get them to the far off distance race points. The Wills pigeons are rarely raced as young birds but they are extensively trained. This begins with an initial 20 mile toss – single up! This is repeated a number of times before moving on to 40 and 50 miles where the process of singling or doubling up is repeated. John never releases his pigeons in large groups. Nor is he worried if the young birds make a mess of these early training tosses. All they have to do is get home and hopefully learn to become independent and rely on their own homing ability in the process. As yearlings they are usually expected to go out to 300 – 350 miles and in fact John has won the Saintes race at more than 350 miles with pigeons that were having the first race of their lives. Two year olds, if fit and well go to the NFC Pau / Tarbes race and as three year olds some may be ready to face the “acid test” of International racing out to Barcelona 700 miles. This schedule is not set in stone as John may adjust things as he sees fit, watching the birds and assessing their condition and form allied to their past experience.*

*An example of this softly, softly approach to racing his birds is John’s good hen “Gail’s Supreme” which won 1<sup>st</sup> BICC Pau ,565 miles, when having only the FIFTH race of her life. Ian Benstead regularly entered pigeons in International 600 mile races for their first ever encounter with the race basket and he rarely failed to clock them. The homing ability is so strongly bred into the family that they do not need to have seen every lamp post on the way home in the build up to their long distance tests.*

*John’s policy has been to retire his best racers to the stock loft once they have put up an outstanding performance such as winning the BICC in a long distance race. This has ensured that the family can be maintained as he is constantly breeding from top class performers in long distance races along with their parents and selected sons or daughters. This policy has brought unbroken success at the distance for the past thirty years*

*When ready for the test, the team will be hopper fed on yearling tic beans. This high protein feed is supplemented with peanuts in the final days build up to basketting. John, rarely, if ever feeds maize or seed and is reluctant to treat for any of the main ailments. He only does so if a problem arises or if he thinks the birds are not quite firing on all cylinders. Although the birds do not see a great deal of the inside of a*

*race basket they are extensively trained from points on the south coast of England in preparation for their long distance tests. They also enjoy an open loft as often as John can allow. This keeps them fresh and raring to go.*

*Because of his concentration on long distance racing, John does not mate the birds early in the year, the time may vary and very often he is only weaning his first round of youngsters in late May. Everything is geared to attaining top form in late June, July and early August when he hopes to be entering his team in each individual pigeons' favoured nest position, whether it be sitting eggs or feeding youngsters. John is not afraid to send his birds feeding squabs on soft food as he does not believe that this does them any harm whatsoever – quite the contrary in fact.*

*That's a brief outline of the birds and methods of a master of long distance pigeon racing. With these simple, yet practical methods applied to his carefully developed family of long distance racers."*

*Following on from our loft visits we enjoyed an excellent meal in a local restaurant before moving on to the local British Legion club where we discussed all things pigeon in the company of Dave Farr who came over from Bognor, John Tyerman and John Wills.*

*Next day, after a cracking breakfast we were on our way to Ash and the Autumn committee meeting of the BICC. Despite a mammoth agenda all the business was dealt with efficiently in an amicable manner. The two new press officers for the club, John Ghent and Chris Sutton will report on the details of the meeting in due course.*

*It was then soon time for Ray and I to make the 150 mile journey home to South Wales after enjoying a weekend in good company.*

*Gareth Watkins*