

Thames North & Eastern Counties Flying Club

Over the last couple of seasons the Thames North Eastern Counties has decided to add more and more events to the racing calendar, thanks to not only a forward thinking committee but also the support and encouragement of the members as a whole. The Thames currently has 127 members and new members joining on a regular basis. This again is testament to the way the club is run and organised and the forward thinking and planning that has been put in place over the years. For many years it was a training Club plain and simple for the National races. However that has changed dramatically in recent seasons and it now aims to cater for all members be that sprint fanciers who just want good inland racing each week or the members that's main goal is the Channel events.

To achieve this goal and offer the best racing possible and to allow the many other events we have since organised the first goal was to have a state-of-the-art transporter. For this the Thames needed to raise a considerable amount of money. The fund raising began in 2016 and for the start of the 2018 season this was achieved with no borrowing, just hard work and multiple fundraising events. These included bonus balls, Elimar auctions, race nights and a presentation evening for the first time maybe ever but certainly in a long time.

Once the transporter was brought the Thames then decided to add a Gold Ring race for the 2017 season, which would be flown in conjunction with the BICC second YB race. This has proved a big hit, with prize money and interest increasing each season to date with members all over the country taking part. I think the main reason for this is we pay out not only to the winners but as we know races are often determined by the wind, we also pay Section prize money, so if the day does not suit you for the Open you still can win good money in your Section. To keep things simple we use the BICC Sections and the pay out is not determined on rings purchased in your Section as the Section money is divided equally among

each one. More information on this year's winners will follow later in this article.

Following the success of the Gold Ring race the Thames decided to introduce a Breeder/Buyer into our events for the 2018 season, to be flown in conjunction with the first BICC YB race, again this has proved a massive hit and by the second season in 2019 this event paid out over £17,000 in prize money with the winner walking away with a cool £5,000 with the 20th pigeon still winning a very decent £200. This event I feel will grow and grow as on my recent trip to Portugal for the One Loft race, I had fanciers I have never meet before approaching me about putting birds in for the 2020 race and not just UK fanciers, some top European names were included. When you think about it's not surprising as for no cost of entry you have a great chance to win some really good money and get your pigeons raced in a UK National race. In many ways this makes a better bet than a One Loft race and with much greater chance of success. More information on this year's winners will also follow later in this article.

This moved us to the 2019 season and as in the past years the Thames did not want to sit still, in fact I think the members are now expecting new and exciting ideas to be put forward each season and the committee did not let the members down. Quite a few ideas were banded around at the meetings before settling on not one but two new ventures for the 2019 season. One was just for the Thames members, a six bird race each week racing for prize money. The idea of just six birds was to remove any elements of drag influencing the results as much as possible. This has started off quite well for a first season and most definitely quite a few members will have a nice few quid to pick up at the presentation night. However, I think the concept can and hopefully will be refined for 2020 to make it even better. Watch this space.

The other idea was an National Open race at the end of the season, originally this was going to be from Tours but as it was not available we had to move to Messac. I do not mind admitting

that a few people, myself included, were starting to think this might not have been the best season to start such an adventure, with the very hard young bird races especially in the Nationals, which went just before this race. However, the Thames kept their nerve and went ahead, even when at points it looked like the race could make a big loss financially. However I am aware of one or two people who quietly committed to cover some of the losses, personally if needed, if it was a big loss for the Thames. We were also very fortunate to have £500 sponsorship, towards the prize fund. I will not name the sponsor as they do not like the publicity but I would like to say a massive thanks to you and if I am honest I am not sure the race would have gone ahead without that buffer. The reason being, as so often happens, if something goes wrong on the first attempt then no one tries again. In some cases of course that is the correct approach but on this occasion, I did not think that was the correct thing to do. The only reason for it not to be a success, would have been because of the losses and hard races which had gone before, nothing to do with the Thames or fanciers' desire to have this type of race, it was just unfortunate circumstances. Mind you there should never have been any doubt and as always the members both of the Thames and all over the country came out in good numbers and the race turned into one of the biggest success stories for the sending fanciers of the young bird season, if not the whole Channel season, with very good returns by everyone I have spoken to. Also most people seem to agree this will set these young birds up going forward into next year. As before, more will follow on the winners and the race itself later in the article.

So to the first of these races, which was the Breeder/Buyer race in conjunction with the BICC race. A total of 270 birds were sold over the three auctions back in March, as we all know it had been a tough season even up to that point, so we were not sure how many of these 270 birds were left come race day. Doing a quick count up locally leading up to the race it



Frank Aloisio's BB winner.



Frank Aloisio's set up.



Frank Aloisio.

appeared as if less than half of the 270 sold would most likely make the start line. The BICC race and the lead pigeons in the Breeder/Buyer did very good speeds of over 60mph and the first three pigeons in the Breeder/Buyer were all pretty close together in fact the breeder/buyer winner was also 10th Open BICC with the second pigeon in 12th Open and the third pigeon 18th Open and the first two pigeons were flying into different BICC Sections. I must say there was a good range of fanciers and areas winning money in this race, with the longest fancier to win money flying 228 miles and the shortest flying 135 miles, close to a 100 mile spread. Hopefully this shows it was as fair a race as possible, with most people in with a chance of picking up some money. I believe 28 different fanciers won money in this race, for me this shows the prize fund was well spread around.

Just nipping into top spot was Frank 'The Man' Aloisio who timed a good young Frans Zwols cross cock that he both bred and bought back at the auction, to walk away with a cool £5,000. Frank knew what he was doing as the full brother to this cock won the Pitsea Breeder/Buyer race on the north road a couple of seasons ago and that same pigeon went on to win the Combine from Thurso flying 500 odd miles this season for Frank. This is proving a very useful line of pigeons for Frank. Just pipped into 2nd by a few seconds we have Alan & Gary Young, who clocked a young blue hen that they bred and brought back to win a nice

£3,000. Coming in 3rd, we have S. Buckle who I must say has raced a cracking pigeon in 2019. This young blue hen was bred and entered into the breeder/buyer by Paul Elliott, and is direct from one of Paul's best breeding pairs of Frans Zwols via Formula 1 Lofts. I heard that this young hen has flown very well all season, scoring in other Nationals and in the Club and Fed, hopefully one with a good future ahead of her. She has made a good start winning both fanciers a very handy £1,000 each. Taking 4th, we have Browne & Wickenden racing a blue hen bred by N. Emberson, this cracking hen finished 51st Open BICC and won both lofts a tidy £750 each. Next in the money both as breeder and buyer we have the very well-known lofts of Julia Bros who clocked their blue cheq cock for 63rd Open BICC and 5th in this race for a very nice £1,000 in prize money. This was followed by Paul Stacey who bred the next lot but was brought and entered into the British Masters One Loft race and raced by Sullivan Bros & Dawes as part of the One Loft race. Not only did this pigeon win a very nice £750 in this breeder/buyer but also did well in the One Loft race as well. Next we had Pat Newell as the breeder and D. Heywood & Son as the racer taking 7th and a very nice £300 for each loft. Coming in 8th and winning £500 as the breeder and buyer was Micky Watts who timed a direct child of Formula 1 Lofts super breeder Rekkem 083 when paired to Tip Top Devil. This hen also scored 11th Open Thames Messac National. Coming in 9th, we have a great combination and I believe very good friends. Mahoney Bros as the breeder and another loft which has been on fire in 2019 B & J Wilson, winning 1st, 2nd and 3rd BICC, also winning the UBI Combine earlier in the season. Not bad, a National and a Combine win in one season. And from a loft which has not been south that long (I believe that is correct). This blue hen won both lofts a tidy £200 each. The top 10 was completed by another of the top lofts in (I was going to say National racing but I should say in any form of racing) D. Wilton & Son whose young hen walked away with £350 as they were both breeder and buyer. A special mention for the pigeon in 11th, I am told this pigeon was brought from a stand at the Epsom Show and walked around and put straight into our auction, which was also held at the Epsom Show. Hopefully this provided a nice little profit for Ann Williams as she wins £150 as the breeder. Unfortunately the Dutch and Belgian birds organised by Rik & Jan Hermans missed out on the prize money this time, but Rik presented a very nice trophy for the first of these birds clocked in the final race. This was won by John Cowlin flying a pigeon bred by Adrian Mirabelle. As with all these events, this was a great



Dave Staddon with grandson Archie and his namesake.

success and the aim is to make it even bigger and better in 2020, while in the Algarve recently for the One Loft race, I was approached by people both in the UK and Europe and even from the USA asking about the Breeder/Buyer and how they could enter in 2020. So watch this space as our aim is to smash the £20,000 pay out in 2020. However to give you an idea, in 2019 we were looking to break £10,000 and ended up paying out £17,600, so we could go way past the £20,000. However we need your support both as Breeders and Buyers. Anyone is welcome to enter a pigeon but Buyers must be BICC members.

Next on the race programme was the Gold Ring race flown in conjunction with the second BICC race from Fougères. A total of 547 Gold rings had been sold and I am guessing (as I do not have the actual number) these were brought by around 200 different fanciers. They cover five different Sections of the BICC and fanciers won money flying between 176 miles right out to a whopping 339 miles. Again the money went around very well with different areas of the country all getting a nice return. Having said that you had to be hot to win this race as the winning pigeon not only won the



D. & J. Staddon.



Archie.

Gold Ring and a cool £1,500 but, well carry on reading and you will find out what I mean. All I will say is it was some picking in the nest when the winning young bird was rung.

The winners of this race must be one of, if not the best lofts in the UK in 2019. To add to their many top performances they were also Winners of 1st Thames & North Eastern Counties Gold Ring race from Fougères, the ace partnership of Dave & John Staddon of Ditchat, Somerset. Dave kindly sent the following information to me.

'John, we were persuaded to join the Gold Ring race by Michael Symonds and thank the lord we gave in and bought six rings from him. Remarkably we got all six to the starting line of the Fougères race held in conjunction with the BICC which was a feat in itself. After seeing the earlier NFC result from Coutances with the leading birds all in the east of the country, no doubt influenced by the north-west wind, we feared our chance of winning the Gold Ring was slim at best but at least there were Section prizes to fly for. Our young cock came straight from the south more or less bang on the time we thought was the best they could do on this side of the country. He clapped around for a couple of laps before trapping and was in amazing condition. It was one of our Gold Rings and so at least we had one in the clock we thought and maybe a chance of a Section prize. We were later to learn that in fact, the Fougères race was a harder race than the

earlier NFC and we got the most amazing news that our cock had won 1st West Section, 1st Open BICC and of course the Gold Ring race with it. We were both absolutely over the moon as the next 60 pigeons in the BICC result were in the east of the country. It was an amazing feeling to know that our young cock had basically broken straight from the transporter and headed for home more or less on his own. He had little or no help from drag and certainly not the wind. My old man has been in this game for 60 odd years and says it's his best ever young bird performance. The cock was bred from our race team from two yearlings who coincidentally were both bred by our friend Mark Gilbert from a batch of 12 youngsters we got from him last year to race, these were bred from some of Mark's own race team. The sire was our first bird from this year's BBC Bordeaux National taking 58th Open in a very strong west wind. He is from a full brother to the famous Southfield Ironman, from a son of Jelle Jellema's Orion when paired to a hen Mark bought after finishing 15th International Barcelona 21,169 birds, she was also of Jellema bloodlines. The dam of the National winner was from a son of Cor de Heijde Naomi, 6th International Barcelona 20,669 birds and 72nd International Barcelona 25,224 birds and a daughter of Jelle Jellema's famous Romee. So as you can see, he is a Barcelona blood from top to bottom. I have been waiting for a cock to put in a special performance so that I

could name him Archie after my little boy who is my wife Caroline and I's pride and joy and is the apple of his grandad's eye too.

Our young birds were bred in Feb/March after having sold the first round from our stock birds. They are darkened and go to every WoESRC they can before and in between their Channel races. We only have one 40ft loft and so we have to race young and old birds hard to keep the numbers in check. At the end of this young bird season, all but three of our young bird team has flown between two, three or four Channel races. We test our pigeons hard and send our yearlings out to the Agen International or Tarbes NFC. The young birds are fed identically to our old birds on a variation of Versele-Laga corn depending on the conditions. They are allowed to pair or do as they please and are given an open loft all day while I am at work. I simply don't have time to exercise old cocks and hens and young cocks and young hens. We always try and motivate them for the bigger races. Archie hadn't even spun around or cooed all year and had shown no interest in pairing up or so we thought. He was sent to this race flying to the perch, but since his return, he has been showing and pairing to a hen, so perhaps he was showing an interest in this same hen before the race but we had missed it. I sometimes wish I could be at the loft more but I have to work. He is a very quiet pigeon that you can pick off the perch with one hand. We would like to thank all members of the Thames & North Eastern Counties for organising this race and the Messac Open National that followed but in particular Michael Symonds, Rachael Bacon and John Gladwin for all of their work, also Frank Aloisio and Mike Symonds for their excellent work in conveying the Messac birds and their regular facebook videos showing the birds being taken care of so well. Something all the Nationals and Federations could easily do as well.'

Taking 2nd in this race and winning a very nice £600 for 2nd and a further £200 for winning his Section was Lee Bastone, timing a very good hen from his Frans Zwols via Formula 1 Lofts, this hen had also won 26th Open BICC Guernsey, 45th Open BICC Fougères and 14th Open Messac National and looks like a very good hen. Coming in 3rd we have Micky Watts rounding off a brilliant season which has seen two more National wins including a 1st, 2nd and 3rd from Le Mans (2) which was his first Channel race of the season, followed by a 1st and 2nd National from Guernsey. In this race his Frans Zwols hen had to make do with 3rd Open and a very nice £400 in the bank, £300 in Open prize money and £100 for 2nd Section. Sneaking into 4th and £200 in prize money was John Cowlin who timed a young Frans Zwols cock which has flown consistently all through the young bird programme for John.

Around the Sections and winning 1st CS Section we have Khan Bros with a red cock to win a very nice £200, this partnership has had good success in the middle distance, really building a team for the Internationals. My feeling is a big win in these races is only just around the corner. Coming in 2nd in CS Section we have my very good friend Darren Ede & Family, this is Darren's first young bird season flying to this new location and his first flying by himself, and what a first season he has had, topping the Fed with multiple pigeons on the drop each week plus good National results. This is another loft which I know will be topping Nationals before long, as you do not own the quality that Darren does and work as hard as he has this year and not get your rewards at some point. For this race I said to Darren I will buy you some Gold Rings and put them on the young birds of some joint breeding we were doing. With this one being bred from the Prince of Rekkem when paired to Darren's good hen Samantha.

Winning the NE Section with a very good



Chris & Jane Howse.



1st Messac for C. & J. Howse.

pigeon flying 294 miles and finishing 171st Open BICC we have Mr & Mrs Strowger, actually had the first four in their Section with the first two pigeons winning a nice £300 between them, a very nice profit for this partnership and as I have said before in the NE, NW and normally WS Sections this race is a great bet, I reckon it is the best odds you can find in pigeon racing. I would like to personally and on behalf of the Thames thank the members in the longer Sections that have supported this race and congratulate you all and not just the winners for being brave and confident enough in yours and your pigeons abilities to pick the right ones and for the birds to perform on a pretty tough days racing.

Winning the NW Section and a special shout should go out to this partnership Talent & Westbury flying 328 miles, pretty much in a head wind the whole way, I think this hen did you proud and won you a nice £200 for its efforts. The Thames would also like to say thanks for your great support in the Breeder/Buyer and I know at least one of the Breeder/Buyers young birds flew pretty well for one of my club mates. Finishing 2nd NW Section for a nice £100 into the bargain was Anthony Evans, with his game dark pied cock flying a whopping 339 miles into a head wind.

I should also add that David & John Staddon, showed what great form their pigeons were in during 2019 and what a class act they are by adding that their 2nd and 3rd Gold Ring pigeons took 1st and 2nd Section to pick up another £300 to go with the £1,500 for the overall winner. I should explain in the rules the outright winner is not eligible for Section prize money. What a feat to buy six rings have all six left for the main race and to have the first three in your Section, winning a cool £1,800 in the process. Well done again guys from both myself and all the Thames members. Beers are on you at Blackpool. LOL

Just to give you an idea for next season in case you think, the competition is hot in this race and my chances are slim of winning, well yes granted the winner did win the BICC Open on this occasion, but the second pigeon was 46th Ppen BICC. The first Section winner other than ES section was around 160th in the main BICC race. With a pigeon which finished up 286th Open in the BICC main result still picking up money. This hopefully shows that get the right day and everyone is in with a shout. We hope to see even more people having a go at this race in 2020 and hopefully we can fly for even bigger prize money.

The last big racing event of the 2019 season for both the Thames and the fanciers as a whole, was the Thames National race from Messac. This was a totally new venture for the Thames and we had no idea how it would go.

However, we should not have worried as it turned into one of the best National races of 2019, with the winning birds being spread in terms of location, in my opinion because drag helped balance the race point position and bit of east in the wind. Messac was picked as a race point to help gain support from the west side of the country and hopefully this helped as that and with a bit of east in the forecast quite a few fanciers from the west side of the country entered. This proved a very good call by the fanciers who did by cleaning up the prize money. The race it self see 73 members sending 418 birds racing for £2,589 in prize and pool money.

Our winners Chris & Jane Howse from Radstock sent the following information. 'We are delighted to be 1st and 2nd Open! In all our years of racing pigeons (around 30 at this address) we have never had two birds come together racing as hard as they were which resulted in them clocking at exactly the same time, something we have never had before! The birds are paired after Blackpool and the young birds are put straight on the darkness, they are fed a mixture of Versele-Laga and Vanrobaeys. The young birds are looked after by Jane who does the exercising and feeding. They were all given training and the first few club races then we trained from the coast and then went across the Channel. They were on their fourth and third trip across the Channel respectively, one went to Guernsey Classic, BBC Fougères and NFC Fougères and was in the result for all three. The other hen went to Guernsey and the NFC before going to Messac.

The winner was a Gaby Vandenaabee hen bred by Paul Kenny as part of a team of six that we exchanged, so thanks Paul. Her Sire is a son of Skyfall and her dam is a hen on lone from Mark Evans. The runner up is from a cock of our old family, a grandson of our Certificate of Merit winner Merit Man, the dam is a Belgian hen we had as a young bird from the Natural Breeding Station. We would like to thank everyone involved in organising this race, the conveyors on the excellent condition the birds returned in and everyone that timed in.'



The trophy donated by Rik & Jan Hermans, won by John Cowlin in the breeder/buyer.



2nd Messac National for C. & J. Howse.

Chris & Jane Howse's two young birds between them won a very nice £765. Well done Chris & Jane from all the members of the Thames.

The second member to clock, also with two quick fire timings we have D & J Staddon carrying on their fantastic season. One of these was a Gold ring pigeon and the Thames decided to add a special prize of £250 for the first Gold Ring timed in from our Gold Ring race, meaning in total these two birds won £500 for Dave & John. The next two pigeons which, given the wind etc, were also exceptional pigeons were based in Canterbury and Hemel Hempstead flying to the lofts of Jamie Clarke and S. Buckle. These two pigeons were split by the smallest of margins over a long distance for young birds and it came down to less than 0.5 of a yard between these two pigeons with Jamie just coming out on top with his Breeder/Buyer pigeon, the Thames also added a special prize of £500 for the first of these birds clocked and Jamie also fancied this pigeon as it also picked up a very nice £90 in pools, making a total of £590. The next pigeons were back in Radstock with D & J Staddon clocking two more birds 10 seconds apart to take 7th and 8th. The next 10 pigeons made their way into Essex with D. Wilton & Son having two drop together closely followed by Micky Watts, then three together for Lee Bastone, two for Frank Aloisio and another by Lee Bastone, all of these were within about three minutes of each other. In total 24 pigeons won pool money with pigeons in 48th position still picking up £90 and the pools going all the way down to 90th position.

The Thames would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who supported our events and please watch this space and our Facebook page as there will be more events in the close season and I am sure these three events will run again in 2020. You never know, there may be something new as well. I have already heard a Yearling Open National race being mentioned.

On behalf of the Thames I would like to say a very big thank you to our conveyors for this race, Frank Aloisio and Michel Symonds and race controller Tom Hendley who all did a brilliant job in looking after the birds, this can be seen in the way the birds came and the returns. As I mentioned before this was one of, if not the best National race, returnswise this season, yet it should have been one of the hardest when you look at the distance these young birds had to fly with pigeons flying over 300 miles on the day. You know when something has gone well, there were over 100 comments on Facebook and all I see were positive with not one single negative one, something which does not happen often on social media.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the hard-working and simply brilliant Secretary that the Thames is very fortunate to have, take a bow Rachael Bacon, none of this would be possible with out you and your hard work. As always, any news or views to john.gladwin@hotmail.co.uk