

A loft report on the Wiltons of Chadwell St Mary, Essex

Over a number of years I have noticed certain fanciers who appear consistently at, or near the top of the results, not only of the BICC but also with the BBC, NFC and LNRC. The following article is largely based on a report that I wrote a few years back on the outstandingly successful partnership of Rob Wilton and son Andrew of Chadwell St Mary in Essex who fly under the banner of D Wilton & Son, in memory of Rob's father who sadly passed away a few years ago. Recent seasons race results demanded that I revisit and update the article.

The beginning

Rob Wilton who is now the senior partner started in the sport in 1978 as a 12 year old. Rob's son Andrew has been involved with the pigeons for his whole life, in fact, as soon as he was old enough to go in the loft he started racing with his own section of young birds. This was as a 9 years old in 1996, winning his first ever race in competition. Rob's first major influence was his uncle Roy Wilton. It was Roy who got Rob started in the sport in 1978 with his first loft and birds. Roy

taught him how to do a lot of the basics such as feeding, training etc. Rob's father Dave was the founder member of the present partnership but sadly Dave passed away in January 2015.

The loft

The first loft was a two section 8 ft x 6 ft open fronted affair given to Rob by his uncle Roy. He started with a team of Dordin and Joplin pigeons and everything was flown on the natural system, as was the norm in the 1970's. However, Rob was



Con Leo, son of Miss Consistent.



Blue cock, 8 x 1sts.



Blue cock, 10 x 1st Club, 5 x 1st Fed.



Andrew Wilton with daughter Roxie and son Louie.



1st and 2nd Open BBC Fougères winners, 2013.



Racers enjoying a bath in the winter sun.

fortunate to win his first ever race so really speaking, like son Andrew, he's never been a novice either and has always raced to the current loft location.

At this point I'll let the partners describe their present loft set up: 'The present loft set up we race out of has ten sections, six for widowhood cocks, three for young birds and one for racing hens. There is also a three section stock loft with a large aviary along the front. The six widowhood cocks' sections are each 8ft x 8ft with a three foot corridor along the front allowing access to each section. The three young bird sections have the same dimensions and the racing hens section measures 6ft x 6ft.'

Management

During the winter months everything is on deep litter, that's stock and race birds. The litter stays down until the birds are paired up at the end of January. Once mated, everything is cleaned out once a day from then and throughout the racing season. However, the young birds are kept on deep litter from weaning until racing. At this time they are kept on a kind of half and half with the perches and half the floor scraped out daily but an area of deep litter is left at the back of the loft for them to go and lay and peck about in when they want. They love to lay about in it most of the day and seem very content.

For the 2020 season the partners will have 75 widowhood cocks with 50 being aimed at south road racing with the BICC, BBC and NFC. The other 25 cocks will race on the north road in the LNRC. In addition to the cocks there is a team of 15 racing hens which will be split between north and south road racing. Thirty pairs of stock birds are kept and from these and the best racers the

partners will have around 120 young birds which will be split between the north and south routes. Old birds are raced on 100% widowhood, having tried racing natural a number of times without any success so it's pure widowhood for Rob and Andrew in future. They find it a far better system due to time and their work commitments.

The system

Everything is mated at the same time, race birds and stock birds and this is usually the weekend after the Blackpool Show, this year it was 24th and 25th January. The racers undersit the first round from the stock birds after allowing them to sit the eggs themselves for one week. This way they can get two rounds from the stock birds in quick succession. Once the race birds are on big youngsters and the hens are getting ready to lay the second round, then the pre-season training begins, but only if the weather is good. The birds are taken across the river about 14 miles and this is repeated until they are coming well before they are moved on to around 25 miles a couple of times. After this they go to Reigate which is 34 miles. They usually give them a couple of these and then as long as they come well and in good time that's it, and it's straight into the first race with either of the clubs which is usually Portsmouth, 74 miles south.

Exercise

Rob and Andrew never force the pigeons to fly,



The Lenwick Cock, 1st London North Road Combine Young Bird Open race Berwick 2006 and 3rd LNRC Lenwick 2009. He is sire of the Wilton's London North Road winner.

they are left to do as they please for an hour morning and evening. If they didn't fly voluntarily and they had to flag them then they would know there was something wrong and a visit to the vet would be needed. Widowhood pigeons should want to fly. The birds are not expected to fly the whole hour solid but the partners like to see them land and then strike up again and keep doing that throughout the hour. Young birds are different, they will usually fly for the hour solid and sometimes more.

The widowhood cocks are rarely trained during the racing season, maybe now and again midweek if they think they need livening up but that's rare. However, the racing hens do get a midweek toss usually from around 50 miles as they find hens need more work to keep fit than the cocks. Young birds train once a week usually midweek and usually from one of the race points in the club which is around 70 odd miles. Before a National race they are taken down to the coast and liberated in pairs or small groups if there is time. However, this is on rare occasions now due to the peregrines as they have had a lot of birds injured training letting go in pairs and small groups in the last few years so Rob and Andrew don't see the point in taking the risk.

Young birds are raced on the darkness system and are trained hard, as by the time racing starts



Miss Consistent, outstanding racer and breeder, 2nd and 11th BICC Guernsey, 16th L&SECC Vire, 21st BICC Fougères, 26th L&SECC Carentan, 28th BICC Falaise, 36th L&SECC Vire, 38th NFC St Malo and 60th NFC.



The Wiltons photographed when they won 1st Open LNRC Stonehaven in 2014. Sadly Dave passed away soon after.

they like to have trained them from the first race point which is usually Portsmouth at least once or twice. The policy is to send the whole young bird team to as many of the National races as possible, so most years the majority of the young birds will have three or four Channel races. They feel that anything that's still there at the end of the young bird season after being raced hard like that has earned a place in the loft for the next year. That's the Wilton selection process in a nutshell!

Feeding

All race birds are fed by hand, young birds and old birds alike. They are fed to appetite and they keep feeding until the birds have had enough. Rob and Andrew don't believe in measuring out food.



Classic Boy, in the L&SECC from Tarbes won 37th Open 2010, 7th Open 2011 and 35th Open 2012, also winning a Merit Award in 2012 plus 49th Open L&SECC Guernsey and 78th Open St Vincent.



Blue cock, 1st Open LNRC Kelso 2015.

Stock birds are fed as they need it and the trays are filled three or four times a day. Old birds and young birds are fed a mixture of Versele-Laga Superstar Plus and Versele-Laga Super Widowhood. In the past they have tried all different mixtures and at the moment they feel the Superstar Plus mix is the best on the market so that's what is used. In the build up to a National race fatty grains are added to the daily feed the day before and the day of basketing and that's all.

Bloodlines

The partners say they have bloodlines from as the old Beatles song goes, 'here, there and everywhere'. At the moment for sprint/middle distance they still have the Janssen/Braspenning blood that's been housed since the early nineties. These came originally from Louella Lofts. Recent introductions are the Leo Heremans and



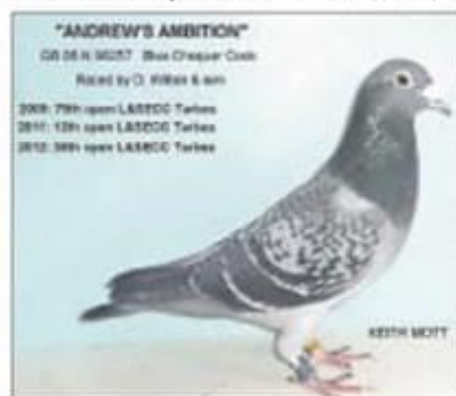
Louie, grandson of Self Harm and a big winner.



2nd Open BBC YB National.

Vandenabeele bloodlines, mainly from the Jutta Brothers of East London. These have won from the off and in 2013, the first young bird season racing with them, they won 1st Open BBC Young Bird National with a Leo Heremans x Brockamp young bird bred by them. Other recent introductions are pigeons from Peter Fox at Syndicate Lofts including a daughter of Drum and a daughter of Dutch Master that are leaving a long list of winner and top performers in the lofts.

For the long distance racing, when the going gets tough, the partners have a lot of pigeons from their good friend Mark Bulled of Harlow. Over the years Mark has given the Wiltons lots of birds from his best and they have now blended their own



Andrew's Ambition, in the L&SECC from Tarbes won 79th Open 2009, 12th Open 2011 and 38th Open 2012.



3rd Open NFC Hens National 2012.



The long distance cocks section.



The middle distance section at the Wilton Loft.



Widowhood section.

family from Mark's bloodlines. Many different breeds and strains of long distance birds have been tried and tested but none have ever been as good as the Bullied pigeons. They have stood the test of time. The Tarbes Merit Award winner Classic Boy, is bred from a son of Mark's Die Hard. He is one of the Wilton's best stock cocks, breeding many of their best Channel pigeons. Also their good hen that won 1st Section, 2nd Open BICC Barcelona National in 2017 is 100% Bullied blood.

Recently, some Brockamp pigeons have been tried, once again from the Julia brothers and these have proved to be very good pigeons, as they have stayed and have started doing very well. The 2015 winner of 6th Open BICC National, 32nd International Agen was a Brockamp cock bred from the original stock bought from the Julia brothers in 2012. Many other top National positions

from 180 miles right up to Bordeaux at 500 miles have come down from these birds including Tom, 2nd Open BBC National Bordeaux in 2017, which is 50% Brockamp.

Breeding theory

When breeding the partners don't take any notice of anything apart from pairing best to best or as long as the pigeon is bred from a winner then they pair winner to winner or children of winners to

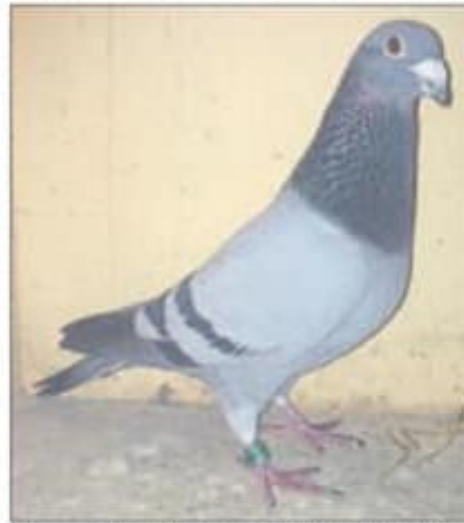
other children of winners. If there aren't any winners or children of winners then they don't have them in the stock loft!

Performances

At this point I'll let Rob and Andrew give their views. 'In recent years some of our top performances have included winning 1st and 2nd Open L&SECC in 2007. Our second pigeon was a yearling cock, which won the Yearling Derby as well. In 2008 we won the Old Hens BICC race and also finished at 2nd Open NFC in the Young Bird National. In 2010 we clocked for 3rd, 6th and 10th NFC Young Bird National from St Malo. The 2013 season saw our young bird win the BBC Young



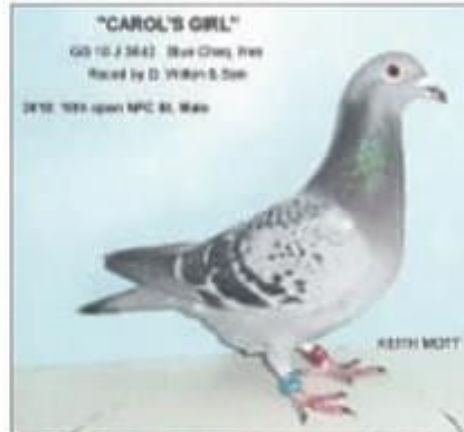
Bordeaux Tom, 2nd and 24th Open BBC Bordeaux, 29th Open BICC Agen International, 66th Open BICC Cholet.



Blue cock 6th, Open BICC 32nd Open International Agen 2015.



Double Up, 2 x 1st LNRC Open.



Carol's Girl, 10th Open NFC St Malo 2010.



Beth's Girl, 3rd Open NFC Carentan 2010.



Bullet, 1st Section, 1st Open Fougères.



Golden Leo, breeder of winners at Club, Fed, Combine and National level.



Racing lofts, young birds in foreground with aviary.

Bird National from Fougères when we also clocked three others for 2nd, 5th and 9th. Also in 2013 we were 3rd Open in the BBC Young Bird National from Tours and had four on the day and in the first 35 of the result when there were only 35 timed on the winning day. In 2014 we were 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the BBC Young Bird National.

We decided to go back on the north road in 2012 with a team of widowhood cocks and we have won a Combine race every year since 2013. These Combine wins include 1st Open London North Road Combine from Arbroath in 2013, 1st Open Combine Stonehaven 2014 and in 2015 we won the Kelso Combine. Also in 2014 we were 2nd Open BICC Le Mans Old Bird National.

One performance with which we were really pleased in 2015 was winning 6th BICC National, 32nd Open International Agen with 10,000 plus birds competing. We were also happy to win 14th Open BICC Pau International. These last two performances were particularly pleasing because over the last few seasons we have been starting to

set up a long distance team with around half of our team now being long distance bloodlines. It seems that we made the right choice with the bloodlines we have been bringing in and doing the right thing with our system and preparation. Our performances in 2017 included: NFC Tarbes 36th Open; BBC Bordeaux (785 birds), 1st, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 13th Section, 2nd, 9th, 18th, 19th, 20th and 34th Open, 456 miles, we sent 12 birds; BBC Fougères (2,038 birds), 227 miles, 4th, 5th, 10th, 12th, 14th and 19th Section, 5th, 6th, 14th, 16th, 18th, 24th Open, we sent 22 birds; BICC Barcelona, (278 birds), 93 birds in Section, 1st Sec, 2nd Open, 701 miles, we sent four birds; BICC Le Mans, (3,179 birds), 765 birds in Section, 9th, 11th, 43rd, 60th 102nd and 150th Section, 9th, 11th, 45th, 62nd, 117th, 190th Open; BICC Guernsey 188 miles, (2,637 birds), 5th, 6th and 7th

Section, 6th, 7th, 49th, 51st, 65th, 96th open, we sent 25 birds; BICC Guernsey (2), 188 miles, (1,533 birds), 26th, 27th, 30th, 32nd, 34th, 60th, 63rd and 83rd Open, we sent 21 birds; BBC Coutances 186 miles, (842 birds), 5th, 17th, 20th, 32nd, 36th and 37th Open, we sent 16 birds.

These are our north road positions: London North Road Combine Berwick, 312 miles, (1,900 birds). We sent 20 birds and timed three to finish 1st, 4th and 6th Open; LNRC Perth, 376 miles, (1,000 birds), 5th and 12th Open, we only timed two of the 16 we sent; LNRC Wycliffe, 229 miles (2,000 birds), we sent 17 and only timed three, 3rd, 31st and 35th Open; UBI Combine Bordeaux, a nomination race from the BBC, 456 miles, (139 birds) we sent 16, 1st, 7th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 15th Open.

These are the 2019 BICC and BBC National



A top breeder for the Wiltons.



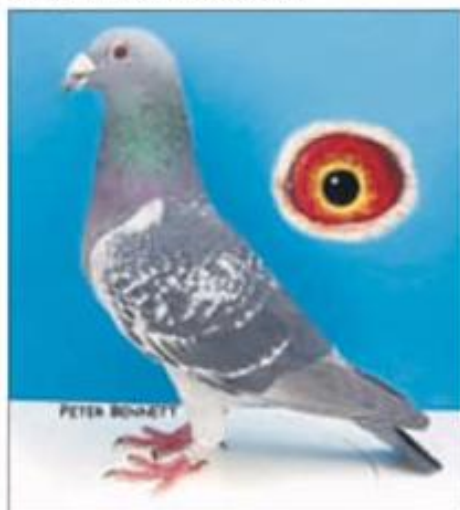
Another of the Wiltons' top pigeons.



Chequer cock, 14th Open Tarbes 2015.



A top Leo Heremans stock cock.



Self Harm, winner of many 1sts on the road and sire, gsire etc of scores of winners.



Dark cock, 2nd Open BICC Le Mans 2014.



A top stock cock.



Blue cock, 5th BBC Fougères and 9th BICC Poitiers 2017.



Self Enhance, grandson of Self Harm and winner of 1st LNRC.

