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THE HOME OF LONG DISTANCE PIGEON RACING

Patron: Mark Gilbert

## **The British Barcelona Club celebrating '50' years 2014**

### **BRITISH BARCELONA CLUB's 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY (Part 7).**

Mr. & Mrs. Vince Durrant & Sons of Godalming.

1<sup>st</sup> open BBC Tours (270 miles) 1986.

I have known Vince Durrant for about 30 years, with us being first introduced by our late great friend, Eric Cannon of Wormley, in the early 1980's and Vince was winning big things with his pigeons then and is still winning with them today. These days Vince has three partners in the form of his wife, Sue, and sons, Jack and Sam, who are very instrumental in the lofts outstanding success in recent years. Vince and Sue have two sons; both are interested in the pigeons, Jack is a keen footballer and works in the leisure industry, and Sam who is resident at University in Portsmouth. Vince tells me that pigeon racing has become very much a family sport, with everybody taking a great interest and involvement. The Durrant family enjoy all aspects of the sport, whether it is sprint or long distance racing and are always looking forward to the next race. Jack being the son living at home is a major part of the pigeon partnership and his specific interest is in National, Classic and long distance racing in general. Jack tells me that some their best performances in recent seasons have been: 2009: 1<sup>st</sup> open BICC (old hens), 2010: 1<sup>st</sup> open L&SECC Guernsey (young bird), 3<sup>rd</sup> open SMT Combine Wadebridge (beaten on a decimal), 42<sup>nd</sup> open Tarbes (540 miles) and taking the first eight positions in a race in the very strong Godalming RPC using a conventional timing clock, and not ETS. The Durrant loft has won the SMT Combine twice and the Federation many times through the years.

Vince and his family enjoyed a wonderful season in 2010, winning several firsts in the Godalming club, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Surrey Federation Taunton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Surrey Federation Taunton and of course the premier win at the end of the season, 1<sup>st</sup> open L&SECC Guernsey (1). The London & South East Classic Club sent 1,455 birds to the first young bird race from Guernsey and the Durrant's won the Classic by 24 ypm clear with their champion little mealy hen, 'Sue's Girl'. She was raced to the perch and the amazing thing is that this young hen won this 160 mile classic race, doing 2014 ypm, and was bred out of the very best of Eric Cannon and Ron Dodd's 550 mile pigeons. Her grand sire was Eric's great blue pied cock, 'Culmer White Flight', winner of three premier positions in the NFC Pau Grand National, including 1<sup>st</sup> section A, 14<sup>th</sup> open. The Guernsey Classic was the hen's fourth race and she was given three single up training tosses from Hayling Island the week before her Classic win.

I recently made the 25 mile drive down to Godalming to visit Vince, Sue and Jack, and must say their lofts and pigeons were a credit to them. They have three really smart lofts set in the Surrey country side, not far from Hindhead; the main old bird racing loft is 42ft x 6ft with open door trapping, the stock birds are housed in a 15ft x 6ft loft with an aviary and the young birds are raced to a two section 18ft loft. The Durrant's use conventional widowhood nest box front, with the front blanked out with ply to give the inmates peace and seclusion. Vince told me the birds are cleaned out regularly and they use a light floor dressing. The partners like racing every Saturday at all distances and race systems, natural and widowhood. The racers are paired up at various times starting in mid January and finishing with the long distance natural pigeons in early March. The partners have 32 cocks on the widowhood system and these are trained well up to the first Federation race, after which they get regular exercise around the loft, and the odd mid-week toss during racing to keep them fit. The sprint widowhood racers are broken down from Saturday to Tuesday, with cocks required for the longer continental races not being broke down at any time and the hens are shown to the racing cocks on marking night. The widowers are fed twice a day in their nest boxes and the sprinting cocks never raced beyond 300 miles and are kept inland, with the long distance cocks going through to Tarbes in the South of France, and these racers are never re-paired for the main event. The 24 pairs of natural racers are kept only for the long distance, being set up sitting ten day old eggs for Tarbes and these birds are trained two or three times a week off the south coast, with Hayling Island being of the favourite training spots.

The loft is full of top class winners, with the main ones being: 'The 07 Cock' a blue chequer cock and winner of: 2010: 1<sup>st</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> Surrey Federation Taunton, 1<sup>st</sup> club, 2<sup>nd</sup> Surry Federation Taunton, 1<sup>st</sup> club Yelverton, plus many other premier positions. A brilliant cock! Vince tells me his good blue chequer cock, 'Stan', recorded 2<sup>nd</sup> club, 2<sup>nd</sup> Surrey Federation Taunton, 2<sup>nd</sup> club Yeovil, 2<sup>nd</sup> club Taunton in the 2010 season and was beaten three times by loft mates. This game cock was home three times to win but seemed to stand back and say, 'go on mate you go across the ETS System first' and let a loft mate walk on the pad first and win three times, including 1<sup>st</sup> Federation! One of the best racers in the Durrant loft is the old favourite, 'The Bump' and this blue cock has won: 2006: 1<sup>st</sup> Godalming Breeder / Buyer £390, 2007: 1<sup>st</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> Federation Portland, 1<sup>st</sup> club Portland, 2008: 1<sup>st</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> Federation Portland, plus many other premier prizes. A firm favourite with Sue is the partner's 2010 London & South East Classic Club Guernsey winner, 'Sue's Girl' and she is a super pigeon in the hand, being medium apple bodied, with good feather and eye sign. A hen I really liked! Two other top 2010 winners we handled on my visit to the loft was 'The 52 Cock' and 'The 14 Cock', both two handsome blue chequer cocks and multi-prize winners.

The main families kept are Eric Cannon, Ron Dodd and Ray Hammond for the long distance events, with premier quality Janssen / Braspennings pigeons obtained from the late Cyril Luxton of Guildford for the sprint races. The partner's ten pairs of stock birds are mated in mid-January and are fed mainly on 'Cranleigh No.1' and barley in the winter months, and a heavy mixture in the breeding season. Jack says, 'we are constantly on the look out to bring in new bloodlines and we mainly look at the results of the pigeon in question and the loft in general when bringing in new stock birds. We are very lucky with our stock birds that we own, with our Number 1 pair having bred numerous club and Federation winner, plus our 1<sup>st</sup> open BICC winner'. Vince, Sue and Jack breed about 60 young birds to race each season and these are raced to the perch, and completely natural. They don't mind if the babies pair up and have won some good young bird races with them being sent sitting eggs. One of their best performances racing a young hen to eggs was 10<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Guernsey in the

2000 season. The youngsters start training at 3 miles; with the distance gradually increasing until they get down to the south coast and a few sprint hens are selected for special training for the young bird National and Classic races. These hens are usually used as widowhood hens after their young bird racing stage. They are trained individually before the National and Classic event, often being singled or doubled up off the south coast. Sue says, 'we like most of our young birds to fly the programme, with selected hens flying the English Channel and we often stop young cocks after three or four races'.

Vince was born in Woking and has kept pigeons for over 46 years, starting up at the age of 11 with a pair of Ron Dodd of Shalford pigeons, which turned out to be two hens. Three of the Guildford North Road fanciers gave Vince a lot of help when he started; they were three brothers who raced separately, Bert, Charlie and Doug Webster. He says his early mistakes were overfeeding and overcrowding his first loft, which was a garden shed. Vince played a lot of football in his early days and he is a very keen fisherman, drowning maggots in all the local lakes in the Godalming area, which is a 'Mecca' of Angling. His first club was the now defunct Guildford North Road Club and he won the odd card racing from the north. Other fanciers who helped Vince in the early years was Ron and Chris Cox of Farncombe who supplied the majority of his stock and helped by taking his birds for marking at the club. Sue's grandfather is the late Godalming 'ace' Stan Edgington and Vince raced his pigeons from Stan's back garden for many years. When Vince and Sue got married in September 1986, Stan clocked his birds so Vince could go off to the church and recorded 4<sup>th</sup> club, 47<sup>th</sup> SMT Combine Bodmin. Stan Edgington, who was known as the 'Bird Man of Eashing' because of his wonderful array of bird aviaries on his property, was a retired carpenter and he built Vince a 30ft loft in his previous back garden in Milford and it was sited on top a hill.

Vince won the SMT Combine twice in the 1980's and in those days excelled at the long distance events. The last SMT Combine old bird race of 1986 was the Blue Riband event from Bergerac (450 miles) and it saw Vince win 1<sup>st</sup> open Combine with 2,439 birds competing. The Combine winner was his two year old Louella bred mealy cock, 'The 62 Cock', which was raced on the widowhood system. For the first SMT Combine race of 1987 season members sent 3,929 birds to Rennes (220 miles) and Vince won the Combine for the second time with a red chequer son of 'The 62 Cock'. At that time I visited his loft with Eric Cannon and Vince told us that he thought the 1986 Bergerac race was his best to date, recording 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> Surrey Federation, 1<sup>st</sup> SMT Combine, lofting several highly rated trophies. Another outstanding performance in 1986 was 8<sup>th</sup> section E, 21<sup>st</sup> open NFC Pau recorded by his two year old blue pied hen, '05', which also recorded 7<sup>th</sup> open BBC Tours that same season. The Durrant loft also won 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> open British Barcelona Club Tours in 1986, and recorded nine of 15 entries in the Rennes young bird National on the day of liberation, winning 30<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup>, 141<sup>st</sup>, 240<sup>th</sup>, 262<sup>nd</sup>, 282<sup>nd</sup>, and 349th open. Brilliant pigeon racing!

The Godalming area has always been a hotbed of premier pigeon fanciers and Vince rates Mick Tuck, Des & Darran McFadden, Ray Hammond and Alistair Muir as some of the best of the present day fanciers. Vince and I both had wonderful friendships over many years with the late great Eric Cannon of Wormley, who was one of the very best pigeon racers I've ever met. It is great that Eric's bloodlines are still winning well in Vince's loft today! Jack maintains the moult is a very important time of the year and they feed a fairly strong mixture, with plenty of linseed and Hormoform. The partners believe a good moult means successful racing the following season and the moult can also assess any health problems a pigeon might have. The Durrant pigeon families are line bred in the

stock loft, but they find crossing out produce better performers in the race basket. Jack told me he occasionally likes the odd late bred off his best birds for the stock loft and likes a nice eye on a breeder, but is not really in to the eye sign theory. Vince travels a lot with his work and says he owes much of his pigeon success to his family, as they do a lot of the work around the loft when he is on the road. The Durrant's are great workers for the sport in the Godalming fraternity and currently Vince is Treasurer and President of the Godalming club. Vince told me on my visit to his loft, 'In terms of pet theories, we can normally tell if old bird sprint cocks are going to be any good when they are young birds, by the way they handle and their behaviour. We like the long distance young birds to develop slowly and not be over big as youngsters. To date my biggest thrills racing pigeons was winning the L&SECC in 2010 and the BICC in 2019, but I was also pleased with our performance from Tarbes in 2009. Taking the first eight positions in the strong Godalming club, when 12 widowhood cocks dropped in the garden together was a great experience. It was before we had ETS and was great fun clocking them in!'

That's our article finished for this week! I have particularly enjoyed writing up this loft report, as the Durrant family are really nice people and Vince and I go back a lot of years. Thanks to them for the loft visit and the chance for me to catch up with their present day champions.

**TEXT & PHOTOS BY KEITH MOTT ([www.keithmott.com](http://www.keithmott.com))**



VINCE & SUE DURRANT.  
Photo by Keith Mott.





## VINCE & SUE DURRANT'S LOFT SET UP

Photo by Keith Mott.



## "SUE'S GIRL"

GB 10 N 69627 Mealy Hen

Raced by Mr. & Mrs. Durrant & Son

2010: 1st open L&SECC Guernsey (1455 birds)

KEITH MOTT



## **"THE BUMP"**

GB 06 J 02164 Blue Cock

Raced by Mr. & Mrs. Durrant & Son

2006: 1st Godalming Breeder / Buyer £390

2007: 1st club, 1st Federation Portland  
1st club Portland

2008: 1st club, 1st Federation Portland  
Plus many other prizes



KEITH MOTT

## **"THE 07 COCK"**

GB 07 N 96707 Blue Cheq. Cock

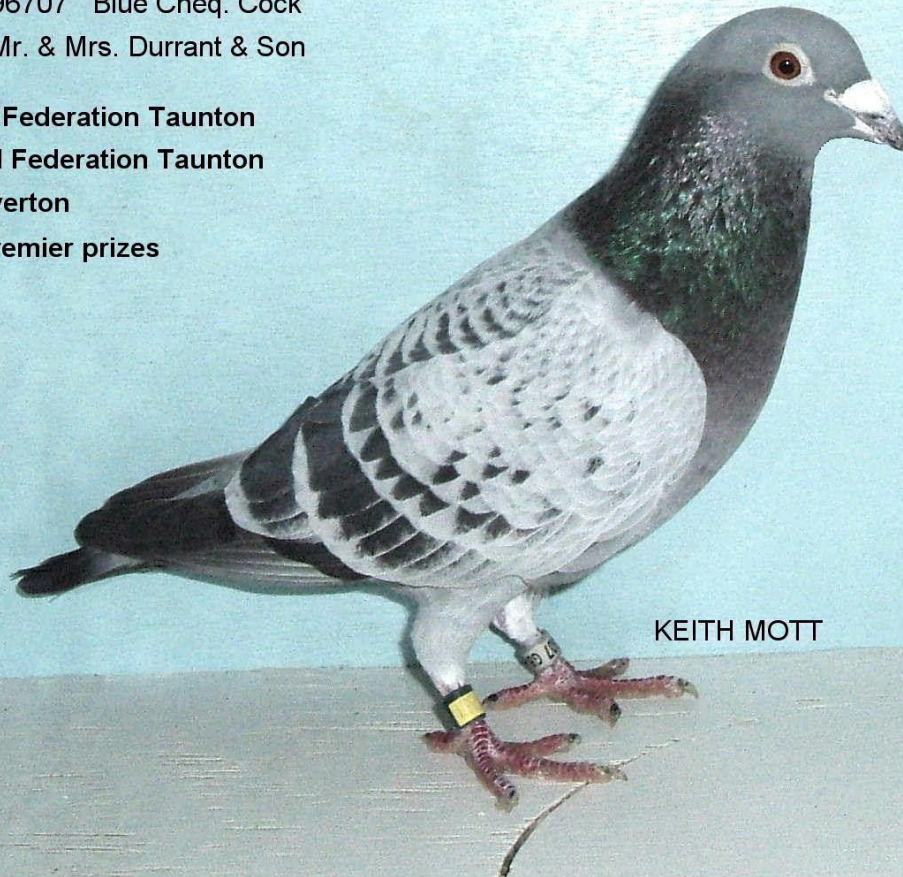
Raced by Mr. & Mrs. Durrant & Son

2010: 1st club, 1st Federation Taunton

1st club, 2nd Federation Taunton

1st club Yelverton

Plus many other premier prizes



KEITH MOTT