

President: Nigel Rigiani



Chairman: Mike Shepherd

THE HOME OF LONG DISTANCE PIGEON RACING

Patron: Mark Gilbert

The British Barcelona Club celebrating '50' years 2014

BRITISH BARCELONA CLUB'S 50th ANNIVERSARY (Part 12).

The Guernsey loft visits.

Whilst conveying for the London & South East Classic Club for six seasons, I went to Guernsey 15 times with the young birds and managed to visit four of the premier lofts on the island. The short tour of these lofts featured two British Barcelona Club winners and I must say a big thank you to Albert Harley and Matt Bentley for their help while I was there.

Richard Mauger of St Sampsons.

1st open BBC Bordeaux (329 miles) 1997 / 1st open BBC Lamballe (69 miles) 2000 / 1st open BBC Messac (119 miles) 2010.

My third loft visit on Guernsey was to the British Barcelona Club winning loft of Richard Mauger, who won 1st open from Bordeaux in 1997. Richard also won 13th open in 1998, with the same pigeon, his good blue hen, 'Misty Lady', who was sent to Bordeaux sitting 13 day old eggs. When the great hen won in 1997 I was at Bordeaux with the London & South East Classic Club birds and there were no day birds recorded in mainland England on the day of liberation, in either club. 'Misty Lady' was bred by Fred Hall of Brighton, the 1998 NFC Pau Grand National winner, and she was bred from the Jackson & Andrews family.

Richard started racing 20 years ago, but always had pigeons as pets when he was a lad. He is only interested in long distance races, flying cocks and hens natural, and has won many major prizes racing with the British Barcelona Club. He has 24 pairs of racers, which are trained from Jersey and St Malo, and pairs up in late February. The old birds get two French races on their build-up and are then sent to Barcelona (601 miles), preferably sitting 12 days; the yearlings go to Bordeaux and sometimes Pau. The racing loft has three sections, open-door trapping, grille floors and Richard favours widowhood-type nest boxes. The main family kept is De1bar, which he has had for 20 years, and he brings in the odd cross now and again. Richard's son Paul is an outstanding fancier in his own right, having won 1st open British Barcelona Club twice, the Rennes young bird race in 1996 and the

Fougeres young bird race in 2010. The Mauger family on Guernsey has won the British Barcelona Club five times!

Bryan Ket of Vale.

1st open BBC Palamos (590 miles) 1999.

In 1999 Bryan won 1st open Palamos, the blue riband race of the British Barcelona Club, and my good friend Albert Harley subsequently set up this loft visit for me. Bryan's self-built loft has real character, being set amongst some mature trees on the picturesque coastline of Guernsey. This loft has two sections, one 12ft section for old bird racers and a 4ft section for his young bird team. It is 100% geared to long-distance racing, which is all Bryan is interested in. He flies only natural and seclusion and contentment are the name of the game in his garden loft. All 24 nest boxes in his old bird section are closed in, giving the birds total peace. His wonderful old loft is painted white, set against a dark background of trees, and all trapping is through sputniks.

The highlight of the visit was when he showed us his 1999 British Barcelona Club Palamos National winner, 'Amazing Grace'. This game hen is a touch of pure class. She is medium, apple-bodied in the hand with silky feathering and is bred from Ponderosa UK Stud Jan Aarden stock. When this wonderful champion won the Palamos National (590 miles) she was sent sitting 10 day old eggs. The British Barcelona Club liberated into a north-west wind and this game pigeon was clocked at 16.16hrs with no birds being recorded in mainland England until next day. Champion 'Amazing Grace' has always been raced entirely on the natural system and had won previously. In 1998 she was 3rd club Palamos, 1st club Nantes, 1st club St Malo as a young bird and has flown Pau (436 miles). A wonderful hen! Bryan started racing pigeons in 1978, although he has kept them most of his life. He has won many premier prizes from the long distance races throughout the years, a recent success being in 1998 when he was 1st, 2nd, 3rd club Palamos; 1st and 2nd club Bergerac (350 miles), only two birds on the day in the club; 1997 – 1st, 2nd, 3rd club Bergerac, only three birds on the day in the club; a brilliant performance!

As I stated previously, Bryan's whole management is geared to long distance natural racing and he pairs up his 20 pairs of racers on 14th February, if the weather is good. He can't train any more than about eight or nine miles in Guernsey, so all training is over the water, from Jersey, Sark and Alderney, which means great losses. He maintains that training from the other islands is very difficult and, if the weather turns adverse or the wind is against them, the pigeons tend to go off into France and find it very difficult getting back onto the island. The typical preparation for the Palamos National is lots of training from the other Channel Islands and then two races, one from St Malo (61 miles) and one from Nantes (161 miles). The birds are fed on Willsbridge Popular Mixture, with peanuts being added to put soft fat on the birds for the longer races. The main family at the Kett loft is Ponderosa Jan Aarden, obtained from an auction on the island a few years ago, and he only keeps four pairs of stock birds. He dislikes deep pigeons, going for those which are shallow in the hand, and is not bothered about their eyesign but insists on good, silky feather. On our very enjoyable visit to Bryan's loft he showed us several of his top racers, including the handsome dark chequered Jan Aarden cock which had 1st club Bordeaux in 1999 and this cock was also raced to eggs on the natural system.

Bryan races his 30 young birds naturally to the perch and trains them to Jersey, 21 miles over the sea. They race from St Malo and Rennes (101 miles) and Bryan maintains the losses are really bad in all Channel races. He says that, if the wind is in the wrong direction from Rennes, the birds seem to go right past Guernsey and cross the Channel to mainland England with the British pigeons. I must say that, to me, Guernsey seems to be one of the hardest places in the world to race pigeons and only quality fanciers and pigeons reign supreme. I think Bryan is one of them. His record through the years from long-distance racing has been second to none and was topped in 1999 by his winning the BBC Palamos National. I hope you've enjoyed your insight into racing on the island of Guernsey. It's a hard old game over there!

TEXT & PHOTOS BY KEITH MOTT (www.keithmott.com)



