



Tony Stephens from Parkstone, Poole

In 2014 the dream of winning Barcelona came true for Dorset pigeon fancier Tony Stephens. Clocking his 2009 blue cock bird "Blue Roy" to become the British Barcelona Club's 50th Blue Riband Winner.

Tony is married to Jackie and they have one daughter called Rachel. For those of you who know Tony, you will know that he is a gentleman and very modest man and to try and get him to talk about himself is almost impossible. He started out in the sport in 1969 keeping a few stray birds. In 1970 Tony's Grandad built him his first proper loft and he began racing in the 1971 season.

The main loft is a Blake's loft, which is 18 ft by 6 ft with a tiled roof. There is a 10 ft compartment for the cocks

with 28 boxes, a 4ft section for the hens and another 4ft section for the late bred.

Tony breeds 50 to 60 young birds each year which are housed in a 7ft x 6ft young bird loft. The amount of young birds which are bred are to allow for any losses on the pylon wires near to where he lives. All trapping for old and young birds is through sputniks.

The stock loft is 7ft x 5ft in size consisting of 8 pairs of stock birds. Strains kept at the moment are Jan Aarden, Jim Biss, Super Crack and a few Janssens. The birds are fed by hopper on Bamfords Breeding Mix.



All sections are separated during the winter and about 70 birds are kept, mostly confined to the loft. All birds are fed 50% breeding 50% barley.

For the breeding season the old birds are paired up mid February. One or two young birds are reared from each pair. When the hens lay again, they are then removed to another section after sitting eight to ten days. The cocks are then left to finish rearing the youngsters until they are old enough to go in to the young bird loft. The pigeons are wormed twice a year before they are paired up using Easifen wormer and for canker they are given Trikanox when they are sitting ten day eggs.



Afterwards, the widowhood section is cleaned and sprayed in preparation for the start of the racing season. Between the end of breeding and the start of racing the cocks again go back to being fed 50% breeding 50% barley and are exercised only once a day with the hens being treated the same way as well.

All work around the loft is carried out by Tony apart from letting the hens out for a fly, which Jackie does as Tony is still at work. Once the racing season commences the cocks are let out for exercising between 6 and 7 in the morning and between 6 and 7 in the evening. The hens are kept on hen perches, only going out once a day between 5 and 6pm. All birds are called in by whistling. When it comes to training Tony's Uncle helps out as Tony doesn't drive. Luckily his Uncle is also a pigeon fancier, Rodney Muspratt from Poole. Training is only for the young birds as the old birds are just exercised around home. The youngsters are trained about three

weeks before the young bird season begins up to approximately 20 miles and then no more once they start racing.

All old birds between 18 to 20 cocks and 10 to 12 hens are raced hard and across the channel but don't always race every week. The young birds programme comprises of about two to three races flown naturally. About ten birds are sent to channel races, mainly hens.

The widowhood cocks are fed in their box twice a day after being exercised with as much as they can eat. Four different brands of widowhood corn is purchased and mixed all together. The hens are only fed once a day after going out for a fly and they are given 50% widowhood mix 50% barley. Mainly Verse Laga Superstar Plus is used.

Tony's preference is middle to long distance racing because he feeds heavy and he likes the birds to have to work eight to twelve hours in a race, but his success over the years is widely spread to all distances.



As mentioned in the opening paragraph Tony had a dream come true last season winning the British Barcelona Clubs most prestigious race from Barcelona. "Blue Roy" is a 2009 late bred, bred by Tony's very good friend Scott Storie. He is from a 1995 Super Crack cock from Roy Seaton of Annan, which was twice bird of the year. With 7 x 1st the dam is from Mr & Mrs Brian Long's blue GB08N00731. She is from Elan GB98N441. Sire of Glazer 1st 3rd Open NFC Pau. Highest priced bird at Jim Biss' sale and went for £9,000.



(Tony holding Blue Roy when he returned home from Barcelona).

Recent performances for "Blue Roy" are 3 x Tarbes in race time, 30th Section B 164th Open, 12th Section B 113th Open Saintes NFC, 3rd Section 5th Open NFC Fougères, 61st Open Niort BBC. Also in 2014 Tony won the section from NFC Cholet and CSCFC Guernsey Young Birds, he was 7th & 8th Section 15th & 17th Open CSCFC Messac and 56th Open BBC Niort.

There have been so many best performances over the years to mention every one, but here are a few. In 2004, 1st Open CSCFC Vains 4,403 birds with a blue cock GB02A00181 this bird also scored 52nd Open CSCFC Picauville 4,582 birds, 214th Open NFC Guernsey 7,190 birds and 109th Open NFC Nantes 8,664 birds. Dark cock 78 1st Club 2nd Federation 2nd Combine Nantes 2,419 birds also taking 5 x 1st and 3 x 2nd Federation.

Other top performances include 2013 – 8th Open Barcelona BBC, 40th & 84th Open Messac CSCFC, 23rd Open CSCFC Bergerac.

2012 – 22nd Open Barcelona BBC, 52nd Open NFC Saintes, 27th & 77th Open CSCFC Messac.

2011 – 26th Open BBC Messac, 50th Open BBC Carentan, 2009 – 27th Open NFC Alencon, 2008 – 37th Open NFC Tarbes and 19th Open CSCFC Messac. 2007 – 44th Open CSCFC Cholet, 21st Open CSCFC Guernsey YB, 2006 – 16th & 41st Open CSCFC Cholet.



When asked who he has admired in the sport both locally and nationally over the years, Tony's reply was, the late Toby Tate of Bournemouth as a good all round fancier, the late Rod Baxter who was a member of Tony's own Club, a local Parkstone man and Rob Jones, a good pigeon man and great guy.

As with all of us, Tony would like to see more young people entering the sport in the near future and more harmony within the Clubs.

His advice to any new fancier would be to go and visit someone local who flies well. Look at their set up and listen to their advice and don't try to rush things. Always keep a book of the history of the pigeons and who you have got them paired with and what you have bred from them.

Tony would like to end by thanking Terry Anderson for being a good Club member, win or lose he always has the same attitude. Scott Storie for the birds he has bred for him over the years and his advice. Also his late good friend Arty Baverstock, Rod Muspratt and finally his wife Jackie for all her help.