

Phil Smith from Dun Laoghaire

Determination, Dedication and Drive is how we describe the partnership of Phil Smith and Son Mark of Dunlaoghaire, Dublin who, having joined the British Barcelona Club over twenty years ago with the sole intention and a dream of timing in a bird into Ireland from one of the club's National races.

Phil's love of pigeons started in 1955 when he was 12 years old, giving his age away here, as a neighbour was a pigeon fancier and Phil took a keen interest in his birds and that really is how it all began he was bitten by the proverbial bug.

After setting up a small loft of birds Phil's mum who was very supportive from the start bought him his first pigeon clock, a wooden Benzing which he still has to this day. She also took a very keen interest in the pigeons so much so that when Phil left the family home she along with dad became members of the Stillorgan Pigeon Club.

Phil's wife Rosaleen recalls that when viewing houses as newlyweds Phil's first preference was the size of the back garden and it's suitability to build a pigeon loft. It wasn't long until they found their perfect loft or should we say garden and in the 49 years of living there the pigeon loft as changed position twice and has had three face lifts.

In 1973 Phil was one of the founder members of the Stillorgan Pigeon Club and has been a member ever since being a very good worker for the club over the years.



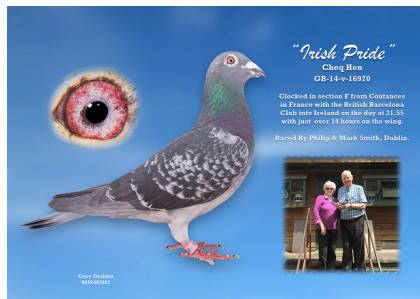
After becoming a member of the British Barcelona Club, Phil has always tried to get more fanciers in Ireland to come and have a go. In fact, he has become a very good ambassador for the club as he has always supported the club in many ways, there are not many out there who would drive a round trip of nigh on 600 miles to bring his race entry/s over to the race marking at Salisbury, Wiltshire or to attend a club young bird sale at the same venue and this he did, having his good friend and also club member Pat Davis as his travelling companion.

Phil and son Mark did not compete in the B.B.C. races every year as it was always the case of being patient in finding a bird who they thought could do them proud as it is no mean feat in getting a bird to fly from France into Ireland and they did not want to throw birds away thinking more of them than that.

2017 saw a three year old hen showing the signs that she might be the one as having had birds homing just out of race time on a number of occasions it was hoped that she could be the one so after all the preparation she was entered into the British Barcelona Club's National race from Coutances and on the 13th May Phil and his son Mark fulfilled a dream by making history within the B.B.C in timing in their grand hen now named "Irish Pride" right on the hours of darkness flying 14 hours on the wing crossing the English channel and the tough Irish sea flying 356 miles into a head wind when the weather conditions on that Saturday in Ireland was not the best as it could be with organisations in Ireland holding over.

A day bird into Ireland at last after some have tried but failed to do though not for the want of trying "Irish Pride" has made her owners so very proud and elated at her performance now that they have come down from the moment and have realised that it was such a fantastic performance that has been admired by all.

Winning the section into Ireland gave them and "Irish Pride" their first award followed by a special award from Harkers for such a wonderful performance. This was then followed by an Irish Region R.P.R.A award again being recognised by the region as a very gutsy and marvellous performance and finally at the Show of the Year held in Blackpool Phil and son Mark plus "Irish Pride" were awarded a British Homing World trophy again for a super performance.



A few details of the breeding of this very special hen is the Grandsire on the Sires side was bred by Brian Denney and is a Grandson of "Tuff Nut" with the Grandsire on the Dams side being from Jim Hooper's stock when paired to a hen from Brian Sheppard so if there ever was a pigeon bred to make the journey this was it. To round this report off Phil and Son Mark have a saying "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" and will give most things a go having had a number of successes in the Million Dollar Pigeon Race as well.

Phil's wife Rosaleen, his five children and eleven Grandchildren are all so very proud and supportive of Phil's Determination, Dedication and Drive an example to the whole family.

Jim Hooper

