

NORTH WEST GRAND NATIONAL PRESENTATION

Once more the North West Grand National Flying Club presentation was held at the Ruskin Hotel during the Blackpool Weekend. The occasion was a shared event in conjunction with the Bamford Gold Ring presentation

The hotel is a superb venue being centrally located, the staff are first class and as many of our regular guests will verify the food is outstanding.

There was an excellent turnout and many of our guests commented it was the best presentation yet

Rob Owen welcomed the guests for the evening. Without further ado the club chief guest Maurice McCartney was introduced. Maurice along with partner Jennifer attend the presentation on a yearly basis and are keen supporter of the club. The pair do a tremendous job in supporting racing into North West Lancashire. Maurice thanked the club sponsors Bamford's Corn, Peter Bennett, and NWHU for their continued support. He went on to thank Keith Iddon, Diane Bonney and the team of B & I Transport for once again providing an excellent service to the club.

Also thanked were the clubs marking officers namely Mike McAlinden, Terry Phifer, Colin Wood, Alan Bamford, George and Mo Hilson, Jim Sephton, Maurice McCartney, Jim Frost & Dave Moss. Where would we be without these wonderful volunteers? Sadly Mike McAlinden is calling time on the job this year, a loss to the club and we hope that someone can step forward to keep the marking station viable. Thanks Mike for your efforts over the years.

The clubs wonderful array of trophies were displayed the icing on the cake being Peter Bennetts marvellously presented photographs and 'Bird of the Year' plate.

Maurice went on to thank club secretary Niki Waterhouse and mentioned her husband John for all the work behind the scenes ensuring club rings are despatched, money banked, race distances and entries verified, and dealing with the constant stream of enquiries a bigish club needs to deal with on a daily basis.

Now to the winners, First race was Carentan and winning of 1st & 4th Open and the Bamfords Corn trophy was Alan Greenall. I remember speaking to Alan as I put his birds through and asking him how his season has been. Alan replied 'not bad', which was an understatement as he had won all six races entered up to that point. His first and second birds were hens raced on the roundabout system, Belgium rung and bred by Eric Ceuleman these were obtained via his friend Frank Bristow. Alan gets a few from Eric every year. Tragedy struck towards the end of the old bird season and Alan contracted Encephalitis, a rare but serious condition that causes inflammation of the brain. After several months in hospital, Alan supported magnificently by his wonderful mum & dad is on the slow road to recovery. He was determined to attend the presentation and it was lovely to see Alan & mum and dad on the night. Just touched off on the day were the well-known partnership of Curtis, Wall & Lunt. The boys took 1-2-3 section with a magnificent team performance. Whenever these boys send over the channel in this club they take some beating. It was nice to see the hard working three counties combine president John Winder pick up a fair chunk of pool money. Jim Kenyon won the B section and the West Coaster trophy and this top class fancier timed five birds in a couple of minutes, a class performance and not for the first time, all at the top of the result. Going to our A section in the Barrow area Hambling & Culbert had one way out in front winning the C. Wainwright trophy. 2nd section with their good hen was A & K Young. Hambling & Culbert have had a cracking season once more, winning several regional awards for their performances in the Cumbrian Combine.

Moving onto the Fougères race. This turned out to be a tough affair being liberated into a North East wind it was never going to be straight forward. Only the best and fittest channel based birds would be timed. Clear winner with one of the best velocities out of Fougères on the day winning the Barrow Victoria Trophy was Jim Hinchliffe. All Jim's family attended the presentation and it was great such a happy bunch in support. Jim's consistency over the channel also won him the club's Channel Average trophy and Peter Bennett framed photograph. Winning 2nd Open and 1st West Section were the St Helens loft of Arnold & Johnson. These lads have always been top performers but I reckon they have stepped up a gear these last five years and do take some beating and won several high positions in the clubs races.

Third Open Fougères winning section B, so three section winners in the top three positions was one of the top distance lofts in the North West, Don McCartney. What can you say when Don, flying into Bolton-Le-

Sands near Carnforth timed five out of his six entries. This when many lofts failed to clock. Don seems to get better with age. His Staddon Bros 'Birthday Girl' Van Loon family thrive in tough hard channel races. His breeding policy is to inbreed to his best lines and then bring in a cross from the best distance lofts in the North West. In this case a bird from Jimmy Foster of St Helens providing the cross. Jim is well known for his performances out of Nantes and Niort especially in two-bird races. Just to mention Don's performance in the NFC where he won 4th section Saintes at 585 miles and 2nd section Fougères. This flying 80 plus miles longer in some cases. He timed all his three entries from Saintes on the day at 585 miles, the last at 21-20 hrs. Remarkably Don was runner-up open channel averages in the NWGNFC.

Over to section 'A' where A & K Young timed in the same hen as from Carentan, winning the Dalesman Shield. It was nice to see Ron Lilleby in runner-up spot after restarting in the sport after a short break. Ron also took 3rd section so a good sign for the future. It was a tough race for these Cumbrian birds so well done all those who timed in.

Messac was once again the final old bird race. In a congested programme with many national, combine and 2- bird races around this time members struggle to find numbers. Plenty of members sent but more a case of quality over quantity.

Winning 1st East Section 1st Open and the T O Burrows Trophy plus Stewardess Cup was Paul Hart of Heywood. With this performance Paul also won the Spillers Trophy for highest points Channel and a framed Peter Bennett photograph. Paul had a great season both in this club, at federation and NFC level. I noted his great 5th section at Saintes flying 547 miles and his 3rd section in the tough Ancenis race. The winning bird, pooled to the hilt, a Cheq Pied Cock had previously won club and federation races plus scoring in the previous two NWGNFC channel races. The sire a Jan Grondelaer X Jos Soontjen won the Lancashire Combine Messac race in 2006 and the dam a similar cross but different line. Well done Paul.

With five birds in the top eight and the team performance of the race came the irrepressible Curtis /Wall & Lunt. The team gave a wonderful example of distance flying as this Messac was not exactly straight forward but after handling the quality of birds at marking I knew they would not be far out. Another good pool winner was the strong J & P Walker partnership and Jack picked up a handy cheque to help pay for next season.

8th Open and 1st West Section winning the Ken Hogg Memorial trophy was Tom Smith of Haydock. Tom is no stranger to the winner's enclosure and had a good day at the office with good birds in the federation and at 2-bird level. Runner up west section was A. Jones & Son and it was nice to speak to Steve at the presentation.

Once again winning 1st & 2nd section B flying 435 miles was Don McCartney, and as I say if there is a better small team distance loft around I would like to find them.

The Barrow loft of Palmer & Shields won 1st section 'A' and the Barrow Victoria Shield. These lads have a great record in the club especially at the longer tougher races. Mr Consistency Tony Johnson was runner-up. You can always reckon to have Tony in the frame no matter long or short, young or old. A Special mention here to A & K Young who once more for the 3rd occasion into Cumbria timed the same hen. What a great little champ she is winning the 'A' section Channel Average on her own. Breeding is via Luke Mason of Leeds and the well-known A & S Hughes of Rochdale

The young bird programme consisted of Bedhampton and Portland flown in the first two weeks in September. Usually Bedhampton is quite a test especially into Cumbria. This race was no difference with speeds just under the forty M.P.H. bracket, however returns were excellent. Winning the race for the second year running doing 1137 y.p.m. was the club champions Green & Hilson. Sadly Ken Green passed away last winter but George is continuing with the partnership in memory of Ken. I have lost count of the number of times George has been involved in winning 1st Open in the club, I think it is around 18 or 19 times and he has set records which will never be broken. This powerful loft is well known nationally and few can match the versatility of performances. An example was their 1st Section L NFC this year in the Ancenis race velocity 1152 at 433 miles. From 60 miles to 740 miles the loft inmates are expected to compete at the highest level and invariably come up trumps. The winner was named 'Fontwell' and like last year's two young bird open winners was bred by the top national loft of Crammond & Langstaff from, you've guessed it, Fontwell. Once more it was a Bamford gold ring bird so of course had previous experience from the same race-point.

This bird was well clear of the next bird in the section. 2nd & 3rd open and flying to the west coast was Hesketh Bank loft of Stephen Stringfellow and both being N Ring and pool birds they picked up a tidy sum. St Helens based loft Naylor Bros where 4th Open and the brothers have a great record in the club. Indeed the West Section dominated the rest of the result. Some cracking team performance for instance R & B Smith timed four together on the same yard 1117 and Newsholme & McArdle five together doing 1115. Great returns considering the distances and cold northerly wind. When you get team performances like this your youngsters are obviously bang on. It was nice to see the late Tommy Dagnall's loft ending the season so strong with 5th Open and all pools and the club would like to wish Tommy's family best wishes for the future.

1st B Section was another top loft Tom Jackson. Tom had birds consistently well placed all season and of course I note his MNFC performances are also top drawer. Ian Pedder another past winner of the club split Tom's second timer to take 2nd section B. So difficult for some of these lofts which were affected by a DEFRA ban on racing in the area and they were only able to compete in the final few young bird races.

It was a tough old fly into section 'A' but after 7 hours and 13 minutes Ken Charnley recorded yet another section win narrowly holding off Tony Johnson and winning the H.B. McAlinden Cup. His main stock hen is a bird bred by chief guest Maurice McCartney which has been a tremendous cross into his base pigeons. Ken tells me he may call time after old birds next season it will be disappointing to see this small team natural flyer leave the sport. There was thirty six timers into the Barrow clock station, which considering the distance and conditions of the race bears testimony to the quality of the youngsters sent.

The last race was Portland, much faster than Bedhampton. Winning 1st & 2nd Open and the George Baddley Cup in their first season in the club where Craig Hughes & Son. These Belgium rung birds appear to be nest mates as the rings run consecutively Craig named them 'Red' and 'Archie'. Craig suffered a disappointment from the Bedhampton race when he had a good bird which sat out, but this time he had a cracking trap. I had previously noted their performances at federation level when they took the first four and knew they had their team fit. What I did not realise was that Craig was married to Steve Maylett's lovely daughter. Father-in-law set them up with the birds and the quality of the birds provided along with Steve's good advice, set them on the road to success. They appear to have really enjoyed themselves at the presentation, what a great family. Third Open by the narrowest of margins was the formidable Green & Hilson. Pooled to the hilt in Open & Section this good young bird was the same bird which was 1st Open the week before and of course it ended up by being 'Bird of the Year' and the Peter Bennet special plate. George has won Bird of the Year on many occasions.

1st and 2nd West Section, 4th and 5th Open came Cliff Harding and MRAD lofts respectively. Cliff's youngster was previously his second bird in the tough Pirie Gold Ring race, being bred from his renowned Hereman-Ceusters top stock cock 'My Drum'. A sister topped the North West Combine and won a regional award. Regarding MRAD lofts what a fabulous young bird season they had. Peter and John are regulars at the presentation. This fine loft have topped the North West Combine no less than nine times in the past. Not many in the Combine can beat that.

Winning section 'B' and not for the first time was Ian Pedder. Former multiple winner Peter Heywood was 2nd 'B' section plus first Gold Ring, closely followed by M.J Riding, another consistent performer. In fact these three lofts dominated the section result taking the first nine positions between them along with most of the pool money.

Section 'A' winner with an all pooler was the Askam loft of J. Jefferson & Son. This was also their Gold Ring bird so obviously a well-bred and well fancied pigeon. Just behind 2nd section was J. Walker again of Askam. A & M Oliver and B. Lloyd took the rest of the prize money. I understand at some point a new partnership will formed re Jefferson & Lloyd so good luck in the future. Once again there was plenty of birds timed despite the prevailing win being against the birds.

Winning the Combined averages and F. Wright Trophy for all races was once again Green & Hilson. In the West Section Bill Dickinson of Orrell won the section combined averages and the Don Owen memorial Trophy Bill has flown an outstanding channel bird in the club over the years, most of Bill's birds were gifted to him and I understand he will continue racing next year as he is going into a new partnership, great news. Chief guest Maurice McCartney, Mr Consistency won the 'B' section all race average once more.

Rob Owen. Press Officer.

BAMFORD GOLD RING PRESENTATION

Alan Bamford came out front to do the honours and thanked Diane Bonney and the team for all their help. Of course we should thank Alan for providing such great facilities for the marking of the birds. He puts a lot back into the pigeon sport via sponsorship, is a fancier himself, sells fabulous products and worthy of our support. Once more with total pools & prizes totalling nearly £20,000 it proved to be one of the major Gold race in the country.

Last year racing from Bedhampton it was the west coastal based lofts which prevailed in the form of Tommy Hawkins of Liverpool. This year it was the easterly based lofts which prevailed, Congleton, Manchester and Rochdale providing the early timers. In 2013 it was the central lofts along the M6 belt which won. So for me it is a very fair race-point which if conditions and your birds are right on the day you have a very good chance of prevailing.

On to the winner Roger Sutton. What can you say about this fabulous versatile racing loft. Just look at the racing records stretching back many years. I usually actually look for his results from Tarbes in the NFC. Indeed he was 4th 6th & 12th section flying 693 miles this year and also was 1st section L Saintes flying 517 miles, but as most fanciers know Roger is one to look out for whatever the distance. His winner won a cool £1400. Not a bad day's work.

Second Open was the young bird specialist racer Steve Maylett by just .1 of a yard. Steve himself won £1062. At first we thought Steve had won the race but he spotted that the club had used his old distances and quickly advised officials to correct the problem. What a fine sportsman. Steve had a fine season with his youngsters, I seem to read somewhere he topped the federation with his single entry one race.

It was nice to see both lofts attend the presentation and indeed last year's 1st and 2nd Tom Hawkins and St Anne's aces Barnes & Walmsley were also present.

Third in the race was the prolific Curtis Wall and Lunt. Being a busy weekend for them the lads could not make the presentation. The next three birds where into Rochdale in the form of Glynn & Gavin Buckley and Peter Hardman. What a fabulous season Gavin & Glynn had in 2015. It started with their 1st section 6th Open NFC Fougères. They then surpassed that by being 1st & 2nd Open NFC flying 400 miles from Messac. Yes year 2015 will never be forgotten by the partnership.

Next up in 8th place Jack Walker of the J P Walker partnership came out to receive his accolades. 1st West Section and 9th Open, and a regular at the presentation was Alex Smith, the Gold Ring king. Alex always lays his youngsters out for these big races and was rewarded with 1st West Section and over a £1000, a fabulous bird defying prevailing conditions on the day. Brother Tom Smith another regular picked up £230 whilst cousins R & B Smith once again collected a four figure sum, enough to pay for the annual trip to America. Paul Hart finished a creditable 27th open followed by George Hilson. George had a great race getting five birds together winning another four figure sum. Yes George I noted that one of your Bamfords timers was the NWGNFC 'Bird of the Year'. What a great little champ. MRAD were presented with a cool £200.

In the North section T. Eaves of Blackpool had a cracker whilst 2nd North section was Peter Heywood. Last year's Open runner-up Barnes and Walmsley came 3rd North Section with an all pooler and £265, conditions did not suit these birds this year but game birds defying the elements and good picking.

Alan then made a special gift presentation to convoyer's Alan and Andrea who been closely involved transporting the birds over the years. Whenever you see the pair they always have a smile on their faces and of course their care of the birds is immaculate at all times.

With prize winners and friends gathered in friendship the evening slipped away in pleasant conversation well into the early hours. Good food, great friends and a social able ambiance finished another great night in Blackpool. The meal is pre booked already for next year.

Rob