

# **Kingdom Boy**

## **1st Open SNRPC Lessay 2006**

### **Jim Benvie**

I was about 13 when I got started in the sport, when my brother, Davie, was demobbed in 1953. My other brothers, Bert and Wull, also took a keen interest. It was our father who built us our first loft in the same year, and our parents always encouraged us. At that time we flew as Benvie Bros in Kirkaldy and we had a few from local fanciers, plus a couple we bought from Slater & Hill from Kirkaldy. We worked away with these for a while but it was a stray blood-red cock caught in a nearby tower that bred us our first winner, which won twice for us in the old Roslyn Club. The tower is still there now. Happy days!

In 1959 we moved to the other side of Kirkaldy, which was a hotbed at that time with four clubs. Novar with up to 90 members could send over 1,100 birds, such was the interest. Roslyn had about 20 members, Raith and St Serfs both had about 24. From our new address we flew in both St Serfs and Novar, when going by rail. Shortly afterwards we went to the legendary J. Reid of Stenhousemuir to try to buy two pairs from him. One of the pairs in the nest box I remember, as one of the pair was the pick of the nest for another fancier who we were waiting on. Then suddenly, from over the fence this fancier appeared and it was none other than the legendary Rangers and Scotland winger, Davie Wilson. I always meant to ask Davie how he got on with his young bird. The one we took home was a red hen, and she proved to be a very good breeder for us, giving us some good sport with her offspring. We bought eight birds at Mr Pitcailly of Burntisland in Fife's clearance sale. One was a red cock, 1st Open Fed Amiens over 500 miles, and paired to the red Reid hen he bred us many winners.

Dysart on the outskirts of Kirkaldy was where I moved in 1964. I flew on my own from there, although Bert gave me some assistance, while Davie flew on his own with some success. Wull was interested in football and played for Dunfermline Athletic, Raith Rovers, Stirling Albion, and at 52 played for Gala Fairdean in the Highland League. In 1966 I sent four to the YB National Worcester smash and had four from four, with the first one 42nd Open. The following year I sent three of these to Avranches and had three in the clock inside 30 minutes and was quite happy.

I moved again in 1968, just up the road but still in Dysart, and took only six birds with me. One was the Reid hen and the other was an exceptional blue cock bred by Whittaker Bros of Methil, who were brilliant at the time. This pair were the parents of the 42nd Open Worcester. That year I timed two at Rennes 562 miles over 15 hours on the wing; there were five timed in the club within seven minutes and all featured on the result ? quite amazing. Then there was a big thrill when on a hard, pea-soup day, I timed a dark hen at noon on the second day to win 1st Fed 24th Open Avranches 520 miles. By then I was very pleased with these birds. I remember when as young birds they would range out of sight for two or three hours. I thought it would take a bit out of them. When training it didn't matter: when they were on their own or tossed with other local birds, they would come home one or maybe two hours later, none the worse. They just seemed to want to fly and it didn't do any harm.

In 1973 I got some eggs from one of the gentlemen of the sport, Jimmy Callan of Blairhall, and they gave me some good birds from the Channel. The next year, Dave Baxter of Coaltown of Weymess gave me two Cattrysse birds and they were very influential on the breeding side crossed with birds from the late John Traill. Then in 1976 a bit of luck came in on my part. Local fancier, Sandy McCleod, had some nice young birds in the nest and said I could have one from a certain pair, which he told me were Newcombes. I said, "OK, but make sure you give them extra beans in the pot?". "OK, Jim, no problem," was the reply. Sure enough the young birds were reared and the one I took home is one of the best pigeons I am ever likely to race in my lifetime. The young bird, a blue hen, I named Tracey B after my daughter. As a young bird she was unraced. As a yearling latebred she was timed from Dorchester 380 miles at 6pm. As a 2y she won 118th Sect Rennes 1978; as a 3y she won 1st Fed, 2nd East Sect, 2nd Open Rennes behind Eddie Newcombe who said Tracy B was as good as, if not better than, his own Live Circuit. Praise indeed from the king! In 1980 Tracey B won 115th Open Rennes, then 184th Section Avranches. In 1981 she won 269th Open Rennes to be the first Gold Award winner into Fife, something I am very proud of. Tracey was also the dam of Lady B, who flew Rennes as a yearling, and won 1st Fed, 5th Open Rennes 1985, the year Jimmy Jackson won with Howden Gold. Another bird at the time was Mrs B who won 24th, 46th, 78th and 96th Open Avranches, and was sometimes doubled back into the Fed Avranches, doing OK there, and in all went over seven times. She was Cattrysse x J. Traill.

Round about the same time, red cock, Jimmy B, was on the scene and he won three times at the Channel. One year he went to the first National and was timed at 5am, just missing the prizes. When I think, my brother, Dave, topped the Fed that day. Three weeks later, Jimmy B was 48th Open Nantes 622 miles, and two weeks after won 46th Open Sartilly 518 miles. I remember him well because although he won in the club it wasn't easy to get him fit for long races. He put on a lot of weight and had to be trained harder. Then I discovered he flew well on the drive and between first and second egg. That's how he flew three Channel races in one year. So, observation came in there, something I think very important, as the red cock was not the norm! Later, we moved again, this time to Thornton in the late 1980s and again had some success there for a brief period, before moving to Methilhill in 1990. That year I was fortunate to win 2nd Fed, 24th Open National Sartilly and was very pleased, as up to then I had managed to win in every location I had raced. For the next few years the birds seemed to perform OK at Club, Fed and National races, winning some good prizes, then I decided I would like to try some different birds and they came from Jock King, some of which are still in the loft at the moment. I bought a hen from Jim Mackie of Leven and she won four times from the Channel. Jimmy Hamilton supplied me with a cock that went on to win 5th Open Fed Beersel, when I was also 4th Open. The Hamilton cock and the Mackie hen bred a 50th and 172nd Open Falaise bird so they were a bonus. Jocky Scott supplied me with two pairs of Busschaerts and they bred a dark cock which won 4th Fed Open Beersel and three prizes from the Channel.

I had by then over 100 diplomas in National racing and thought I had served my apprenticeship. In 2005 I had a good year at the Channel and in the newly formed Kingdom Racing Pigeon Association I managed to win the YB Open from Wakefield, 185 miles, with a Vandabeele bought at the KRPA young bird sale, brought up by one of our friends, Derek Powers, of the NEHU. However, my wife, Margaret, and I decided in December of last year to move once again (hope it's the last), to Ladybank. There is plenty of room for the birds and a very good environment where the lofts get the sun all day. It took me a while to break them but most of

them were eventually settled. Unfortunately, some good prizewinners were lost, although luckily some good ones still remained, but could I get them from the Channel?

I couldn't have picked a worse time as it was Fife that had the first case of bird flu (a swan) reported, and the programme was put back even further. Some races were missed and our birds had to be jumped. However, I managed a few club wins early on and sent to the SNRPC Newbury race 340 miles and won 29th Sect, 148th Open; at the Association Maidstone race I was very pleased with 6th and 12th Open 376 miles. The first one, another bought at our KRPA sale, came up from the North-East from our friends. At the SNRPC Reims race, 567 miles, I was 23rd, 31st and 36th Sect, 55th, 73rd and 81st Open. The first one, a cheq cock, was my second on the Falaise result last year and has scored in the Newbury National, so I was quite happy with my first Channel race at our new address again.

Nothing could have prepared me for what was to happen next, though. I thought I should have a go at the last race with the SNRPC at Lessay. They were away at 0805hrs into an east wind, and a very difficult race ensued. Bob Nisbet timed at 8.38pm and looked like the one to beat. I had a training toss earlier with the young birds and two or three were amiss. I was in the young bird end letting one in and was having a quick count, going over them, when I thought I heard another on the trap. I had a quick look out thinking it was a young bird, but on second thoughts, it was on the old bird trap and it weren't no young bird! Well, it was panic stations after that! I timed the yearling cheq pied cock at 9.04pm for 491 miles on 1110. You can imagine I was very excited. These days we open the clocks on the second day. It was a long wait, and I can tell you honestly I was a relieved man when the clock and rubbers were finally read.

Over the years I have been very friendly with John Proctor of St Nazaire fame and we have swapped a few times. It was John who supplied the National winner, Kingdom Boy, for me. Jocky Robertson of Kirkaldy was finishing in the sport and gifted three pairs to John, saying they were too good to kill. These were Busschaerts that Jocky bought in from Fountainhead. The next year John paired them up, bred two pairs and gave one to Ian McClaren, which flew Maidstone this year, and the other to myself, proving you don't have to spend a fortune for good birds. It's hard to believe that John and I won two Nationals inside two weeks ? quite remarkable!

Kingdom Boy was raced to the SNRPC YB National Leicester, 260 miles. This year, as a yearling and broken bird, he won earlier on, and then was second to the loft from KRPA Maidstone winning 12th Open, flying over nine and a half hours. After that I thought the yearlings had done OK and he was left alone. After I chose to send to Lessay the birds had three tosses from 40 miles, the last one on the Saturday before basketing. He was sent on his 5th flight just burst through and sitting seven days. In the same race I was also 31st Sect, 81st Open with a 4y mealy cock, a gift from Bob Millar. The mealy had already won 10th Open Fed Maidstone, scored in Newbury National, and was my third pigeon on the Falaise result last year. This year he won 73rd Open SNRPC Reims, and now scored in Lessay ? a useful bird.

Now something about my methods. All birds are cankered before pairing, which is mid-February, and again before the big races. I breed two rounds from the stock with some floated under yearlings. I also like to breed some from the yearlings as I have had some good birds from them, and even latebreds. I'm not too frightened to put latebreds on the road, either: some have been my best birds. There are 24 nest boxes, 12 in each section, but there are always empty boxes in each section. They are fed a mixture when rearing young birds, which are moved at 23 days. Their feeding for racing is hopper fed with Gerry Plus in the morning and Versele-Laga All-rounder at night, which I prefer to measure out. Linseed is added twice per week and sometimes two or three peanuts are given in the boxes.

Training starts the first or second week in April, weather permitting, and I don't mind missing the first two races. Yearlings are expected to fly the coast, nearly 400 miles, and maybe two or three will be picked out for the Channel. I have had some luck in that respect, with some in the top 10 in the Fed and a 16th Open SNFC Chenoise with a yearling and, of course, Kingdom Boy. Old birds usually have three or four races and are sent sitting 7- to 10-day eggs. Their training in most cases would be 20 miles morning and evening for seven days. They are scraped twice daily and have a bath at least once a week, and are exercised twice per day and trap through stall traps. When weaned, young birds are fed maples for four weeks. Then they have Versele-Laga Young Bird No Maize, which is fed until racing ends at the Young Bird National 260 ? 300 miles. Their training starts three weeks before the first race and they have at least 15 tosses out to 35 miles and fly to the perch naturally. All are vaccinated and are treated for canker before racing starts and a close eye is kept on them. They are also spotted on the back of the neck for lice and worms, given a little Hormoform as a titbit and are scraped twice daily.

I have a 14' x 7' stock loft which used to be Dennis Dall's old racing loft. It's stood on its own since 1936 and had more than its fair share of winners in it. A small sputnik is fitted to one end to help me break new stock. I brought my old racing loft with me and it has three 8' sections, two for old birds and one for young birds, who have access to a big aviary. All birds trap via the stall trap and there are no tiles or skylights in this loft.

I'd like to see more young lads in the sport and if I was to offer advice to them it would be to start with the right birds and take your time. Remember, it's horses for courses! Before closing I would like to thank my wife and family for their help and understanding over the years, in particular the last 18 months, when I have been in hospital three times. They have had some running about to do, I can tell you. Also thanks to my close friend and near neighbour, Harry Maidment, who has helped out a lot especially at the loft (Harry was 2nd Open St Nazaire SNRPC) and to John Proctor who bred Kingdom Boy. Finally, I would like to thank the Editor of the British Homing World for the invitation and space in this year's book and would like to wish everyone all the best for 2007.

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JIM BENVIE HOLDING KINGDOM BOY (PICTURED LEFT) AND KINGDOM BOY 1ST OPEN LESSAY  
SNRPC 2006 (PICTURED RIGHT)

