

# “Lightening Strikes Twice”

For John Proctor Kirkaldy!

1<sup>st</sup> Open SNRPC TOURS, 2007, ONLY BIRD  
ON THE DAY, 627MLS!

AND

1<sup>st</sup> Open SNRPC ST. NAZAIRE, 2006, ONLY  
BIRD ON THE DAY, 613MLS!

When I was an 11y.o boy I used to clean out my Fathers loft, assisted by my older brother James. I remember when my Father was away on Holiday and my other brother Alan and I had to look after the pigeons. Alan was courting and was a few years older and supposedly wiser. We were told to send all the Y.B'S to the next race and given money and instructions etc. However it was a fair old walk to the club house with 2 big baskets, and Alan had other ideas! No pigeons were sent and Alan being into the non feathered variety at that time spent most of the money on his latest beloved, and I of course got my share, and kept quiet as agreed. When my Father came back home, he enquired how we got on. Oh, great race full returns was the reply! Father was none the wiser, that is until he went to work on Monday. He did his full shift down the pit, only to come up and find out on the way home, the truth from the club Secy. The Secretary looked at him in disbelief when he told him we had all our entries home!!! Well that was it, he couldn't wait to get home. When we arrived home from School the birds were already given away. The loft mysteriously vanished also within a week!

My Father was strict, and didn't like being made a fool of and this taught me a hard lesson! It took me about 3-4 years to finally convince him to let me get the pigeons again, and I went into partnership with a school friend, and flew as Taylor & Proctor. This only lasted 1 year though! From 1973-1979, I was in and out of the sport. In the next 3 seasons I tried various different methods in an effort to improve. Then in 1982 season I asked Jackie Wishart the then club Secy, if I could go into Partnership with him and he agreed!

This Partnership Wishart & Proctor proved successful and we had some good wins in club fed and National racing. We had the 1<sup>st</sup> Fife bird one year in the Rennes race, and we also had the 1<sup>st</sup> Fife bird from SNFC Niort 687mls, winning the East Section in 1991! All this time I was aware of the top fanciers in the area and was introduced to some of the best National winning household names you could ever come across! Fanciers like Jock Trail, J & J . Keir & Son, Dennis Dall, Matt McLauchlan, John Anderson, Jock Mackenzie, Jock King, Jim Benvie, Pete Patrick etc. One could only learn from the above fanciers. However I really aspired myself, hopefully to get some good channel positions, just like them, and maybe someday be as good as them and possibly win a National! To do this though I realized that I would have to be patient, work mighty hard and learn my trade the best I could to have any chance. This is where Jackie Wishart came in for he has taught me a lot and showed me the ropes so to speak! Jackie and I had some great times and for that I thank him, for it was the success we had together that lit the spark and my passion to succeed from the long distance Nationals.

I flew with Jackie for a decade and in 1992 my wife and family and I moved house and here we had just enough room for some pigeons. For the next couple of years I just pottered about with the birds, as money was tight and I had a young family and some responsibilities plus a fulltime job to hold down. However though in 1994 I joined ST. Serfs club in Kirkaldy, the club I joined as a boy. I took on board everything I learned from my mentor Jackie Wishart, who also gifted me some y.b's containing D.Dall lines. I also got some good pigeons from Buster Brown Kirkaldy containing Newcombe blood and boy did these pigeons give me a boost!

Since 1996 I have won prizes from the old distance race points like Rennes, Nantes, Satrilly, Vire, Lille, Beerstal, Liege, Clermont and Messac. More recently from La Ferte Bernard, Chenoise, Falaise, Alencon, Reims, Cholet, St. Nazaire, Lessay and Tours. Distances ranging from Lille 457mls- Cholet 633mls. In addition to this I have also won the Sect, in 2001, from Frome Inland National, and won the Sect, 2000, from Leicester Y.B National. Also won the ER Williamson Trophy in the SNFC for best 2-bird Ave Tours, 7<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Open 2004!

In 2005 flying with the Scottish National Racing Pigeon Club, scored in Newbury race. Then 83<sup>rd</sup> Open Alencon 549mls in a hard race. Followed by my Grizzle and blue cocks at Cholet 633mls winning 10<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> Open. And a good position at Falaise.

Season 2006 came and at Newbury won 101<sup>st</sup> Open, 335mls. Reims came next and I timed at 5.20 am, with the first one winning 47<sup>th</sup> Open plus the first yearling in

the race in 68<sup>th</sup> Open and 99<sup>th</sup> Open with my third bird. The Sect, winner and 3<sup>rd</sup> Open was my good mate Jackie Wishart with one I bred him, I was as pleased as Jackie himself. Nothing would prepare me for what was to happen next though! Our 600ml race point was chosen to be with the NFC at St. Nazaire some 613mls. The NFC liberated all the pigeons together at 6.45am into a N. East Wind on July 1<sup>st</sup>. That night I was watching the football, France taking on Brazil and never really thought about the pigeons from the race that night, although I had an eye on the loft. Suddenly I noticed a pigeon already on the loft. I looked twice, then quickly made my way to the back garden. Absolutely fantastic feeling to time this bird in. It was my blue cock now named McFly, he was timed at 9.37pm with a vel of 1209, for the 613mls, with many pigeons struggling down south it made his flight all the more incredible! He was to be the Only bird into Scotland on the day, and would have been around 135<sup>th</sup> Open with the NFC had he been duplicated. McFly was the eventual winner of 1<sup>st</sup> Open SNRPC St. Nazaire, and the calls we had from all over Scotland and England I will never forget! The whole family was on a high for weeks! In fact it was my daughter Alison, that named the pigeon, Mc for Scotland and Fly for pigeons and not after the pop group as some think!

McFly has previously won 90<sup>th</sup> Open SNFC Falaise, 518mls, 17<sup>th</sup> Open SNFC Tours, 627mls, and 20<sup>th</sup> Open Cholet 633mls, with the SNRPC. He had 4 races from 77mls, 110mls, another from 77mls after we found out we were getting channel racing. He then had Maidstone 367 mls and was 4<sup>th</sup> to the loft taking over 9hrs, 30 mins. He had one toss from 50ml, and was sent on a 6 day y.b. His sire was a blue cock who was actually lost the year I bred McFly, 2001 what a pity. This blue cock was from a hen from the lines of Buster Brown. The sire of the blue cock was a pigeon I called the "ugly duckling" he won 75<sup>th</sup> EAST Sect Frome, 75<sup>th</sup> Open Reims, 185<sup>th</sup> Open Clermont and 24<sup>th</sup> Open La Ferte Bernard, and contained Buster Brown pigeons going back to the Newcombes. Dam of McFly was a white hen, which won 9<sup>th</sup> fed Open Maidstone 2001. Her sire was bred by Dale Newcombe and was a full brother to "Kardale Clives Memory" 1<sup>st</sup> Open Rennes for Dale!

I also timed my Grizzle cock next morning 6.43am, to win 3<sup>rd</sup> sect, 6<sup>th</sup> Open vel 973. This was a dream for me! At the last race from Lessay it was a difficult race with only 16 on the day of toss with another good fancier winning the race namely Jim Benvie with a yearling, also one I bred here. I was ecstatic for Jim, he has had a few near misses before. This was just turning out to be a dream season, everything seemed to fall into place at the right time. The next morning I timed in my blue hen to win 30<sup>th</sup> Open with the hen that was 47<sup>th</sup> Open from Reims, bred by my good friend Steven Aitchison of Eyemouth. I would like here to also

congratulate Steven on winning the SNFC Alencon race this year he deserves it! I was also 118<sup>th</sup> in the Lessay race and 13<sup>th</sup> Sect Y.B National to finish off the season.

At the Scottish National Racing Pigeon Club Presentation I was a very Proud man to win the Silver Medal for 1<sup>st</sup> Open. Won the best Ave in Sect, C' Award from all the races. Some top flyers in this section. Also won the SNRPC Overall Ave Award. Later I was presented with an RPRA Award Medal, also the BHW "Shy Lass" Trophy for best individual performance in the UK, by any fancier flying over 450mls! Les Blacklock Secy of the Cumbria Region also presented me with the Cumbria Region Award recognized by their members. I was on cloud nine!!!

I would also add that with the Kingdom Racing Pigeon Association, I won the J.Mackenzie Challenge Cup for best Ave all Association and National races. I & L Moffat Trophy 1<sup>st</sup> bird 600ml race, and K & M Crawford Trophy, best Ave all SNRPC races. Plus a Silver hip flask suitably inscribed from the members, in recognition nice touch! Also appreciated was a cup presented by the ST.Serfs club members to me for winning the National, again a nice touch!

Season 2007 came along and I was well and truly back to normal. The pigeons were coming along nicely in the club, without setting the heather on fire! When we got to the SNRPC Wanstead Flats race 343mls, I was delighted to win 3<sup>rd</sup> Sect, 10<sup>th</sup> Open with one bred by Mick Brennan. The Reims race turned out to be unbelievably hard with only 83 in race time 3 days. The winner on this occasion was Jim Benvie with that champion pigeon of his Kingdom Boy, which won the Lessay National race last year! I can only say out of this world, for words to describe the pigeon and the fanciers efforts! In this race I was lucky enough to win 32<sup>nd</sup> & 36<sup>th</sup> Open, and was happy with this. The Following week I am not likely to forget! The SNRPC birds were convoyed to Tours with the MNFC. The birds were liberated at 7.30am into a light S. West Wind on July 1<sup>st</sup> after a 1 day hold over. Again from this race I wasn't really expecting pigeons on the night. I was very lucky because I had a few fanciers going to and fro during the evening. Local fancier Dave Burns, a very good fancier was in the back garden with me just pottering about looking over the birds etc. Just after 9.25 pm a couple of pigeons came racing across the sky and were heading west between the houses and looked to be carrying onwards. When one, of a light colour suddenly veered off and swung back and landed on the house roof above the gutter. Davie and I looked at one another wondering what it was. I calmly walked down the garden to get a better look, only to find out it was my Grizzle cock from Tours who was by now preening himself. My heart gave a thump when I saw it was him, and I excitedly

said to Davie it's the Grizzle, I don't believe it!!! The Grizzle then came down and was timed at 9.27 pm, doing 1318yphm for 627mls. I didn't know what to say to this exactly, but I called a few friends to tell them and they were as up beat as me about it!

The pigeon now named " Lucky Jim " after my Father and Late Brother is a 5yo Grizzle cock who has previously won the following. 277<sup>th</sup> Open SNFC Clermont as a yearling 520mls. Returned injured from La Ferte Bernard 570mls, 2004. 10<sup>th</sup> Open SNRPC Cholet 633mls 2005, and 6<sup>th</sup> Open SNRPC last year at St.Nazaire, 613mls, beaten to the loft by McFly. When I got the News that I had won the Tours race with Lucky Jim, I found it hard to take in, for not just winning the longest race 2 years on the trot but to also have the only bird on the Day into Scotland 2 years running!!! Fabulous, a dream come true!!! By now I was in a trance, like a school kid.

Lucky Jim was paired mid February and the first round were floated. He sat his dummy eggs out til he deserted them. He then reared the next round and was only lightly trained before the season only having 4 tosses. His first race was Wakefield the 5<sup>th</sup> race on the programme 185mls . Then Leicester 257mls. Both races were tricky and gave him time on the wing. Two weeks before Tours he had 8 tosses between 30-40mls with the last from Shotts in Lanarkshire on the Sunday. Most of his tosses had north in the wind. Last year he was sent on eggs, but this year he was on a 5day baby and on his 2<sup>nd</sup> flight, and this seemed to do the trick! His sire was a great racer winning with the SNFC, 8<sup>th</sup> Open Chenoise, 20<sup>th</sup> Open Chenoise, 39<sup>th</sup> Open Messac and 57<sup>th</sup> Open Nantes, all close to the 600ml mark! The dam was a gift from my good friend Rab Purdie Kirkaldy. The sire side contained Jock Ellis Wellbank lines, and the dam Wilson Ovenstone of Methil.

Unfortunately we couldn't send to Arras, Portsmouth being the replacement. However I decided not to send and look forward to 2008 with optimism! I look forward to once again collecting my 2<sup>nd</sup> Silver Medal at the SNRPC Annual Dinner, something I never thought I would repeat! I don't think I can ask much more of these birds as not only are they flying their hearts out, they are also doing well for others! This pleases me immensely. As I say I work hard with them and try my best, and it's paying off now. It's the fanciers named in this article who inspired me to do well, and I have them to thank!

## **Lofts.**

My lofts are not big or fancy, but they serve their purpose. The ob's race to a 12x6 loft with about 18 boxes and are raced Natural. The y.b's have a 10x5 loft and will house no more than 38. The stock loft is 7 x 5, with only 4 pairs kept. All pigeons trap through a sputnik on race day, and there are big louvers running the full length of all lofts under the home made sputniks. The air that comes in goes out the back of the loft above the boxes.

## **Ob's**

The ob team are usually paired mid Feb. The channel pigeons will sometimes not rear their first round, floating them under yearlings. Channel birds would then rear the second, and be given some light training out to about 20mls before going into their first race wherever that may be at the time. They have exercise twice per day and have an Open loft. There are anti cat traps fitted to all lofts. They can be seen out anytime after 4.30 am in the summer months, so they don't need much training. They are not brought back in until I come home from work at 5pm. They are then scraped out and fed, while the y.b's go out. They are only let out again when the y.b's are in. If I feel that they need training, I can arrange for some lorry drivers at my work to take them to various places across Scotland. Yearlings are expected to fly from the longest inland race 340-370mls. Ob's all go over the channel and will normally get 3-4 races depending how hard they have been, and what time on the wing they have had. I would like their last race to be 8-9hrs on the wing, and pay a lot of attention as to their best nest position. Favorite for cocks is a 6 day y.b, and hens 14-18 days.

## **Y.b's**

My y.b's are weaned at 24 days and exercise at night when I come home from work, for 1hr, when I then call them in to their 2 sectioned loft which is fitted out with box perches. All y.b's fly naturally and are flown to the perch. If one or two start pairing up I normally just leave them alone. This would probably be at the last couple of races. Their training starts 2-3 weeks before the first race. They go to 5mls twice then 10 and 15 before going over the river Forth to Drum Brae 15mls twice. Then Penicuik, Leadburn and Peebles which is 35-40mls. After this they can go anywhere, and once racing starts they only go once per week from Soutra Hill with a local mans trailer with a few hundred birds on board. It's all mostly education! Most of them are expected to fly from Wakefield, 185mls, some are selected for the Y.B National 257mls.

## **Feeding.**

The ob's are fed Versele Laga breeding mix 50-50 with Buctons bread & wean, while rearing. When the y.b's are separated they go on 1 once of versele laga Gerry Plus in the morning and 1 once of versele laga All Rounder in the evening in their boxes. After the birds reach Wakefield they get about 6 peanuts and have a teaspoon of trapping mix. This all helps keep them tame and is good oil for the big races later on. The y.b's are fed the same feeding as the ob's morning and night and are never stinted. They have electrolytes in the water on a Saturday the same as the ob's, and are given a multivitamin on a Wednesday, same as ob's.

## **Medication**

The only medication they get is normally prior to pairing. They are de wormed with ivomectin, 2 weeks before pairing and every 3 weeks or so I give them bicarbonate of soda in the water for canker. Other than that they don't normally get anything else. They are cleaned out daily in the light nights. On the dark nights they are cleaned at weekends as it is dark when I go to work and also when I get home, and I have no lights in the loft.

## **The Moul**

In the off season the birds are not split up until near Christmas, I just close the boxes after the last y.b races. They are fed a 50% moulting mix & 50% All Rounder, after the racing until the moult ends in December. After which they are simply cut down until about 2 weeks before mating, when it starts all over again!

During the off season I must admit to enjoying taking part in quizzes and going round the shows and sales, Particularly Blackpool and the Old Comrades. I also enjoy going to Belgium for the weekend with some local fanciers before the season starts. I urge all fanciers especially the novice or new starter to go to as many of these as you can. You can learn a thing or two and you also meet many old friends and always make some new ones!

## **Conclusion.**

Before concluding this article may I offer some advice to the novice fancier. Go to a man who is winning well, preferably not with a big team. Keep your eyes and

ears open, see if this fancier will take you under his wing. Learn your trade and keep good husbandry, and success will surely follow!

I would sincerely like to thank my wife Elaine and Family for putting up with me all this time! Without you I would never have been as successful. Finally I appreciate the invite from the Editor to pen an article for the 2008 year book, and send my best wishes to everyone for the future!

### **John Proctor.**



^ J.Proctor with some awards.



^ J.Proctors awards won in 2006.



^ O.B loft : note the anti-cat trap!



^ View of main loft.



^ View inside main loft, grizzle (2<sup>nd</sup> from end).



^ Y.B loft.



^ Inside Y.B loft.



^ 'Lucky Jim' 1<sup>st</sup> Open S.N.R.P.C. Tours 627mls 2007, only bird on the day.



^ Chq cock, 3 x winner, from channel incl 32<sup>nd</sup> Open S.N.R.P.C. Reims 2007.



^ 'McFly' 1<sup>st</sup> Open S.N.R.P.C. St.Nazaire 613mls 2006, Only bird on the day.



^ Blue hen, mother of the loft.



^ John holding 'Lucky Jim' the morning after.



^ Chq hen, 36<sup>th</sup> Open Reims S.N.R.P.C. 564mls 2007.

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