



# NEWS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

with Irish Rover

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## THE MAGNIFICENT 12 - PART 1

The history of the INFC Gold Medal is a story waiting to be told. At the AGM in 1979 Willie Reynolds proposed that the INFC present a Gold Medal to any pigeon that was an Open prize winner four times from the Kings Cup Grand National, it was duly passed; 1982 was the first year that the Medal could be won and several pigeons that had won a Hall of Fame Diploma three times an Open prize winner from the Kings Cup were in the entry liberated from Les Sables at 6am. It was to turn out one of the worst races in the history of the INFC, at the end of three days only 17 birds were recorded with the race winner being Joe Doheny of Dublin.

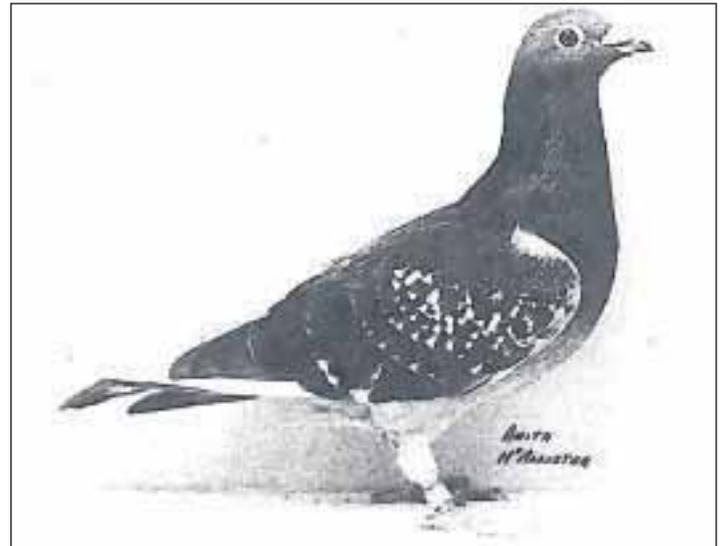
Against this background two Gold Medals were won, the winners being John McCartan, Annalong with a dark chequer pied hen and Gordon Kirkpatrick, Lisburn, his winner being a dark chequer w/f cock named 'Hermes', arguably one of the greatest long distance racing pigeons in the history of the sport. It is wildly recognised that the route from France into Ireland is one of the most hazardous routes in the world. 'Hermes' the 'Arkle' of the pigeon world, raced from France seven times and was seven times an Open prize winner; 1976 - 130th Open Rennes vel 580ypm; 1978 - 38th Open Rennes vel 767ypm; 1979 - 119th Open Rennes vel 1042ypm. Hall of Fame Diploma winner: 1980 - 83rd Open Les Sables 729ypm; 1981 - 62nd Open Les Sables 971ypm; 1982 - 14th Open Les Sables 419ypm. Hall of Fame Diploma winner, Gold Medal winner and with a red chequer cock winner of the French Diploma 1982; 1977 - 2nd Sect, 11th Open NIPA Derby. 'Hermes' recorded his highest position from France in his last race as an 8yo, 14th Open Les Sables. Gordon was telling me that he received several big offers for the pigeon but did not ever think of selling him. Gordon's father was always interested in distance racing and Gordon has followed the same path. The breeding of 'Hermes' is mainly Arthur Walkingshaw, Killyleagh.

The second Gold Medal winner clocked in 1982 was a chequer pied hen bred and raced by John McCartan, Annalong. It was in 1966 that John took an interest in racing pigeons and joined the local club Annalong HPS. Like many other new starters he found it very difficult to time in from the Channel races despite flying quite well down Ireland. John decided he would need a different type of pigeon to fly the Channel. In 1972 he started fresh with a breed of bird that had a proven track record from the Channel, he had approached the Benson Bros of Dundrum HPS and from this partnership he obtained four late breeds, one of these was a blue pied hen, a direct daughter of their great pied hen which won 1st Open EDC Dinard OB Derby in 1972. The Gold Medal winner was injured as a YB and not raced; 1979 was her first time to Rennes for the Kings Cup and she won 84th Open. Tommy Speers was the Kings Cup winner and the first South Section fancier to win the cup.

For the 1980 race, the race point was changed to Les

Sables and this was always going to be a hard race. The chequer pied hen flew a great race and won 97th Open. The Kings Cup was won by Geoffrey Douglas of Lurgan with a yearling; 1981 and Les Sables was once again the race point and the hen won 149th Open and a Hall of Fame Diploma. The 1982 Kings Cup from Les Sables was a disaster with only 17 home and the hen was 17th and the Gold Medal was won.

It was another 10 years before a third Gold Medal was won by a super star 'Rainbow Warrior' bred and raced by W



**'HERMES'**

IHU7483193 dark chequer w/f cock.

Arguably one of the greatest long distance racing pigeons in Ireland, racing one of the most hazardous routes in the world - France to Ireland.

1976 - 130th Open INFC Rennes, vel 580ypm, 934/1,830 birds.  
1977 - 2nd Sect, 11th Open NIPA Derby.

1978 - 38th Open INFC Rennes, vel 767ypm, 984/1,986 birds.

1979 - 119th Open INFC Rennes, vel 1042ypm, 1,322/2,859 birds.

1980 - 83rd Open INFC Les Sables, vel 729ypm, 970/1,830 birds.

1981 - 62nd Open INFC Les Sables, vel 971ypm, 979/2,123 birds.

1982 - 14th Open INFC Les Sables, vel 419ypm, 939/2,069 birds.

1979 - Hall of Fame award.

1982 - Hall of Fame award.

1982 - Gold Medal winner.

1982 - French Diploma winner with GB80B86438 red chequer (c).  
'Hermes' is the first pigeon to win two Hall of Fame awards.

Catherwood & Sons of Ballynahinch. 'Rainbow Warrior' was hatched at the end of October 1986 and had to be rung with a 1985 ring and held eight nest flights, he was first trained March 1987 with the OB team. The reason he was bred so late was his parents laid in the corner as all the next boxes were closed and John had intended to throw the eggs out, when he went to separate the pair, one egg had hatched and the other egg broken. The cock that was sitting the eggs was a son of John's Millar Gold Cup winner of 1981 and the hen

a daughter of his OB Derby winner 1978. As John does not like to dispose of a YB that hatches, he put the squab in to a nest bowl and let them rear the YB that was to turn out 'Rainbow Warrior'.

He had his first race from Wexford in 1987, 147 miles and he was the last bird home injured. John let him stay at home until Penzance and he was back in good form when sent holding eight nest flights to win 2nd Club, 14th Open EDC in only his second ever race 1988, and after the bad experience from Wexford, John decided no more inland races and his first race was Talbenny winning 1st Club, next Okehampton winning 1st Club, 3rd Open and finally Penzance winning 1st Club, 6th Open. John decided he would be his single entry for the INFO Kings Cup from Rennes where he was clocked at 6.15pm on the day to win 26th Open. 'Rainbow Warrior' was sent sitting 14 days on eggs to one hen and five days on eggs to another hen – this wasn't planned, it just happened (his idea); 1982 – no inland races.

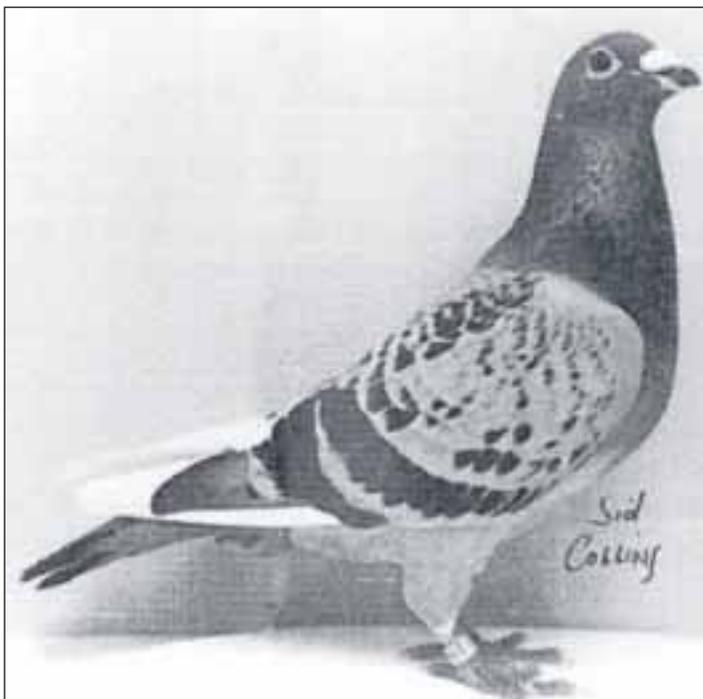
Talbenny was his first race winning 1st Club, then Okehampton again 1st Club and Penzance 1st Club, prepared the same way as 1988, he won 133rd Open vel 718yym; 1990 – no inland races, sent to Talbenny 1st Club, Okehampton 2nd Club, Penzance 1st Club and then Kings Cup Rennes but did not arrive home until the fourth morning. In 1991 saw him prepared once again for the Kings Cup with Talbenny his first race and then Okehampton but he did not arrive until 6am second morning. John decided that rest was what he needed so missed Penzance. The time for basketing for the Kings Cup came round he was sent in super condition on the same nest condition and recorded a spectacular result 7th Open vel 908yym clocked at 9.13pm on the day and winning the coveted Hall of Fame Diploma. After this result John was offered a huge amount for him but would not sell. The Gold Medal, could it be won? The year 1992 opened with Talbenny 1st Club then Okehampton and then into the Kings Cup Rennes on the same nest conditions, 'Rainbow Warrior' won 48th Open vel 591yym and became the third Gold Medal winner in the history of the INFO. His hatching was a mistake and the taking of two hens his own idea 'Rainbow Warrior' has left a legacy of French pigeons behind for example a double g.son won 8th Open Kings Cup St Nazaire 1997. 'Madam Rainbow' flew France four times, a g.son was a Merit Award winner 2011 and another one Merit Award winner 2012, his bloodlines have also won 24th Open St Malo, 26th Open Kings Cup, 126th Open Kings Cup. 'Rainbow Warrior' has made his mark as one of the great pigeons in the history of the Irish National Flying Club.

After waiting 10 years for the third Gold Medal winner, we had the fourth Gold Medal winner the following year 1993. Michael Conlon of Banbridge bred a blue chequer cock in 1988 that went on to be a coveted Gold Medal winner. As a young bird he flew Arklow twice and then Wexford. Michael had a felling about him and decided he would give him the ultimate test Penzance with the INFO, distance 296 miles over the Channel to Banbridge. Michael was not to be disappointed as the young chequer cock was clocked to win 1st Club Banbridge – only bird on the day. As a yearling he was sent to the INFO Penzance Yearling National and clocked to win 1st Club Banbridge and two weeks later flew the Penzance classic.

In the winter of 1990 Michael decided the Kings Cup would be his target. He flew the two Talbenny races and was the first bird to the loft on both occasions being 2nd Club and 6th Club. Michael had him in super condition for the Kings Cup and he was sent sitting 14 days on eggs. Rennes was the race point and the chequer cock was clocked second morning at 11am to win 1st Club Banbridge, 26th Open.

Michael knew he had a top class pigeon on his hands and he was already looking forward to 1991. Come 1991, and after flying the two Talbenny's, again being first bird to the loft, Rennes with the INFO was his next race sent sitting 14 days he was clocked to win 14th Open and collected the Robinson Cup clocked at 10.42pm on the day.

Michael was starting to think of winning a Hall of Fame Diploma and in 1992 he flew two Talbenny's as previous years and sent to Rennes sitting 18 days on eggs. The birds



**'RAINBOW WARRIOR'**  
Blue chequer w/f cock IHU95N11095.  
1991 – Hall of Fame award.  
1992 – Gold Medal winner (first Gold Medal winner for ten years).  
1988 – 26th Open INFC Rennes 1185yym.  
1989 – 133rd Open INFC Rennes 718yym.  
1991 – 7th Open INFC Rennes 908yym.  
1992 – 48th Open INFC Rennes 591yym.  
Also flown Rennes 1990 & 1993.  
1987 – 14th Open Penzance EDC.  
1988 – 3rd Open Okehampton EDC.  
1988 – 6th Open Penzance EDC.  
Bred and raced by W Catherwood & Sons.

were held over for a week and when finally liberated the chequer cock was timed 17.30am second morning to win 89th Open and collect the Hall of Fame Diploma. The following year of 1993 was the crunch year and would he go for the Gold Medal? Yes, was the answer and after flying the two Talbenny's, clocked on both occasions he was sent to the Kings Cup on chipping eggs. The chequer cock was clocked second day at 12.54pm to win 68th Open and take the biggest prize of all the coveted Gold Medal.

Michael named the Gold Medal winner 'Grove Hill Gold'. His race record: 15 Channel races, clocked 14 times, 5x1st Clubs plus 11 times in prize money. Hall of Fame Gold Medal and Robinson Cup plus in the top 100 in all four Kings Cup races. 'Grove Hill Gold' went on to produce some very fine birds, McCracken Bros famous 'Lucy' INFO Hall of Fame winner is a granddaughter. 'Lucy' was 3rd Open Kings Cup Single Bird Challenge winner with cash winnings of £8,000. Aidan McAteer's success in Channel races has the bloodlines of 'Grove Hill Gold' and his NIPA Gold Award winner is a grandson. The top National loft of N Black & Son have also enjoyed success with the 'Grove Hill Gold' bloodlines. Granddaughter 6th Open Kings Cup and 41st

Kings Cup; granddaughter 25th Friendship National; daughter 21st and 25th Kings Cup; grandson 88th Kings Cup; grandson 53rd Kings Cup.

The great pigeon is still producing them, to young birds in 2012 won 7th & 15th Section, 15th & 21st Open INFO Penzance YB National. Offspring of 'Grove Hill Gold' have also competed and done well in the Million Dollar race in South Africa. One could say he was bred to be a sprint to a middle distance pigeon, his sire being a W Blom from Holland and dam 'Delwiche Jet' from P Hoy & Son of Gilford.

'Grove Hill Gold' has more than established himself as one of the INFO great champions. The year of 1995 was to be a remarkable one with no less than three Gold Medals won. Burns Bros, Comber, Frank Scott & Son, Dromore, and Gordon Kirkpatrick with a second Gold Medal.

Let's start with Burns Bros, Hughie & Paddy who flew to a single 18 foot x 6 foot in Dundonald. Hughie is now



**Burns Bros.**

deceased but brother Paddy still sets his targets for the Channel and National races that has always been his passion. In 1991 a blue chequer hen was bred and the brothers liked her a lot, the parents being a blue chequer cock that won 7th Open INFO Kings Cup Jersey as a yearling and he in turn was a grandson of Bob Dunlop's Kings Cup winner. Dam was from Murphy Bros of Killyleagh containing the famous Walkinshaw lines and a daughter of 'Olympus' Welsh Grand National winner.

The blue chequer hen flew only two races as a YB and was flown Natural; 1992 as a yearling she was flown to Bude and then prepared for the Kings Cup. The birds were seven days in the baskets and the Kings Cup was won by Jimmy Cullen of Malahide on a velocity of 989ypm; the Burns hen was placed 114th Open from 2,500 pigeons. In 1993 Paddy decided that she would be trained privately every week from 100 miles, sent sitting 14 days she was clocked to win 73rd Open, 2,218 birds competed, only 147 in race time. It was decided that she would be sent again in 1994 with the same preparation as '93 and in a quick National won by Henry Beattie of Laurelvale on a velocity of 1309ypm, the Burns' hen won 95th Open and a coveted Hall of Fame Diploma. The tough decision had to be taken – would she be prepared for a fourth time and a crack at winning a Gold Medal.

Paddy decided she would go again and the same preparation was under taken, 100 miles each week, sent sitting 14 days. Rennes was the race point and the Kings Cup winner Jackie Patience, the hen was again clocked to win 188th

Open from a record entry of 3,259 birds and the Gold Medal was won. The Gold Medal hen went on to breed a blue chequer hen that won 8th Open East Down Combine OB Derby from Lamballe when only nine birds were recorded in race time three days. Paddy Burns also bred and raced the champion hen 'Dolly' who flew France four times and won the INFO Hall of Fame. 'Dolly' is now the property of Ian Gill of Kells.

The 1995 season was a record breaking season for the Irish National Flying Club, the entry of 3,259 was the highest ever for the club and still stands to this day. Jackie Patience of Lurgan became the only fancier in the history of the club to win 1st & 2nd Open Kings Cup Rennes and three Gold Medals were won by Burns Bros, Frank Scott & Son, Gordon Kirkpatrick, the latter fancier winning a second Gold Medal, the only fancier to achieve this remarkable feat.

Gordon's first Gold Medal was won by the famous 'Hermes', each Gold Medal winner has its won story to tell and it is no difference with Golden's second Gold Medal winner. The winning pigeon is a dark chequer cock bred in 1987 and not raced as a young bird, the following year Golden had too many cocks and sent the surplus over to Eric Crawford. The following year Golden was cocks short and had several back from Eric which included the Gold Medal winner. The cock was a very steady pigeon and flew Talbenny and Penzance before going to Rennes in 1991 for the Kings Cup winning 47th Open.

In 1992 he was again prepared for the National, sent sitting 10 days and clocked to win 79th Open. Gordon is a very keen golfer and has not seen the cock arrive home as he



**'Grove Hill Gold'.**

has been working or playing golf. In 1993 he once again went to Rennes for the Kings Cup and the chance of winning a Hall of Fame Diploma, he did not disappoint winning 49th Open, missed out in 1994, but was again set up for the 1995 Kings Cup from Rennes and was clocked again to win 77th Open and the Gold Medal was his, yes you were right, Gordon was not there to see him home. The cock always flew to the same nest box so Mrs Kirkpatrick knew it was him but she called Tom Marshall to come and confirm it was a Kings Cup pigeon. The sire is a son of 'Hermes' paired to 'Hermes's best daughter; dam is a daughter of 'Hermes's best son to a grandson of 'Hermes'.