

# Irish National Flying Club

The Irish National Flying Club had the first race of the 2012 season when the birds were liberated in Skibbreen on Wednesday, 23rd May, following a one-day holdover. Wednesday morning again started off dull and overcast but this cleared as the morning progressed and the birds were released at 1200hrs in a light south-south-easterly wind. While the winning birds put up high velocities these quickly fell and there were some gaps between pigeons returning.

The race was sponsored by Bamfords Top Flight and we are very grateful for their continued sponsorship. The race took on a new format with the introduction of a new Middle Section for the Skibbreen Nationals only. As such, the Ronnie Johnston Challenge Cup and Diploma are awarded to the overall winner and the Gerald Delaney Trophy is awarded to the best velocity of the other two Sections. The winner of the Section with the lowest winning velocity will receive a coveted INFC Diploma. There are no Open positions for the Skibbreen Nationals but prizes are allocated to the three Sections.

**1st North Section Cromie & Magee, Dromara**, on 1723, flying 243 miles, winning £747 and the Ronnie Johnston Challenge Trophy. The 'Dromara Destroyers', Cromie, Magee & Son, strike again, winning 1st Open, 1st North Section. This is the third time in four years that the loft has won the North Section and the second time in the same number of years that it has won the National. The wind direction or weather conditions do not seem to matter to this loft as they have the Skibbreen preparation off to perfection.

The partnership is Joe senior and his son, Joe, and both work very hard with the birds. Now that Joe junior has retired there could be more fireworks to come. The loft is at Joe senior's house just west of Ballynahinch and they race with Dromara HPS, which is full of top flyers. The bird timed here is a 3y blue cock raced on widowhood. As a young bird on darkness he had the full programme, as a yearling all the inland programme and the same as a 2y. This year, as usual, he had all the inland races with very little training and then into Skibbreen. Throughout his career he has been a very consistent racer, winning many prizes. The breeding is Soontjens/Hofken, the Soontjens coming from the late Lesley Mairs and the Hofken from Andrews & Jackson. His grandsire on the dam's side was 2nd Open with the NIPA from Rosscarbery and has bred many good birds. In fact, two full brothers to Young Joe, as he is now called, were the loft's first two birds from the NIPA Rosscarbery race, taking 8th and 11 Section D, 45th and 54th Open with

6,175 birds competing. The feeding is Marimans French Petite with multi-vitamins in the water once a week.

**2nd North Section D. Campbell & Bigger, Eastway**, on 1718, flying 256 miles, winning £785. The 2nd and 3rd North Section saw two pigeons to two lofts in the Eastway Club in neighbouring gardens. The first of these was to the partnership of D. & J. Campbell & Bigger, a blue chequer yearling hen competing in her second race of the year, having started a week previous to the National when she was a prizewinner from Fermoy, racing on roundabout. The breeding is Alan Brown of Dunedin and Ronan Kynt, which the Eastway partners have blended together to make a family of their own. The Campbell & Bigger team had a very successful Skibbreen National with three further birds on the prize sheet at 222nd, 228th and 248th North Section. The Campbell & Bigger lofts were definitely on form, having had four birds in the top 100 in the NIPA Open result from Rosscarbery at 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 11th Section C, 13th, 17th, 23rd and 60th Open with 6,175 birds competing. They had another super result from Fermoy the week before when they were 12th, 13th, 16th, 26th, 28th and 34th Section C, 26th, 27th, 31st, 68th, 77th and 91st Open with 28,178 birds competing.

**3rd North Section Grattan Bros, Eastway**, on 1711, flying 256 miles, winning £607. The second pigeon into the Eastway Club was to Grattan Bros, who also timed a yearling blue hen of Belgian origins, the sire being a grizzle cock of Vos Jennes lines whilst the dam, like the Campbell & Bigger pigeon, was a Ronan Kynt. As a darkened youngster this hen had already been a prizewinner, although she did not start to race until later in the season with the NIPA comeback race after having been well trained, and again this year had already been amongst the prizewinners. Pre-season she was given just two training tosses and she was racing on roundabout. The name of Grattan Bros has been at the top for many years but, sadly, Tommy's grandfather, Jack, passed away in April of this year. He would have been delighted with this latest success for Tommy and his sons, Justin, Jack and Jamie. This loft also had other birds amongst the prizes at 158th and 183rd North Section.

**4th North Section R. Johnston Comber Social**, on 1707, flying 254 miles, winning £150. Ronnie Johnston is the Patron of the INFC, a position he has held for a number of years, and he makes no secret of the fact that he is very proud of the INFC and its achievements. So far this season he has achieved very consistent results in the East Down Combine, featuring regularly in the Open results. This pigeon is a 2y blue cock with a very impressive pedigree. The sire is a blue pied bred by Jean Stevens & Son of Belgium, the grandsire being the blue cock De Bliksem, winner of 6 x 1sts including 19th, 24th and 25th Nationals. The dam is a blue Willy Jacobs direct, on loan from Mr & Mrs Gerald Delaney of Oroory Hill Stud.

Ronnie had a second pigeon in the prizes, a blue hen finishing 38th North



Joe Cromie Snr & Jnr with Young Joe, the Skibbreen Old Bird National winner.



Davy & Alister Campbell & Hugh Bigger, 2nd North Section.

Section, and enjoyed a great race with excellent returns

**5th North Section G. Buckley & Son, Annaghmore**, on 1690, flying 229 miles, winning £230. This loft, in 5th Open, has an excellent record on the Channel and in the National races from France but let's not forget that it also has a very good record from Skibbereen/Rosscarbery. The partners won Skibbereen Young Bird National in 2001 and were 1st Open NIPA Yearling Cocks Rosscarbery in 2009. Their timer is a blue yearling Soontjens x van Rijn hen raced on roundabout. She had most of the inland programme this year, as she did last year when raced as a darkness young bird. Glen & Johnny had a great race here, with other birds in the result at 21st, 74th and 102nd North Section. In the NIPA Rosscarbery race this year they were 8th and 17th Section E, 26th and 29th Open from an entry of 6,175 birds. Having won a Hall Of Fame Award last year, the Buckley's have a lot more to look forward to in National racing this year.

**1st Middle Section Grogan & Kearns, Finglas**, on 1670, flying 177 miles, winning £384 and the Gerald Delaney Trophy. They become the first-ever winners of the Middle Section in the INFC and they will always hold that honour. The partnership is made up of brothers Thomas & Robert Grogan. The Kearns was their late grandfather, Robert, who was a founder member of Finglas Club in 1960. The partners started back racing in 2008 and were Irish South Road Federation Champions in 2011. The pigeon winning the Middle Section is a 2y Vandenabeele cock. The dam was Old Bird of the Year in the South Road Federation last year and is one they bred themselves from stock obtained from Dave & John Hawkins of Doncaster. Thomas told me that they reared two youngsters off this hen in 2010 and two more in 2011 and still have all four of them. The sire is another Vandenabeele bred from stock obtained from Dave & John Hawkins. As a young bird the 2y cock timed here had a couple of minor cards, then as a yearling he had four Federation cards (in the top 100). He was injured and was taken off the road after five races. This year he has been 2nd Club twice and 3rd, competing against 600 to 700 birds, and was 45th Fed Mallow, 32nd Fed Skibbereen and 20th Open Barleycove. The only race he has missed this year was Pilmore Beach on the Saturday before basketing for the National. His nestmate has been 1st and 8th Club this year as well as 4th Fed from Mallow. They had a great race here with two other birds in the result at 15th and 26th Middle Section. The birds have a 35-mile training toss every day Monday to Thursday, weather permitting. They are raced on roundabout and the hens are shown on Friday mornings for a short spell before being taken away again. Feeding is Gem and this is left with them all day until 8.30pm. They rear between 70 and 80 young birds, which are all darkened, and started the season with 65 old birds. The Grogans asked me to congratulate Cromie & Magee on another great win and said they feel proud to see their name among so many well-known fanciers in the result.



Tommy Grattan (Grattan Bros) holding the 3rd North Section winner, with sons (L-R) Justin, Jack & Jamie.

**2nd Middle Section Joey McLoughlin, Blanchardstown**, on 1626, flying 175 miles, winning £210. I had the pleasure of reporting on this loft last year when Joey was 1st South Section in the Channel Young Bird National from Penzance and went on to win the Harkers Trophy for best average Sennen Cove Yearling National and Penzance Young Bird National. The pigeon timed here is a mainly Roland Janssen x Soontjens grizzle yearling hen bred in the racing loft. As a young bird she had 2 x 1sts Club, 38th Fed (10,500 birds) and 52nd Fed (8,500 birds). Joey had a great race here with three more birds in the result at 6th, 18th and 39th Middle Section. The nestmate of the pigeon taking 2nd Middle Section was 18th Middle Section. Joey's pigeons have been in great form all season with many good results, including the first seven in the Club from Mallow. He started the season with 38 old birds and had terrible trouble with hawks at the beginning of the season. He races the birds on the roundabout system but left them together after the Skibbereen National to prepare them for the Yearling National as the Nationals really are his focus of attention.

**3rd Middle Section Safet Duran, Blanchardstown**, on 1606, flying 174 miles, winning £169. Mick Gilligan introduced me to Safet at the Irish Homing Union AGM in March and assured me that it wouldn't be long until I would be writing about him for one of the National reports. Here we are in the first race since and Safet is 3rd Middle Section. He came to Ireland from Bosnia 12 years ago. Back home he had kept some high-flying pigeons (tipplers) so had some knowledge of pigeons. He was introduced to the Club by Paddy Maples and is very grateful for the warm welcome he received from all the members. Safet told me that he has made many very good friends through pigeons. He mentioned Liam Donnelly in particular



Ronnie Johnston, Comber Social, 4th North Section.



Joey McLoughlin, 2nd Middle Section.



Safet Duran, Blanchardstown, 3rd Middle Section.



Brendan Corley, Monaghan, 4th Middle Section.

who had been an enormous help. While this is only Safet's fifth year racing pigeons in Ireland he was the Old Bird Champion and Overall Champion in the Club last year with 13 x 1sts, 9 x 2nds, 11 x 3rds and a total of 91 cards in the top 10. He also had the Best Old Bird and Best Young Bird. The previous year only young birds were raced as he had moved address and he was the Young Bird Champion with 5 x 1sts, 3 x 2nds and 8 x 3rds, getting 41 cards in the top 10. He joined the INFC in 2010 and had instant success with seven pigeons in the Open result at 17th, 19th, 31st, 37th, 47th, 48th and 112th in young bird Skibbereen and in the Young Bird National from Penzance he was 92nd Open. Last year he was 36th, 41st, 48th, 50th and 102nd Open old bird Skibbereen, 39th Yearling National and 135th Open young bird Skibbereen. In the Old Bird National this year he again had a wonderful result, taking 3rd, 16th, 17th, 33rd, 35th and 58th Middle Section.

The pigeon timed at 3rd Middle Section is a yearling cock, which has been named Arrow. The dam is an Eijerkamp/Janssen, a granddaughter of Wonderboy 05, James Bond, Sonny Boy and Lady General. She has bred many winners for Safet and for others. The sire is a Koopman, a grandson of Garmela which was 3rd in the Million Dollar race. His dam is Klein Dirk and his sire Ligmos King. Safet wants to take this opportunity to thank his family for understanding his love for the pigeon sport, especially his daughter, Merjem, for the help she gives him with the pigeons.

**4th Middle Section Brendan Corley, Monaghan**, on 1600, flying 205 miles, winning £70. We move to Smithboro in Co. Monaghan for the 4th Middle Section pigeon, bred and raced by Brendan Corley, a 3y cock raced on the widowhood system. This is a loft bang on form at the moment as Brendan followed up this result by taking 1st Open NIPA on the Saturday from Clonmel. This was, in fact, Brendan's third NIPA Open win, having won from Talbenny in 2007 and Tullamore in 2010. The sire is from Alan McDonald, Portadown, and is a race winner himself. The dam is a Delbar from Bill Troughton lines. These Delbars have been a great introduction for

Brendan; his three NIPA Open winners all have the Troughton lines. The 3y cock timed here has had quite a few Club positions but this is his first win. Brendan's birds are trained with Kieran Shannon to Granard, Co. Longford, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, weather permitting. Feeding is widowhood mix and Champion Supreme from Cyril Beattie.

**5th Middle Section Savage Bros, Finglas**, on 1589, flying 177 miles, winning £115. We go back to Finglas for 5th Middle Section, to the lofts of Gary & Mick Savage, of Savage Bros. Gary & Mick began racing with their late father, Mick senior. On leaving school Mick junior went abroad to work and came back to Ireland only in 2007, the year their father died, when Gary & Mick got together and went into partnership. The pigeon timed is a yearling Jos Soontjens cock, the parents coming from clubmate James Boland. This cock was also 4th Club, 41st Fed Skibbereen and his sister has a great racing record, having been 1st Club, 15th Fed Thurles and 4th Club, 9th Fed Rosscarbery in 2010, then 1st Club, 21st Fed Thurles and 6th Club Mallow in 2011. They race their pigeons natural and this cock was sent to the race feeding two big young birds and chasing his hen again. Training is with Thomas Grogan on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Feeding, like the Grogan & Kearns partnership, is Gem from Jeff Byrne

**1st and 2nd South Section Gregory Bros, Rathnew**, on 1557 and 1507, flying 167 miles, winning £80 and £65 respectively. These partners need no introduction as they are previous INFC winners having won Skibbereen Young Bird National in 2002. Since Tommy & Roger started to build this family of pigeons 15 years ago they have won six Nationals, 40 Fed and 16 Opens, which is quite some record. The South Section winner is a yearling hen flying natural, which was 26 minutes ahead of the 2nd pigeon in the South Section. She was paired only four days before the race on the Saturday when she came home from Owenahincha, winning 1st Club, 11th East Coast Fed with over 5,000 birds competing. She had been 15th Fed three weeks previously from Pilmore Beach. She was sent back to Owenahincha on the Saturday after the National and was 2nd Club. The sire is a Staf van Reet from Jeff Greenaway, Dromore, while the dam is Delbar/Jan Aarden with a touch of Soontjens and Staf van Reet. A full sister



Gregory Bros, Rathnew, 1st and 2nd South Section.



Michael & Joe O'Reilly, 3rd and 5th South Section.

was clocked in the King's Cup race in 2009 and a cousin was 6th Open Friendship National last year. The dam has bred 12 winners with three different cocks and is a full sister to the 2007 Yearling National winner for J. & J. Merrigan, Rathnew. These bloodlines go all the way back to Hercules, a Delbar/Jan Aarden cock. The winning hen was a darkened youngster and won a few prizes but no major honours. The brothers don't make a big effort for the young birds as they like to concentrate on the old birds. The pigeons have food in front of them all the time and they can eat as much as they want. They are not broken down at all after a race.

The pigeon at 2nd Section is a blue pied yearling cock. The sire is half Grondelaer from Gerald Delaney's Oroory Hill Stud and is down from Young Terry and Young Felix. The dam is a Heremans-Ceusters from Stuarne & Donker of Belgium. Tommy & Roger bought their number one stock cock and the dam is a daughter of this cock. They are very happy with this new blood. Again this cock was paired only on the Saturday before the National. He had been given his hen two hours before basketing for the Owenahincha race. The hen was taken away on the Sunday evening and then put back on the Monday at 6am prior to being sent to the National. With three more birds in the result at 19th, 21st and 22nd South Section, this was another memorable National race for Gregory Bros.

**3rd and 5th South Section M. & J. O'Reilly, Arklow Utd RPC**, on 1472 and 1404, flying 157 miles, winning £98 and £44 respectively. This father-and-son partnership, Michael & Joe O'Reilly, had a great race with birds at 3rd, 5th, 11th and 18th South Section. The first pigeon timed was a yearling cock that had won as a young bird. The breeding is Soontjens from the late Eric Carlisle, Dundrum, Co. Down. These birds form the base of Michael & Joe's loft and a very successful loft it is. The sire is their St Malo cock that was 4th Open St Malo in the IHU National in 2006, which has bred multiple prizewinners. The dam is their '62' hen, a daughter of the No 1 Soontjens hen. They have had three wins this year and all are birds off this pair. Michael & Joe take a pair of young birds off all their 3y pigeons to see if they are worth putting to stock. All young birds are raced on the darkness and they see no problem with these as old birds.

Their bird in 5th South Section is a 2y cock that has already won three races. Unfortunately when I was speaking to Joe he was missing from Castletownbere on the Saturday after the National. The sire of this cock is a son of their number one Soontjens cock from Eric Carlisle, while the dam is the Hermans Hen bought at Eric Carlisle's clearance sale in 2006, responsible for 20 x 1st prizewinners. She is the dam of the National winner from Rosscarbery, Dundrum Lady, and Dicey, winner of the IHU National from Penzance in 2007. The friendship with Eric developed when he reported one of their birds. When Joe travelled north to collect it he returned with three Soontjens and the rest, as they say, is history as Michael & Joe went on to build a very successful team of Soontjens. This is the O'Reillys' first year on the roundabout system and they feed Natural Widowhood and Natural Diet. They watch the weather to decide how and when to build up their birds.

**4th South Section Murphy Bros, Newtown-Kilpedder**, on 1423, flying 170 miles, winning £35. This partnership is made up of brothers Frankie, Terry, Willie & Craig and was formed only last year. They have named their lofts Magpie Lofts after their local football club. They were too late to join



Craig and Frankie Murphy with Frankies son Ross 4th South Section.

any club last year but managed to send their birds to a few races as trainers. They bought in 10 Belgian-rung Natural Breeding Station youngsters from Sheldon Leonard. This year they joined the Newtown-Kilpedder Club and began the season with seven birds. They decided not to send to Owenahincha on the Saturday before race marking, as they wanted to save their birds for the National race. They sent five to the National and had all five within the hour. The pigeon timed at 4th South Section is a van Dyck yearling hen that has been the first bird to the loft in every race this year. She lost her cock early in the season and has just been flying to the perch since. Craig asked me to thank Liam Paisley, Stillorgan, who has given them a lot of good advice and has put them on the right road, and their father, Frankie, who has been a great help to them and will probably feature in the partnership next year. All the brothers are very enthusiastic and when talking to Craig I was very much reminded of John Prenter who won last year's Yearling National.

I would like to thank Davy Black and Clifford Brown for their help in compiling this report and to all who helped with photographs, particularly Davy, Clifford, Steve McGarry and Willie Reynolds.

BRENDAN McLOUGHLIN

# A Jubilee Celebration

It was a right royal occasion for A. & Miss P. Tullett's loft on Monday, 4th June, when their pigeons took part in the Lincoln Drive street party where their loft is situated. Some 140 neighbours sat down to a Jubilee lunch which was followed by organised competitions and games. The road was closed to allow the celebrations which continued until midnight. At 3pm 25 pigeons were released from baskets by the children. This was the shortest race/toss they had ever had - 200 yards! The neighbours were fascinated as the majority knew nothing about the sport. I spent the following hour explaining pigeon racing to the parents and children. It was a fabulous day which finished with a hog roast and we didn't let the weather dampen our spirits.



ALAN TULLETT *What a party!*