

# Chroniclesport

## Pigeons

# Michael does his father and Gilford RPS proud by winning the King's Cup

**GILFORD RPS's Michael Fitzpatrick – son of the late Owen Fitzpatrick - has won THE major Irish National Flying Club (INFC) award, the Holy Grail which is the King's Cup.**

His first Open All-Ireland title is a massive achievement and one that delighted his colleagues in Gilford RPS who wasted no time in passing on their warm congratulations.

"Phone calls, texts, card, people actually coming to the house and strangers passing on their congratulations via somebody they knew who knows me. I've had all of that since this happened," said now-retired Michael who continues to race under the name that has always applied in his case – O. Fitzpatrick and son, he being the latter.

"I suppose it's just in memory of my father," said the Castview, Gilford fancier. "I'm one of three sons, but neither of my bothers had any interest in pigeons.

"I was interested in them, though, and once I started to get involved alongside my father, I suppose I just got the bug. I was about eight at the time – and I've had pigeons ever since."

He learned from a master, for his late father won two Opens and was a noted and respected pigeon man among those who knew the sport.

As trophies in the sport go, the

King's Cup tests birds to the limit. Indeed, Michael sent three to France for the King's Cup race and only one of them – his new champion – made it home.

He is a disarmingly modest, unassuming and straightforward man. There's nothing flashy about him – quite the opposite, in fact.

"I keep a very small team of birds," he reveals. "Thirty young birds and 24 older ones. I have a 26-foot loft with four sections. And that's it – that's all I have and that's all I want. There are others who have a whole lot more, but that's plenty for me."

He is proud to belong to Gilford RPS, a club which once had 50-plus members but now has only half that number. And there is a very proud history, witness the fact that his is the fourth such win, a truly remarkable record for a little club in a small Northern Ireland village.

"Thompson brothers, 1954. Doran brothers in 1966. Dan Campbell and sons in 2011 and now me," he says proudly, though that pride clearly is in the club as a whole rather than in his personal achievement.

"It's unreal for a club of our size," he stresses. "There are big clubs – some VERY big clubs – that haven't had a winner and yet we've had four. It's unbelievable."

Without divulging too much detail, he pays tribute to 'good friends who helped me when I needed a bit of support'.



Gilford pigeonman Michael Fitzpatrick with his Gold Cup winning bird 'Wee Lilly'. CS1830006.

"Dessie Breen could not have done more for me," he says, naming one. "In fact, the bird that won the King's Cup dates back to him."

In addition to the coveted trophy – which he won't receive until November when there is to be a formal presentation at Belfast's Stormont Hotel – Michael had winnings totalling £2,100-odd. But the truth of the matter? That really doesn't matter.

"No, the satisfaction comes from having a

bird good enough to win a race of 473 miles," he smiles. And his eyes confirm he means that.

"The number of birds released was 2,723 – and an awful lot of them never made it home. It's a very, very difficult race, make no mistake."

And at that, there is discernible emotion in the voice of the man who lost a brace as well as getting his champion home safely.

## Latest local results

### DRUMNAVADDY INVITATION HPS

St.Malo Od Birds National 29/6/18

1st. C. & G. Quinn 261.09

Infc Lamballe Friendship National 13/7/18

1. B. McAvoy 593.02  
2. C. & G. Quinn 447.36

### TULLAMORE Y.B 21/7/18

1. R. Cannaway 1049  
2. C. & G. Quinn 1017  
3. C. & G. Quinn 1016.303  
4. C. & G. Quinn 1016.205  
5. J. Brush 1015  
6. C. & G. Quinn 1011  
7. N. & S. Close 1004  
8. J. Brush 990  
9. J. Brush 965  
10. E. McALinden & sons 938

## Motorcycling

# All eyes on Dundrod as Hicky and Harrison prepare to meet again

**WITH the start of the 2018 MCE Insurance Ulster Grand Prix Week (August 5-11) now less than three weeks away, excitement is mounting.**

Following a TT which saw Peter Hickman demolish the outright lap record en route to winning a thrilling Senior TT finale ahead of Dean Harrison, the 7.4011 miles of Dundrod tarmac is the next meeting ground for these two road-racing heavyweights.

Peter – last year's UGP Man of the Meeting and now the world's fastest rider - secured podium finishes in four classes, three of them as race winner.

Reflecting on his and Dean's recent form the Lincolnshire ace said, "Obviously I had my first win at the North-West this year and followed that up with a host of firsts at the TT, the highlight of which was achieving a new lap record in the Senior Class.

"The aim is always to win at the slowest pace possible, but Dean was flying so I had to do 135mph to secure the win!"

Hickman attributes his rival's speed to his experience of competing at the BSBs. There is a certain irony to that, however.

"A few years ago I told Dean that if he wanted to get faster he needed to come to the BSBs," Peter revealed. "It's a faster style of racing, with top level riders, bikes and teams and I think if you can ride at the BSBs you can

ride anywhere.

"In hindsight I wish I'd never mentioned it to him - he's been giving me grief ever since!"

Although disappointed to have lost his lap record, Dean's focus is on winning races.

He said, "Lap records are there to be broken. But with race wins your name is forever etched on that trophy and that's something that can't be taken away from you.

"I'm looking forward to getting out there, but I'm definitely not counting my chickens! There are at least 10 other riders who have a chance at that podium and based on how well the teams are all performing, so it won't be easy out there."

Clerk of the Course, Noel Johnston said, "Both riders have had an incredible year to date and with a plethora of race wins under their belt they are returning to the Dundrod circuit confident.

"They are both at the top of their game, which will no doubt make for some very exciting, edge-of-your-seat racing for fans."

There are two days of international racing at this year's MCE Insurance Ulster Grand Prix, with 11 races taking place across the Thursday and Saturday. Over 100 riders will be participating in what promises to be the perfect climax to the international road-racing season.

Wristbands can be purchased via [www.ulstergrandprix.net](http://www.ulstergrandprix.net).



Peter Hickman and Dean Harrison are joined by Clerk of the Course Noel Johnston and Superbike Race sponsor Eugene McManus (MMB Surfacing) as they try out a different style of machinery at the Dundrod circuit. CS1830800