

## **View from The Reddings – April.**

Thankfully the weather looks like it has finally improved to allow racing to start, let's all hope that it stays good enough that we get a full season racing in, albeit that many people have to catch up on some training tosses following the winter weather that proved to be so disruptive. Below I've listed a series of short updates that you hopefully will find of interest – more will follow during the season.

Roll on Racing!

Stewart Wardrop  
General Manager.

### **RPRA.**

Change continues with Mel and Derren leaving to follow new careers outside the RPRA, we thank both of them for all their hard work and wish them well in their chosen occupations. We welcome Nicky into Racing Support taking over from Mel and Jade who replaces Derren looking after the post room and the website.

### **Bletchley Park.**

We have agreed a five year "memorandum of understanding" which means that the Pigeons in War displays simply move to a new room in the current Hut. We have been offered some help from the team at Bletchley Park will help us improve and develop our display to ensure the message and learning outcomes are the best they can be – over 200,000 visitors are expected this year!

### **Dickin Medals.**

By the time this article is printed the Antiques Roadshow edition which features the Dickin medals will have been aired. Even before the airing of the show (following the pre-show press release) we have had considerable press interest into the stories of the Dickin Medal winning pigeons – and hopefully afterwards we will get even more.



There are five medals shown – four of which are owned by the RPRA and one belonging to “Maquis” that we are researching the legal ownership of so that it may be returned to the rightful owner. If any fancier has any knowledge of the legal ownership of the “Maquis” medal can they please contact me urgently?

### **One loft.**

Yearlings - Two races have been completed with a third imminent – thanks to Ray Harris for helping out with marking ahead of races – especially at very short notice.

Young birds – training has started and it's quite a sight to see the 1350 entrants circling the loft at Tewkesbury.

One Loft race North – we have had five expressions of interest so far and these will be considered by the Future of sport committee in the coming weeks and months – it's not too late to indicate if you'd also like to like to submit an application.

### **One loft local schools competition.**

In order to start promoting our sport with local schools we invited over 100 local primary schools to compete in pigeon racing by “piggybacking” on the yearling birds entered in the RPRA One loft this year. A prize fund of £1000 was made available by the Future of Sport committee to add a financial incentive as well. The response has been brilliant and so far we have had requests from many of the participating schools for a pigeon talk to be held in the school and we have completed four of these already with many more to be done.



Eldersfield School, Corse Lawn.



Even the Headmistress has a go!

### **Probus Groups and Historical Societies.**

In addition to the school talks we are increasingly being invited to talk at Probus group talks and Historical Societies. Probus groups are spread countrywide and are formed by retired businessmen. In these talks not only do we discuss pigeon history and modern racing but also the challenges facing pigeon racing as an organisation. The feedback and advice we have had from these talks has been extremely useful and beneficial.

Historical society invitations are also increasing and anything remotely connected with the centenary of WW1 is extremely popular and are always well attended. I recently did a talk at Purton Historical Society (a small village near Swindon) on a Wednesday evening and they had an attendance of over 50.

### **Website.**

Continues to change and evolve as we move on, although we still need many more “good” pigeon pictures! It may help by explaining “good”! We are looking for action photographs involving pigeons and ideally pigeons and their fanciers. We’d also like a much larger selection of loft photographs – not just the posh ones but more like my sons – you’ll see a photo later!

Business on the shop is booming – we have taken well over £2000 of sales and it is increasing by the day. On line subscription payment for the BHW will be launched in the next couple of weeks.

### **Ink Ribbons for STB Clocks.**

We have had numerous phone calls from fanciers struggling to obtain ink ribbons for STB clocks. Does anyone know where a source is – as all our searches have resulted in being told that the Belgian manufacturer is longer making them – with a planned production run in February being cancelled? We have sent a sample ribbon to a contact in China to see if they are manufacturing them over there – once we get a response we will put a note in the BHW accordingly.

### **Pigeon Vaccination – make sure you do it!**

Please ensure you follow the vaccination instructions supplied with the vaccine – if its states that the vaccine takes 14 days to be effective then do not enter your birds within this time frame.

### **Raptor Alliance.**

An update will be published in the next week or two and there will be monthly updates during the racing season. The key thing however is that the Law commission have now published their initial summary report and it has been lodge with DEFRA – we hope to get a copy when it is made available to the public in a few months' time.

At a recent Standing Conference on Countryside Sports in London one of the parliamentary representatives stated that the new Wildlife bill could be put before parliament as early as the next session – as early as 2015 – this is good news and a whole year or two earlier than we originally thought.

Press packs have been produced and are in the process of being circulated to regional representatives, regional secretaries, councillors and all constituent unions – the sole objective is to have a series of reference articles that can be referred to – so that “we all sing from the same hymn sheet”.

With one years’ experience of working together the alliance has reduced the professional press involvement and much of this work is now being carried out by Sharon, the part time Alliance secretary. Professional help will now be sought on a “as required” basis and to this end the alliance have appointed a new agency called Voice – who will introduce themselves in a forthcoming Raptor Alliance update.

Please carry on supporting the campaign – we still have a lot to do!

## **Dealing with the press – PETA campaign.**

The following was printed in the BHW and RP in May 2012 last year – as part of one of Jennie Wood's Raptor Alliance updates – talk about foresight!

**Have you seen the findings from an investigation carried out by PETA on pigeon racing in the US?**

Findings from the animal welfare association's 15-month undercover research are damning and receiving a lot of media attention. We need to be ready for any enquiries concerning racing pigeon welfare - from the media and public. PETA has branded pigeon racing a blood sport.

The press office is ready to respond to any public and media enquiries regarding this issue. We're proud that here in the UK we look after our birds and animal welfare is a priority – it's the responsibility of every fancier to ensure this message is conveyed.

PETA's investigation spanned five US states, documenting mass casualties of birds during races and training and highlights the widespread killing of unwanted birds and training methods it describes as abusive. Please watch this film: <http://bit.ly/PETAinvestigationUS>

We need to be proactive and helpful with any public or media enquiries. Adopting an emotional, defensive or rude stance will escalate the problem. Given the scale of the US investigation by PETA, fanciers need to be mindful that similar undercover operations could be underway here.

### **What to do if a journalist contacts you about this issue:**

- Do not be tempted to engage in conversation – explain that their enquiry is better handled by the press office for Pigeon Racing UK, and:
- Ask politely for their name in full
- Ask what it is they want to know
- Ask the name of the publication or media title they are working for
- Ask if they have a deadline by which they need a response
- Obtain an email address and direct contact number
- Tell them that you will pass on this information straight away and they can expect contact from the press office for UK pigeon racing asap.

**Please then forward this information on to pigeon racing's UK press office: 07552 610770 / press@pigeonracinguk.co.uk**

Thankfully the planning we did enabled us to be ready to respond to the PETA campaign when it was launched in the UK earlier this year – we issued a pre prepared press release with two hours!

The advice in Jennie's piece from last year still holds true – there are unfortunately organisations and individuals that will deliberately try and entrap members.

Thankfully PETA's reputation as being on the "lunatic fringe" has meant that this negative story quickly lost any real impact and the positive messages that are more normally associated with Pigeon Racing have been resumed. Press activity is continuing at pace for 2013 and we fully expect the build-up to the WW1 centenary celebrations next year to be a great opportunity to tell the remarkable Pigeon story.

### **Finally – my Pigeons.**

With help from my dad – my son (Sam – aged 10) and I are now flying in partnership in the Stroud Valley club - out of a small loft next to my Dad's.

We now have a team of 20 youngsters bred by my Dad and over the past few months Sam and I have been bringing our youngsters on with Dad's help. They are now out and about on the loft roof – training will start shortly – although Sam is struggling with the concept of 6 o'clock training tosses – especially on school days – so that will be my job before going to work!

Needless to say we can't wait to start racing!

More updates to follow through the season.

