Central Southern Classic Flying Club.

I completed my first convoying stint for the Central Southern Classic Flying Club in mid-May and I must say it was one of the most enjoyable trips I’ve had to France with the birds. One of the main reasons that got me out of retirement and start convoying again this season, was the prospect of visiting some new liberation sites and our first destination was Messac, which is on the west side of France, midway between Rennes and Nantes. I met up with my driver, Mike Clarke, at the Boxhill Transport yard in Capel at noon on Wednesday and with the early weather information to hand I anticipated a great weekend of Classic racing out of France. The Classic has two marking stations at Frome and Salisbury and these two venues were buzzing on the Thursday marking day and in spite of the bad racing and bad loses on the weekend leading up to the Messac event, the members managed to muster up 2,126 birds. All the birds were watered at both the marking stations and I must say looked in very good order in the club’s crates. We arrived at Portsmouth docks and after booking in the transporter was levelled and the birds were watered before departure for Caen. The proposed time of departure was 11.00hrs, but because of an industrial dispute, the Ferry was delayed and left Portsmouth at 02.00hrs, arriving in France just after 08.00hrs on Friday. We had a good run through France and arrived at the Messac marina liberation site where the birds were watered on arrival. I was very impressed with liberation site at Messac and I think it is fair to say it is one of the best sites I’ve visited in France. The birds are liberated at the top end of the picturesque marina, on a raised tarmac area which is site between the water and open fields. The pigeons have a perfect fly out on their liberation, with no obstacles to hamper them at all and the site is very quiet, with only the odd person walking their dog passing the transporter. On our arrival on site we were given a code number to the lock of the Shower / WC block and I must say this facility was spotlessly clean. The liberation site at Messac is brilliant and is one that I strongly recommend!

I awoke at 05.00 hrs on race day to a virtually clear blue sky at Messac and the sun coming up strong in the East. Although the weather condition were perfect in France, I delayed the liberation for a short time as I received reports of heavy cloud and showers in the English Channel, which were moving away quickly to produce the perfect racing day. Weather conditions were perfect at Messac so I liberated the 2,126 birds at 09.00hrs in a very light North West wind and the convoy cleared the site instantly. I would like to say a special ‘thanks’ to my assistant convoyer, Mike Clarke, who drove in France for this, my first time with the CSCFC pigeons. His driving was excellent and I must congratulate him on his general good attitude and hard work with the pigeons and the club’s transporter. With excellent conditions on the day, the members had good returns and enjoyed our first Classic race of the 2010 season.

With the North West element in the wind the first three in the open result were clocked in the Portsmouth area and I would like to congratulate Steve Vaizey and Barry Robertson who won the race handsomely! The partners clocked their Vandenbeele blue cock to record a velocity of 1298 ypm and won the Classic by a clear 11ypm. Brilliant pigeon racing! The day after the race Steve said, ‘I’m still recovering from winning the Messac Classic and the feelings great! We are only back garden flyers and last year we won all the Milton HS old bird averages and the
combined average, plus the Solent Federation old bird average, three longest race average and combine average with just ten cocks and eleven hens. Our pigeons are flown on the roundabout system, so we can race both cocks and hens. Our Messac Classic winner had every Solent Federation race in his preparation and flew the BBC Vire race the weekend before his win’. I spoke to Steve on the phone to arrange the partners forth coming loft article and tells me we have met many years ago. It turns out he is the son of the late Len Vaizey of Kingston and we met when he was a lad in the early 1970’s. Watch this space for the forth coming loft report on Robertson & Vaizey. Well done to you both on your brilliant Messac Classic win!

It was nice to see Derek Human of Petersfield up in the Messac result at 2nd open, as he recently had the very bad luck of having his 2007 NFC Tarbes winner Champion ‘Any Distance’ killed by a Sparrowhawk. Derek was telling me at Messac marking about having several of his premier pigeons killed and I must say it was really bad news to hear his Tarbes winner was dead. Derek’s 2nd open Messac pigeon was a yearling hen flying in her second race of the 2010 season, bred by his son Adrian and was a grand daughter of Champion ‘Any Distance’.

Derek Human and I go back many years, starting in the early 1980’s when he had his wins in the Central Southern Classic Flying Club and he came to my home in Claygate to have his young bird champions photographed, and I covered his successes in the fancy press. Derek is a very likable guy, who has always got a smile on his face and along with his pigeon racing son, Adrian, is always up for a laugh. I for one was over the moon to hear the great news that he had won the greatest prize in long distance pigeon racing in the 2007 season, 1st open N.F.C. Tarbes Grand National and did it in fantastic style. His wonderful champion, ‘Any Distance’, won 1st open Tarbes (540 miles) with 3,477 birds competing and won the strong Section B. by 133 y.p.m. clear. A brilliant performance at the highest level! This game five year old Cattrysse blue chequer hen was sent to Tarbes feeding a nine day old youngster and has won a N.F.C. Certificate of Merit Award, previously winning: 8th section, 70th open N.F.C. Bordeaux and 11th section, 71st open N.F.C. Pau. Champion ‘Any Distance’ has had a brilliant racing career, winning other premier positions including: 1st, section, 16th, open N.F.C. Chale, 15th section, 251st open N.F.C. Fougeres and 369th open N.F.C. Sennon Cove. A champion racer in the truest senice of the word, winning at at the very highest level and as her name surgeses, at any distance! Derek says she was sent to Tarbes in her favourite nest condition, feeding a baby, and the squeaker she was feeding when she won the National was donated to the N.F.C. Young Bird Auction and raised £470 for the club. In the early part of the season she was seperated from her mate to hold her moult and then was sent to the very hard C.S.C.F.C. Cholet race, where she scored in the first few in the open result, and then was repaired so she had a youngster for the Tarbes National.

After winning the 2007 NFC Tarbes race in such good style, Derek Human certainly had some thing to do in 2008 to equal that wonderful National win achieved by his great Champion ‘Any Distance’. Well if he didn’t equal that 2007 performance in the 2008 season he certainly came close! Derek entered five birds in the 2008 NFC Tarbes race, with over 4,000 birds competing, and got four home on the day of liberation, clocking three of the birds within 18 minutes of his first arrival. Brilliant pigeon racing by any one’s standards! The first bird on the clock at 16.40hrs to record 15th open was Derek’s good blue cock, ‘Jack’, who is a very consistent racer in
National events and was sent to Tarbes sitting 14 day old eggs. ‘Jack’ was mated to his mother, ‘Rose 2’, and she was third birds home, clocked at 16.58hrs to record 38th open in the National. This wonderful hen is sheer class, being a brilliant racer and breeder! Second pigeon on the clock at 16.50 hrs was the good blue chequer cock, ‘Kenny’, and he is a son of the Tarbes National winner, ‘Any Distance’. ‘Kenny’ recorded 32nd open and was also sent sitting two week old eggs. Derek got a phone call from his wife while at the clock station getting his National clock checked and she said a fourth pigeon had arrived from Tarbes at 21.00hrs, and turned out to be Champion ‘Any Distance’. The Human’s fifth bird arrived home early next morning and had been ripped up by a Sparrowhawk. That was some brilliant performance. Well done Derek!

Derek has lived at his present address in Petersfield about ten years and on moving in he scaled down his pigeon set up to a wooden 18ft x 6ft ‘Barnsley’ loft, which has three sections. The loft has an aviary running a long the front and the birds are trapped through the old fashion ‘bob’ wires. Derek says his loft is very old fashioned, but it has the push button belt to clean out the nest boxes every Sunday morning. The loft houses all his racers, as the stock birds are kept at his son, Adrian’s house and he only keeps eight pairs old bird racers, which are mated up on 14th February. He races the natural system with the long distance Nationals in mind and when they have reared their young, they are seperated to hold their moult, and then repaired to get them ready for the race they are required for. The birds are fed on Willsbridge ‘Irish’ mixture and get very little training, only getting a few chucks from Fareham Sports Centre, 15 miles from the loft. The birds are not given an open loft because of the really bad local Hawk problem, but get good exercise around the loft in the evenings. The basic family are Davenport / Cattryse, with some Newman / Cattryysse being bought in some years ago and all Norman Bishop’s Cattryss pigeons were purchased just before he passed away.

This weekend Mike and I will be back on the road again, convoying the Central Southern Classic Flying Club birds to Poitiers for the second Classic race of the 2010 season. All the very best of luck to the members! I can be contacted with any pigeon comments on telephone number: 01372 463480. See yer!

TEXT & PHOTOS BY KEITH MOTT.