ON THE ROAD” WITH KEITH MOTT.

Central Southern Classic Flying Club.

I had my second race as chief convoyer with the Central Southern Classic Flying Club at the end of May and I must say the whole exercise was very stressful with a bad liberation site, bad weather and hold overs! As I pointed out to committee members at the Salisbury marking station, I think to hold a Poitiers race; with some members flying over 400 miles in the month of May is a bit early to hold a race of this sort of distance. I think the birdage reflected this fact, with it being well down on the 2009 event. The Classic President, Robbie Hooper, and I had a chat at marking and I can see where he is coming from when he says there is a big shortage of race points at the right distances to suit the CSCFC on the west side of France. When we were at Messac for the first Classic race on 15th May we were about 30 or 40 miles further down the road than the other organizations in France that day. Years ago the old A10 motorway running down the west side of France was the pigeon racing backbone with loads of race points on or around it, including Avranches, Fougeres, Rennes, Messac, Nantes, Poitiers, Niort, Saintes and Bordeaux, but a lot of these liberation site have now gone. There are a good number of sites more central in France, but these are too far east for the CSCFC which is situated in the South West corner of England.

We had a good run through France and arrived at the Poitiers car park liberation site at 11.45hrs on the Friday where the birds were watered on arrival. A very unsatisfactory thing I noted on our approach to Poitiers was the mass of wires and pylons which ran for about three or four miles along the motorway. This obstacle was north of Poitiers and the pigeons must negotiate this dangerous mass when they clear the liberation sight. I was very un-impressed with liberation site at Poitiers; in fact I think it is one of the worst I have visited in France! I can just imagine all the lads reading this and saying, ‘Mottys back on his soap box again, with another liberation site assassination’. The car park liberation area at Poitiers is nice and big, but for some reason the council have erected a wire fence right smack down the middle and compounded all the pigeon transporters in one corner. The smaller transporters can turn side ways on and release quite safely, but big vehicles like our CSCFC transporter can’t turn. On one side you have a row of trees which are far to close, making the birds climb to steep on release and on the other side is the 6ft wire fence, which is far to close to the liberation. The wire fence has a row of trees behind it and the pigeons would not see it, and in my opinion would kill many pigeons on release. If I liberated there that weekend, I was going to dismantle the wire fence! The site has a WC and wash hand basin, but this facility has not been cleaned for about twelve months!

I awoke at on race day to thin cloud cover, blue sky and sun shine, but although the weather condition were perfect in France, conditions at the home end and in the English Channel were adverse, so I decided to hold over. We were battered by heavy rain and blustery high winds in the early hours of Sunday morning at the Poitiers site and I awoke at 04.30hrs to 100% heavy cloud cover, rain and a very hard blustery North West wind. I rang my race advisor at 06.00hrs and he informed me that the line of flight had improved. With some of my members flying over 400 miles in the NW wind that day, my cut off time was 07.30hrs and with the adverse weather persisting well in to the morning, I decided to hold over. There was a French Federation on site, flying only 100 miles to Alencon and they didn’t think they would liberate until after
noon because of the bad weather conditions at Poitiers. I had a long phone conversation with the CSCFC President, Robbie Hooper, and in view of the bad weather forecast for the Poitiers area, we decided to move the convoy to Messac. We pulled out of Poitiers at 09.00hrs and encountered heavy cloud, rain and blustery winds for 50 miles up the motorway and arrived at the Messac site at 12.50hrs to blue sky, sun shine and a brisk South West wind. I watered the convoy on arrival and liberated the Guernsey RPC race birds at 13.35hrs, which cleared the site instantly.

On the Monday I awoke at 05.45hrs to 100% thin cloud cover and light rain at Messac. On opening up and watering the birds, I had a good inspection of the convoy and considering they had been in the basket five days and drove across France twice, they looked in brilliant condition and ready for the job in hand. I rang my race advisor at 06.40hrs and was given a very good line of flight right through to the home lofts. At this point of our race, this was the most confident that I had been all weekend of getting a liberation, but knew it was going to be a waiting game at the liberation end of things! Conditions at Messac improved very rapidly and with 50% thin cloud cover and blue sky, I liberated the 1,300 birds at 09.10hrs, in a very light North wind. The convoy cleared the Messac site well and headed northerly in two batches. Mike Clarke and I had a good run through France in perfect pigeon racing weather and when we arrived at Cherbourg the English Channel was as calm as a mill pond bathed in sun shine. With excellent conditions on the day, I anticipated a very good race.

I had a phone call late that evening while we were waiting to board the ferry, from our secretary, Clare Norman, and she gave me the good news that our sole liberation in France that day had produced a brilliant race! Nearly every member had verified a bird and returns were excellent, with some member having all their birds in the loft. This news was very satisfying to hear as most of the organization in France that week had had really bad races with massive losses. Some more good news that our Clare gave me was that my ol’ mucker, Tony Cowan of Southampton, had recorded 1st and 3rd open. Tony’s and my paths have crossed many times over the years and of course he is famous in our sport for his expertise as a pigeon auctioneer and DVD maker. I had a long conversation with Tony on my return from France and he told me, ‘One of the most pleasant sounds in the sport of pigeon racing is when the secretary of a large organization phones to tell you that you may have won the race. It was especially nice when Clare phoned me, as I have previously been 2nd open in National type races seven times, but have hit the jackpot this time. My winning pigeon was a Louis Cooreman, bred by Bob Fenech and given to me as a squeaker. She has quite a few top positions, including 3rd section NFC as a young bird and her nest mate has two section wins. Her name is ‘Fanny Fenech’ and is my pride and joy! I won my first race in 1949 and have tried every racing method known to man. My racing system is simple, but allows me to race both cocks and hens.’ Well done to Tony on his brilliant race!

Well that’s it for this week! The next classic race is Tarbes on 25th June, when I will be convoying the CSCFC and L&SECC on the Central transporter. I can be contacted with any pigeon comments on telephone number: 01372 463480. See yer!

TEXT & PHOTOS BY KEITH MOTT.