

FRED DICKSON OF CRAMLINGTON.

I have known Fred Dickson since the early 2000s and following his great success racing in the 'hotbed' of the north east of England over that time, I have asked him for article many times. Fred being one of the true gentlemen of the sport and a very modest man has always declined the offer. His racing record in a life time in the sport is second to none and as far as I know has never been record in the fancy press. In recent times I have written dribs and drabs about Fred and his brilliant performances, but at last he has given me some matter verbally and we can now give him a proper article. Fred Dickson lives several miles away from the pigeons and has to travel to tend the birds every day, what ever the weather conditions might throw at him. I remember one day he rang me up and there was two foot of snow on the ground and he was off to feed and water the birds. This great fancier has to hire a taxi cab on race days to take him to the pigeon club to get his clock read! I have known and spoken to Fred on the telephone many times over the year, but never met him, until in November 2011, when I was invited to judge at the NEHU Show in South Shields and we met in person for the first time. I really enjoyed our pigeon chat and I must say he looked much younger than his 85 years!

Fred races his small team of old birds on the natural and roundabout systems to his allotment 'L' shaped loft, which is 28ft long. Fred built the loft him self in 1989, with open door trapping and uses a sand litter on the floors. His real interest is in long distance pigeon racing, but tells me, he only uses the shorter Federation races for training, but he dose enjoy these events and wins a lot of premier prizes in them. Fred has no stock birds now and tells me the main families kept are Eric Cannon and Brian Denney, with 600 mile racing in mind. He has a great admiration for the late, great Eric Cannon and has followed his wonderful performances in the long distance Nationals over many years. He has also obtained a couple of outstanding Eric Cannon based breeders from the Kent loft of Ced & Clive Allwright, who have won the NFC three times in recent seasons. Fred sends his yearlings through to 431 miles and his old birds have to fly Bourges (581 miles), with the yearling being paired up in February and the channel birds in March. The birds are fed on 'Gerry Plus' and a quality 'widowhood' mixture, and are never broken down during the racing season, even on the shorter training races. The birds are normally trained prior to the first Federation race, then after are exercised around the loft for any hour twice a day. Fred tells me his old birds had no training in the 2012 season, but still won the Federation! Fred has a few short distance pigeons from his good friend, Tommy Laskey of Gateshead, who has won 1st Up North Combine and Fred tells me, Tommy is a great sprint racer. Fred has a yearling Laskey blue hen that had three races up to 290 miles on the roundabout in 2012 and won 1st Federation (twice) and 3rd Federation. A brilliant hen! The Dickson loft won 2nd, 3rd, 4th Federation Bourges (581 miles) in 2012, with his champion stock, 'Foxwarren Fred' being responsible for the pigeons taking the first four positions in the Federation result in that race.

My good friend, Eric Cannon passed away in 2000 and I think it is common knowledge that he was one of 'greats' of long distance pigeon racing in the UK. Eric was certainly one of the best pigeon fanciers I've ever met! Through the years since I carried out his dispersal sales in November 2000 I have had countless phone calls and letters from fancier who have done well with Eric's birds and this has always given me great pleasure. In recent times fanciers have won National and Classic races with the Cannon pigeon pure and crossed. Probably one of the best Eric Cannon breeders in recent times is Fred Dickson's red cock, which was bred by my self in 2004 out of a son of Champion 'Culmer Sam' and a daughter of Champion 'Culmer Bess', the NFC Pau Merit Award winner. The red cock has bred a dynasty of Bourges (581 mile) winners for Fred, including being the sire and grand sire of 1st Federation winners. We named the red cock 'Foxwarren Fred' after Fred Dickson who is still winning big time at the grand age of 85, to his loft on the allotment in the North East of England.

His great Eric Cannon stock cock, 'Foxwarren Fred' is the sire of many premier long distance champions including: 1st Federation Bourges (581 miles), 2nd Federation Bourges, 2nd Federation Bourges, 2nd Federation Bourges, 3rd Federation Bourges, 5th Federation Bourges, 8th Federation Bourges and is grand sire of 1st and 4th Federation Bourges (581 miles) in the 2012 season. He is the sire of the champion cock, 'The Five Times Bourges Cock', winner of 3rd, 5th, 8th Federation Bourges and sire of 1st, 3rd, 4th Federation Bourges. Sire of 'Foxwarren Fred' is 'Culmer Sam's Lad' bred by Eric Cannon, the last son of Eric's Number One stock cock 'Culmer Sam', who was the product of Eric's Fear Brothers cross. Champion 'Culmer Sam' was the ultimate stock cock and was the sire of Eric Cannon's highly successful 550 mile family. Dam of 'Foxwarren Fred' is 'Culmer Fantasy' bred by Eric Cannon and she is a daughter of Champion 'Culmer Bess', winner of 6th, 26th and 170th open N.F.C. Pau (540 miles), 47th open N.F.C. Pau / Saintes, winning the NFC Pau merit award. This brilliant hen was top priced pigeon at Eric Cannon's dispersal sales, sold for £2,300. 'Culmer Fantasy' is a full sister to the dam of Champion 'Night Flight', winner of 1st open Saintes / Pau Grand National in 2003, for Mark Gilbert.

Fred has had pigeons all his life and tells me both his great grandfathers were outstanding pigeon racers in the North East of England. He owns a pigeon wall plate dating back to 1910, which belonged to his great grand father and this has all the Cramlington HS winners painted on it for that season. Fred's trade was an electrician working in the coal mines of the north east for most of his working life, but when the coal industry went in to decline, he became a factory worker and found it hard to race his birds, having to work 12 hour shifts. In the year between 1950 and 1960, Fred tells me he had the best pigeons in the local area and won many races from 50 miles through to 600 miles out of turn. The family of pigeons raced at that time was the Stassarts and had a red cock that won eleven firsts and twice 1st Federation. A sister to the red cock won five firsts, including 1st club Bourges (581 miles). In the 1957 season the club had 17 races with the Federation and the Dickson loft won twelve firsts.

Another wonderful Eric Cannon stock cock for Fred Dickson is the blue cock, 'Foxwarren Prince' and he was also bred by Keith and Betty Mott in 2004. This brilliant cock is a son of our fantastic original Number Two Eric Cannon stock pair and is sire of many premier 550 mile racers, including 1st Federation Bourges (581 miles), 2nd Federation Bourges and grand sire of 3rd Federation Bourges in the 2011 season. The sire of 'Foxwarren Prince' is the blue cock 'Culmer Prince', bred by Eric Cannon. This champion breeder is one of the best 550 mile stock cock we have ever owned and is a direct son of Champion 'Culmer Marion', winner of 1st open NFC Sartilly in 1990, when mated to a daughter of 'Culmer Expected', winner of 22nd, 27th, 103rd, 231st open NFC Pau, who is a grand daughter of 'Culmer Rose' winner of 30th, 56th, 131st, 389th and 541st open NFC Pau. 'Culmer Rose' is a daughter of the champion breeding cock 'Culmer Sam'. The dam of 'Foxwarren Prince' was the blue hen 'Culmer Rocket Queen', bred by Eric Cannon. One of the best long distance stock hens we have ever owned and is a champion breeder! Dam of many winners and is a daughter of 'Culmer White Flight', winner of many positions in the N.F.C., including 1st Section A. 14th open NFC Pau, when mated to Champion 'Culmer Channel Queen', winner of 23rd, 29th, 98th and 183rd open NFC Pau and winner of the NFC Pau merit award, also 346th open Young Bird National. This wonderful hen is a daughter of the champion stock cock 'Culmer Producer', who is a son of 'Culmer Pat', winner of 27th, 80th, 104th open N.F.C. Pau and dam of 1st open NFC Pau for G. Stovin. 'Culmer Rocket Queen' is a full sister to '80993', highest priced young bird at Eric Cannon's dispersal sales, being sold for £520.

When I asked Fred Dickson if he treated his birds, he told me, 'only with the annual PMV jab, apart from that, I only give my birds cider vinegar and honey in their drinking water. The families of pigeons I own have a very good constitution and never look sick or sorry. Eric Cannon never treated his birds

for any thing and his racing record from the long distance was second to none! I think if pigeons get regular exercise and good feeding, they keep in good health, and the only way to sort out good pigeons from bad is the race basket'. I also asked him about his young birds and did he like the 'dark' system, and he replied, 'I only put my young birds on the 'darkness' once and was not happy with the end result, so have never did it again. I breed about 20 babies to race each year and these are fed well on 'Gerry Plus'. They get lots of training from 30 miles and race the programme through to Folkestone (296 miles). With my interest in long distance racing I'm really looking to win young bird races with them, just educate them for the Bourges event in later life. The youngsters need plenty of racing in their first year, too teach them about eating and drinking on the transporter, and of course being liberated with thousands of other pigeons'.

Well, there you have it! I hope my readers have enjoyed our article on the great Fred Dickson of Cramlington. (Photos can be found in the Website 'Album')

TEXT & PHOTOS BY KEITH MOTT (www.keithmott.com)