

## **KEITH MOTT JUDGES 'BEST IN SHOW' AT BLACKPOOL 2014**

Back in October I received a letter from the RPRA, inviting me to judge at the BHW 'Show of the Year', Blackpool 2014 and I was delighted to accept, as I have always loved to do the job and consider it a great honour to be asked. This was my third time judging at the premier show in the UK and the last time I judged was in 2007 when the BBC sent a film crew to the Winter Gardens to film me and Peter Taylor for the 'Inside Out' programme. I then received a phone call in December from the Blackpool Show committee inviting me to take on the premier judging job in the show world, to judge the specials and Blackpool Show 'Best in Show'. I have been judging at top National and Show Society shows for 40 years and to judge 'Best in Show' at Blackpool was the crowning glory of all those years doing the job. I was highly delighted and accepted the invitation immediately. My ol' mate, Peter Taylor, has travelled all over the UK as my steward for many years, but in recent times has not travelled because of his 'dodgy' knees, but I managed to get him to Blackpool to steward for me, on this great occasion. We knew the Friday of the show was going to be a hard day, with the 250 mile drive up to the Hilton Hotel in Blackpool, then attend the RPRA dinner that evening and after that the late night judging in the Winter Gardens, so we left Claygate early that morning. After a good run up to the North West, we arrived at the Hilton Hotel on the North Promenade that afternoon in fine weather and managed to get a couple of hours rest in our rooms before the RPRA 'do' in the evening. The dinner was a very grand event held in the hotel and was attended by several premier pigeon parties from Europe and Mr. & Mrs. Eddie Collett, the Lord Mayor of Blackpool. It was nice to meet up with some ol' friends at the dinner, including Steve Richards and Helen Edwards of the BHW, John and Pamela Robilliard and former RPRA General Manager, Peter Bryant, there with his wife Glenys. I saw my good mate, Frank Bristow, on another table in the distance, but we never got close enough to talk! John Robilliard introduced me to David Trippett, the Blackpool Show committee chairman and David was take Peter and I to the Winter Gardens in a taxicab after the main judging had finished, to do our final judging job. I had a good chat with David Trippett and he told me the Blackpool Show committee meet about five times a year, and the show has raised about three million pounds for charity in its 42 years existence, with over £63,000-00 being donated from the 2013 event. Well done and full credit to our great sport in general!

It was late when we arrived at the Winter Gardens, just before 23.00hrs I think, and we were greeted by chief steward, Dora Pounder, and what a nice lady she was! Dora has been doing the job at the Blackpool Show for many years and was so efficient, directing us to all the pen numbers to sort out the show specials. On arrival, I took the first ten minutes to set up my filming equipment to record the judging on auto and finished up with a brilliant 14 minutes personal DVD of the whole weekend. There was the usual gang of show stewards in attendance and I must say a big 'thanks' to them all, as they were there in the middle of the night, waiting to feed and lock up the birds. I spent quite some time judging the 29 class winner and needless to say I went through them with a fine tooth comb! From the outset of judging there was only one winner of Best in Show, a wonderful Show Racer red hen and she was medium appled bodied, with good balance and brilliant feather quality. I loved the hen as soon as I picked her out of Pen 4 and from then on she was the one the others had to beat! A beautiful mealy was her runner up, but I found a major fault in her on her second handling and Reserve Best in Show went to a stunning looking Show Racer blue chequer hen. I gave Best Racer to a handsome pencil blue pied cock and although it wasn't confirmed, I was told it might have won at the Blackpool Show in 2013. It was a great judging session to remember and we finished just before 01.00hrs, after which we jump in a taxi and went back to the Hilton Hotel. It was a very long day and I finally got to bed just after 02.00hrs! Thanks to Dora Pounder and David Trippett for all there help on the night!

We got up on Saturday morning and after breakfast I was keen to get down to the Winter Gardens to see who owned the red hen, but on our arrival in the show hall there were no cards on the winner's pens. Peter and I went around the whole show and then spent a nice 30 minutes in the BHW Scribes Room talking to Helen, Nettie and a few fellow BHW writers. Then we were off for a second circuit of the show and I was told there was a rumour that John Robilliard had won Best in Show, but this information was not confirmed. We met up with lots of our pigeon friends on our walk and I had the usual two dozen strangers come up and talk to me about my weekly column in the BHW, which I really enjoy talking about. I had a chat with Tommy Gilbertson, who looked well and my ol' mates Bobby and Anthony Besant, who were up from Surrey for the day. I bumped into Mark and Les Duffell who are Surrey exiles, now living and racing their pigeons on the South Coast at Havant and they recently won 1<sup>st</sup> open Central Southern Classic Flying Club at their new address. After meeting up with countless other friends, we were all talked out and returned to the Scribes Room for a rest. It was finally confirmed that John Robilliard did own that wonderful red hen and had won his second Best in Show at the BHW Blackpool Show. I was so delighted to hear that great news, as John has given a life time's work to our sport and deserves every success he has with his

wonderful Show Racers. Talking to John after the event, he said, the hen is now called 'Rocquaine Queen' and she won as a young bird, and won a first at the Duchy Show in November 2013. She was bred from a pair of stock birds that John obtained at the Ken Jeffery of St Ives dispersal sale. Congratulations to John and Pamela on their great success! John and Alice Bell of Scotland had a fantastic Blackpool Show winning: 'Supreme Champion', Reserve Best in Show and Best Opposite Sex. Well done to John and Alice!

In my 40 years plus as a pigeon scribe, a fancier I have admired is, John Robilliard of Cornwall, for his high level of success with his birds and the great work he has put in to our sport, over many years. John first started keeping pigeons in the early 1950's, about the time he met his wife, Pam, and was doing National Service in the R.A.F. John raced pigeons up to 1958 and in those early days enjoyed showing his race birds at all the local events including the Bodmin November Show. He saw the show birds at these events and obtained his first Show Racers in the late 1950's, but these were not very good quality, so in 1959 got some better stock from the late Trevor Parker of Treherbert and Edgar Griffiths, who were two of the premier showmen at that time. The three birds obtained from these fanciers won well for John and were a good foundation for his new Show Racer loft. Right from the outset these birds produced stock to win premier prizes at all the National shows for the Robilliard loft, including the People Show held at the Royal Horticultural Hall in London, the Old Comrades Show, Show of the West held at Swindon and the Royal Cornwall Show. The Robilliard loft has been built up over the years with the very best stock obtained from the premier Show Racer lofts in the U.K. John and Pam's second hobby is dancing and have regular social dance evenings at Luxulyan Village Hall, which they enjoy very much. Through the 50 years that John has been in the sport he has given a 100% commitment, being a founder member of the Bodmin R.P.C., serving over 20 years as secretary, also a founder member of the Mid Cornwall Federation, serving as President of the Federation and Cornish Combine. On the Show Racer scene he has had a 40 year commitment to the Royal Cornwall Show, serving as secretary and chairman, and has a big involvement with the British Show Racer Federation, the Stithians Show and a founder member of both the Devon & Cornwall Show Racer Society and South West Show Racer Society. John had quite a full pigeon life, when did Pam get to see him! He has a big involvement with the R.P.R.A. spanning over many years and was a founder member of the Devon and Cornwall Region. He was elected President of the R.P.R.A. in 1996, serving his three year term and before that was vice-president for four years. John said, 'It was an honour to be President for the year the R.P.R.A. celebrated it's Centenary in 1996 and again in 1998 when it hosted the Olympiad in Blackpool'. John was recently presented with a very nice carriage clock by the RPRA for his many years of first class service to our sport!

In his 40 odd years on the Show Racer scene, John, has won just about every honour in the National show arena, but the 2004 season saw him set a record at the B.H.W. Blackpool 'Show of the Year'. He won Best in Show (2,400 birds) and Reserve Supreme Champion of Great Britain with his wonderful Mosaic hen, 'Rocquaine Cathrina', and she has plenty of previous good form, including B.I.S. South West Show Racer Society in 2003. 'Cathrina' went on to win Reserve Supreme Champion of Great Britain at the 'Show of the Year' again in 2005. A fantastic hen! Also at the 2004 B.H.W. Blackpool Show, the Robilliard loft, won the premier honour of Supreme Champion of Great Britain with John's champion Mosaic hen, 'Rocquaine Dream Girl'. John and Pam won the three premier prizes and £1,250 at the 2004 Blackpool 'Show of the Year', and lifted nine major trophies. A fantastic performance and a record that will take some beating! The Robilliard's champion hen, 'Rocquaine Dream Girl', was bred by Austen Runnals of St. Austell in Cornwall and John purchased this hen in 2003 when Austen had his clearance sale. This great hen is a champion in the truest sense of the word, having won: B.I.S. Royal Cornwall, B.I.S. Stithians, 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Welsh, 1<sup>st</sup> Cornwall Fancy Pigeon Society, B.I.S. Duchy R.P.C. Show and Supreme Champion of Great Britain at Blackpool in 2004. A once in a life time hen!

Well that's the 2014 BHW Blackpool Show done and dusted! I attended the very first Blackpool Show in 1977 and haven't missed many over the years, but for me personally this was the best ever! Thanks to the RPRA Show committee for inviting me to judge Best in Show, it was a great experience!

**TEXT & PHOTOS BY KEITH MOTT ([www.keithmott.com](http://www.keithmott.com))**