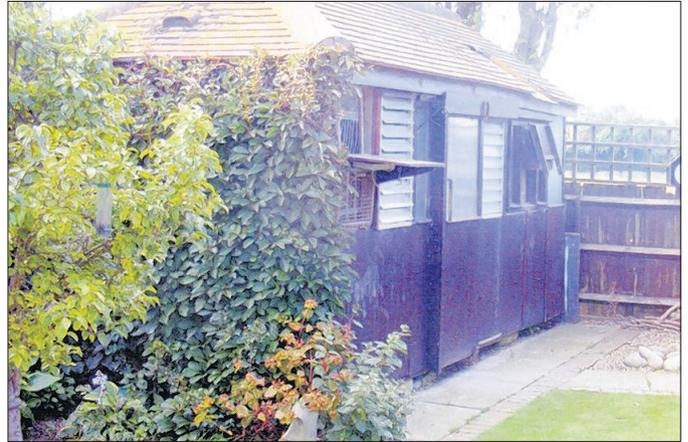


A Workingmans' Fancier

Malcolm Collis

1st Club, 1st South Coast Federation,
1st Wessex Combine 987 birds
Bergerac 414 miles



Malcolm's loft.

More often than not the winner of your local Blue Riband Combine race will have come from a well-known loft that has been to the fore in their Club and Federation results during the whole season. Now and again however one of the smaller lofts puts in a result that makes us all take notice and although I knew the result of the Combine the very evening of the race and mentioned in my weekly column and congratulated the winners the thought of being able to see and handle the winning pigeon didn't cross my mind until a mutual friend rang me and asked if I would do a small profile on the winning loft. After a couple of phone calls it was arranged that I should call on the morning of their first young bird race and so on Saturday 28th July I drove to the home of Malcolm Collis in Littlehampton in West Sussex. This popular and modest fancier is a self-employed carpenter by trade who first started in the sport as a young man in 1970 and joined his only ever club, the very competitive, Littlehampton FC. In 1971 he raced a variety of young birds with very little success just gaining a 2nd Club and 23rd London & South Coast Combine from Exeter. In 1975 he left the sport after getting married but he was back again in 1985 and rejoined the Littlehampton Trades & Labour Club plus the NFC and BICC. Over the years he has been their Secretary on three separate occasions and is still holding that office today although he insists that without the help of Dave Bridger he wouldn't be able to cope, during his years with the club they have flown North & South Road and have always been the club to beat. Malcolm enjoyed the North Road and felt those pigeons were more reliable than those of today. You do get the odd pigeon today which is that much faster over the distance events and as he likes to race every week nothing is held back, some fall by the wayside but he is never afraid to send a good winner back again the following week. This is not a large set-up as can be

seen by the photograph but is set in a beautiful garden with a nice fish pond holding some very nice carp and koi carp and as Malcolm said the only down side is that sometimes the youngsters like to drink from it instead of entering the loft. The loft itself is 16ft x 8ft with a tiled roof and has three sections young birds, hens and a widowhood racing section with 16 boxes but only 14 pairs are ever wintered leaving two spare and Malcolm never keeps stock birds, so his breeding is done quite early on. The 14 cocks are raced on widowhood but are paired up again when the longer Channel races come around then the hens are raced as well on the natural system.

All his race birds are expected to race every week from Lyndhurst 49 miles to Bergerac 414 miles plus NFC and BICC races if they are fit and no fools are tolerated. When I asked what strains he raced he said that they are his Heinz 57 but if you look into them they have top-class pigeons all through them, such as this year's Combine winner which is bred from a cock gifted to him from Dave Bridger and is bred out of a direct stock from Brian Sheppard of Trowbridge in Wiltshire direct out of his 'Legend Lines' and this same cock was 3rd in this race and was 1st Club, 11th Fed in last year's Bergerac race. The dam of the Combine winner was purchased from the Ponderosa Stud from their top distance Janssens. He has a few Kellens from John Kirk, Jos Thoné grizzles in his race team and several are bred from these and are the make up of his own blended family and this year he has added some top-class van Osch from Ian Crammond and Nigel Langstaff who are one of the best racing lofts in Great Britain at all distances. These are being raced and will join the old bird race team when ready. As I said Malcolm is not afraid to send pigeons back into the race basket and the pigeon a yearling Vandenabeele cross that was 4th Club Bergerac has been sent back to Saintes with the NFC and is probable 3rd Section A. Some of the others which timed in race time were back at Le Mans with the BICC on the day of my visit.

Now a little about the Combine winner she is a beautiful well-balanced 3y blue hen and was timed at 14.43pm from a 0600hrs liberation for a velocity of 1392 just beating another friend of mine Tim Joy of Nutbourne, Nr Chichester who was 1st Solent SR

Fed, 2nd Wessex Combine and out of the 15 birds sent Malcolm had 7 on the day of liberation and 5 more next day leaving three adrift and he took 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Club on 1392, 1247, 1181 and 1168, and that is very good flying. His record from Bergerac is very good having won it 5 times in 8 years. In 2003 he was 1st Club, 1st and 3rd Fed; 2005 1st Club, 1st Fed, 5th Combine; 2008 1st Club, 5th Fed; 2011 1st Club, 7th Fed and to date 2012 1st Club, 1st Fed and 1st Combine added to this Malcolm was 1st and 3rd Club from Tours not a bad record for a small team fancier. Each year he breeds a maximum of 30 young birds but likes to race a slightly smaller team and this year after a couple of losses he has a team of around 28 and regards young bird racing as an education and these will go to every race if fit and already he has a couple of birds that have flown into wires and will take a while to heal. These are trained from the same point just 20 miles away as often as he can before racing starts then just a couple after the first two races. His old birds have just 3 tosses from the same training location before racing starts then nothing and the only exercise they get is around the local area and they look great on it. For feeding he uses a Gem Widowhood Mixture with extra maize added plus plain grit and minerals but no extra supplements of tonics. On the day I was there he had sent 23 young birds to the race and got them all during the day and out of his 5 sent to Le Mans he had 4 out of 5 sent. The Club that Malcolm races with is just about the strongest Club in the Federation and has in it's tanks some top-class fanciers including Classic winners, Combine winners, multiple Federation winners and to win this club you might have to win the Federation and the competition is very keen and I know that is just the way most of their members want it to be and that brings out a lot of respect amongst them and as a club they are proud when one of their members is top of the pile.

On closing I would like to thank Malcolm for inviting me to visit his home and let me into his special world of pigeon racing. My thanks to Bob Short for helping to arrange my visit as Malcolm is a very shy and private man and I shall look forward to seeing them all in the near future.

SOUTHCOASTER



Malcolm Collis holding blue hen 1st Club, 1st Fed, 1st Wessex Combine Bergerac.



Sire of the Combine winner who was 3rd Club 2012, 1st Club 7th Fed 2011.



Sire of Combine winner, 1st Club 7th Fed Bergerac 2011, 3rd Club Bergerac 2012.