

# Bill Woodall of Woodall & Cox, Dover

## The man.

Bill Woodall is a quiet modest man. No, that's not the Bill Woodall I know. Bill is, if anything, larger than life, he is certainly big, he is bold and he is not at all frightened to say exactly what he thinks whenever he opens his mouth. Some, I know, consider this a trifle bombastic and whilst first appearances could lead you to that conclusion if you take the trouble to listen to what he has to say you might be surprised by how much sense he makes. There is one thing that is not in question, Bill is passionate about International pigeon racing. Some involved in this area, within the UK that is, give the impression that they resent the involvement of other Europeans, a paradox if there ever was one, but Bill is in quite a different category to this. He has himself lived so long in Europe and has such strong ties even now with Germany in particular, that he is almost considers himself a foreigner in his own land.



**Bill outside the lofts**

One of the great features I think about International pigeon racing is the very fact that it does bring you into contact with other people from other countries and enables you to learn something of our differences whilst teaching you that we are actually all rather similar after all. In any event Bill is very European, very International and very ambitious to do well at International pigeon racing. The truth is of course that he is not doing badly at all. He managed to take 1st National in the Barcelona race of 2001, which left him with the burning ambition to do it again. In 2002 he was 5th, in 2003 he was 5th again, in 2006 of course we had no race and then in 2007 he came very close indeed to taking that top spot when he was 2nd and 3rd. Probably the best Barcelona record seen in this country.

## **The pigeons.**

In 2001 Bill won Barcelona with a blue cock called "DRAGON BOY".



**"Dragon Boy"**

The race was held over for one day and the pigeons were finally released at 0910 on Sunday 8th July. The International winner was

produced by Holland, yet again and timed at 0545 on Monday morning giving a velocity of 1373 mpm, or 1504 ypm for it's 709 mile journey. The South west wind meant several of the early times were to be found in the South Eastern part of Holland and Germany and this in turn meant that "DRAGON BOY", flying in a totally different direction, had quite a testing journey home, obviously a tough, independent pigeon. In 2007 then, when the pigeons were liberated into similar conditions, it is clearly not merely coincidence that two grandchildren of "DRAGON BOY" should show at the front. The pigeon that won 2nd National Barcelona 2007, GB03B09698, was bred from a Sire that was himself inbred to V02772 88 609 "Der HERIBERT" who was 2nd International and 2nd National (that is German National of course) Dax 1993 and it was his Dam who was down from "Dragon Boy".



**2nd National**

The pigeon that won 3rd National Barcelona 2007, GB03B09655, who incidentally also managed to take 8th National Perpignan 2005, was down from "Dragon Boy" on both sides of his parentage. Little separated these two pigeons, having been liberated at 0950 the first arrived at 1844 on the following, winning day, with the other arriving early next morning. Bill sent four pigeons to this race and actually got all four

home but the later two came on day four by which time Bill had already hung up his clock. The following year, 2008, GB03B09698 was 14th National Barcelona and 20th National Perpignan while GB03B09655 was 35th national Barcelona and 39th National Perpignan.



### **German connection.**

There is a strong German element to Bill's success. He lived and worked in Germany for many years and speaks the language fluently. German is even now the main language spoken in his household as his very charming wife Ulla is German and they simply communicate in the language that comes most naturally to them both. Ulla I must add speaks really excellent English and so that could easily be their main language. Bill raced pigeons while in Germany and gained many contacts and long standing friends there and to this day his racing stock is firmly based in German lofts. Beyond that he feeds his pigeons on some special high quality mixes that he brings in from Germany and which he hopes to import on a larger scale in the future. Speaking of food he also manages to feed himself on a variety of German style foods, which he either brings in himself on his frequent visits or, as in

the case of a really excellent Rye bread that I tried on my visit, that his wife Ulla makes.



**The food mix**

## **Confidence from Experience.**

When it comes to the pigeons Bill is not one for keeping large numbers. He has been at the game for a few years now and enjoyed quite a lot of success over those years, which has brought him to a point where he has great confidence in his pigeons. He feels that confidence is an important element and you certainly need it if you are only going to house a very few pigeons as he does now. Clearly the success he has had helps to build confidence but even then to contemplate an International season with little more than half a dozen racers takes a great deal of confidence indeed. Bill is also very keen on working the pigeons well and testing hard. He likes to get his racers across the channel as often as possible, they would certainly go every week if he had the opportunity, but of course the restrictions imposed by Avian Flu effect this enormously. He is also very keen to send his yearlings to a real test and he sees Perpignan as a good choice for this.





**Bill reviewing his stock**

## **The regime.**

Bill only races cocks, in the important races anyway, and last year managed with a team of seven pigeons. This is not because of a lack of accommodation as he has a spacious garden, well tended by Ulla, with lofts running down both sides. Mainly these are quite open and combined with the low numbers means that they have ample fresh air. Feeding, care and training is kept very simple with a high emphasis placed on quality of stock, the provision of ample high quality food, regular exercise and stringent testing and selection.

## **Recent times.**

In 2009 and 2010 Bill has suffered at the hands of ill health. First the sight in one eye was suddenly snatched away and then, after only a brief period of trying to come to terms with this disability, he lost the sight in the other eye as well. Being the man he is he soldiered on and fortunately he had already found a strong ally. Just prior to losing his sight Bill had taken under his wing a younger local man who had developed an interest in pigeon racing. Gradually these two working together formed an interesting and still developing arrangement. The younger man organised a sale of pigeons, with donations from flyers in France and Germany as well as the UK, and the proceeds of this sale helped to modernise Bill's lofts and enable him to continue racing despite his disability. That is still a developing area because it does take time to change ways and methods after such traumatic and disabling circumstances. On the other hand that younger man has, with the help and guidance of Bill, set up his own lofts and within just a couple of years quite amazingly hit the top. This year, 2010, amongst several very good performances he has established the outstanding achievement of winning 1st National Perpignan with, it is believed, the first ever pigeon timed into the UK on the day. So the story of Bill goes on and the story of that younger man, Geoff Preece, I hope to bring you soon.

Nigel Lane