

WEST OF ENGLAND SOUTH ROAD COMBINE

by Alen Gibb

Our season got underway on 18th April from Lyndhurst. We attracted a massive birdage of 5,513 birds entered from 25 clubs and 289 members. This was an increase of around 1,300 birds over the first race in 2014 and did cause a few problems when picking up from the clubs. However with very much appreciated help from the Midsomer Norton and Carlingcote members all crates were safely accommodated on the two transporters. I must give a special thank you to Lionel Vining of the Carlingcote club who used his own vehicle to collect the Farrington Gurney birds because their transporter was completely full before getting to the club.

Our race advisor and convoyer have decided that where possible, taking into account weather and avoiding clashing with other organisations, the Combine's birds this year will be liberated early at any time after 6am. I'm afraid I did not do a very good job in emailing clubs and members about this, many of whom got the impression we were going to liberate at 6am come what may. Mention of 6am was merely a guide and liberations at this hour will only take place if conditions allow.

The weather on 18th April was always going to be good with clear skies, plenty of sunshine but fairly cold. Wind was generally from the NE or ENE. The strings were eventually cut for 8.30am liberation – it takes a long time to cut the strings on 400 crates! The birds cleared the site immediately, except for a few stragglers and began the journey home. You will see from the map that birds leaving the transporters have to very quickly



Raphael & Diego de Silva.

making 2084ypm. What is particularly great about this win is that Raphael and Diego da Silva are aged 9 years and 6 years! They have been racing together for two years and are very keen being always at their club helping out where possible. They are ably assisted by father Vasco but actually race on their own. What a marvellous result for them. Their winner is a yearling black pied hen originating from birds of Mestre Brothers in Portugal. The partnership also has birds originating in Malta. The brothers were also 6th, 14th, 15th & 27th Combine – the birds have obviously done well acclimatising to the conditions in England! Well done lads!

Our second race of the season was from Portsmouth-Bedhampton when 310 members from all 27 clubs entered 5,633 birds. This time the birds were liberated at 11am into a strong SW wind and the likely winners were expected to be found in the north east of the Combine area around Gloucester or Cheltenham. This turned out to be the case with members in Gloucestershire taking the bulk of the first 50 positions. It doesn't matter where the favoured



1st Combine Lyndhurst 5,513 birds.

orientate for the flight home – there is a 90 degree difference, some flying due west and others north covering everywhere between Crewkerne in the south and Cheltenham in the north. These conditions where birds have to learn to think and hopefully break away from 5,500 others make Combine racing so good.

As expected the race was dominated by clubs in the south of our area, some making over 2000ypm whilst in the north it was a good bird to be making over 1300ypm. Our winners were the partnership of R & D da Silva of the Taunton club



Fred Evans of Gloucester
1st Combine Bedhampton 5,633 birds.

area is you still have to have your birds on form to beat your neighbours. Gloucester & District FC took the first four positions in the Combine with Mr & Mrs Fred Evans coming out on top on 1411ypm with a yearling Andreas Drapa (Germany) cock the parents of which were bred by clubmate Andy Harker from birds originating

from Wall & Lunt of Manchester. Fred's yearling was feeding two large young birds at the time of his win and came smack online from the SE. Gloucester's Mr & Mrs Phelps were pipped into 2nd & 3rd Combine with Paddy Russell & Sons a very creditable 4th.

The race proved somewhat problematic with various stories doing the rounds regarding the liberation. The Secretary made enquiries with various respected fanciers and convoyers who were at or near the liberation site and it appears that the main reason for a 'funny' race occurred just after liberation and out of site of the convoyer who thought the birds had cleared. On leaving the relative calm (still strong SW) of the liberation site the main convoy disappeared over a hill and out of sight. This is where the trouble started – they were suddenly up against an

even stronger wind after they crested the hill and had difficulty sorting themselves out for the journey home. Witnesses stated the birds broke into more small groups than had ever been seen before and only gradually did each group head for home with the really strong shoulder wind. Some were in the area for an hour during which another organisation going into Kent were liberated (40 minutes after the Combine) no doubt taking some of our birds with them. None of this would have been visible to the convoyers and other witnesses at the liberation site.

For our third race on Monday 4th May we were again at Bedhampton (much to the annoyance of certain fanciers who believe the race-point is totally unsuitable) when 280 members from 25 clubs entered 4,728 birds – another massive entry. This time there were no complications and the birds were liberated at 7.35am into a light SW wind with sunshine and excellent visibility. All but about 60 birds cleared the site immediately and the stragglers also disappeared after 3-4 minutes. All this has been confirmed by independent observers on site whose assistance at the site was greatly appreciated. As the previous week, with a SW wind, the result was dominated by Gloucestershire based-clubs.



Mike Bullingham 1st Combine Bedhampton
4,728 birds followed by 2nd Combine
Littlehampton 4,550 birds the following week
with the same bird.