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Bordeaux National Provisional Race Report

Friday 10th July 2026

1st Open BICC, John Halstead of Gillingham

1st Open BBC, John Halstead of Gillingham

1st CSCFC, Anton Ionut of Tilehurst

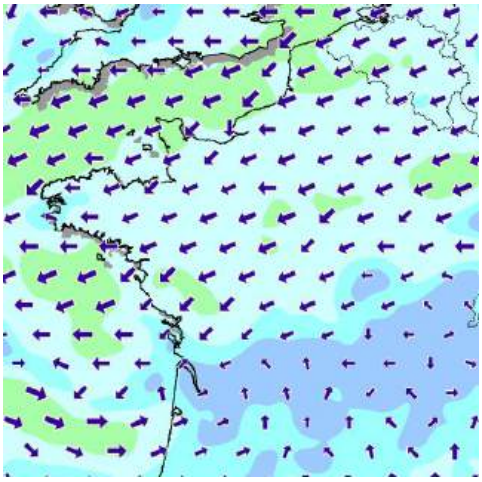
The BICC, BBC and CSCFC held another joint liberation from Bordeaux. This race report covers the Open and Section winners in the BICC, BBC and CSCFC, and is a combined report by Clare Norman and Mike Jackson.

Many thanks go to the BICC race sponsors, Benzing, for a fantastic free Benzing Smart Loft System for the BICC winner. The BBC also held the Bordeaux Loft Nomination race, with thanks to Mark Gilbert, who kindly donated the £1,000 first prize.

The Weather/Race Report

Steve Appleby, the BICC race and weather advisor, provided the following report:

The convoyers liberated the birds from Bordeaux at 5.30am, the earliest possible time conditions would allow. Weather conditions through France showed almost clear blue skies, as viewed on various webcams and satellite images. As a consequence, there was no relief for the birds from the intensity of the sun. The winds through France came from the north east, supported by the attached wind-flow chart taken at 2.00pm on Friday. The main factor affecting the race was the high temperature, which by midday was recorded at around 33°C over northern France. The English Channel and England were also affected by similar weather conditions. The wind strength in the afternoon over the Channel, as recorded by the Greenwich Lightship, was averaging more than 15mph from the north east. This was a very difficult race, mainly due to high temperatures, cloudless skies and north-easterly winds. Well done to all the birds that arrived at their home lofts.



Bordeaux weather map

This report is based on members' verifications, and the final result may differ.

1st Open BICC & 1st Open BBC John Halstead of Gillingham



Nyland Heatwave

John won the National with a two-year-old chequer cock raced on the traditional widowhood system. It has been six years since John last hit the top spot in National racing, although he has enjoyed success from Bordeaux before, winning from the old race point, some 11 miles shorter, in 2008. In recent times, birds of prey have devastated the Halstead loft, particularly in March and April, with some fabulous pigeons losing their lives close to home.

The winning bird, now named Nyland Heatwave, was not weaned until 31 May 2024, being a second-round youngster from two homebred birds containing Jelle Jellema bloodlines. The grandsires were bred by Jan Willems in 2019 and imported by John Gerard. The granddams are through Mark Gilbert, one being a double granddaughter of Golden Barcelona and the other containing Zwart Goud and Kleine Jade bloodlines. These stock birds were selected by former champion racer Nigel Langstaff and are now a hugely important cog in the Mark Gilbert team.

Heatwave had three races under 80 miles as a young bird, but as a yearling he was much busier. He went to seven inland races with Glastonbury Flying Club, taking 2nd Club and 6th West of England Combine from Eastbourne against 891 birds. He also had three trips across the Channel to Fougères, Nort-sur-Erdre and Messac, returning as the third or fourth bird to the loft each time.

He was mated to the same hen on 1 February this year and allowed to rear a single youngster. Towards the end of March, along with two other Jellema cocks, he was nominated for the £100 Bordeaux Challenge. Sadly, within the next fortnight, both of the other two cocks were taken by the peregrine falcon amid constant strikes at varying times of the day. After four inland races, Heatwave was sent to Fougères and returned after eleven and a half hours, slightly injured, with feathers missing around his rump.

His next two inland flights were below-par performances, including a night out from Ramsgate, but with a marked improvement in his general demeanour on the first Saturday in July, into a headwind, he was the first cock to the loft from Maidstone and finished 10th Club, 10th Section from 467 birds, and 27th Open in the Three Counties Combine from 895 birds.

He had been fed on a mixture of Versele-Laga Champion Plus, Energy Plus, Countrywide Diet Supreme and Junior Winner, along with John's favourite supplements, Golden Boost and Harkers Hormoform, all essential components in getting birds ready for a difficult race.

At 6.30am on Tuesday, 7 July, his hen was put into his nest box and, exactly half an hour later, he was basketed for the race. He arrived on Saturday morning in great condition, was not distressed in any way and had hardly lost any body weight. He had a good drink but did not keep returning to the water, suggesting he had everything he needed and a first prize to collect. He remained with his hen and has now finished racing for the season.



John Halstead

1st Open CSCFC, Anton Ionut of Tilehurst

The story of this result began the moment I made a promise to my youngest son that I would name the first pigeon to come from Bordeaux after him, and that is how Theodor's story began. My name is Ionut Anton. I have been a nurse in England for 11 years, and I come from Romania, where I was a teacher at the Carol Davila Medical School. I can say that the passion for racing pigeons is already in my DNA; I have had pigeons since I was seven, and I am now 37. I started racing pigeons more seriously in Romania in 2009. The cock, Theodor, was raced naturally, sitting four- to five-day-old chicks. The Bordeaux race was expected to be very difficult, as I kept checking the weather almost every 30 minutes before and after race day. This cock is bred from a 100% Batenburg-Van de Merwe sire from Ciobanu Bogdan of Romania, while the dam is a mix of Bert Saarloos, Moise Dinu and Dorin Matei bloodlines. A few days before basketing, I tried to load the pigeons as much as I could with peanuts and energy food, knowing the race would be very demanding. I owe the joy of this National 1st place to my family: my wife, Anca, who helps me as best she can, and my parents, who have always believed in me.



Anton Ionut with son's Sebastian and Theodor

2nd Open, 1st SE Section CSCFC, Bradley & Matthews of Southampton. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the winner on a very tough race. Our pigeon has matured very well over the last couple of seasons and has shown well in National and Classic racing. She is bred from a cock I bought at Blackpool, a direct son of Chalice King, which I paired to a direct daughter of Southfield. Their progeny are coming well for us and others this season. I purchased the hen directly from Mark Gilbert/Nigel Langstaff solely for the purpose of pairing her to the Chalice King cock. This hen is a half-sister to my Pau/Tarbes hen, which over the last few years has won 5th, 22nd and 90th Open positions.

1st South Centre Section, 2nd Open BICC, Tiberiu Bejenariu of Harrow. The sire of my champion cock is from the extreme marathon racing bloodline of Dorin Melinte, also known as "The King", while the dam is from Vasile Curaciuc. The pigeon was raced on the natural system, sitting a youngster of 17–18 days and exercising daily when time permitted. For feeding, we used Van Den Abeele Sport and Sport Light from Beyers once a day. We try to keep things as simple as possible due to long working hours. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Dorin Melinte for providing the sire of this champion cock, and to Vasile for providing the valuable hen of Van de Bulck bloodlines. We would also like to congratulate and thank everyone who clocked pigeons in such a demanding and difficult race and wish everyone good luck in future races.



Mick Bradley and Rachel Matthews



Tiberiu Bejenariu

2nd Open, 1st Section G BBC, and 3rd South Centre Section, 6th Open BICC, Derek Reid of Southampton. Flown on the widowhood system, this was his third visit to Bordeaux. Last year, he was 3rd Section G. In preparation, he had three Channel races before Bordeaux, being 3rd, 3rd and 1st to the loft. His mother was bred from two Jellema pigeons from Dean Pallett, while the sire's parents came from Rick Morse and both contained Jellema blood. Derek said: "This was a very hard race for me, and I ran out of patience, so I missed his arrival while watching my second love, tennis. It was down to Elaine to do the honours and verify his arrival at both clubs. As of Monday, I have only one home from the nine pigeons sent."

3rd & 5th Open, 1st & 3rd NW Section CSCFC, and 2nd & 3rd South West Section, 7th & 10th Open BICC, Mike Hathway of Hartcliffe. Mike clocked two of his four entries on the winning day, when very few birds made it home. His first bird was a chequer white-flight hen on her third trip to Bordeaux, sent on pipping eggs. This three-year-old had previously been 42nd Open CSCFC and 84th Open BICC from the same race point. The second bird clocked also had plenty of proven blood behind her. Bred from Mike's Blue Janssen family and raced on his spare-hen system, she had previously been 2nd Open and 2nd Section CSCFC Bordeaux, as well as 6th Open BICC Bordeaux. On her first trip to Bordeaux, she scored 6th Open CSCFC. Mike would like to congratulate all those who had birds home on the winning day; they were all true warriors.



Derek Reid 'Gorgeous George'



Mike Hathway

2nd & 3rd Section G, 3rd & 4th Open BBC & 8th & 9th Open BICC, Mick Chaplin of West End. I would like to congratulate John, the winner of this extremely hard race. I clocked a two-year-old hen at 6.00pm and a five-year-old hen at 7.00pm on the second day. Both hens had been acting as widowhood hens for the cocks until a month ago, when they were paired up, given a couple of races and sent to Bordeaux sitting 10 days. Both hens are related to my old family of Burgher/Frans Van Wildemeersch pigeons, and the five-year-old hen is the last daughter of West End Vulcan, who, among his many wins, included 1st SMT Combine Falaise.

As a small-team fancier, I start the season with 20 pairs of racers, but I am now down to nine pairs due to the problems caused by birds of prey and the increasingly challenging weather conditions, which are likely to get worse in the future. I am finding it more difficult to compete as I used to. Recent National results show that extreme temperatures and north-east winds, especially in the Channel, are having a serious impact on returns. It raises the question: what if there were a late-afternoon liberation, allowing the birds to fly for five or six hours, come down for a drink, and then get going again early the next morning when it is cooler?

4th Open, 2nd NW Section CSCFC & 11th Open, 4th South West Section BICC, Mr & Mrs P Atherton & Son of Bristol. First of all, I would like to say well done to everyone who timed in on such a hard day. The hen I timed had been kept with my young birds for four weeks to maintain her fitness and was flown out twice a day. Her dam was a gift pigeon from Jill and Clive Rogers, carrying Zwart Goud bloodlines, while her sire was bred from the AP Archibald cock, Son the Proof.



Mick & Lyn Chaplin



Pete Atherton's hen

5th Open, 1st Section J BBC, and 1st South East Section, 15th Open BICC, Les Stock of Romford. My Bordeaux pigeon is a small-to-medium-sized, five-year-old pencil blue white-flight widowhood cock. He had not been raced since the BICC Nort-sur-Erdre race at the end of May, when he came home late evening. He is a very consistent pigeon, this being the third year running that he has made the BICC/BBC Bordeaux result, but this is his best performance so far. He obviously benefited from the long rest, although, like all my widowhood cocks, he flies out twice a day and eats as much as he wants without putting on too much weight. This cock is 100% Mark Bulled's old family, Legacy.

2nd South East Section, 20th Open BICC, Constantin Costache of Chadwell Heath. In preparation for the Bordeaux race, Constantin's pigeon flew Holmes, 96 miles; St Philbert, 289 miles; Nort-sur-Erdre, 295 miles; and Guernsey, 185 miles. She was raced on the natural system from Bordeaux.



Les Stock



Contantin Costache's bird

3rd South East Section, 25th Open BICC, Shaune Carey of Folkestone. Shaune had originally prepared his pigeon for the Pau race, having timed the bird from Nort-sur-Erdre. However, just before the race, a neighbour's cat caught the pigeon and caused some injuries. Shaune thought that would be the end of his season, but the bird healed quickly and soon looked ready for Bordeaux. He was therefore entered for the race and proved he had fully recovered by putting in an excellent performance. His breeding goes back to Brian Tuplin Barker's pigeons, known for their grit and determination, especially when the going gets tough.

1st North Centre Section, 3rd Open BICC, David Paine of St Neots. Firstly, David would like to congratulate the winner and everyone who timed in on what proved to be a difficult race. David timed a yearling hen sitting on eggs to win 1st North Centre Section and 3rd Open BICC. On the sire's side, her breeding is Jellema, bred from a cock obtained from good friend Phil Harod, while the dam is a Wim Muller pigeon from another good friend, Kevin Grace.



Shaune Carey



David Paine & grandchildren

2nd North Centre Section, 5th Open BICC, Philip Butts of Gravenhurst. Firstly, I would like to congratulate everyone who got birds home in what was a very hard and testing race. The hen is known as "the little hen". Her sire was bred by Clive Brown from his Stichelbaut family, while her dam was bred from a pair of Westcotts I purchased from Tumley Lofts Stud.

3rd North Centre Section, 12th Open BICC, Bill Blunt of Biggleswade. "80", recently named Sandra, was bought in Baldock's first breeder-buyer auction from my good friend and club mate, John Black. She has been a very consistent pigeon for me, achieving many top-100 National performances from Guernsey through to Tarbes with both the BICC and the National throughout her racing career. She was sent to Bordeaux sitting chipping eggs and, although I expected a very difficult race because of the conditions, I knew she would do her best and come home. Thanks go to my partner, Lauren, for basketing her, which was a first for Lauren while I was working away, and to John for taking her to the marking station.



Phil Butts



Bill Blunt

1st & 2nd North East Section, 14th & 19th Open BICC, Kelvin Sharman of Syleham. The pigeon that took 1st North East Section was the same bird that won 1st Section from Bordeaux last year in the BICC. Her sire was from Poco of Jos Thoné, while her dam was a Cor de Heijde, down from Don Michell. The pigeon that took 2nd North East Section was a hen from Doug Gatland of Hookwood, Surrey, with Jelle Jellema bloodlines in her breeding.

6th & 7th Open, 1st & 2nd Section A BBC, Lee & Maureen Dyer of Shanklin. Lee's first bird had four races in preparation for Bordeaux: Isigny-sur-Mer twice, Fougères and Messac. Her background is full of distance birds; her sire was a grandson of Southfield Supreme and McFadden, crossed with Paddled Jack and New Laureat. Considering the effort required for this race, the hen was tired but in very good order, with only minimal weight loss.

The same applies to Lee's second bird, who was also in remarkable condition, bearing in mind he was 122nd NFC Tarbes 2026. He had also flown Isigny-sur-Mer, Fougères and Nort-sur-Erdre. Even more interestingly, he was bred by Wayne Seager from Kittel x Pitbull lines. Lee keeps only a few birds, and the lofts and birds are always in immaculate condition, with plenty in the tank for such a grueling race.


Kelvin Sharman


Lee Dyer

6th Open CSCFC, Mark Sparey of Abertillery. His sire was Rhiw Parc Evan, who had appeared four times in the result from NFC Tarbes/Pau. Evan was bred from a grandson of Southfield Supreme crossed with De Weerdt bloodlines, while the dam was from a son of Jellema's Jac, 3rd Ace Pigeon Barcelona and Perpignan over three years, paired to a daughter of Golden Barcelona x a daughter of Kleine Jade.

8th Open BBC, Pavel Dan of Aldershot.

9th Open, 1st Section H BBC, Paul Mauger of Guernsey. Can I first say thank you to Clare and Martin for looking after our birds and taking them to the marking station; it is very much appreciated. I would also like to congratulate John Halstead on a great win in a very difficult race. The blue hen I clocked to win the section also won it in 2025. She is from Mark Gilbert Southfield Supreme bloodlines and was sitting 10-day-old eggs.



Mark Sparey's cock bird



Paul Mauger

7th Open, 2nd SE Section CSCFC & 10th Open, 3rd Section A BBC, Brian & Viv Wall of Bedhampton. I was very pleased to see one of my four entries return from Bordeaux, especially as it was such a hard race. At the time of writing, I have two of the four home. This cock is a previous Classic winner, which is why I have kept him in the team for so long, now at six years of age. He has got me out of jail a few times over the years and must have crossed the Channel at least 25 times, mostly in big races. I always felt he had a good race left in him. Because he came as he did, losing all his weight yet still keeping going in the intolerable conditions he was put through, I am going to give him a well-deserved retirement.

8th Open CSCFC, Mr & Mrs Mick Bunney of Paulsgrove. The bird was bred last year from two yearlings, both of which were lost that same year. The grandparents were from my stock loft and were all Jelle Jellema bloodlines. 32453 has been within the first three clocked every time I have sent her this year.

9th Open CSCFC, John & Pat Webber of Abertillery. Our chequer hen is bred from birds gifted by Roger Phillips from Guernsey. This was her third channel race this year with the Classic, flown on roundabout and paired prior to the race, when she was sent sitting eggs. We would like to congratulate all who timed in on a very difficult race in extreme temperatures.

10th Open CSCFC, Darren Ede of Fishers Pond. Congratulations to the winners and, in fact, to anybody who managed to time a bird in the very, very tough Bordeaux combined race. After a very long wait, I arrived at the loft on Monday morning to see my beautiful blue hen had battled the conditions and made it home. She was previously 4th SE Section, 57th Open CSCFC Isigny-sur-Mer, 2,451 birds. She was raced the full season on roundabout but paired up after the CSCFC Messac race. She paired to another hen and laid, so I slipped a fertile egg under the pair of them, and she was sent on a one-day-old baby. She was bred by my good friend Mike Moody and is a granddaughter of the Verkerk champion "New Olympic Solange".



Brian Wall



Darren Ede's hen

Bordeaux proved to be a stern test of both pigeons and fanciers, with extreme heat and challenging winds making every arrival worthy of recognition. Congratulations go to all the winners and to everyone who timed in from such a demanding race. The BICC, BBC and CSCFC now look ahead to the forthcoming young bird joint race in September.

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