

The Racing Loft.



Eric Ceulemans.

by Mike Lakin

Eric Ceulemans

of Booischot

'A Man With Birds That Are In Great Demand'

Whilst visiting Frank and George Bristow the partnership that has been racing so well over the last few years I got to hear about Eric Ceulemans and his pigeons. Frank explained to me that every year he gets a full round of youngsters from Eric and he allows a large proportion of these babies to move on to new homes. Fanciers can come and take their pick and the partners are happy to keep and race what are left. This policy hasn't prevented the Bristows from flying fantastically well with the remainder. When you bear in mind that Frank and his son George have won no less than two Kings Cup races and in 2014 were the Midlands National Flying Club Combine Average winners which culminated in 1st National from Bordeaux. I am not trying to claim that all of the Bristows winning birds are Ceuleman based but a good percentage of them certainly are. This surely must give a good indication of the consistent high quality of the birds housed in Boischot.

Knowing that I always keen to highlight good lofts Frank very kindly gave me Eric's phone number and arrangements were soon made to visit him on my next visit to Belgium. It was a bright afternoon when I drove over to Eric Ceulemans home and lofts in Boischot. I must say what a grand set up Eric has the lofts are made up of a fine double decker loft for the old birds and breeders above his garage and a large conventional loft where the young bird team is housed.

As we sat talking so that I could gain a back ground to Eric and his pigeons, Eric told me that he concentrated more on young

bird racing quite simply because the demand for his birds was so high and so to fulfil his orders that he recently has to largely fore go old bird racing. I was very eager to know what the foundations of the Ceuleman colony were. Eric explained that he started racing in 1982 flying from his parent's home and the first birds were a combination of the lines of Frans Maris, Lambrecht and Geert. These birds gave some excellent results in the early days. In 1998 the birds were transferred to present lofts. Since this time further introductions have been added from the likes of Van Hove-Uytterhoeven and Engels of Putte and last but not least from

one of the up to date sensation loft of Gaston Van de Wouwer who as 99% are aware has a team based around the fabulous 'Kaasboer' (Cheesemaker). When one digests these facts it is no great surprise to find out why Eric and others have performed so admirably with the Ceuleman blend of pigeons.

I was soon firing more questions to my host. Eric did say that from the middle of May that he with the aid of his son manages to race his old cocks with the bonus that the late start allows him to race well into September with his male birds. It was explained that the young birds get plenty of 'roadwork' which may just

Eric Ceulemans of Booischot



Frank & George Bristow with their fine haul of trophies many of which were won with their good friend.

explain why Eric's birds race so well for him in the UK as everyone is aware that the Brits tend to be heavy trainers in general.

There are 60 pairs of breeders with a close eye kept on the results of their offspring with a strict policy of no good performances then their parents are soon removed from the loft. In front of the lofts was woodland and Eric bemoaned the fact that hawks were a big problem to him and looking at the location it is ideal habitat for the Sparrow Hawk or as the Belgians refer to it as the 'Klamper' which is exactly how the bird holds its prey down.

I asked Eric for a few of his do's and don't's. First he told me never listen to your club mates as he considers that they are very unlikely to offer sound advice. After a few seconds thought I must agree with his opinion as how often is a rival going to aid someone they are in competition with? As we continued our conversation Eric told me that besides excellent stock, health is the most important item to obtain good results. The weather he feels also plays a big part as poor weather conditions result in poor and often inaccurate races. I asked if he was a believer in medication and his reply to that one was "Water alone is not enough!" So I

will take it from that comment that the Ceuleman birds are treated for the usual health problems on a regular basis. This I find is quite a common belief amongst the shorter distance flyers. Possibly this is due to the incorrect over use of medicines over the past few decades. I wish I had a £1 for every time I have either read or been told to treat for either one or two days during the racing season and these medications are often antibiotics. How can one or two days be correct if the need is there to treat then the directions on the box or bottle should be followed otherwise you are helping to 'feed' the disease. I remember

listening to Armand Scheers who explained that 'short term treatments only knock a disease down but it gets up again in a short time and is stronger and more difficult to eradicate than ever as it has built up an immunity to the medicine'. This sounded like wise advice at the time and in fact still applies today of that I'm sure.

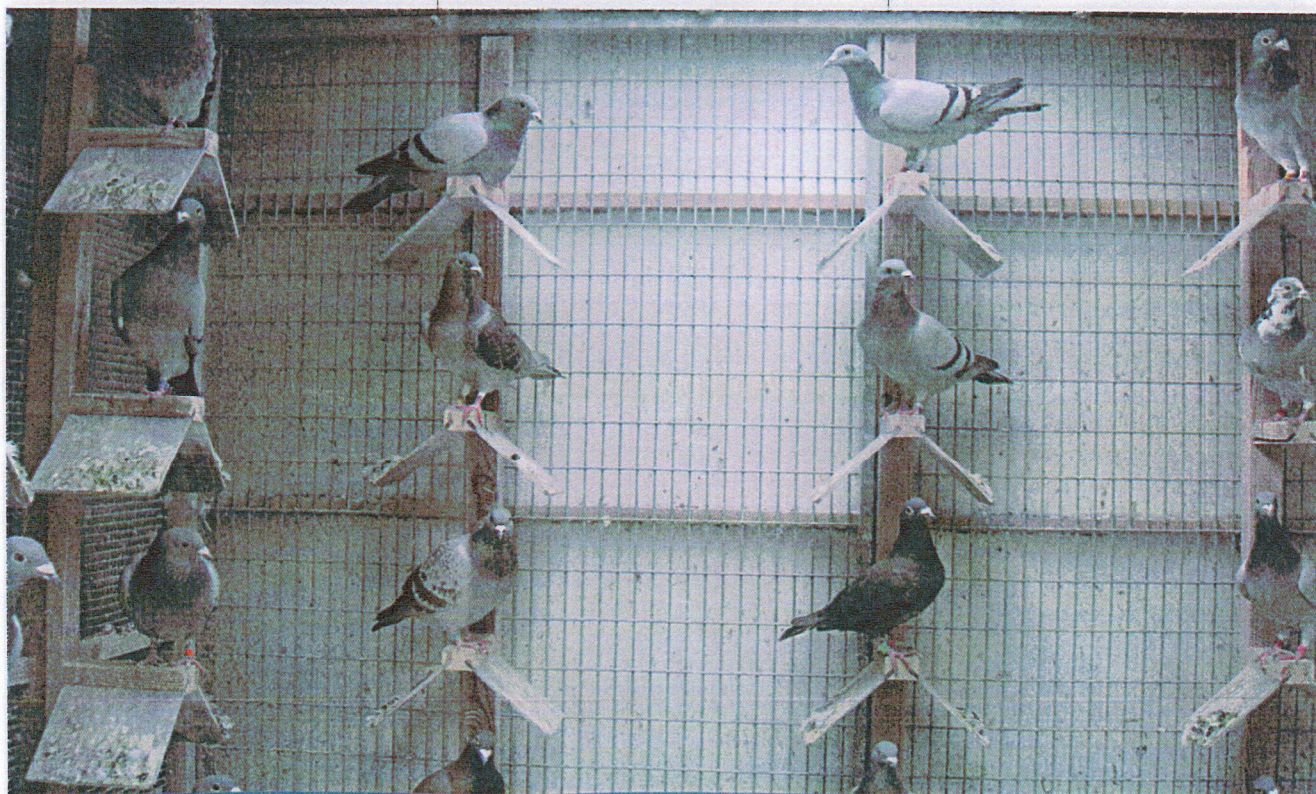
I was shown into the young bird racing loft and it was a hive of activity with birds busy nest building and others with a baby in the nest and as it was early October at the time of my visit it was clear that the birds were still highly motivated which is essential as the birds can become less interested as the long season draws to a close and remember the young bird races take place in Belgium from May until near the end of October. This explains why the 'young bird Specialists' race first to the perch then operate separated sexes and a 'sliding door system' and finally racing to the nest.



Eric's hen talked about in the report guarding her baby.

I was intrigued to see Eric's selection for the race that was to take place on the following day a nice blue hen sitting on a large baby behind a sloping board and every time a bird flew up to the

shelf where her nest was she was out like a shot to drive the invader away. I bet she didn't let Eric down in the race either as she was as keen as the proverbial mustard.



Some of the breeding hens relaxing in the garden aviary at the end of the breeding season.