

Danny McCarthy's

UK Tippler Tour...



Pat and I had a wonderful holiday in the UK: it sure is a country full of history and fantastic scenery. Before I elaborate on the details of our short, but memorable stay in England, I would like to say at the outset that we met a great number of genuine people - all the "tippler men", and families were warm, hospitable folk, and we are delighted to have caught up with you all.

We arrived on Sunday, 7/05/06 and were based in Reading, (a beautiful place not far from London (Heathrow) which, like the rest of England is full of greenery, lovely well-kept gardens and friendly people. My sister's house, in which we stayed, had comfortable, elegant accommodation in a quiet location. Our travels then took us to Ireland on the 11/05/06 where we were very fortunate and honored to stay with Harry and Anne Shannon. All I can say is that they spoilt us rotten and that I ate them out of house and home. The food was just brilliant. We were in Ireland for about 8 days and what wonderful eight days they were. The highlight was being given the opportunity to see how Harry trains his birds and manages his loft - his patience and hard work, day in and day out, are quite admirable and I must admit that I learnt a lot by this "hands on" experience.



Harry's birds were in pristine condition - their feathers and gait were lovely - he flies his own family of birds and they are all "cut from the same cloth" so to say, giving them a stamp all their own; all very similar in shape and type: he has some really nice badges in his loft. In-between the training of tipplers, cleaning his lofts and feeding us, Harry and Anne found the time to take us sightseeing around the country. Ireland is a very beautiful spot and the scenery was just breath taking. The warm friendship and hospitality that the Shannon's extended to us is something that Pat and I will never forget.

In addition, Harry took me to visit most of the lofts of the Ulster Flying Tippler Club and - let me tell you - I saw some very nice lofts and birds, which I will describe below. I was like a kid in a candy store who could only look, but not taste due to the strict quarantine laws in Australia. I had the pleasure of meeting many nice gentlemen, who were kind enough to allow me to film their lofts and birds - thank you to all.

a. Wes Ferguson, who still has the old Meredith strain of tipplers, and what colors! Blacks, Silvers, Duns, you name them he had them and what fine specimens!



b. Emmanuel Fenton, who is the holder of the new young bird record. I watched Emmanuel's kit of 6 hens fly deep into the dark sky: they raked back and forth and it was lovely to watch. At Emmanuel's home he



was kind enough to let me film his birds, loft and his record kit consisting of lovely looking birds that have obviously

been very well trained and cared for.

Harry and I were at Emmanuel's place till quite late one evening, watching the birds fly: needless to say I made many mental notes and asked a heap of questions. The

knowledge and advice that I received from everyone was worth the trip in itself.

c. Hugh Coulter - another record holder- his loft and birds were great too. He had some beautiful dark grizzles and blues that you would give your right arm for.

d. Eamon Ryan who has a loft full of lovely birds as well; he has recently built a new loft and considering the confined space available to him, has done a very good job with his loft. He too has some beautiful badges, blues, blacks and grizzles that anyone would be proud to own.



e. Tommy McTaggart who also had a beautiful loft and great birds - he had some very nice bronze grizzle youngsters that I fell in love with. His breeding stock and old birds were just great.

f. Roy Davidson, another 'tippler man" who has some gorgeous birds as well. His loft was very well laid out and his birds were a pleasure to the eye. A special thank you to Roy & Lynn for their hospitality - the food was delicious and we had a great night (I made sure my plate was clean)!! Last, but not least -

g. Bobby Dunseith, who, together with Harry Shannon and Hugh Coulter are "Icons" in Ireland and around the Tippler world. He (as with all whom I met) is always willing to help others in any way possible, be it with birds or simple advice - a very fine example to anyone in our sport who wishes to achieve perfection in the sport of tippler flying. His loft and birds are great as well. Some of the blues, dark grizzles and bronze birds were

out of this world. Again, I had the joy of watching Bobby fly a large kit of rollers which climbed high into the heavens. Unfortunately, a falcon spoilt the show. I am not sure if Bobby lost any, but I watched as he brought the scattered birds down with the help of his droppers.

At the risk of repeating myself, all in all I had a ball in Ireland - the people were just lovely and I have made some very good friends. The friendship and hospitality extended by each and everyone is something that I will cherish forever.

Pat and I then moved on to Scotland where we stayed with relatives in Aberdeen and had 3 tippler-free days, which were spent sight-seeing, shopping and, of course, eating. Aberdeen too is a beautiful place with many old castles and a great deal of history. We enjoyed every moment in Scotland before moving on to Durham by train, where we were met by my very good friend Davey Warrener. Davey took us straight to his home from the railway station where we met his lovely wife Helen and son Dave. Once again the warmth, friendship and hospitality shown us was just out of this world and Pat and I will be forever grateful to Davey, Helen and young David.

We enjoyed an amazing two days in Sunderland, where I had the time of my life visiting the many lofts and tippler men that have made the sport so famous around that area.

The first loft that I visited was non other than that of my good friend Davey Warrener who has a very clean and well laid out loft. His birds were something to write home about too. He has some great Gordon Hughes blue bars in his loft and the birds are all uniform in looks and size, they are a picture: some very fine blacks and black mottles along with some stunning dark bronze and bronze mottled tipplers that were also outstanding.



He also had approx 10 very fine young ones that he was training for the next young bird fly. These young ones were very



Davey's beautiful blues

strong, both to look at and on the wing. Davey has been getting 6 to 9 hours out of them in training every third day. I witnessed them flying and can tell you that they have what it takes to be up there with the best of them. At present Davey is not dark-training them but intends to do so next year after his new loft is up and functioning. I am proud to say that I have Davey's stock in my loft and after seeing what they are capable of achieving, I am sure I will better my times pretty soon - with some good training. Others I met were:

a. Dave Blacks who has a very nice loft and excellent birds: his Boden hens and Pilot cocks are outstanding and I was thrilled to witness Dave fly a kit of three (2 hens and a cock) into the dark. It was a very cold night (at least I thought so, although Davey was wearing just a tee-shirt and Dave I think was in a long sleeved shirt) I thought they were mad. I stayed at Dave Black's home with Davey Warrener to watch his kit



Dave and Danny

complete 19 hours and then had to leave as my ears and nose felt like they were about to fall off. I found it very hard

to leave, as the kit was still powering away and flying in good style, I could also sense Dave's excitement build as he was about to break his own record. Needless to say, he did just that- he flew 20 hours and 3 mins. Unfortunately the cold got the better of me and I was tucked into bed trying to get some feeling back into my hands and feet, whilst poor Dave stood out there waiting to release his droppers at the right time. I heard the good news the next morning and was more excited at his achievement than Dave, as I have never been part of anything like this in my life. I was so happy for Dave.

b. Later that morning, Davey Warrener took me to Mel Dolan's place. Mel has a very nice loft and some very nice birds as well: he has had some bad luck with his

young ones, loosing quite a few of them while trying to settle them, Mel showed me around his loft, his young ones in the nest bowls were beautiful as well as his pure young silver Bodens. Mel is a very fine gentleman and I enjoyed meeting him. Davey then took me to visit Steve Nixon's loft where I met Steve and took some pictures of his loft and his birds. Steve is a fine gentleman and also a very good tippler man, his birds were great. I was amazed at his beautiful birds which were a picture of health and bubbling with energy. Steve mainly fly's Plester/Pilot crosses, his times speak for themselves. Steve and I had been in contact through the net before I visited the UK and it was a pleasure meeting him in person and having a chin wag about his pigeons and pigeons in general. I also visited the loft of Darren Kelly with Davey: when we got there, Darren was settling his kit of young ones- he has very little space to play with but, has used every inch of it to his benefit; his loft is just great, very functional and clean. I take my hat off to Darren as considering all the obstacles he has to overcome, such as electric wires running straight above his loft and his loft being hidden by the surrounding buildings, he has flown some great times. As a matter of fact, he has flown well over 19 hours in competition. How he is able to get his birds to land in the dark on cue with such obstacles above his loft I will never know. He has got it down to a fine art. I was very impressed with the control Darren had of his birds. As a novice in the sport, it was great to watch Darren take his young ones through their paces with his droppers - a very exciting experience for me. Darren is another fine gentleman who is always willing to help the new-comers to the sport. I have taken some pictures of Darren's loft and birds as well and once sorted will have them on the net. Davey also took me to visit Tony Veater's loft.



Tony Veater

Tony is a great bloke and ever so friendly. His birds were great and in very good condition - his lofts were a

credit to him. Whilst there, I stood and watched Tony fly a kit of 5 young ones, it was quite windy that day and the birds were raking well in the wind. After being at Tony's loft for approx 25 to 30 mins, Tony asked if I had been over to see Geoff and Phil Dove's loft and birds to which Davey and myself answered no. He said, "give me a few moments to drop my young ones and we can

go over and meet them". Well, what followed was amazing for me to watch: Tony released his droppers and in less than 5 seconds his young ones seemed to close their wings, turn into a ball and all landed at once at the sight of the droppers. That, for me, was control at it's best, as I have never witnessed anything like it in my life before. I was gob smacked. I have taken a few pictures of Tony Veater's birds and loft as well. Keep an eye out for them on the net. Before we went to the Dove's home, Tony took us to Billy Straughn's loft. Billy was at work so I did not get to meet him, he has a lovely loft and some very good birds as well. He is in the process of extending his loft which, when finished, will be something to see. Davey, Tony and I then visited the Dove brothers Phil and Geoff, they are two very fine people, excellent tippler men and oh so friendly, their birds and loft were great. If I remember correctly, Phil and Geoff fly Dunseith/Pilot crosses and Pilot/Plester crosses, I fell in love with the blacks and grizzles that they had in their loft, both of them are a credit to the sport. Geoff took me into his home and showed me all the lovely trophies that he had won; and let me tell you there were many. It was hard for me to say bye to them, but I had two more lofts to visit that day and one was quite a distance away. Phil and Geoff are great guys and I will always cherish the time I had at their home.



Ian holding a Hughes Badge

Later that afternoon Davey and I visited the Loft of Ian Estlob, who fly's the Hughes-

type tippler and does he have some great birds! He has two beautiful lofts, both full of birds that are out of this world. His badges and blue bar cocks are a picture and the same goes for his hens. All his birds have the same look and cut about them and are in very good condition. Needless to say, I wanted to grab a few, put them in my suitcase and bring them home.

Ian is a wonderful gentleman and a great tippler man. I am glad I got to meet him and see his birds. I have taken some pictures of his birds and loft and hope to have them on the net soon. After visiting Ian's loft Ian, Davey and myself drove down to see Dave Burtenshaw's loft.

Dave was there to meet us and showed us around his loft - boy let me tell you if you want to see the Gordon Hughes strain of tipplers you could not find a better

place to see them than Dave's loft. He had some outstanding birds - blues, grays, badges, Prints, grizzles and blacks - all of them a picture. Dave has a large loft and his management is "A 1" the loft is really well laid out. I must say I had never seen Prints and Grizzles in the Hughes type of tippler before and it was an eye-opener for me, Dave had a very nice black badge in his loft, which I was very tempted to run away with, it was just beautiful. While at Dave's loft he showed us a lovely Hughes blue badge hen and said that this hen was going to be his new foundation hen, it was something to see.



Dave Burtenshaw and Danny

Here in Australia, there are many lofts that have the Burtenshaw bloodline in them. They all come from two beautiful blue bars, one hen and one cock which were imported from Dave Burtenshaw's loft in the UK some years ago by a very fine tippler man by the name of Colin Jones. Dave Burtenshaw is a very fine gentleman and one hell of a tippler man, it was a pleasure meeting him and being able to see his loft and birds.

I was scheduled to take a trip to The Midlands on Saturday, 27/5/06 and meet the boys. I had spoken with Tex Brooks who had kindly agreed to take me around the lofts of Ken Potts, Colin Bristow and the other tippler boys around that area, but as most of you would have heard by now, I had to cut my trip short due to the sad loss of my dear Father - hence I did not get the chance to make that visit. Maybe some day in the future I will be able to make that trip again and meet all those fine people in The Midlands.

The experience and knowledge that I gained on this trip was well worth the fare, the friendships that I made and the hospitality that was shown to me by every one that I met in the tippler world is something I will always cherish. Thank you one and all for making our trip such a memorable one. God Bless you all.

Danny McCarthy