

The British Way

With all the press both positive and negative about ets I thought I would send in a letter to the BHW about how I a fancier with no technical background has grown to love ETS, some two pages later I have had to ask if he would mind publishing it in the editorial. This has not been done as an advert but hopefully to enlighten those that are sitting on the fence to get down on the right side.

Having travelled around Belgium and Holland and being somewhat intrigued with the way the clubs operated and with ETS now being accepted by more and more fanciers, it left me wondering how the hell will it work for me. After all I am in more than one club, some weeks I also have to mark club and National, just thinking about it had me in a spin.

On the continent it is the usual for a fancier to only race in one club, here he will mark for the local club race, the provincial and in some cases the National, yes of course I am aware that in Belgium there are bodies that organise different events such as Crueghem Centre and so on, but still this is very much different to how we enter and race our pigeons in the UK I really did think this would be the failing of ETS here in the UK. How wrong I was.....

Last year I never bothered with it, technology and me are not something that really go together, my wife Sue sets the video recorder, well actually she don't even do that she press's record on the sky box, there we go even more technology, we are surrounded by it, so why do we fanciers step back from it.

At a dinner in 2007 I was lucky enough to win a Unikon Champ 200 system. With Unikon's office being only a five minutes up the road I thought that I would go over and see what was what and could their system do what I wanted it to do.

Once sat in their demo room and being served with a nice cup of coffee, by an even nicer young lady called Rebecca. Ray Knight asked me what is was that I wanted to do with the system, I told him, well I race North and South, I am in two North Road Clubs and Two South Road clubs I also fly with the Midlands National, National Flying Club and North Road Championship Club and on same days I can be racing in as many as five different races on the same day, so my question was, how will I do this and could it be done? The answer to that was a definite yes and more besides. "At this point I could feel a cold sweat coming on, I thought I shouldn't have come on my own perhaps I should have brought the wife or my son, was I going to take all this in?"

Ray went on "Well Frank your scenario is a little different to most, however to be honest the new Champ from Unikon was developed for the UK fancier. Racing in the UK is structured different to any where else in the world, and this is where Unikon have set themselves apart from all of the other manufacturers. We will have no problem with the fact that you have to be at Bourne and Sleaford at the

same time for marking, "Agh, but what about when I mark for Championship, I have to be in Cambridge and, No Problem really.

Marking for different races is simple if you are marking for a National race on a Thursday and club marking on a Friday evening. In your case when you are marking for two races in two clubs some miles apart and you have to be in two different places at the same time, then that's a little different, hence why you are here.

As with all Ets systems your clock handles all of your personal loft information. All you have to do is put the same information into different clocks. Pondering for a while and working it through in my head I reckon Ray could hear the cogs whirring inside my head. "What's the problem?" asked Ray. After a bit more silence I said, well this still wont work for because one weekend I will be marking Thursday morning for the Midland National, National Flying club, on Friday for the North Road Championship Club and on the Friday evening for two clubs. That means I will have to have a conventional clock any way". No at all, but you will need three pocket clocks, but it's still less than five conventional clocks, and no running around to clock stations on a Friday evening" was the reply.

Now for the cruncher, I had won one of Unikon's "Champ 200" clocks, would this be wasted? would I have to sell it? Neither every thing that Unikon do is all off the same platform; all I had to do was purchase the pocket clocks and antenna pads and I would be up and running.

How would it work in my loft? was the next question, after all I have traps on the front and back of the loft as I have six sections for my old birds and two traps for my young birds. On being shown the system and how it connected with it's simple connectors and circle and squares, I was getting even more confident that even me a guy that gets the wife to record the TV for me was going to manage this, only problem would be that Sue would think I'd been pulling the wool over her eyes, mind you I can change a light a bulb.

Well after a few weeks my Unikon system was operational, fortunately for me George Cardell who is a local agent and a member of my club assigned my rings for me, with these clipped on to the birds it sounded like some kids computer game in the loft, beeping away as the birds crossed the antennae. I have to confess though I never used it the first week, I still had a T3 set.

The following week I bit the bullet and off I went to Sleaford with one pocket clock and to the other club with the pocket clock. The secretary who was already using Unikon and had set up the club system, all I had to do was hand over my pocket clock and pigeons, no race sheet, that was printed off from the Club system, all she did was press the number '3' and out came three copies, one for the club, one for the transporter and one for the club, simple.... I was amazed apparently it gives you the option to print up to six copies, just by pressing the relevant

number. This in it's self was a blessing as the usually I would be getting Sue to write out the race sheets in duplicate while I basketed the pigeons and called out the numbers.

Well with the birds marked and after the usual chat at the club, I have to confess I was still a bit nervy about it all, allsorts were going through my mind, what if it don't work? What if I press the wrong button? What of there is a power failure, yes it all went through my mind.

Saturday morning arrived and the birds were up. I went into the loft, switched the power on and as instructed by George Cardell, place one pocket clock, up came the message, how many birds were marked, then the second clock for Bourne Clubs, in this clock I had my south road pigeons and my north road pigeons in as we have a north road and a south road club at Bourne, the same here the number of pigeons marked were shown in the display. All I needed now were the birds to arrive home. I don't know whether I was more anxious waiting for the birds or had I done every thing right, only one thing for it I called George Cardell and ten minutes later called Chris Sutton, of course all was fine, I must admit I was quite chuffed with myself being a non tecky.

When the birds arrived it was just as before the clock beeping as the birds walked over the pads. When the bird arrives up comes the time, ring number, the race where the bird has arrived from and so on, by now I had a grin from ear to ear.

All I had to do was as usual take my clock to the clubs. When I got there for those of you that haven't seen it in operation, you really need to, I am 60 and take it from me we should have had this twenty years ago not ten. I can remember the secretaries doing the results with a swivel stick, then a calculator, then the little velocity calculators things, now we have computer programmes that do the lot for you. This little clock is no different it's just progressing us on to the next level.

Once the club system is set up which if I am honest takes a couple of minutes, but nothing really when you consider how long it takes to read clocks, empty clocks, write the rubber ring numbers down, go through the sheets and cross reference everything. All you do is put the pocket clock in the base, select number three 'Strike off race' in the menu and out came my sheet with all the required information on. My name, address, RPRA loft number, phone number, clock number, my birds in clocking order with all their details and the times. I also understand that should my clock be connected to the clubs computer as soon as the last Unikon clock is read off with two mouse clicks we can have the full result out.

I have to admit when I first went into the Unikon office asking the questions I did I had many doubts and now in all honesty the product has gone beyond what ever

imagined it would do. One weekend I had six races going on in three different pocket clocks, I had marked the Falaise Midland National on Thursday, Perth with the NRCC on Friday morning and my Bourne south road pigeons with the Harrowdon federation all in the same pocket clock, added to this I also had two other races running in two other clocks, so that was six races on. I used to get flustered when I had three conventional clocks set on National days and even restrain from sending to the local club for fear of putting the wrong rubber in the wrong clock, now all that stress has been taken away and sit back and enjoy every bird trapping from the first to the last. The beauty of all this was when the clocks had to go in, on the Friday there was no clock stations to visit and the Bourne club is a clock station for the NRCC and MNFC so I could get my National and club birds all read out one after the other without waiting for clock strikes or chasing round the place to different clock stations.

Any one that knows me will tell you that I am obsessed with pigeons, I love the chat, the social side in the winter, but most of all seeing those birds finish, how many times have we had a bird racing to loft only to be put on edge by a maniac of a fancier who on Friday was showing his birds more affection than he does to his wife, then turn into a raving lunatic when he see's his first arrival on Saturday, what must go through that birds head. The anticipation of that first arrival will never leave me and it is only something that a pigeon fancier feels, but take it from me Saturdays enjoy even more!

Happy New Year
Frank Bristow.