

PIGEON RACING MID 1960's to EARLY 70's

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From the beginning of pigeon racing in Adelaide until about 1965 all pigeons were transported by rail in metal & wire mesh hampers with a hessian lined floor and half way up the sides and ends. It would have been around about 1966 when the SAHPA decided to switch mainly to road transport. The first transport company engaged by the SAHPA was Anderson & Porter of Glanville, a well known local carrier on the Port Adelaide wharves. Doug Green was the SAHPA General Secretary at the time and I believe there is or was a photograph at Walford Hall of Doug & the transport driver, Matty Russell standing in front of a semi trailer loaded with pigeons prior to departure to a race, underneath the Bakewell Bridge at Mile End.

The Association had these large, strong & heavy wire mesh baskets made up and they were distributed to all the clubs. The clubs would hamper the birds in these baskets and transport them by ute, trailer or tray top truck to underneath the Bakewell Bridge. Going by memory the baskets were about 4 foot wide x 6 foot long and about 10 or 11 inches high. For club racing and the middle distance races 60 birds were loaded into each hamper. For the long distance races this was reduced to around 40 birds. The baskets were bloody heavy when they were empty but when they were full of birds they were back breaking. The semitrailer was parked off the side of the road under the bridge and the vehicles would pull up alongside the semi and commence the back breaking task of loading the birds onto the semi. All this was happening as traffic on the road was going past. Dam lucky someone wasn't badly injured or killed. The heavy mesh on these baskets was about 2 inches square and once the floor of the semi was loaded, the next tier would be commenced and the higher the tier the more lifting was required. The load sometimes was 5 to 6 tiers high. The hampers were very strong and could be walked upon as the tiers went up. The hampers could only be loaded from the right hand side of the truck so those on the left hand side had to be lifted into position on that side of the truck. The loaders were instructed to be careful and not to slide them across the hampers below them but to lift and place them down. But occasionally due to either tiredness or easiness someone would slide a hamper across those below and a pigeon would stick its head up through the mesh and have it chopped off. Fortunately this was rare. Once all the birds were loaded the load was tarped and the semi would be on its way to race points such as Keith, Dimboola, Maryborough, Benalla & Junee on the SE line and Carrieton & Pimba on the north line. For races from Marree, William Creek, Oodnadatta & Finke on the north line & Tarcoola, Cook & Forrest on the NW line the truck drove to Port Augusta and was loaded onto a flat top rail wagon for the rest of the journey as there were

no sealed roads to these race points. The driver & Convoyer rode in a carriage on the train, most likely in the brake or guards van and the birds were fed & watered at various stops on the way. This method was used until about 1971 when the new SAHPA transporter was built & introduced around 1972. For the first year or two the new road transport unit was housed and loaded at the Bulls Bus Depot on Port Road at Albert Park until the SAHPA Hall at Boulderstone road was completed.