

IN DAYS GONE BY by John Hofman

Having been raised at Seaton Park, on the southern fringe of the Port Adelaide area, and having worked initially in shipping offices and later on the Port Adelaide wharves themselves from 1963 to 1998, I really enjoyed reading Bill Verco's article in the July 2000 edition entitled "How True Is A Pedigree". And I can confirm that his story is pretty close to the truth as I have heard the same stories myself over the years, probably firstly in the mid 1960's. That is the period when I was working for a Customs Agent and my job involved daily visits to the wharves checking on cargo that had been unloaded from ships. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the importation of birds into Australia was banned during this period so I never ever came across any pigeons off the ships. There were a number of Wharfies, Tally Clerks, Harbours Board employees etc who were pigeon flyers, most in the Port Association, some in the SAHPA and many pleasurable hours were spent talking pigeons, with the time booked down as doing some erroneous & time consuming cargo examination to keep the boss happy. Eddie Weeden, Howard Perry, Jack Wasley, Ron Shiell, Len & Brick Aubert, Bob Drew & Geoff Hogarth, the Port Barber, are just a few who immediately come to mind. Also Bill Walford, who then worked for Non-Ferrous Metals at Gillman, was a frequent visitor to the Port and Hogarth's Barber shop where many a long lunch hour was spent talking pigeons. Laurie Lloyd, Frank Boron & David Russell were also regular visitors who took part in these barber shop conversations. David in fact was a "Tommy Rob," as he called him, Kaffer (or was it Kaffir) enthusiast. Hogarth's Barber shop was on St. Vincent Street, directly opposite the old port Dock Railway Station, which has since been demolished, and the new Port Adelaide Police Station & Courtrooms now stand on this site. What days they were. Days that are well behind us and the likes of which we will never see again.

Anyway, back to Bill's story. He mentions four birds sent out from England by the Duke of York before he became King George 6th, called the "Evangelistics". This name had me immediately diving for my old and most valued copy of Wing Commander W.D. Lea Rayner's "The Creation of a Strain." Bill, you nearly got it right, the name is Evangelisti. Evangelisti was a fancier who lived at Tottenham so I would assume that these four birds either came directly from Evangelisti or descended from his strain. Evangelisti imported birds from J. Pletinckx, a great Belgian long distance flyer in his time. Lea Rayner goes on to say that the pigeon with which Pletinckx's name is

always associated was "Barbiche" a gay blue pied cock with a white "beard" throat. He was the father of the Pletinckx strain, as we know it and is therefore not surprising that peds, white peds and whites occur not infrequently in this strain. A peculiarity of the Pletinckx whites is the natural coloured eye, instead of the usual "bull" eye of the white headed pigeon. This would appear to show that the Pletinckx were not the usual, as it were, "negative" whites due to absence of pigmentation on the feather suppressing the natural colour, but "positive" as opposed to any colour. Today, the term's recessive & dominant are used. In any case, they were different, as shown by the natural orange, yellow or red eye colour in Pletinckx whites. "Barbiche" won over 100 prizes in his long career, including 7h National Bayonne, 560 miles 1800 birds, 8th National Morcenx, 550 miles 1935 birds & 142^d National Dax, 560 miles 2923 birds. Another famous Pletinckx was "Le Vierzon," flown Bilbao, Spain, twice, winning 3rd prize in the 1 886 race, and other prizes from Le Vierzon, Poitiers, Dax, La Mothe, Vendome and Toulouse. The best racing hen associated with Pletinckx's name, was "Hippolyte," a blue hen bred in 7 884. She did not score until 6 years old, in 1890, when she won 252^d Dax, 560 miles 3748 birds. 1891-79th St. Jean de Luz, 2376 birds, 1892-23^d St. Jean de Luz, 2368 birds, 1893-163rd Dax, 2917 birds, 1894-145th St. Jean de Luz, 5543 birds, 1895-2441st St. Jean de Luz, 4157 birds, 1896-70^s St. Jean de Luz, 3794 birds, 1897- 54th San Sebastian, 650 miles, 340 birds, when in her 142nd year.

Can anyone think of another hen for such consistency & longevity? These 8 races of 500-600 miles cannot all have been easy yet the Pletinckx strain has been described as good and fast in fine weather. This is unusual since it is the base of some of the greatest long distance and hard weather strains, both in Belgium and Britain. It formed an important part in Felix Rey's Rome and Barcelona winning family. Perhaps it was an extremely versatile strain. The Pletinckx were among the earliest importations into England to F. A. Key, Sam Cummings, Stone (of Soho), Hateley (Birmingham), Chas. Mills (Ben Rhydding), and others as well as Evangelisti. It was one of the principal ingredients of John Banks' very old established "Funny Colours" strain, which has anything but a "fast fair-weather" reputation and has scored rather in smashes or near smashes from such race-points as Arendal, Mirande and San Sebastian.

Bill also mentioned the Gi Maylin birds that descended from the Evangelisti crossed with Horwood's Morrison Barkers. I can add to the list another fancier who had good success with the Maylin birds; the late Harrold Webber. Harrold always kept three or four different families of pigeons as he maintained that to be competitive week in, week out, a sprinkling of each in all races was required in order to suit all conditions. How right he was. One of these families was the Maylins which I believe he obtained from Bob Woodhead, another noted Port Adelaide fancier of the 1950' & 60's, and incidently, another former waterside worker, or should I be politically correct and say, Stevedore.