



# ● Alf Capel

**Alf Capel has been a familiar figure in SA pigeon racing since 1932.**

He has raced birds with two of the State's top bird racing bodies . . . the SA Homing Pigeon Combine and the SA Homing Pigeon Association.

Alf began his career with the Alberton Homing Pigeon Club, and has flown as a member of Broadview, Albert Park and Riverside clubs in the combine.

His association with the SAHPA came when he was a member of the Henley and Grange club.

However nowadays Alf, who is married with a grown son, races as A. Capel & Son with the Riverside club, of which he is chairman.

His interest in the sport stems from the days of his youth, when his father, Alf senior, flew racing birds. His father's career began in 1911.

Last season birds from the Seaten loft of Alf junr. won 16 certificates in the combine competition, establishing themselves among the top SAHPC birds of 1972.

In the tender years of his pigeon racing "life" Alf junr. was "apprenticed" to Bob Tumbridge, one of the top flyers of his day, and an expert on the conditioning of race birds.

He was given one or two old birds from the Tumbridge loft and bred from them before a brief spell in 1949.

A few seasons later the present loft was founded on a couple of pairs of racing birds which John, Alf's son, brought home.

Alf took interest in the sport again mainly to keep John active in a good hobby.

Other blood was introduced, including birds of the Stassart-Sion strain from the loft of Colin Hawke, and from the Mona Blue Gown hen of Charlie Henderson, patron of the SAHPA.

Today the birds in the loft are mostly of the Stassart, Sion, Harrison or Jurion bloodlines.

A former champion to spend time at Alf's loft was the three times Alice



Springs blue chequer hen of Max Smith, from which a number of champion breeding and race birds have come.

Alf finds his Stassart blood is best raced in medium to long distance races, while long distance is a specialty of his Harrison's.

Before Alf sends a pigeon on a race he makes certain it is 100 p.c. fit. He says this is a must.

He believes exercise is another essential for success.

Only last year Alf constructed a 54-foot long flight for his stock pigeons. This exercise yard gives hen and cock birds ample area to exercise, while providing them with an open air environment.

The philosophy which Alf expounds the most is: "It is good to have champions, but it is better to have the parents."

Many of his champions come from champions of the past.

He believes in racing about 10 birds a race, and admits that if the competition from other owners in his club and combine is about the same he "should be in the results somewhere."

In 1964 Alf wrote an article for the world circulation "Squills" diary which explained conditions under which Australian owners and their birds compete.—GRAHAM BADGER