



● George Rowland

Forty-four-year old George Rowland took out top position last year in the 30-member Murray Bridge Pigeon Racing Club.

He also won the Clarrie Baker shield for the highest aggregate points.

George was born in Port Elliot, and he and his wife Betty moved to Murray Bridge 19 years ago.

They have three children.

George works as a spray painter, and has been associated with the sport of pigeon racing for almost a decade.

Competition in this country club is fierce.

Each week flyer-members from within the town precincts, and points as far away as Mannum and Myponga travel to the clubrooms in the centre of the town to start clocks and hamper birds.

The club is affiliated with the State's largest bird racing organisation, the South Australian Homing Pigeon Association.

Birds from the club are taken into Adelaide for shipment with other SAHPA birds on hampering night. This is when the liberation points are on the north line.

Other weeks the birds are placed on board the transporter when it stops at Murray Bridge on its way south.

George keeps a neat, tidy loft, with about 120 flying birds, and 20 stock pairs.

He feeds them wheat and peas, and supplies fresh water sometimes twice a day.

George holds no preference for either cocks or hen birds when looking for a champion.

He treats the job of looking after his birds as a hobby and a sport, and is not in it for gain.

In the Murray Bridge club George serves as clock secretary. He has held this position for the past five years.

Members of the club are "hard" workers, and George says he and his clubmates have some renovations in mind for the modern clubrooms in the approaching season.

Unlike most other owners, those at Murray Bridge have the advan-

tage of being directly under the flight path of south line birds. And on a number of occasions each year tired racing birds are prone to stop overnight.

George and the others in his club feed and water these pigeons and give them a perch for the night. If they are well enough to continue the next morning they are liberated.



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However on the occasions they are unwell enough to continue, they are reported to their owners.

Sometimes Adelaide owners offer the Murray Bridge flyers such birds for stock and, as has happened a number of times in the past, champions result.

At one time George had a stray in his loft from Max Solley, and on the invitation to breed from it he did just that. The cockbird helped originate a strain.

Other numerous owners are represented in George's loft including Adelaide's Vin Blanden.

However, most of the birds George competes with today are from the Solley-Queen family.

His wins last year, in a season of peak success, included races from Pinna-roo, Mittyack, Tarcoola, Cook and Morundah.

And in the coming season George looks set for an even more satisfying result. — **GRAHAM BADGER.**