

GEOFF AND BRIDGET CLARE

I started racing pigeons as a boy of 14 - 55 years ago. I used to hide in the loft so I missed the school bus (which happened on the days when there were lessons I did not like). We flew with the Wolverton club and the Berks Bucks & Oxen Fed. Pigeons soon made way for motorbikes and girls which was normal for teenage boys back in the early sixties. After getting married to Bridget (my wife of close on 50 years) she had the shock of me telling her I was going to race pigeons. She soon became interested and has raced on her own for a time and beat me on many races. We flew with the Northampton Town and the Northampton Central pigeon clubs with a lot of success and with some good help from the older fanciers.



In the late seventies we moved up into the Lincolnshire fens to start a haulage firm. We soon joined the Boston clubs and started winning with our widowhood cocks. We were told the same as we have been told here in SA "THAT WONT WORK HERE MATE" anyway it did and the locals soon changed to this system (we had four firsts on widowhood last season so it has started working down here).

We had a lot of winners including five 1sts North Road National and 14 times 2nd. This was where all the top North Road flyers flew their best pigeons. At one stage there was over 1500 members.

We also flew with the strong Peterborough and Dist Fed. that had 500 members. I was a vice president of the NRCC for quite a number of years.

Then 10 years ago our youngest daughter moved to South Australia followed a year later by our other daughter. We came down on a number of holidays and was talked into the idea of moving down here which happened in 2012.



For around 25 years we had a pet shop selling pigeon products then moved again and sold the shop and our haulage business and started selling pigeon products etc on the internet and all the big shows in the UK like Blackpool and the old comrades (I have also judged at these shows as well). We sold pigeons for Gerhard Schappelhorst in Germany and also for Simons Bros in Holland. We would go over to Holland, Belgium and Germany 2-3 times a month for birds and pigeon products.

We moved to South Australia in 2012 and lived for two years in Willunga before moving to Noarlunga Downs

in December 2015. We fly with the Southern Vales club where we were made very welcome and helped by all the members which we would like to thank.

Our lofts were made by Tranter lofts in the UK and we shipped them in new down here backing 2012. They are made of timbers to the UK style and kitted out to fly the widowhood system with the perches and widowhood boxes made in Germany by Hermes. They are on the conveyor system (so no scraping boxes and perches). The front is closed in with twin wall clear plastic polycarbonate and the roof is colourbond with insulation under it. The loft is fitted with daylight

Some advice to the beginner:

Most important is that your loft this must be dry and well ventilated with a good air flow not just an open front. The air needs to come into the loft and have some vents to let the stale air out. Keep the sides front and back free from weeds etc which can stop the air flow. If the finances permit have a loft with a pitch roof which again will help with the ventilation. You should go into you loft and not smell "PIGEONS". Try to keep the loft at an even temperature - have electrics fitted if possible and you loft MUST be kept dry .

Do not keep too many pigeons. This will bring lots of problems. Go and look at the fanciers who are winning in your area. Look at the position of their lofts, the type of loft they have, which way they have the loft facing and the kind of trapping system they have, what the loft is made of.

We have a corridor in our lofts which is very useful as you can have - like us - a basketing system where we walk our birds down the corridor through a small slider in the bottom of a door and into the training crates. This way you don't have to chase young birds or old birds round the loft to catch them for training plus save a lot of time and your birds stay calm.

Once you have your loft built next to get your birds. Try to get a family of birds that will perform up to the distance you want to fly ie sprint or long distance. If you want to do both get two different families. Go to people who are winning with the families of birds you want to keep. A good way to buy is with late breders or try and obtain the eggs from widowhood cocks when repaired. Take care with late breders. Give them the best of everything as they soon have winter to face and dont be in a hurry to pair them they will be a lot better with a little bit more age and warmer weather. Another good thing is to listen to top flyers. Dont be afraid to ask questions however silly they may sound. You - like your birds have to learn. Read as much as possible and as the old saying goes "walk before you can run".

Some things not to do is get birds from lofts that are not winning. Take what these people say and use anything that makes sense the rest forget. Dont keep changing your system corn etc. Get a good winning system from a winning fancier and stick with it. If its not working ask him what you are doing wrong. Most times he will help. Dont make a pest of yourself and dont leave any thing to chance. The more you listen the more you will learn. Think twice what you are doing and keep working hard.

Dont feed cheap corn as the people you will be flying against will be feeding the best and if you cannot afford the best keep less birds .

Never let young pigeons out on Saurday until they have been raced. Dont train in east winds and clear blue skys you will more often than not lose them. Think on those day "will training today make me win more races?" They will be better in the loft. Never take your birds to be fools the only fool is the one who looks after them. Always look at yourself first as thats where the the problems usually start with something you have done or not done.



lights from Germany designed for racing pigeons by Rhonfried. The loft is also fitted out with radiated heaters on a thermostat and a hydrostat to keep an even temperature in the cold wet winter nights.



I have been to the Gerald factory in Germany and know the sales manager well from the shows and my visit back in 2003. So I have been talking on the phone many times to them in Germany with things we needed to know etc. I know that we have the "BEST TRANSPORTER IN ALL OF AUSTRALIA!"

South Australia must have some of the best long distance pigeons and long distance flyers in the world. I have travelled all over Europe, China etc and the best are down here. I think the prepayment is going to be a good step forward when everyone gets used to it. I

would like to say thanks to everyone who has helped us and to make our move to this great country a lot easier. *All the best - Geoff & Bridget Clare*

Most memorable events in my pigeon racing career:

The most memorable was the first time we won the NRCC from Perth with Champion "Lucky." I will never forget seeing his tail disappear through the open doors of our loft 35 minutes before we expected birds home - also the next year when he won Perth NRCC again! I will always remember the day we should have won the Kings Cup from Lerwick and how I was so disappointed in myself for not being ready for such a fast race having two birds arrive together from the wrong way with one trapping straight away and being 100 yards from the loft and strolling back thinking they were two birds from the short race we had earlier that day. Then not going into the loft to the bird that had already gone in but standing calling the one that sat on the trap. Then to lose on decimals at 2100 yds per min. What an idiot I was! Another great thrill was to get our good cock Hagar winning on the day from Lerwick flying 14 hours 20 mins and finish 4th open NRCC.

One of the saddest times was to find Champion "Lucky" dead at six years old and about the only time I have shed a few tears on losing a good bird as this is all about racing pigeons when they go to a race you may never see them again especially from Lerwick .

Winning our first race brings back good memories being first Northampton Central Inv club first Brackley Fed Morpeth with a red cock bird .Another bad day was after three great results in the NRCC Perth race 1st then 1st the next year then 3rd the next year only to clock 11 of our 12 entries in the wrong clock with most of them being good pool birds. Some of the good memories I have had are of the good times and holidays with fancier friends and the sad time when good friends die like my old mate Sid Shill who I spent many good times playing golf and waiting for and talking pigeons. Also good mates like Tommy Kilmore and Brain Hakes and many more.

Some of the best birds we have owned are Champion Lucky twice first NRCC Perth. And Hagar - 2nd NRCC Perth 4th NRCC Lerwick first club Thurso Champion white tail winner of 1st Peterborough and Dist Fed Thurso eight times the Shetland Islands and in the clock every time. Blue hen "26" winner many times from Scotland and over £2000. Also another good hen Treble 3 twice 1st open NRCC old hens race from Dunbar.