

# David Walker

**Fourth Moulamein** (13MU34 bbc) was purchased by Phil Thalbourne in a 10 bird squeaker team. He is Jan Arden based and was bred by Phil Almond Qld. He did very little in 2014 other than come home. In 2015 he flew Cowangie (2nd loft, 37th open), Ouyen (5th loft , 36th Open) and Moulamein (1st loft, 4th SAHPA). Phil Thalbourne has been flying race birds from my loft for the last three years to the Benzing M1 clocking system.

**Second Deniliquin** (SA14 26287 bch) was bred from a bcc (all South Australian genes) and a bch bred from a Janssen / Van Loon hen (GG Sire was brother to Planet Che owned and raced by Greg Hamilton) GDam was Kokoda (owned and bred by Greg Hamilton). 26287 BCH flew Hawker, Parachilna, Lyndhurst YBC, Moulamein SAD and Deniliquin (2nd SAHPA) in 2015.

Pigeons always interested me as a child however it wasn't until I became interested in another bird that I was properly introduced to pigeons from my then prospective father-in-law. George had fancy pigeons and I indulged my interest in them (Modena and English Short Faced Tumbler varieties) for some 25 years. When I was working in Brisbane (no pigeons then), I decided to re-enter the pigeon world and did so through the QHS club affiliated with the Queensland Racing Pigeon Federation. I built a loft, acquired birds, bred birds and was transferred back to SA with work without flying a bird! I subsequently started flying race birds with the SAHPA in 2003 with the Adelaide Hills Racing Pigeon Club. My wife Wendy allows me to indulge my hobby and interest in pigeons, but does not assist.

I deliberately took on the task of editing the SAHPA year book to introduce myself to the better flyers in the SAHPA. This I did for some eight years and it was most beneficial. In addition, I spent time with a number of interstate flyers. In 2015 I corresponded frequently with Len Vanderlinde from the QHS. I met Len while part of the QHS (he was club president), He had recently gained the Qld Racing Pigeon Federation Champion Flyer award for 2014, and the ARPJ had provided a most interesting summary of Len's loft and race pigeon management practices. Len was most kind with his time and feedback to me, and I believe that his advice in 2015 was a significant help to me in getting better race results in 2015.

A good loft position helps – and living somewhat remotely from the mainstream of pigeon racing in the SAHPA is difficult. My best two results in 2015 were both east line races, however I was able to fly some reasonable races from some of the early north line races. The wind does make a difference. In 2015, I decided to follow the Leo Duits method – leave the sexes together all race season! I am continuing that practice in 2016.

If the retired person has the required energy, then yes I believe that retired person can be competitive with the better flyers. The SAHPA (like most organizations however) is made up of a range of flyers with somewhat differing interests. Yes we all like to be competitive, but not all are – and this depends on the flyers means, aptitudes and attitudes. Not all flyers will make the top 20%, so the SAHPA needs to take that into account.

I have been involved in club administration for 10 years with the AHRPC and I have been the Hills/Eastern electorate delegate for a three year period. In addition I have edited the SAHPA Yearbook for eight years.

I have a soft spot for the mother of my 3<sup>rd</sup> Holbrook/19<sup>th</sup> Terang 10BS 2013 hen. The mother is all old family SA (Kakoschke) which I purchased from Ziggy Zyko. She is 1999 rung and although now barren is still alive and well.

Other best performances to date include - SA07 24536 bcc 4th CBS Emmdale 2008; SA08 20258 bcph 18th Lyndhurst YBC 2009; SA10 14860 bcph 3rd Holbrook and 19th Terang 10BS in 2013. My favourite bird and performance would have to be the Holbrook hen.

Without the support and assistance of fellow club members it would be very difficult (not to say disheartening) to race pigeons. Support and friendship are most important – and equally so in the broader SAHPA community – there is more that keeps us together than forces us apart – after all – we just wish to race pigeons!

My ultimate aim is to win the SAHPA Aggregate Points. My shorter term aim is to become consistently competitive in all SAHPA races. Inspiration comes from the very best of flyers in the SAHPA and interstate – the more so if they are generous with their time, advice and friendship. If I get a good result I get satisfaction, relief and pleasure for the pigeon – satisfaction for me for managing to get the loft and pigeon management right for pigeons.

Is there enough help for new flyers? In a word – no! We as a group are much more focussed on our own pigeon world than the need to maintain and extend the SAHPA to others.

Pigeon racing is a singular sport played out in our own backyards so we tend to look after ourselves first. I have invited two flyers to participate in racing from my loft over the last three years. I have enjoyed the experience, I get lots of advice and feedback (some of which I take notice of) and I get additional help in the operation and management of my loft. In addition, I have the use of the electronic Benzing system which allows four flyers to fly from the one loft.

My most memorable moment was finding SA 10 14860 in the loft after returning from shopping late Saturday morning in 2013. She gained 3<sup>rd</sup> Holbrook following a 19<sup>th</sup> Terang 10-Bird Special. A lovely hen.

#### **About me and my management:**

I look for a reasonably balanced bird – I am unable to see breeding potential just by handling – I try to get birds from successful flyers – based on flying and breeding performance. Top form? – I am unable to pick the birds that end up doing well – it is a skill I have not developed – The general signs are well known – light birds handling bigger than they look, warm bodies, clean and tight feather clean wattles and clear eyes. I keep 24 breeding pairs and float eggs out to foster parents. In 2015 little medication was provided except for alternate weeks of Turbosole and Emtryl.

The race and breeding lofts are deep litter and raked regularly to remove lumps, feathers etc. Where I live is very cold and damp in late Autumn, Winter and early Spring (ie most of the race season!). I scraped floors daily in the race loft for 6 years and found the loft floor damp most winter mornings – hence the move to deep litter – with better results. The floor litter is monitored daily and alum and Cooke Plains gypsum added as necessary. I have been at the same location for 13 years. Merv Hatch has been an influence - He was not always forthcoming with information, but he was friendly and lived close to me at Littlehampton. In 2015 I took greater care with food supply and loft management – I believe it assisted my results – I will take more care in 2016.

The imported birds can compete in the longer races. The Stasinowsky Bros at Hyde Park have successfully added the Van Loon genes to their Alice Springs birds and Greg Hamilton has shown that he can fly to the longer SAHPA races with success – note his 18th Holbrook in 2010 with AUST09 20563. Interstate flyers Nick Lakiotis and Michael Portelli both fly imported birds to the distance with success. David Wetering in Victoria has consistently won with imported pigeons to all but the longest distances.

Breeders are fed peas and pellets by hopper. Breeders in the off season are fed 50% barley and 50% mix of peas, wheat, maize, milo and safflower.

Race birds are fed a basic mix of peas, wheat, maize, milo and safflower. This mix has barley, peas and or maize added as I think fit on the day. Race birds are fed on the floor and as soon as barley is being left feed is stopped.

Worming is done monthly and vitamins and probiotics are used weekly. Grit and minerals are changed every two days. I purchase feed from Warren March and mix as necessary. I do use pellets in breeding and include in the race mix from time to time. Peas are in the mix from 10 pc to 40 pc and the carbohydrate is increased during the season. Citric acid is given in conjunction with all additives. The droppings are inspected daily. My aim to do everything 'right' – I always have in the back of my mind the words of Graeme Davison – 'If I make fewer mistakes than my competitors I will do all right'!

I have found it difficult to get regular and consistent loft flying at Blakiston. It has been a key issue for me and I try to get a minimum 30 mins a loft fly. I start short tossing late March and get to 100kms by racing.

On breeding I will put a bird straight in the stock loft but it will race again the following year. At the moment I am trying to get consistent breeding/race results. I mate on performance and breeding performance. I have obtained birds by buying at sales and also taken gift pigeons. Bloodlines are Kakoschke and imports. The imports being Janssen Van Loon, Heremens Ceuster. About 120 are bred each year.

The loft has five sections each 1200 x 3000, corridor at the front, sun sections at the front for sorting birds and for baths. It is a metal framed loft. My loft setup is such that water access is similar to SAHPA race baskets. If I was starting again I would make from timber and face it north. I would advise a new flyer to start small and get good ideas from successful flyers.

Race birds are locked up from the end of racing to March the next year, then added to the young birds in early March the following year. Young birds are given a pm fly most days – no forcing. From March they are expected to fly am and pm and begin short tossing late March. The last three years I have raced my birds fortnightly – as long as there is no reason to send them. North wind racing is a problem for me being well off line of flight for north races – it is generally when I get my heaviest losses. They go every two weeks if fit – I have doubled them back but with no success.

**The Future:** My concern is that most flyers (and committee) do not think strategically – most are concerned with day/day matters – the future of the sport must be considered some years hence. Having a new transport vehicle is good news, but is just a vehicle – we need to be more forward thinking.

Drug testing is necessary – however where we have concerns about a particular result, and if that concern is raised by a flyer – the cost should be borne by the complainant if resolved in the negative and the SAHPA if positive.

