

# Dixon and Watson Families



**ROBERT DIXON**

My cousin Barry Steele and I were given pigeons from Peter Mathews who also helped to build our first pigeon lofts. We both joined the Salisbury Pigeon club in 1969/1970. Robert flew in the Salisbury club as well in the 1976/77 season, and at one stage he also flew with his uncle Syd Dixon in Mansfield Park..

For advice Peter Mathews, John Jarzabek and Ivan Wareing freely shared their considerable knowledge of the sport. I have been fortunate to have good mentors and good friends, especially my current flying partner, Robert, who asked me to join him when I had to give the pigeons up due to health concerns. He was unable to race the birds because of work commitments so he allowed me to race his pigeons this year.

Robert has great performing pigeons that he worked very hard to produce over many years. My inspiration has been family and friends. I like to be remembered as an honest person who tried to help others get some success.

Winning a race is great but I don't get excited until the results are on the board.

I would like to have won the SAHPA aggregate points, having come close on a couple of occasions.

The stock I have are Gabby, Godfather, Goodger, Dordin, Delbars, Dangerfields, Janssens, De Rauw Sablons, L. Loyds and Buschaerts. I do look for good pigeons at auctions. I've purchased great pigeons from Steve Pradella in WA and Phil Murphy from Sydney. The imported birds seem to do better on the North line.

## **Opinions and Advice**

Loft position doesn't matter – get good pigeons, look after them and train them. Talk to the best and get their advice and then adjust it for your needs. Prepare in advance for the next race.

Desire can be the difference between winning and losing. This was a quotation from a great flyer, Ivan Wareing, many years ago, and I think it is still relevant. Retired people don't necessarily get an advantage. When you are younger you have a bit more energy!

The wind does have an effect but every now and then a pigeon beats the odds. The only real "secret" is dedication and hard work.

I would like to see the race program back to 3 Carrieton, 3 Keiths, 2 Hawkercs 2 Mittyacks and 3 middle distance races on each line. This prepares the birds for the longer races and gives the late breders half a chance. The Association flew successfully with this programme for many years.

As far as drug testing is concerned I don't think we do enough and we need to keep updating our procedures. I do think the Management Committee could increase contact with their groups / sections to obtain more members suggestions and feedback.

On the new unit, it appears to be well built but hot air removal concerns me. I guess we won't really know until we strike some hot weather. The new pre-paid system is probably not so good for pensioners who are struggling with weekly bills. As far as the future goes, my time on the Promotions Committee convinced me we should target retirees. I had pursued juniors through the Education Department with not much success. I can see us having ten more years unless a huge effort is made to promote the sport. More needs to be done to help the new flyer.

## **The Birds in General**

I like a bird that has feathers like silk, bright and alert, does not over eat and is first up on its perch and chatty when it gets there. I prefer birds with narrow flights for the last five main flights. All good pigeons have eye-sign. Some people separate the sexes after the derbies but I do it when they are ready to be transferred to the racing cage.

I used to keep to the 25 to 30 pairs and Robert keeps a few more. We consider performance and maintaining the families of birds. I would put a bird straight into the stock loft if it is off certain families. Maintaining family lines is important but performance is the ultimate indicator.

I do introduce new birds, some expensive, some quite cheap and have also had good pigeons gifted to me. I look for performance in a race bird and I try to maintain family lines. When mating up I would mate an older hen with a young cock bird. I like to line-breed. Pairing up is done straight after the last race of the season.

My favourite bird was a Laurie Lloyd/Dangerfield red checker hen that finished 4<sup>th</sup> SAHPA Benalla when I was in the running to win the Association points. It rained most of the day and only 8-11 birds homed on the night (and it was dark). She only passed away this year at 19 years of age.

Robert's favourite pigeon was a bch hen out of a Peter Wortley Delaney / Delbar. This pigeon was placed many times for him and produced a great family. Robert has won 1<sup>st</sup> SAHPA Farina 3 bird special. I have had 1<sup>st</sup> Farina YBC 1<sup>st</sup> Farina open 1<sup>st</sup> The Twins, 1<sup>st</sup> Lyndhurst, and 2 Vin Blanden Memorials including the very first one and Bird of the Year 1998. My loft has plenty of perches (more than the number of birds), plenty of air circulation and is always kept dry. The loft is cleaned daily and I use washed sand.

### **Feeding and Medications**

I make up my own feed mix which is a combination of peas, wheat, corn, milo, safflower, linseed and XLR-8 with just a small amount of barley. I feed the race birds and the stock birds the same mixture to hunger, leaving none overnight. The feed is 50% peas at the start of the season but adjusting as needed during the season. Carbohydrate is increased as the races get longer. If you are observant you will know when to make the changes. Grit is always available. Medications are Doxy T and Turbosole every four weeks in the racing season and at times XLR-8, Stock Gain & citric acid. I will send droppings to be tested if I think it is needed. I don't educate the birds to feed and water in the basket.

### **General training and racing**

I usually start with 100 hens and 40 cocks. They are trained to 90 km and usually get 4 to 6 races a year. I have tried single up tossing but not with much success. Cocks are trained to race early and then the hens. I'm not keen on late bred. Training can be either head or tail wind. Birds are trained around the loft and tossed once or twice a week. They are not forced to fly but can't just do as they like either. Tossing begins once they are ranging, starting with eight short tosses before a long one – all in two weeks.

On fast and slow races I have had the birds do both. But a win is a win! Would you disregard an SAHPA winner because it was a fast race and it beat 6000 birds home?

When a bird loses form I look for sickness or an injury. I like the birds to be quiet in the loft and not boisterous. Finally, we have been lucky in South Australia in that we have had good people set up the SAHPA and provide us with a great constitution which should be maintained.

