

Martin had timed their first two arrivals at 7.12 and 8.29, to be 1st & 3rd Fed, 1st & 10th Combine. There were only 13 arrivals in the Derwent Valley Fed on the night, and the partners' blue chequer cock that won the Combine recorded 1024yppm. I recollect that almost all organisations that competed from France over that weekend experienced very difficult races, and I know that the velocity of the Cumbrian Combine winner compared favourably with all other winners.

The Cumbrian pigeons went back to France the following week to compete from Nantes as part of the Chris Catterall race, and in contrasting conditions Bobby & Martin timed their dark w/f cock at 4.39 on the day of liberation, following a 6.20 liberation to be 1st Fed, 1st Combine on 1481yppm.

In his writings, Andrew Neilson-Hutton stated that a measure of the quality of a family was the longevity and vigour of the principal pigeons in the family, both as racers and breeders. When David and I viewed the pigeons in 1988 we saw two magnificent aged hens which at the time were still breeding winners. One of the hens was a red chequer containing the genes of one of the original mealy cocks x Tommy Buck Bricoux. She had been 2nd Fed Nantes in 1980 and 1st Fed Nantes in 1981. She competed again from Nantes in 1982 but homed very badly injured. The paramyxo restric-

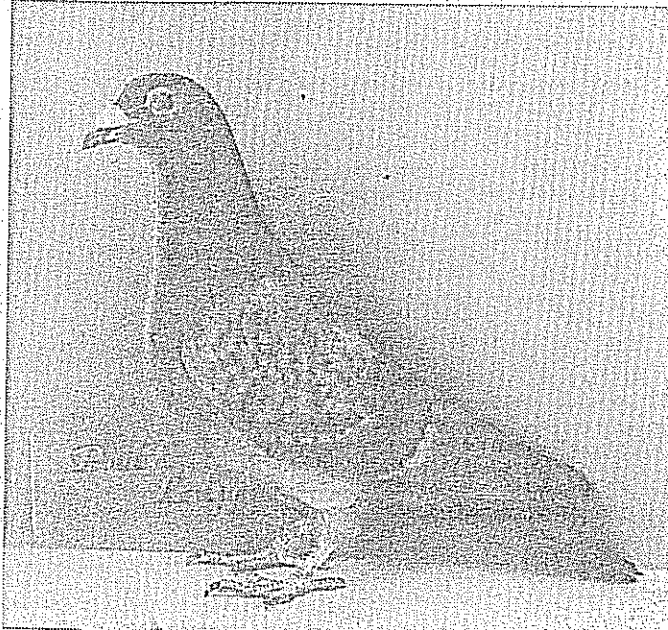
the best fancy pigeon fanciers in the country, winning at all the major shows, and being asked to judge around the world. At the time the fantails were housed in a compartment of the racing loft, and David and I were fascinated as we watched Martin work with them. Considerable technique was required and the birds intended for the shows were being

Rennes in 1989, was 14th Fed, and was then doubled back into Niort and won the Fed by one hour. She was given the same preparation in 1990, she was again 14th Fed from Rennes, and on this occasion won the Fed from Niort by approx three hours. On each occasion from Niort she was timed at circa 7 am on the second morning and then when

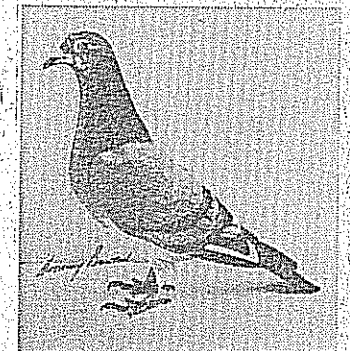
section is divided into three compartments each containing eight nestboxes, and the YB section is kitted out with box perches. The loft is of wooden construction, lined with polystyrene and plywood, it is eight feet deep with a tiled apex roof, there is a corridor along the length of the structure, and the birds trap through the open door.

In former years the partners only housed 14 pairs but anticipating season 1997, they currently have 34 OBs to race, and as they work away to re-establish the family, also have several older stock pigeons, including the good blue pied hen.

Now let us consider how successful they have been at re-establishing their team, measured by the success of the loft in 1996. The first Channel race of the 1996 season was Sartilly on June 1 when the convoy was liberated at 6 am into a SW wind. Bobby & Martin timed at 3.02 to be 2nd Club, 10th Fed. They then advanced to Rennes on June 15 and following a 5.35 am liberation into a NE wind, the partners timed three to be 1st, 2nd & 3rd Club, 1st, 6th & 10th Fed with their first arrival being 6th



Blue Chequer cock, 1st Cumbria Combine Rennes 1988.



Blue pied hen, twice 1st Fed Niort. Photo by Anthony Bolton.

set up by pleating and taping their tails to have them set correctly.

Martin's interest in fantails emanated from when he was a small boy and attended a cage bird show with his father where he was gifted a pair. Bobby subsequently encouraged him to keep exhibition fantails, and when he was 12 years old he purchased a pair from Norman Isle of Yaddleshorpe and subsequently made a further purchase from George Turner, County Durham. As a 14-year-old lad he won BYB in the large Egremont Show which further whetted his appetite, he then made additional introductions from Eddie Swan, Norman Brown and Arthur Griffin. Eddie Swan originated from Lockerbie and subsequently resided at Dumfries, and he particularly encouraged and coached the young fancier. In 1978 Martin gained Champion Fantail and Best Bird In Show with a white fantail cock at the prestigious Doncaster Show, which is the premier fancy pigeon show in the country. He has subsequently won the event on a number of occasions and is now recognised as being 'at the top of the tree'.

The success story of the Adair family was to continue and two years in succession, 1989 and 1990, the partners won the Fed from Niort with their brilliant blue pied hen. This hen was the partners' second pigeon from Rennes in 1988 to be 3rd Fed, 10th Combine. She went back to

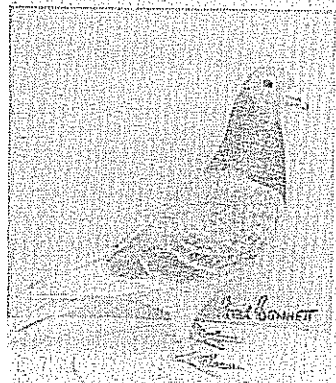
absolutely 'at her peak' she was retired prematurely from the race basket as she developed a cyst on one wing but, fortunately, continues to breed. The sire, incidentally, was inbred to the original mealy pied cock, and the dam was a direct Belgian-rung Bostyn which Bobby obtained from Eric Edwards, which had cost £86 when purchased from Belgium in 1974.

The hawk menace is a real problem in Cumbria, and in the early 1990s Bobby & Martin lost a number of quality pigeons to the predator from the sky. The Cumbrian Federations also experienced several trying Channel races with resultant casualties. Over the past three or four years, therefore, the partners have worked at consolidating their team by breeding around the proven lines in the loft, reintroducing their own bloodlines from fancier-friends, who had previously received pigeons from Flimby and by making occasional introductions. They have, for example, tried several Alfons Bauwens and made an introduction from Michael Spencer of Barnoldswick.

In recent years also, Martin and his good lady moved residence to a property outside Flimby, where a new loft was erected and on Good Friday 1994, the pigeons were moved to the new address. The loft complex now comprises a 22-foot long section for old birds, 10-foot long section for young birds and a section for the fantails. The OB

Combine: Their leading arrival, which was timed at 5.22 is a 1991 red hen that is typical of the family and has always been a fine performer. In 1993, when 2yo, she competed from Sartilly in the Workington Victoria Open race and was up with the leaders; and in 1993, also, she won the Meritorious Award Trophy in Cumberland Social Circle.

Cumbrian Combine competed from Nantes on June 29, liberated at 6.10 am into a NW wind. A number of other organisations held over from France that day, including the SNFC. Bobby & Martin timed their 3yo chequer cock at 8.55 to be 1st Club, 1st Fed, 1st Cumberland Social Circle, 1st Combine. The event proved difficult with only five making home on the night into the Combine, and the Combine winner was the only arrival into West Cumbria on the day of liberation. He is a brilliant pigeon, having scored twice inland, competed from a very hard Rennes race as a 2yo, and before going to Nantes in 1996 was 2nd Club, 10th Fed, 4th Cumberland Social Circle Sartilly. He was



Red hen, 1st Fed, 6th Cumbria Combine Rennes 1996.

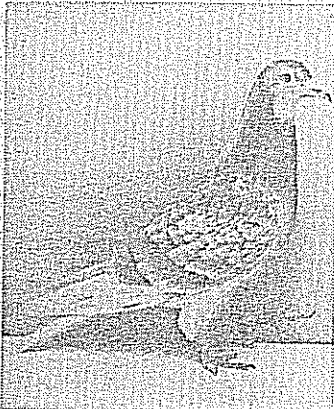
ions did not permit her to get to the Channel in 1983, but she went back to Nantes in 1984 and was 3rd Fed. She returned to her favourite racepoint in 1985 and gain made the Fed list, and then in 1986 she went back once more when nine years old and was 11th Fed.

At this point I must relate the wing distances to the Adair loft from the Channel racepoints. The distance from Sartilly is 420 miles from Rennes 461 miles, from Nantes 521 miles and from Niort 93 miles.

When we viewed the team in 1988 we learned that not only is Martin an important member of the racing partnership but in his own right is a very accomplished fantail fancier, indeed he is one of

basketed for Nantes sitting ten-day eggs, and his second flight was half-grown. I made reference to Bobby & Martin making introductions from Michael Spencer, and the dam of the Combine winner is, in fact, from that source being a double granddaughter of 'Scottish Lady'.

Final Channel event in 1996 was Sartilly on July 6 and following a 5.45 am liberation into a west wind the Adair partnership timed in rapid succession to be 1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th Club, 2nd, 4th, 10th & 11th Fed with their leading arrival, which was timed at 4.39, being 5th Combine. Their 2nd Fed Sartilly is a 4yo latebred



Red hen, 1st Fed Rennes.

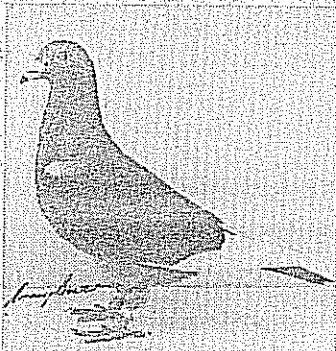
chequer cock that was hawked in the spring of 1996, but recovered confidence in time to enable him to compete from the Channel. Dam of this cock was actually bred by my own son Scott. Prior to him going to university he kept pigeons for a couple of years and Bobby Adair kindly gifted him a super dark cock that had scored right out to Nantes, and had bred a number of winners. John Hodgson then gifted Scott a direct daughter of 'Starview Pegasus' when paired to a daughter of 'Starview Leo' to pair to the cock, and this mating produced a hen which is the dam of the 2nd Fed Sartilly cock. Sire of the Sartilly cock is an exceptional pigeon as this red cock additionally bred the red hen that won the Fed from Rennes. Dam of this red cock was actually selected by eyesign by Billy Napper when he visited the loft a number of years ago, and he told Bobby he had 'never to let the hen out if there were hawks about'.

On making reference to the 1996 season, our readers should also note that the Nantes Combine winner and the Fed winner from Rennes were selected as 1st & 2nd Meritorious Award in the 500-Miles Section RPRA Cumbria Region.

Birds are raced Natural, and are set down to put them on the cycle with the objective of being able to induce optimum condition for the races that matter. The flock is paired during the second week in March, and birds that are habitual fast moulters have the eggs moved from them immediately, and they are then set down again to retard the moult. As part of their established system, Bobby

& Martin race their team of YBs through the programme, and as yearlings they go to the coast. When 2yo they go to the Channel, and in keeping with many of the Cumbrian fanciers, they frequently have birds race from two Channel races in a season.

Another item of interest is that I have listened to Bobby speak on quiz panels when he has explained that pigeons that have not scored by the time they are 2yo, are disposed of. The loft is cleaned twice a day during winter and three times a day during summer, and in this clean environment the birds are on the floor. Bobby has explained to me frequently that to condition pigeons to compete from the Channel one requires to get them mentally and physically fit, and develop sufficient body-weight to enable the bird to endure hours on the wing. When the birds are through the moult, and the end flights are up, they are fed 100% barley, and then prior to pairing he commences to hand-feed the regular mixture, which consists of four parts peas, four parts maize and two parts beans which the partners obtain locally. When the birds are rearing they are addi-



Dark w/f cock, 1st Cumbria Combine Nantes 1988.

tionally fed turkey grower pellets (without any antibiotics added), and when the selected candidates are being prepared for Channel competition they are fed four to six peanuts daily. Linseed is fed very sparingly as a conditioning aid.

The maintenance of sound health is all important. Bobby & Martin share a close friendship with near-neighbour Raymond Ingram, who is one of the foremost experts on pigeon health in our hobby, and I have no doubt that they have learned a great deal from their friend. They own a microscope which they use to screen their pigeons on an ongoing basis. Additionally if a bird sits out for even one night, it is allowed back into the loft. By carefully monitoring the birds' health in this fashion, the partners believe that it is not necessary to blanket-dose the entire flock on a routine basis as a preventive, and instead they treat individual pigeons only that do indeed have something wrong with them.

In former years the Channel candidates were worked privately

FREE MEAL WITH GEOFF

The Pigeon Pharmacy held a free draw for customers ordering PMV Vaccine from their stand at the Blackpool Show - picture shows Sonia from the Pharmacy picking the prizewinner - D Scott of Witham in Essex.

Prize includes accommodation for up to four people in a period-stone cottage in beautiful Teesdale. There is superb walking available with the Teesdale and Pennine Ways both within two

miles, and many other attractions such as High Force Waterfall, Raby Castle and the Bowes Museum nearby. Fishing for native brown trout and graylings is included on a private stretch of river.

In addition Geoff Smith of Colombyac hopes to be able to entertain the winners to a meal during their stay.

PO



Sonia draws out the lucky winner.

£1,000 HOLIDAY

Leeds & District Amalgamation's race from Fareham on May 17 will have an extra prize of a £1,000 holiday presented by Sutton Transport. This

marvellous opportunity has been made available through Alan Sutton and is open to all Amalgamation members. TO

on the road to put the edge on them, but this is not now possible owing to the large number of peregrines nesting along the Cumbrian coastline and in almost every valley in the Lake District. The partners now work their birds around the loft for an hour, morning and evening, and train occasionally on a local transporter. It should be understood, however, that whilst the Cumbrian fanciers now express extreme caution with respect to the peregrine, they continue to frequently lose pigeons.

Observation is all important in this loft, whilst the partners aim to have their Channel pigeons sitting 10- to 14-day eggs, they observe to identify each pigeon's preferred nesting condition and work towards mirroring this condition as the birds are set down for the prestige races. Bobby explains that there is another aspect with respect to observation and tells the story of one of the original mealy cocks that used to 'dance' on the perch when he was right. When 2yo this cock was being prepared for Avranches but he came into

condition quicker than anticipated which was apparent because he was indeed 'dancing'. Bobby decided to 'strike whilst the iron was hot', and he was immediately entered from an inland race from Lynton and duly won the Fed. The following week he went to the intended Avranches race and was 5th Fed.

Having referred to Martin's talents with fancy pigeons, when I visited Flimby recently with several friends to view the partners' 1996 Channel winning pigeons, Bobby took us into Martin's home and showed us a framed certificate which he had received from the National Pigeon Association and is endorsed Master Breeder. Martin must be very proud to have received the certificate because only a handful have been presented over a good number of years. I would suggest that if our parent body were to present similar certificates then very high on the list of fanciers deserving such recognition would surely be Bobby & Martin Adair because, have no doubt, they are indeed, Master Fanciers.

WFW