

**WINNING THE GOLD CUP**

By JAMES HAMILTON of HAMILTON

(Winner of the Lancashire Social Circle Gold Cup)

I don't ever remember being without pigeons except for the period during which I served with H.M. Forces during World War 1. On my return I started racing pigeons again with the Motherwell Club and continued with them until we removed from the Motherwell side of the River Clyde to Haugh Head farm, on the banks of the Avon, just before it joins the Clyde between Motherwell and Hamilton.

Once settled at Haugh Head I joined the Lanarkshire Social Circle, which had been formed a year or two earlier. The L.S.C. is different in many ways from the ordinary run of clubs, being absolutely independent of any other pigeon organisation except, of course, the ruling body—the Scottish Homing Union. It is not a big club in point of numbers but, nevertheless, it flies its own route and employs its own convoyer. Members are scattered over a wide area and with the comparatively small number, the birds have to work very much on their own, which pays out the duffers early and gives the really good pigeons a chance to shine. The success of the L.S.C. members in the big open and National races can, in part at least, be attributed to the training and experience their birds receive while racing with the club.

This year birds in the L.S.C. prize list from Rennes (540 miles) won over £1000 in hard cash in the Scottish National, and the total won by the members exceeded £1600, and this sort of thing has been going on each year. In fact, if my memory serves me rightly, twenty years ago there were seven members in the first eleven in the Scottish National. Just imagine being twelfth in the Scottish National and only seventh in your club! From this you will gather that competition is keen. In a club like this members come and members go, but always there is a hard core of keen experienced fanciers each year battling it out for the big trophies, the most coveted of which is the famous Gold Cup—diamond-encrusted Cup.

The Gold Cup came into being as the result of social meetings of the members during the winter of 1934-35, at which a substantial amount of money towards its purchase was guaranteed by those present. The moving spirit in this venture was the then president, James L. Muir, of Newarthill, who never rested until this hand-

some cup was a reality. The original conditions under which the cup is flown for are that each member can nominate four birds in the following races: Oxford (300 miles), Salisbury (340), Dol (500), Rennes (540), Nantes (600), and each member's first nominated bird to count for the average over the five races. I had the good fortune and honour to be the first to win it in 1936, and from that day to this I have tried all I know each year to win it again. How I fare, the names inscribed on it will bear witness.

1936 James Hamilton, Hamilton	1948 J. Lumsden & Son, Blackburn
1937 McLuckie Bros., Newmains	1947 Hannah Bros., Morningside
1938 Alan Semple, Bothwellhaugh	1948 Smith & Aitken, Braidwood
1939 C. & S. McCann, Limekilnburn	1949 Arch. Miller, Wishaw
1940 Dr. Wm. Anderson, Armadale	1950 James Hamilton, Hamilton
1941 R. G. Russell, West Calder	1951 McAlpine & Son, Armadale
1942 P. Higgins, Quarter	1952 Cup withheld
1943 J. L. Muir, Newarthill	1953 Wm. Stokes, Carstairs
1944 R. & J. Fortune, Hamilton	1954 R. Beattie & Son, Lanark
1945 J. L. Muir, Newarthill	1955 James Hamilton, Hamilton

(Names in heavy type indicate those years when the cup races included cross-channel races, as during the war the club only raced to 350 miles.)

Looking over the above list, while I have been fortunate to win the cup three times in twenty years, I cannot forget that seventeen times I have slipped up, a constant reminder of how hard the Gold Cup is to win. Even the wonderful year's racing I have experienced in 1955 does not blind me to the ease with which anyone could make a fatal slip, as the following abstracts from this year's Gold Cup races will show.

**WORCESTER RACE**

M. Greenshields 1408	J. Lumsden & Son 1332 6th G.C. 13th
M. Greenshields 1402 1st G.C. 2nd	R. G. Russell 1329 7th G.C. 14th
J. L. Muir 1375 2nd G.C. 5th	Alan Semple 1315 8th G.C. 20th
J. & J. Hastie 1371 3rd G.C. 7th	R. McLuckie 1314 9th G.C. 21st
Whitehouse 1361 4th G.C. 8th	J. Scott 1308 10th G.C. 22nd
J. Stokes 1338 5th G.C. 12th	Jas. Hamilton 1302 11th G.C. 24th

**CHELTENHAM RACE (280 miles)**

Pringle & Wilson 1303 G.C.	J. Kerr 1245 G.C.
Jas. Hamilton 1278 G.C.	R. Beattie & Son 1233 G.C.
J. Cameron 1271 G.C.	R. G. Russell 1231 G.C.
Whitehouse 1269 G.C.	M. Greenshields 1222
J. L. Muir 1262	Year Non
T. Brownlie 1261 G.C.	R. W. Reid 1214 G.C.
	M. Greenshields 1210 G.C.

**SALISBURY RACE (340 miles)**

Jas. Hamilton 1323.7 G.C.	Campbell Bros. 1311 G.C.
M. Greenshields 1323 G.C.	J. & J. Hastie 1310
M. Greenshields 1323	J. Cameron 1300 G.C.
Alan Semple 1321 G.C.	R. Beattie & Son 1294 G.C.
Deans & Son 1319 G.C.	J. & J. Hastie 1293 G.C.
M. Greenshields 1315 G.C.	R. G. Russell 1289 G.C.