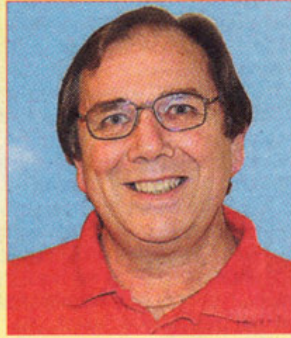


"ON THE ROAD"

With
Keith
Mott



Paul Stowell of Basingstoke.

Paul Stowell's brilliant pigeon racing career has spanned over 50 years and it has seen him win the UBI Combine five times, the Berkshire Federation 37 times and an RPRA Southern Region Loft Performance Award. A staggering record. He tells me his best performance to date was 1st Section A, 1st Open in the BBC National from Bordeaux 437 miles, with his wonderful dark blue grizzle hen, Champion Emma Louise in 1998.

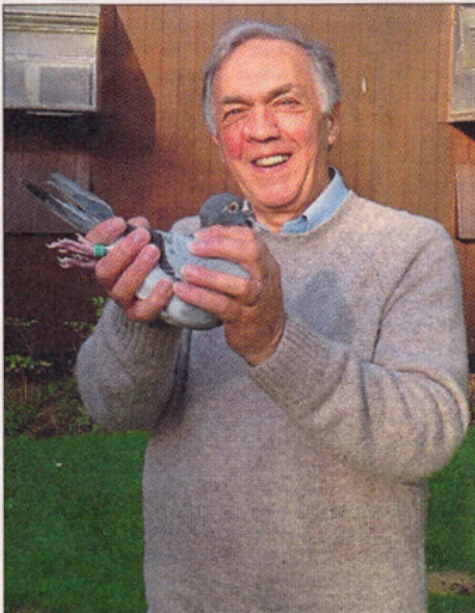
The Paul Stowell story starts in Camberley, where he was born in January, 1947. None of his immediate family were pigeon fanciers although he did have two uncles on his father's side that were fanciers but never met either of them. He was 13 years old when he first became a fancier. His lifelong friend, Kenny Sheppard, who lived in the same road as the Stowell family had some pigeons and when they were playing football in the road they rescued an injured blackbird. Ken took it home to look after it, and that was the first time Paul saw his pigeons. He became very interested in them, especially a lovely white cock Ken had at that time. The young Paul was also very keen on football prior to starting up pigeons, but only played for his school class team and five-a-side for the local Technical College. Paul told me, 'my parents were very supportive, especially my dad, who gave me tremendous help and encouragement, and he built my first two lofts. My first loft was more of a pen, being about 6ft long, 2ft high and 2ft deep, and was on legs, fixed on the back of the garden shed. I started up pigeons with my brother and the first birds we had were from the late Brian Thornton, a very well-known pigeon fancier and scribe. After a few days the wind blew the door open and the birds escaped, and dad went down to see Brian to get the birds back since I was at school in the daytime. Three pigeon fanciers lived in our road and we were later joined by a fourth,

the late Tommy Deacon. Both Tommy and the late Doug (Jim) Stratton gave me birds to start me up. Many of Tom's birds came from the very successful, Jim & Jean Jones of Fleet partnership'. I asked Paul if he could remember his first ever winner and he answered instantly, 'I remember it well, it was a Bricoux mealy cock, that not only won the club, but also 1st Solent SR Federation from Guernsey, in 1968'.

Paul has been in the sport over 54 years and he joined his first club when I was 16 years old. In those days, the Basingstoke & District RPC had some good fanciers in its membership, including Baden Pope, Brian Thornton and Bert Bryant of 'Spangles' fame. Jim & Jean Jones of Fleet and Billy Wright, another Bricoux man, were fanciers whose results he followed closely. At the same time his lifelong friend, Kenny Sheppard, who was friends with Billy Wright was winning well, with some of these winners being Bricoux's and Paul remarked, they were such lovely looking birds. The first pigeons Paul had were Bricoux, Logan and Stassarts from Doug Stratton. In his first race, a young bird event, he recorded 4th Club with a Bricoux blue bar. He went through a spell of obtaining birds from various sources, including Louella Pigeon World, Arthur Hill, Johnston of Larne, but in the main Bricoux came from Tommy Deacon and later from Mr & Mrs Jim & Jean Jones of Fleet, who he became great friends with. They supplied him with some great pigeons and he will always be grateful to these wonderful people. Like everyone, his early mistakes were training on dodgy days and lack of patience, pushing the birds too far in training, especially young birds that were not really ranging. Paul won many minor prizes up until he won 1st Solent Federation in 1968 and has never looked back since.

Paul likes all racing and likes to win from the first

to the last race, but he has a preference for Channel racing and in the future hopes to concentrate more on long distance racing. His best performance to date was 1st Section A, 1st Open in the British Barcelona Club National from Bordeaux 437 miles. The pigeon that won this race was his wonderful dark blue grizzle hen, Champion Emma Louise, bred down from Jim & Jean Jones Bricoux. Paul always remembered that Jim always said she would be a good one, how right he was. She had won prizes before her Bordeaux win, but she was 7y when she won the BBC race and it was definitely her year, since she was 3rd Section F, 51st Open NFC Pau 546 miles some five weeks before Bordeaux race. She was then rested and given a couple of 14 mile tosses with the young birds. This wonderful hen had plenty of previous good form winning a long list of premier positions including: 34th Section, 142nd Open NFC Saintes (380 miles); 10th Berkshire Federation Honiton; 18th Berkshire Federation Exeter; 23rd Berkshire Federation Exeter, 1st Club Honiton and 2nd RP £10,000 Championship (long distance) 1998. Her parents were Paul's outstanding stock pair, Cliddesden Tulip, bred by Ko Nipius and Cliddesden Luciano, bred and raced by Paul Stowell. This brilliant cock won: 7th Berkshire Federation Plymouth, 10th Berkshire Federation Weymouth and 19th Berkshire Federation on the road. They say cream always comes to the top and this is the case with Champion Emma Louise, as her grandam was Jim & Jean Jones' wonderful Bricoux champion red chequer hen, Fleet Lady, who flew Palamos (673 miles) four times, twice over 500 miles and Perpignan (618 miles). She was a champion in the truest sense of the word winning the BBC Spanish Diploma Award for 44th, 120th, 157th and 180th Open BBC Palamos, 257th Open Perpignan, plus 4th Three Borders Federation Dax (522 miles) and 1st Club Weymouth. A wonderful hen! Paul's favorite pigeon will always be his Champion hen, Magic Moments and he told me, 'what a racing machine she was, winning: 1st Berkshire Federation (1,966 birds); 1st UBI Combine Plymouth (3,897 birds); 1st Berkshire Federation (1,521 birds); 1st UBI Combine Plymouth (2,894 birds); 1st Berkshire Federation Honiton (2,743 birds); 6 x 1st Club, 7 x 2nd, four times beaten by the same pigeon which was another one of my pigeons. This brilliant hen had many other premier positions in the Federation. She was a Ko Nipius /Jan Aarden bred from a direct Ko Nipius cock I bought at the Ko Nipius clearance sale in 1986 and a hen from Bob McDonald of Fraserburgh'. His pigeons win from the first to the last race and sometimes the same birds have won the first race and the last race. Another great pigeon is The Combine Cock, a



Paul Stowell.



Paul Stowell's loft.



Champion Emma Louise.

Gaby Vandenabeele bred by Graham Warman of Doncaster. He won 4 x 1sts, topping the Federation by 90yppm and won the UBI Combine by 9yppm. One of Paul's best performances in young bird racing was taking the first 12 places in the Club and 15 positions out of 30 in the Federation result. He likes his old birds to have plenty of race experience before going over the Channel. He has raced his young birds as far as Rennes in the past, but as yearlings, they only fly inland and then at 2y they go up to 400 miles and at 3y they go all the way to the longest race.

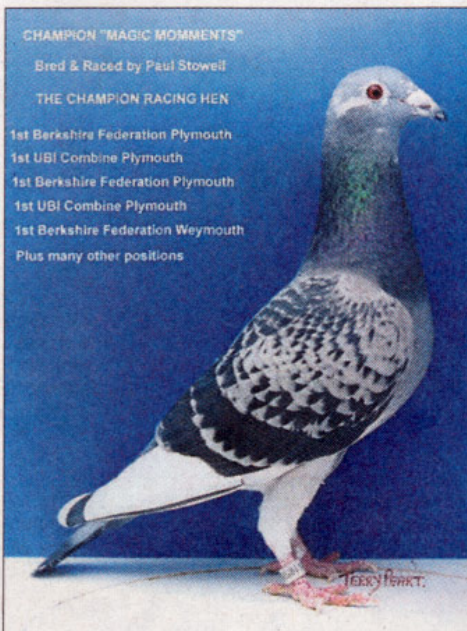
Paul still races in his first Club, the Basingstoke & District RPC and his present loft was built in late 1989. The very smart structure is a double decker brick cavity wall construction with a pitched tiled roof. The doors and windows are uPVC for low maintenance and the loft is fitted with mechanical extraction fans and galvanised floor gratings with a 225mm (9in) pit underneath. The ground floor area is a corn store and the stock loft has two Sections, one for hens and the other for cocks when separated. The hens and cocks Sections both have aviaries and the race birds are on the first floor, and this upper level is accessed by a metal staircase. There is a verandah running the full length of the loft at the front, supported on metal tubular supports. There are adjustable glass louveres below all the windows. Paul has used deep litter with previous lofts, but he doesn't think the dust does the pigeons or the fancier any good and he much prefers gratings on the loft floors. He maintains a good loft needs to be dry, with facilities to allow plenty of sunshine to get into the loft and also be well ventilated. It also needs to be of smart appearance and regularly painted to create a good impression to the next door neighbours.

When I asked Paul about his method he told me, 'I race on the natural system and have done so most of my racing life. On two occasions I raced widowhood and got fed up after a couple of months because the natural racers were beating the widowhoods home, paired up and on both occasions topped the Federation. I normally pair the race birds no earlier than middle of February, but am more likely to mate them in the middle of March. I normally have 25 to 30 pairs of race birds and do not like training too early if there is cold north-east wind as the birds are not fit, and this can do more harm than good. You have to be very careful with yearlings when the wind is so cold since they are easily lost. I like to give plenty of training and do not consider the birds are ready unless they have had a minimum of 20 plus tosses up to about 30 miles. I used to mix my own corn and would buy seven or eight different corns and mix these to a mix that Jimmy Jones gave me many years ago. Today I tend to buy ready mixed corn since the various corns are so scientifically calculated and mixed. I have raced and won with

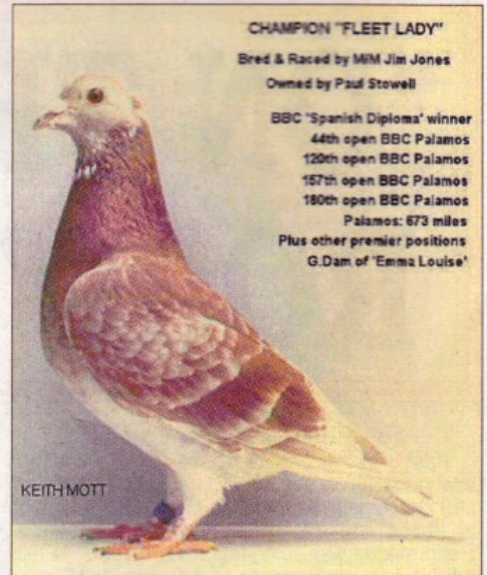
birds from the first race, 75 miles to the longest race, 520 miles with the same pigeon. I would normally race out to 560 miles, although I have raced to Palamos 673 miles. Favourite condition for racing my pigeons, I think it is a matter of knowing your birds, some race well to 10 or 12 day old eggs, others for the longest race on the first youngster of the year do well'.

The main families Paul keeps are the Bricoux and the Jan Aardens of Machiel Buijk of Holland which he has had for 12 years. In the last three years, he has visited Belgium and bought in new birds in from four or five top long distance National flyers. He refers to these as his Belgian family, but as yet, he has not been able to really try them out. When buying in new stock, he first does his homework on the person he is buying from and studies his record at the distances. Paul is interested in the type of pigeon, how it handles, the eyesign, quality of feathering and the pedigree. He has visited Machiel in Holland on numerous occasions and became good friends with him, so much so that he was allowed to buy some of his principal breeders such as Donkere Goudoger, Ingeelde Witpen, Greoger Dolle, Staaloo Dolle and Witbek Dolle. Paul's favourite was Staaloo Dolle and that is where the violet eyes come into the loft. He has had most success with his children, some of which he has crossed since they are an inbred family. On the Bricoux side of the stock team, the main stock cock is Magic's Scarlet Pimpernel, whose pedigree goes right back to some of the Jim Jones original stock birds and he is kept in the bottom of his double decker loft, which is where the elite breeders were kept. These stock pigeons include Champion Fleet Lady, who won a Spanish Diploma in the BBC for four times Palamos and flew 600 miles five times and 500 miles four times. He is a keen eyesign enthusiast and this came from being a close friend of Jimmy Jones of Fleet. He says he can pick out the breeders and the long distance candidates by eyesign, but as Jim used to say the eyesign is a guide to the pigeon's brain, it must have all the other qualities to make it a top racer. Paul maintains, anything can win up to 300 miles! His family of Jan Aarden pigeons is an inbred family and he is a great believer in inbreeding as well as line breeding. He only breeds late birds to sell and told me, he just doesn't have the time or space for them in his loft.

Paul is an excellent stock man and I asked him about the history behind his wonderful stock team, and he told me, 'Jim Jones was a member of our club and when I got to know him better I bought birds from him mainly Bricoux since Jim had the finest team of Bricoux, all backed with performances to match. Jim then suggested a trip



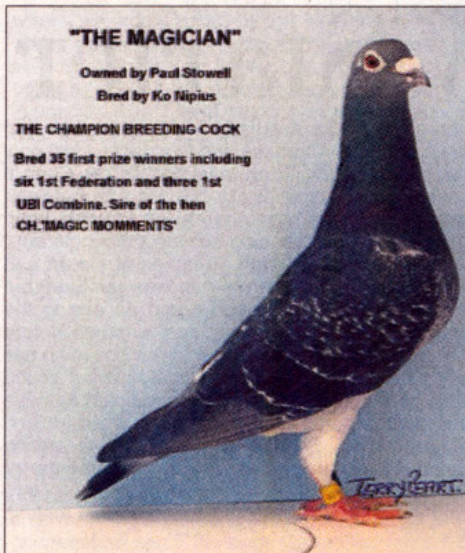
Champion Magic Moments.



Champion Fleet Lady.

to his father-in-law Jack Henderson in Warminster where I purchased more of Jim's birds. This proved to be a master stroke since in 1980 I bred two very good pigeons, the hen was a Bricoux blue chequer and the cock I mated her too was a Bricoux x Ko Nipius. This pair bred me at least eight 1st Berkshire Federation winners. The hen was later mated to the sire of Emma Louise and bred another four 1st Berkshire Federation winners. Fast forward to 1986 and Jim had been to Sully Hospital for tests and was told he had Pigeon Fanciers Lung and would have to pack up the pigeons or he would end up in a wheelchair. I used to speak to him every week on the telephone and it was three weeks before he could tell me this shattering news. I made an agreement to buy all his birds. The birds were a mixture of Bricoux and Ko Nipius Jan Aardens, with the Ko Nipius coming from Bob McDonald of Fraserburgh, a friend of Ko Nipius who had birds direct from him. Jim had met Bob, when Bob was judging the Breeders Class at the People International Show of Racing Pigeons back in 1966 in London. Jim or I should say Jim & Jean were a partnership and when they won this class at the Show Jim was invited to appear on TV's World of Sport, which in those days was compered by Eamon Andrews. Jim agreed, but only if Jean was with him, always a great man of principle was our Jim and as straight as a die'.

Paul continued, 'my pigeon performances started to improve dramatically, so much that in 1985 I won the Berkshire Federation five times and with other performances an RPR Southern Region Award for South Road Loft Performance. If you look back, there are always special years of breeding, 1980 certainly was, as was 1991 when in my young bird team were two future stars Magic Moments and Emma Louise. Magic Moments was bred from the dark blue grizzle who had already bred four 1st Berkshire Federation winners and a blue chequer hen bred by Ko Nipius I bought at Ko Nipius' clearance sale in Birmingham in 1986. What a special year this was, I bought what I thought was four hens at the Ko Nipius sale in Birmingham and within a few weeks the entire team of Bricoux and Ko Nipius Jan Aardens from Jim & Jean Jones, when they had to finish in the sport. I was actually sat with Bob McDonald at the auction and a friend of his I did not recognise at first, who turned out to be the late Bertie Fletcher from Northern Ireland. Bertie had wanted one of the pigeons I had bought since it was Ko Nipius crossed with van Wanroy. Not sure what to do I asked Bob and he said let him have it and I will send you a good hen, what a brilliant decision that turned out to be, the hen Bob sent me turned out to be a goldmine at stock when mated with The Magician, I called her Lady Magic. Two of my purchases were in the same double carrying box and one was clearly a cock. After 12 months I

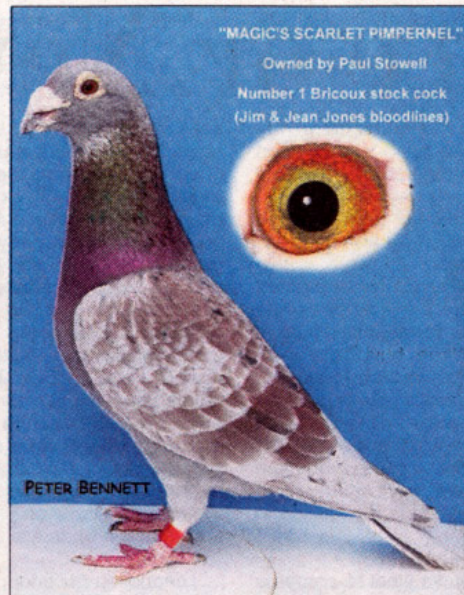


The Magician.

paired the Ko Nipius cock which I decided to call 'he Magician to Bob's dark pied hen Lady Magic and they bred me 28 x 1st prizewinners, including 6 x 1st Federation winners and 3 x 1st UBI Combine. One of this pairs children was Magic Moments, winner of 11 x 1sts, 8 x 2nds (beaten four times in one season by the same loftmate), 3 x 1st Federation, 2 x 1st UBI Combine. The Magician actually bred me another 7 x 1st prizewinners with another hen. In 2010 I visited Mark & Dick Evans of Myrtle Lofts in West Yorkshire. My son and his family live within walking distance of Dick's home. I purchased six pigeons of the Gaby Vanderabeele strain from the top breeders and wanted these for the shorter and middle distance races. I later added more from Graeme Warman's sale on Mark Evans' advice. The birds have already started to show great promise winning 1st prizes at Club, Federation and Combine level'.

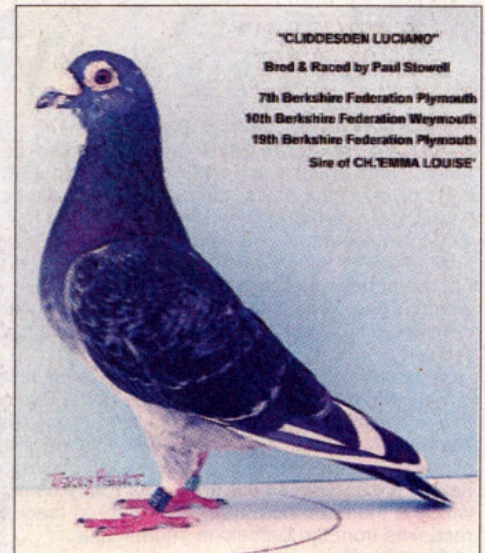
Paul normally breeds between 50 and 60 young birds for himself to race. These are raced on the darkness system, being given nine hours of daylight each day until the third week in June. Training for the young birds starts once they have started ranging. He starts them off at five miles then 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 miles. He always trains his young birds with the old birds to start with, breaking them down into small batches of no more than six young birds, which he liberates with 12 old birds for the first toss. This way they do not panic and once the dreaded first toss is over, Paul can unwind a bit since he hates those first tosses, having had some bad experiences over the years. Normally he takes them to the same liberation spot three and even sometimes six times, since he finds plenty of short tosses instill confidence in the young birds and loses very few in training after that. On the second training toss 12 young birds are liberated with 12 old birds and then after a few tosses they are being trained with just the old hens, that he wants fit for any age races. He then trains the young birds in three teams of 17 or 20 birds, and he doesn't put all his young birds in one basket. Paul told me, 'I have not taken part in young bird races for a few seasons now, but when I do race them, I like to race them through the programme, provided they are fit and in good condition. The youngsters are raced to the perch and are fed twice a day, with just a light morning feed and the evening feed being the main one, usually of Versele-Laga young bird mixes. I really like the darkness system and I do not think I will change from this. I hope to race the young bird programme in 2015 and I would not hesitate in sending the young birds over the Channel if in good condition and fit'.

Paul has now been retired from work almost three years, although it took a while to wind everything down since he had his own business for almost 40 years. He used to prepare plans for



Magic's Scarlet Pimpernel.

building regulation and planning permission for all sorts of construction work. He told me, none of his family takes any real interest in his pigeons, perhaps the grandchildren will at a later date. Paul says winning 1st Section A, 1st Open BBC Bordeaux (437 miles) with Champion Emma Louise and winning an RPR Award for Best Loft Performance on the South Road are his best performance. He has never really been interested in showing his pigeons, although many years ago he did take part in the People Show in London. Paul is a good worker for the sport and has for many years been the unofficial velocity secretary in his Club and he is now the Secretary, but he says, only because he has the necessary computer skills and no else wants to do the job. He is also Federation Delegate and Treasurer. How does he find the time to be so successful with his birds, as he has also been the Press Officer for the Berkshire & District Federation for the past three seasons? Owing to other commitments he has decided to stand down for the 2015 season. Paul's



Cliddesden Luciano.

advice to any new starter would be to visit a good local fancier and form a friendship with him, go on as many loft visits as possible to listen and learn. Start with just a few birds, breed yourself a small team of young birds and take your time in learning the pigeon game. All too often today, people do not listen and learn from older wiser fanciers, and patience is a very important quality you need to be a successful pigeon fancier. Another very important aspect is punctuality in feeding, exercising and attending to your pigeons needs. When I asked Paul for his opinion on the importance of the moult, he said, 'the moult is such a very important part of the season and it has been said many times before that next year's races are won during this period. I always feed a couple of good moulting mixes as well as oils on the corn and pigeon tea to help and assist the moult. I normally separate my birds in early October'.

Well there you have it, the Paul Stowell story. A great lad and pigeon racer! I can be contacted with any pigeon 'banter' on 01372 463480 or email keithmott1@virginmedia.com

TEXT BY KEITH MOTT (www.keithmott.com.)