

"Bilco" reports on...

MR & MRS JIM JONES OF FLEET

A winning Hampshire partnership

THE MOST engaging facet of almost every pigeon fancier under the sun is the immediate welcome he affords every other fancier he meets, or who calls on him, no matter what race, colour, or creed. I have met this attitude in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Malta, Malaya, Australia, New Zealand, S. Africa, Canada, USA, Italy and even in China during my travels, and it never varies, whether one speaks the language, or not. Sometimes the welcome is polite and slightly aloof,

been certain I could attend until the very last minute) and when he had tried to fix me up on the day of the do, it was too late. However, he had mentioned this small dilemma to Jim Jones, and notwithstanding the fact that Jim and Jean (his wife) were up to the ear'oles in preparing for their eldest son's wedding the following day, they immediately insisted that yours truly share a perch with them for the night. I was delighted to accept, for there is nothing so cold as the comfort of a strange hotel, where everyone is a stranger. I arrived at somewhere about 3 p.m, and from that second onwards, until 6.30 p.m, when we all departed for the Hog's Back Hotel where the dinner was to be held, the talk was 'pigeons' all the way. Where those 3½ hours went to I shall never know! They simply fled, as time always does, when in welcome company.

him, Jim was highly chuffed at the double and shot down to the loft to see the duo. To his surprise, he discovered that Jock had timed one rubber, and Jean had timed the other, the same bird!

His worst experience (he reckons) was when sending a team of 5 of his best birds to Palamos.



"The Original"

The founder of the loft, bred & raced by Billy Wright of Fleet. Has bred many winners and is G.Sire and G.G.Sire of winners galore.

requiring time to bring it to the fruition of maturity, and at other times it is immediately a deep and warm 'sit-thee-down-lad' welcome with a glass, or cuppa, thrust into one's hand and the best pew in the house shoved under the caller's backside. So it was when I called in at 'Branscombe', 132 King's Rd in Fleet, Hants, when over in England to attend the 'Gazette's' annual staff dinner. Editor Roy Bishop had failed to book me hotel accommodation (since I had not

JIM FIRST became interested in pigeons when he was in India. Two army fanciers sparked his imagination, and from that day he just lived for the moment when his own loft was erected. It came in 1956 when he settled in Fleet and turned an old chicken shed into a home for his Fancy birds. On losing one of these, he called in at the home of nearby Billy Wright just to enquire if the bird had strayed there. After Jim had seen a team of racers, his Fancy birds were bade adieu and the following season YBs were racing to the Jones' clock.

In those early days, Jim says, he received much help from Billy Wright and Baden Pope of Basingstoke and with these lads as mentors, and Mick Walker of Camberley as a local leading light to spur him on, Jim has steadily ascended the ladder of success to the present day when he has a team as like as peas in a pod, and as good racers as you will find anywhere.

Based on the Bricoux-Sions, this team has won 1st Fed Thurso (only bird on the day) NR, and 21st & 38th Open Palamos, SR, with several hundred good wins in between. 1st Fed St Malo, 1st Fed Bordeaux, 2nd Fed Elgin, and so on.

One of Jim's most humorous experiences was when, in his absence, his friend, the late Jock Martin, timed a bird in from Le Mans for him. When Jean, his wife, came home she went down to the loft and found a rubbered bird sitting inside, so promptly timed it, proudly informing Jim on his return that she had done so. Knowing that Jock had already timed one for



"The Sparrow Hen"

Winner of 11th Sect & 21st Open Palamos, 673 mls, also 2nd La Reole, beaten by loftmate. Won many other positions.

in 1971. He has never seen a feather of them since! Remembering the race that year, I am wondering how many good birds did attempt the Channel that evening, and how far they got before the sun went down in the west? A winner also in the pen, Jim took 1st in the Breeder's Class at 'The People' 1966 Show, and that is what I call taking on the best. The present loft is a double decker, 16ft long, nicely lit and very well ventilated. The birds handled very well and were quite tame, with a stranger in with them, I noted. YBs fly 200-mls, Ylgs go to 460-mls and 2-y-o and upwards are expected to take in Palamos, 637-mls before they are assured of a



(left)

"Jeanie's Boy"

Flown Pau three times, 546 mls, in race time winning 7th Sect, 49th Sect & 58th Open N.F.C. Also 1st Club & 57th Solent Fed (3,580 birds) Rennes, 1st Club & 15th Solent Fed Rennes.

1ST CLUB - 1ST FED - ST. MAO

(right)

"Blacksplash"

Winner of 6-1sts, flown Pau, Sire, G.Sire and G.G.Sire of winner and won Breeders Class at the People Show.





Jim & Jean Jones caught in happy vein. Shortly after this picture was taken, Jim clocked a bird in the 1974 Palamos classic.

perch and a nestbox. A system that ensures no weakening of the strain. Jim listens to all that he hears about pigeons from every point but proves any factor before believing in it implicitly. A keen student of Eye-Sign, the quality in his own birds is very evident. I thought I'd seen some good eyes in my time but he showed me one or two to match them, I assure you!

As he keeps an open loft, Jim has little need of hard training but tosses the YBs at 20-mils on their 1st outing to ensure that only the best ones come back. He usually loses few, he tells me. He has tried all sorts of feeding schedules but finds the BOY Century Mix as good as any; as a titbit he feeds linseed and groats.

A FIRM believer in line-breeding, Jim says that though a fair percentage of duds are produced this way, when a good one does crop up it is invariably very good, indeed. Latebreeds are liked here, as they have often developed into the best birds at maturity. Deep litter was tried and worked well but Jim says he prefers to scrape out, then apply a good dressing of sand and lime to the floor, sort of a combination of both scraping and deep litter, sort of thing!

Pres of the Fleet DRPC, he is often on call for show judging engagements and, like his near neighbours, named above, lives pigeons all year round. He says he would like to see overcrowding stopped in lofts, as he is sure this causes disease, 'flyaways' and, as a consequence, fan-

ciers leaving the sport, a happening which might never have occurred if the young fancier had been properly educated, in the first place, in the good sense rules of the game.

He is, himself, quite prepared to play a waiting game with his birds. He never rushes them into races when unfit and is always ready and willing, aye keen, to see that a bird is 100% fit from a previous race before being sent again. His work as a sub-contract builder sometimes leaves him lots of time on hand, but more often keeps him too busy, so Jean, his wife, is to be seen in the loft feeding, watering, or clocking, as often as himself, on occasions. About 5 prs of stock birds are kept, 16 prs OBs and about 30 YBs are reared annually. Jim thinks that far too many fanciers are part-timers, who neglect their birds during winter and thus reap the reward that they duly receive the following season. He also reckons that most fanciers keep 90% rubbish and just don't know the difference between that and good sound stock. I agree with him, fervently! When he started in the sport, Jim fell into the usual pitfalls, such as over breeding and sending the entire team to one race, often a bad one, with the inevitable disastrous result but he learned fast and didn't repeat the errors. A keen cycle racer, cross-country runner and swimmer, in his younger days, he knows the value of exercise and fitness and sees to it that his birds are kept by the same golden rules. I don't as a

rule quote many race results when I write an article but the record sheet of one of Jim's birds, 'Mr. North', bears printing here. 1st Thurso (Fed) only bird on the day, 1st Retford, 1st Elgin only 4 birds in race time, 1st Selby, 1st Weymouth, 2nd Fed Elgin, 2nd Fed Northallerton, and so on, including twice Bordeaux on the day, Pau in race time, and 38th Open and 78th Open Palamos, to quote only half of his wins. Most of the birds here are a small-medium in size, good feather, excellent eye and well muscled. Mealies prevail, though there are one or two other colours. The family dog is dead jealous of the birds and ensures that none of them ever sits on the grass when he's around. He also keeps cats out so earns his place by the fireside OK.

I HAD to push on the following day to Weymouth, where I heard there might be a chance of buying a house in my wage bracket, so I missed the wedding, unfortunately but on one of these not too distance days in the near future I hope to call in at Fleet again, and have another shufti at the Jones team; they certainly take a bit of keeping up with. For a warm welcome, a comfortable bed, a marvellous natter, one of the best cuppa's in a long march, and some of the nicest company I've met in years - not to mention the birds - my very deepest thanks Jim, Jean and the lads. From myself and the 'Gazette', salutations and best wishes for the future; you deserve to win a national and I hope you do. Cheers!