

PIGEON
RACING

FOR

BEGINNERS

by

A.J. BEARD.

Dedication.

To old Tom,

who knew it all.

Acknowledgements.

The author wishes to thank the following people for their co-operation in helping him to prepare this thesis.

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Preface.

Although I have raced pigeons for five years or more, when it came around to writing this thesis, it slowly dawned upon me as to what a vast and interesting subject it can be to the beginner.

During my relative few years in the Yancy, I read many works on the Racing Pigeon, but never did I stop to consider the wide expanse of material that can be put into a book of this kind.

In this thesis, I have tried to include everything that would help the novice who starts from scratch, but obviously I am bound to allow a few facts to slide which I have forgotten, but what is contained between these covers will, I hope, provide some valuable information to the beginner.

Locking.

April 1959.

Introduction.

Pigeons have been used for message carrying purposes ever since man discovered their ability to come back to their lofts. Hannibal used them when crossing the Alps, and they proved servicable to the people of Paris in the siege of 1870-71. Newspapers have found them valuable on a number of occasions and Reuters, who once ran a pigeon service in their early days, took advantage of this method of transmitting news from the Normandy beaches.

When wireless came into use, it was thought that pigeons would cease to be of any use, but World War II proved they could be used, when for security reasons, wireless could not. The fall of Tunis was announced to the allies by a Racing Pigeon.

During the last war, nearly 200,000 birds were given by fanciers to the

Racing Pigeon Service. The value of each bird was between £2 and £5, and they paid for their weight in gold.

The birds were dropped by parachute to agents operating behind the enemy lines, and they brought back much valuable information.

As pigeons can fly as high as 35,000 feet, they were particularly useful once they gained height.

Pigeons saw service during D-Day, with the American forces in Europe, in India, Burma and also in the Middle East.

Some of the birds returning to England were very badly shot up, some with tails missing, others with bullet crazes all over their body, but they returned, whereas no aircraft could have achieved that feat!

The late King George VI owned the first pigeon to return from the continent with a message and this bird was awarded

The Dickin Medal, the V.C. of the Pigeon World.

Under war conditions in 1944, a pigeon achieved one of the longest flights on record. This was for the R.A.F., and the flight was from Gibraltar to Gillingham in Kent, a distance of 1,100 miles.

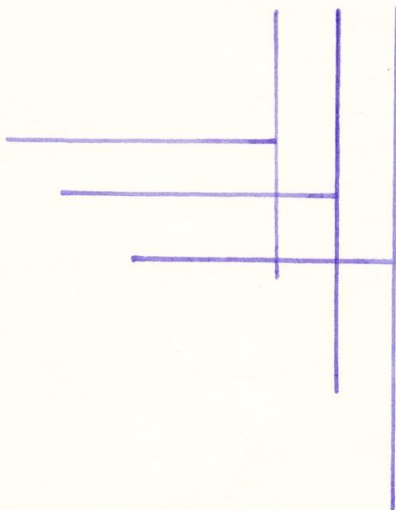
The time taken was approximately ten days, but it has not been properly estimated.

Many of these war heroes had more than man made dangers to overcome and these were the deadly hawks and falcons which drop from the sky on to the unsuspecting pigeon.

The reader can see therefore that the Racing Pigeon has been used universally for countless centuries, but now in peacetime, it has returned to its previous occupation, that of a sporting game.

PIGEON

RACING



FOR

BEGINNERS.



Chapter 1.

The Loft.

So far as the young fancier is concerned, if he happens to have an available piece of ground, such as a garden or an allotment, the erection of his racing loft should be relatively simple.

The most suitable size for the beginner, which is recommended by most housing authorities, is roughly around twelve to fifteen feet long, by about six feet in depth to six or seven feet high. This size of loft will easily house up to thirty five to forty birds.

In prewar days, manufacturers provided a large list of various sizes and types of pigeon lofts, but nowadays there is little hope

of obtaining a ready made loft unless it can be bought from somebody who is retiring from the sport. The other alternative therefore, is to build one or convert a shed or other similar building along the necessary lines.

Some very successful fanciers have used old brick airraid shelters of the above surface type which have been smartly furnished and are quite suitable providing they are well ventilated.

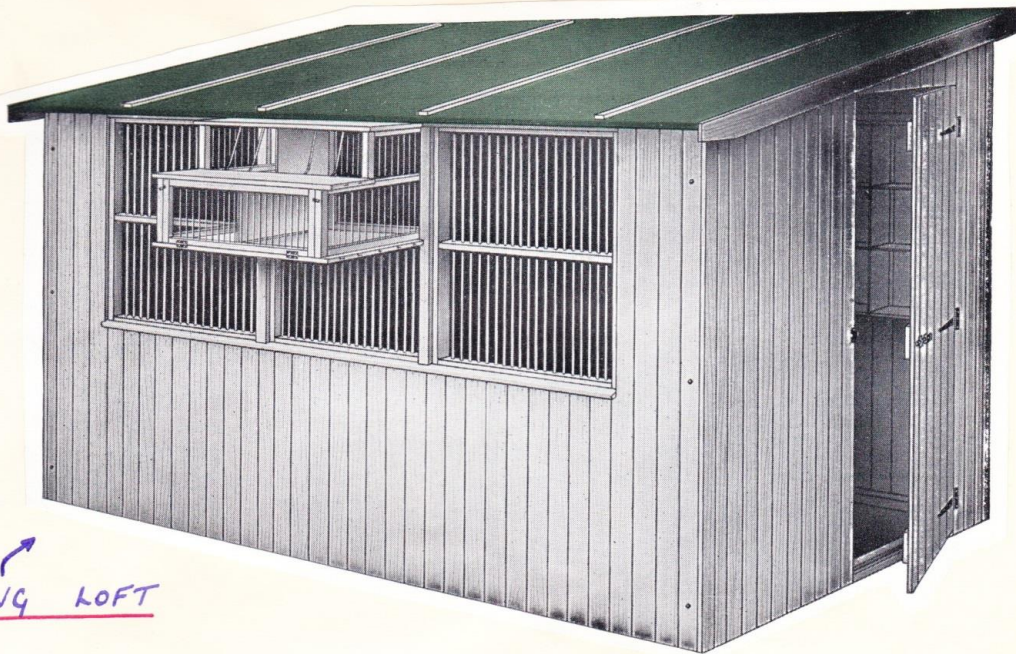
With the help of another fancier or someone who knows the construction of a loft, the beginner will find it fairly easy to construct his own. The materials are easily purchased from dealers and the rest of the little oddments can easily be made in any back garden shed. From the outside, every racing

loft should appear the same. The rear and the two sides of the loft are unbroken, except perhaps for a small door leading into the aviary, and also the roof should be one complete surface with no roof window or sky light.

From the front, the average loft will contain all the necessary components, but the layout depends entirely on the individual fancier.

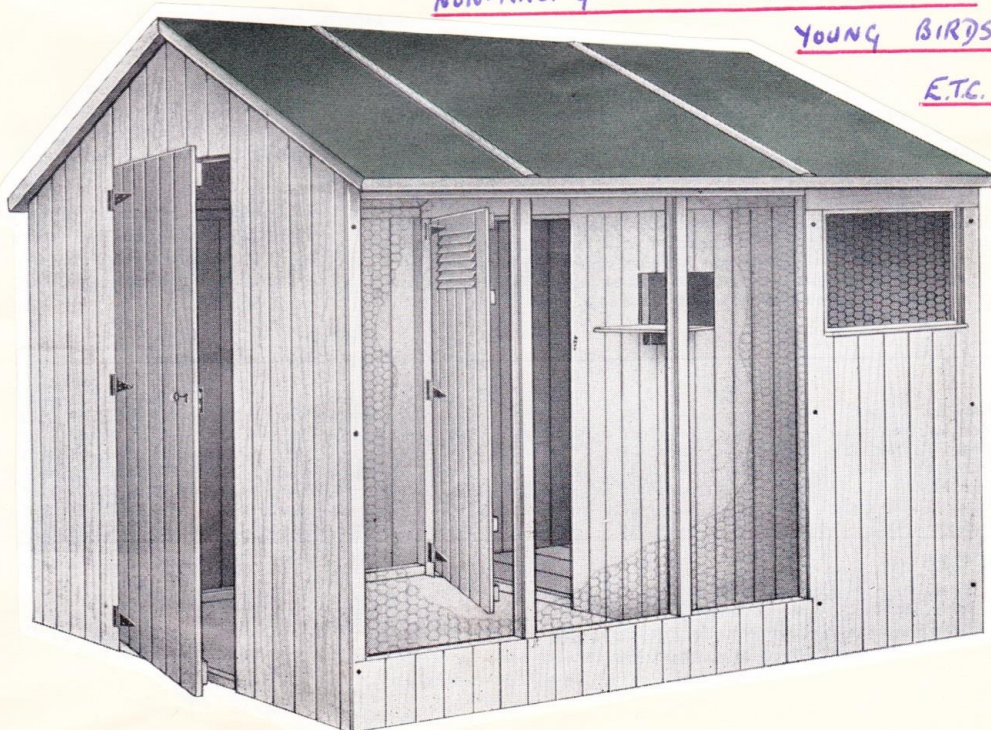
The number of outside doors is again dependant on the loft, but generally, the less the better. For your sake, & for the birds, one main door is sufficient.

The "windows" of a loft are always covering in wire netting, usually of $\frac{1}{4}$ " or $\frac{1}{2}$ " gauge. A glass window inside should always be avoided, as it must be remembered, that racing pigeons



↗
RACING LOFT

↘ NON-RACING LOFT FOR NEW AND
YOUNG BIRDS
ETC.



are like other birds, ie they cannot distinguish glass very easily and they are apt to fly into it.

The wire netting or mesh as it is called, should be fixed to the walls of the loft from the inside, and all loose and ragged ends cut off or covered by felt. These ends may injure your stock when they take their inside exercise.

A very important point to consider when designing a loft is the question as to whether your loft will be damp or have bad ventilation. There are many ways in which a loft can be kept dry and warm, but the most general ideas are as follows.

All racing pigeon lofts should be raised off the ground by at least three to four inches. This perhaps, is the most important point of all, A loft which is

actually resting on the ground will almost certainly develop rot in the floor boards and after a few months, the weather & its bad foundations, will render it useless.

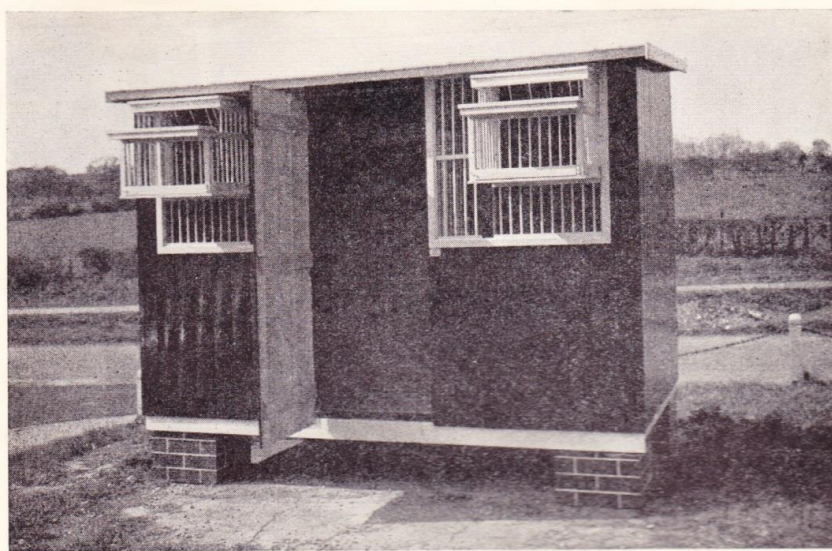
When considering the ventilation problem, it must always be remembered that hot air rises and so the most obvious thing to do is to arrange small holes around the walls of the loft and just below the roof.

Grills, with a doweled front, positioned near the ground level of your loft, will be sufficient to complete the circulation of air.

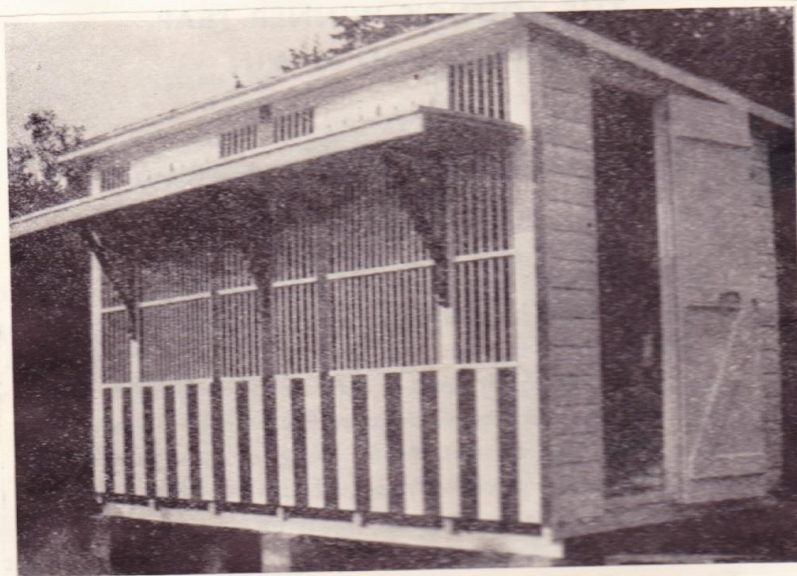
In building, in your mind and in the actual construction, it must be remembered not to overdo things. For instance, two ventilator grills, roughly two feet square are ample in an average loft.

One point to remember about your roof is that it is far better to have it sloping away from the front. For one thing, this will keep rain from either collecting on the top or from dripping across the front, but most of all, it will prevent your birds from lingering on the roof after a race in which seconds count, particularly in short distance flying.

The actual material used on the roof varies of course from loft to loft. Some fanciers use wood covered with felt or tin covered inside & out with felt or asbestos. Personally I prefer asbestos as this type will keep the loft cool during the hot summer months & it is a very hard & reliable material. Similarly a roof should never be covered with tar or pitch as this will



READY MADE PIGEON LOFTS.



undoubtedly get very sticky and hot under the sun.

The reader may have wondered why I have not mentioned the entrance taken by his pigeons to get into the loft. I have left it till last because to my mind, it is the most important part of the exterior of any racing loft.

The most efficient & quickest entry by a bird returning to its loft will count towards its placing in the race. When a bird returns from a race, it has to be caught, have the race ring taken from its leg, and then this rubber ring is dropped into the "clock" which registers the time it is put in. Therefore the beginner can see that he has to get his bird down from the air and into his hand in the quickest time possible, but this will be dealt

with in a later chapter under training.

The actual entrance is known throughout the pigeon world as a trap. The only trapping it does is to allow easy entry into the the loft and to prevent the birds from getting out again.

With all traps, a landing board is necessary upon which the pigeons alight and then drop into the loft. The length of the trap depends upon the length of the landing board. It's height will also vary with the height of the loft, but it is safe to say that it should be fitted roughly about three quarters of the way up the front of the loft from the ground.

The width again varies, but it is usually between 12" and 20". At least $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick material is necessary for stability and to prevent it from.

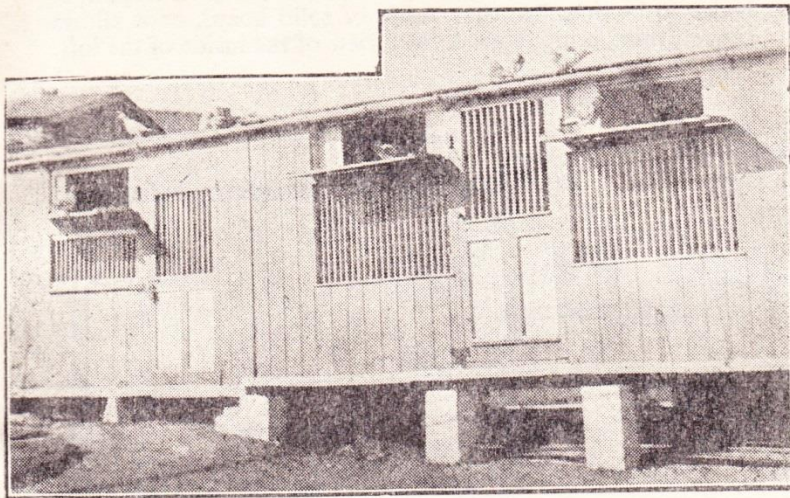
warping. Wooden or metal supports are advised as this will add to its firmness. A very important point to remember is that it must have a gentle slope away from the loft to run rain water off, but not enough to upset the bird's balance.

With regard to the actual trap itself, there are many different types used throughout the pigeon world.

The most suitable in my opinion is the open trap. This takes the form of an open box, 5" square at the ends and from 4 to 6 inches deep. This is laid upon one side and fitted into the front of the loft with only 1-2 inches showing outside.

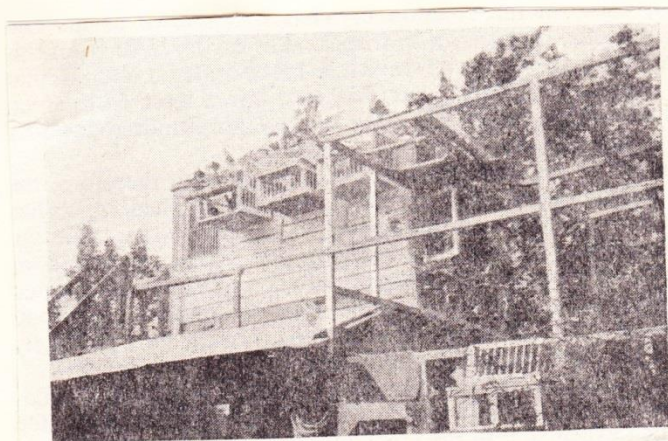
Any number of these may be placed alongside one another on the landing board.

A 1" wide wooden bar placed across the opening inside the loft



Typically English North-Country Loft with doweled front, and small type Landing Boards for each compartment. Loft is that of Mr. W. Astles of Wirral, Cheshire

TYPICAL HOME BUILT ENGLISH LOFTS.



Picturesque Loft of Mr. W. G. Rummery of Guildford, showing high-set position and large outside Aviary

and positioned roughly an inch to two inches down from the top, will give the bird ample room to drop through & into the interior, but prevent any of the birds from flying up to it and so out ~~in~~ onto the landing stage.

In its entry into the loft, the homing bird will not come into bodily contact with anything and from experience of different types of traps, I have found that all pigeons prefer this method.

Another commonly used method is called the bobhole grill trap.

With this type, the complete opening into the loft is covered with metal or wooden bars hanging down from a common or individual axle.

They are fitted from the inside of the loft and hang just below the landing board so that they can be pushed open from the

outside but not from the inside. In my pigeon loft I use this type as well as the open trap, but I must admit, the open trap is the more popular with my birds.

The spacing of these bars is approximately one inch apart, so that the bird can see the inside of the loft. With this type of trap, a wooden bar is needed inside, which can be slung behind the wires to prevent them being opened at night by any intruders, or from keeping cats and stray pigeons out.

A good point to notice when constructing your loft is that it is necessary to have all doors, windows and traps completely removable to be able to get into all the cracks & corners during cleaning.

The young novice might wonder which is the best position to have his loft. If he lives in a house

with a fair-sized garden, the obvious position is farthest away from the house to enable his flock to descend straight on to the roof or the landing board. He will find this an advantage over the fancier whose loft is situated near his house where his birds have to alight on the rooftop before descending to the loft. My own garden is spread out around my house and also as it is on a corner my birds have first to alight on the houseroof and then drop down to the loft.

I have found this a distinct disadvantage over my friends who have a long back garden where their birds alight straight on to the loft.

In this temperate climate of ours, the prevailing winds can cause trouble if we have our lofts facing the wrong direction and



By gracious permission of H.M. the Queen
H.M. The Queen's Loft at Sandringham

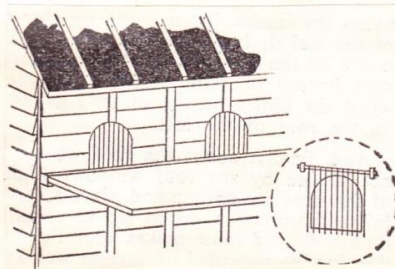
ROYAL LOFTS



FRONT SECTION OF

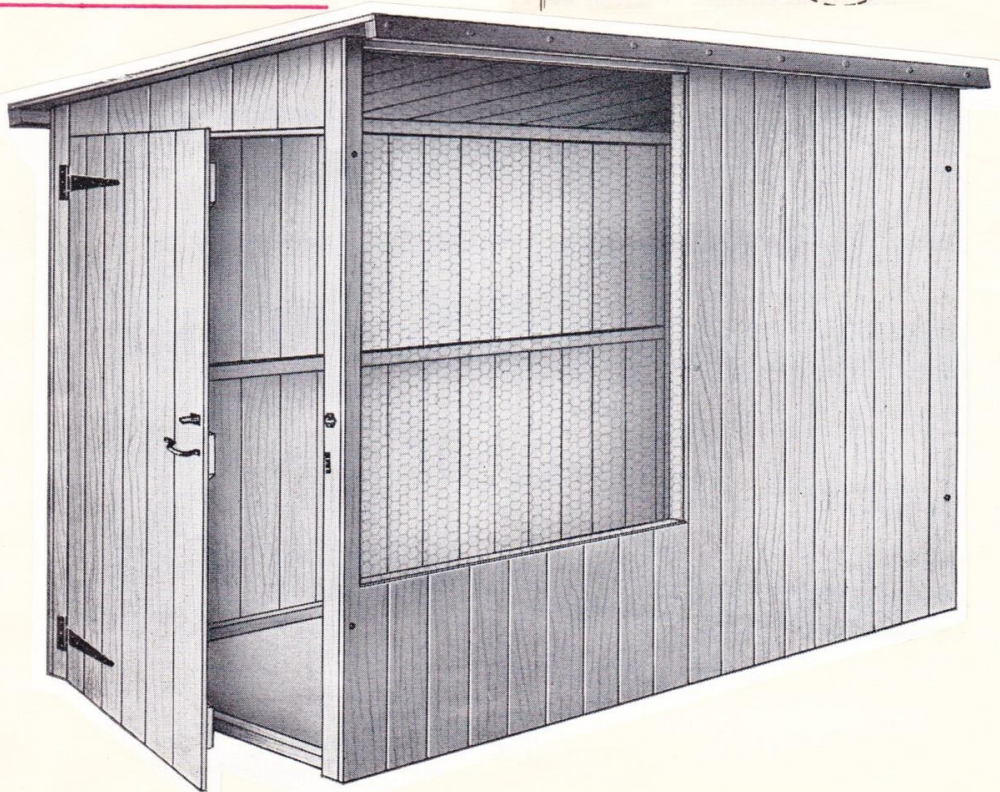
LOFT SHOWING

BOBHOLE GRILLS



ADDITIONAL SECTION OF

LOFT WITH OPEN FRONT.



so the beginner should have his loft facing the south or south east with its back to the wind and driving rain.

Also during the winter months it is advisable to have tarpaulin sheets hung across the front overnight & during snowy weather to prevent the inside of the loft from getting wet.

The beginner must always remember that when his birds return home from a long race they won't welcome the idea of becoming aerial spotting machines in an effort to distinguish their loft in the maze of building below, and so he must make his loft easily discernable from the air.

Different fanciers have their own ideas upon decorating the outside of the loft such as fancy trellis-work along the front, or painting

them gaudy colours, but all beginners will do well if they take the tip and paint their loft in a colour differing from its natural surroundings.

My own loft is painted in a medium maroon as against the green background of the countryside and also I have adapted a commonly used practise of a design upon the roof. On the roof of my loft I have painted a large white star, which must show up quite well from the air. Whether or not my birds recognise their home by this star I just can't say, but at least I am at ease knowing that my loft is not camouflaged.

In this chapter I have endeavoured to help the novice in choosing and building his own loft. In the following chapter I will go on to describe the interior.

Chapter 2.

The Loft Fittings.

As we unlock the door, for racing pigeons are too valuable not to be secured against those two-legged intruders who sometimes work by night, we find ourselves in a passage about 2' 6" wide running down the whole length of the loft.

Behind that, there are three compartments each divided by a lathed partition on a lathed front. If it is in the winter months the two ends contain the cocks & hens while in the centre partition are a few new birds and some late bred youngsters. During the actual breeding season all of these three compartments will house the mated pairs.

Each separate compartment is

entered by a lathed door and each individual compartment communicates with the next by means of a lathed door and in addition at the foot of the partitions are further hinged doors measuring about 9" square.

These smaller doors are to allow the birds to walk from one division to the next, especially in the mating season.

At the rear of the loft and along the side walls are the best places to install the perches. These are necessary as each individual bird will want his or her own place to roost overnight & to rest during the day.

There are two main types of perches, but the novice will find that most fanciers prefer the box type over the roof top type.

The boxes are made from normal thin wood of approximately 1' square

and 6" deep. These boxes are housed next to each other and fixed in rows up the side of the wall. The number of boxes depends of course upon the number of birds the loft can cater for.

These particular perches make pigeon handling very easy, as the bird cannot get out or away from the outstretched hand, but well trained birds should never fly away from the owner. A sense of trust should be installed in the pigeons so that the owner can pick up any bird regardless of where it is in the loft.

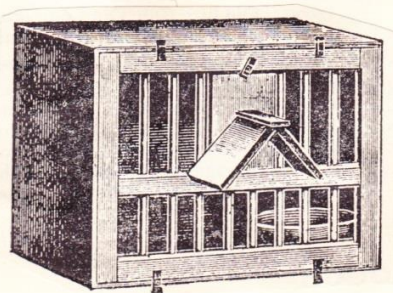
The second type of perch is the roof type, which is shaped like an inverted V. This has the advantage of being able to be fitted in awkward corners and is not so big as the box type.

A beginner will do well if he

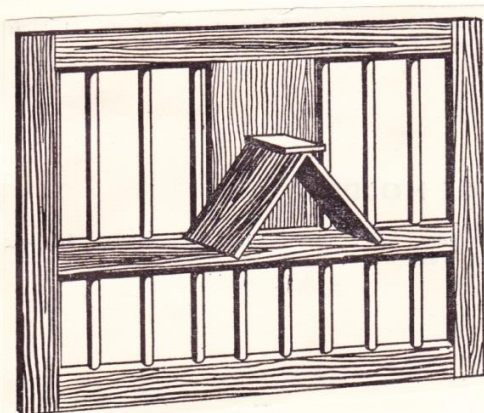
employs 80% box type & 20% roof type as some birds prefer one to the other.

If the beginner intends to breed his birds, which most people do, then he will need a fair amount of nest boxes.

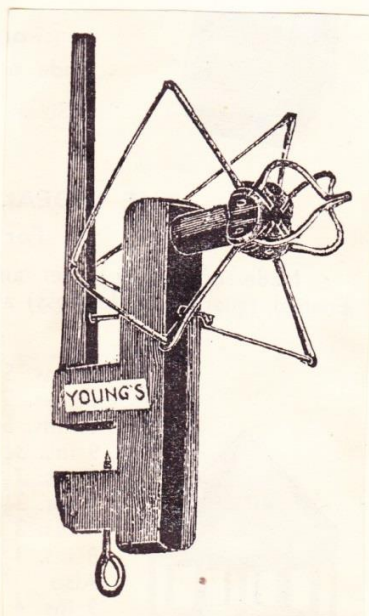
When the birds make up early in the year, the cock will choose his own box, and so a fancier normally has more boxes than mated pairs. Singularly placed nest boxes have the advantage that the pairs easily recognise their own boxes, whilst in stacking the boxes, a few fights between the cocks might be the outcome of a misunderstanding. Some fanciers have been known to attach coloured discs to each box and they declare that the owners know their box by the colour. As to the truth of that, I leave it to the reader to decide.



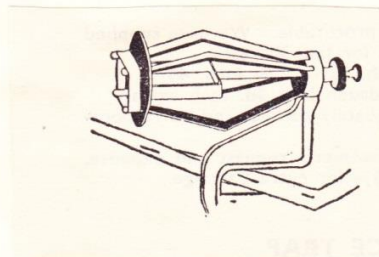
A
COMMON NESTBOX.



NESTBOX FRONT
ENLARGED.



TWO TYPES OF RINGING MACHINES.



The construction of the boxes is very simple. The floor and roof must of course be solid and sawdust, about 1" deep is advised as a covering on the bottom. The sides and back can be lathed, slated or entirely solid, depending up the owner of the loft, but the front portion must always be detachable to enable cleaning to be carried out.

As to the design of the front half, that I will leave the novice to decide for himself, but I will outline the main types.

They can be left entirely open if need be, but normally these boxes are not commonly used.

The most common type has the front split in two sections. The bottom of fixed dowelling and the top half made of the same material but fixed to the lower half by two hinges.

Two rests are fitted under the

upper half, so that the lowered section acts as a platform to allow easy entry into the box.

The third type of front incorporates a solid or latticed section with a small opening to allow free entry of the birds in and out of the box.

Whatever type of box is used, they should all have the dimensions of 2 cubic feet.

The nest pan itself can be bought from any petshop dealer and there must be one in every nest box.

The pan itself is shallow & made of porcelain and is fairly robust.

The owner can supply a few short clips of straw for the pan or else let the birds build their own nests.

Personally I prefer to let my birds loose in the garden to pick up odd pieces of straw lying around.

This I think gives them a great deal more satisfaction as I have

found some birds which object to having their nests built for them. often I have found that a few pairs will ignore the nest pan and build their own nest in the other corner of the box, but this is because I gave them their freedom whilst resting.

The novice will notice also in the racing pigeon loft an assortment of other necessities, although their numbers are restricted so as not to obstruct the birds freedom.

The feeding hoppers or grain bins are essential in all good lofts. The pigeon food must be kept spotlessly clean and for this reason many types of feeding troughs have been devised.

The novice should avoid galvanised troughs as these are entirely unsuitable. Wooden troughs are ideal either in a long V-shape or in a box covered with wire netting to keep the birds out of it.

To avoid the danger of getting the hoppers dirty they should have solid coverings over them kept away from the bird's droppings. Most fanciers only leave the hoppers in the loft at feeding times and then remove them for cleaning before the next meal.

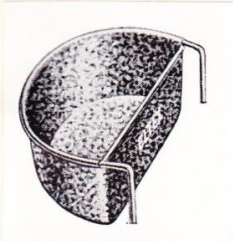
Alongside with food requirements we have the drinking facilities for the birds. Pigeons are known to drink quite a lot of water during the day and so all drinking fountains must be changed at least twice daily, once in the morning & in the evening.

The most common type of drinking fountain is the inverted bottle type.

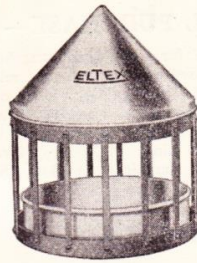
A large size medicine bottle strapped upside down on a wooden support and the mouth of the bottle hanging in a not too deep glass bottle. As soon as the level of the water in the dish goes down, then it will be replaced by more from the bottle. I have found this a very

TWO MANUFACTURED

FOOD HOPPERS



AN ALUMINIUM
DRINKING BOWL.



A PLASTIC
DRINKING
BOWL.

A GRIT
CONTAINER

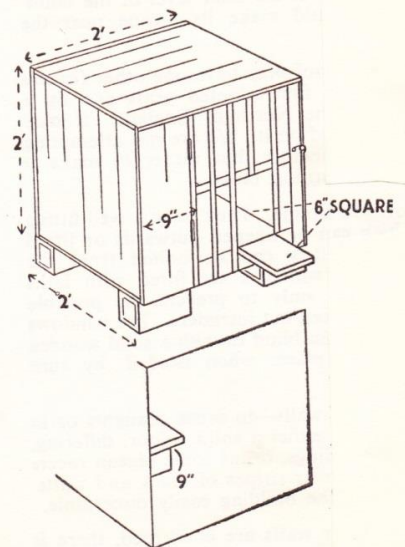


A PERCH AND FLOOR
3-CORNER SCRAPER.



LOFT ACCESSORIES.

NESTBOXES



satisfactory method over the years and providing the whole fountain is kept clean, and green slime is not allowed to settle inside, then the young fancier will find no difficulty in that type.

One very important article every loft must possess is the grit bit. Any pigeon will need grit as they digest it and use it to grind the corn & peas when feeding young. The grit must be kept in a wire covered box in some corner, and not near any perches in case the birds droppings should dirty it.

Like humans, pigeons like to bathe & then lay in the sun & dry. Every loft should have its own bath troughs, large area shallow dishes or pans will serve the purpose very well. In the summer, my birds have every Sunday morning to wash themselves thoroughly and then lay on the roof of the loft in the open air. Midweek bathing, taking the average loft, is conducted

in the aviary and then the birds fly up to the perches to sit out and dry.

Watching pigeon's antics in the bath will provide endless fun for the novice, especially at the way they flap their wings and generally do their utmost to empty the tray.

Every fancier should endeavour to procure or build an aviary, as it is a very important part of a good racing loft. A small 9" square door cut in the side of the side leads out into the aviary. A medium sized landing board will bring the bird out into the open and from there he should have the choice of a long high perch or small individual perches.

As to the nature of the floor, there are many differences of opinion in the pigeon world, but personally I prefer the bare ground type. A spot of picking around in the hard earth will do a healthy pigeon no harm

at all, but the beginner must ensure nothing that will injure his birds finds its way on to the floor of the aviary. A slightly sloping floor running into a drain will sap off any rain water which might collect in the aviary. A novice will find that his birds will spend most of the daytime hours out in the fresh air and only return to the inside to roost. It cannot be denied that it does the birds good, whatever the weather. I have seen pigeons stay in the aviary in heavy rain falls and even during snow falls.

The aviary is easily constructed of a framework of wood and covered with $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter wire mesh.

I should imagine that the reader is wondering why everywhere on the loft he finds doweled slats & when it could easily be constructed of wire of wire meshing. The answer is

That when in lofts, pigeons are apt to flap their wings and raise them off the ground for exercise. This wire netting will easily damage the birds flights & ruin them for racing and so we keep the wire to a minimum except in the aviary where they are not so liable to get their wings torn.

The only other essentials in a loft are the cleaning materials. As the loft should be thoroughly cleaned out twice a week, the tools needed have to be fairly strong & permanent. A triangular deck scraper is ideal for doing the perches and a shovel will deal with the floor. A broom, long handled & also short handled ones are needed to clear the dirt, droppings & feathers out of the loft. The loft should also be whitewashed before and after breeding every year and so a stock of good brushes should be kept for this purpose.

Providing the beginner has build and
equiped his loft as I have described
he should be ready how to look
around for his stock.

Chapter 3.

Gloosing a Bird.

Now that the novice has acquired his loft and assuming it is ready for use, he can now turn his thoughts to his birds themselves. This statement is strictly untrue, for his mind should have been on the stock from the beginning of the erection of the loft. Already the novice fancier should have made friends, if possible, with an experienced racing pigeon owner and also he should have joined his local Homing Society, and from the secretary he will have learnt all about the use of rings and clocks for timing in his birds. The novice will also get valuable information from his corn chandler about the varieties and prices of pigeon food. By joining his local club, he will also meet other fanciers who are always more than willing to

help him in any matter.

As a rule, the late summer or autumn is the best time to purchase pigeons as many fanciers have some very good birds for disposal due to their excess of requirements and also the fact that most fanciers breed a few birds purely for sale.

A novice's best bet is to purchase a few birds, preferably youngsters, from people whom he knows he can trust.

A beginner should never purchase any from adverts which appear every week in the "Racing Pigeon," as many of them are 'sharks' prying on the fact that newcomers to the sport generally know very little about pigeons. His best bet therefore is to question the members of his club, and find out what they have to offer in the way of young birds, or even old birds which may be used solely for breeding as opposed to racing.

On the whole, young birds breed earlier in the season are better than old birds. This is because old stock need to be conditioned to their new home, and this will take a considerable length of time. When old birds are acquired, they must be kept in the loft for several months until they are broken of their own habits. I have known birds which need between six and nine months of confinement to their new loft before they are allowed out for exercise with their fellow loft mates.

The young fancier must always keep that in mind, as if he is too hasty & keen to get his new birds in the air, he will find them flying straight back to their previous loft. This of course, will cause unnecessary trouble & probably annoy the bird's previous owner, and so the novice will take heed and keep his new birds in confinement, until the previous

THE
BIOLOGICAL
MAKE UP
OF A
RACING
PIGEON.

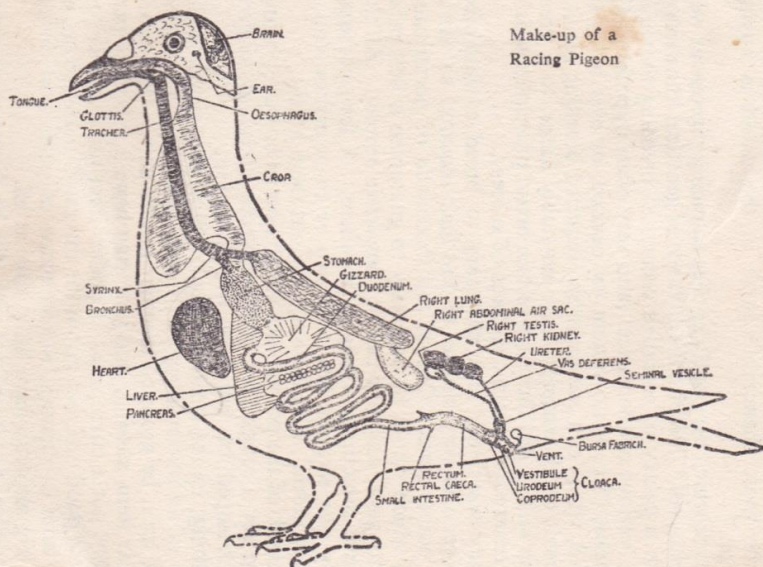


DIAGRAM SHOWING POSITION OF ORGANS IN PIGEON. (HILL)



THE
STEADY
APPROACH.

owner, who will be experienced in these matters, recommends their release.

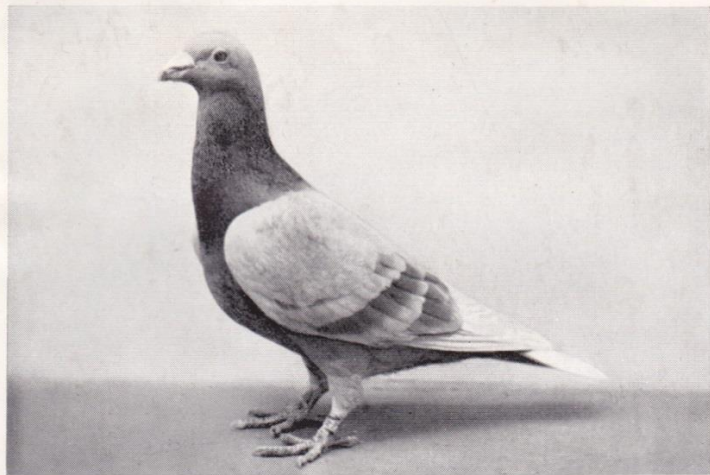
One golden rule to always be borne in mind, is that quality and not quantity counts. A few good pairs of young racers are by far better than a lot of mediocre cross breeds, and the novice should spend his money on five or six pairs of very good birds from which he can breed and race in the next season.

Although young birds are preferable for purchase, there is one disadvantage & that is the fact that their sexes must be taken on chance. This is because youngsters are very difficult to distinguish and the novice should, if possible, buy several pairs of "brother & sister" birds and then inter-mate them with the rest. It is only in the mating season that one can really tell the cocks from the hens.

Marking and colours are not of primary importance in modern Racing Pigeons and

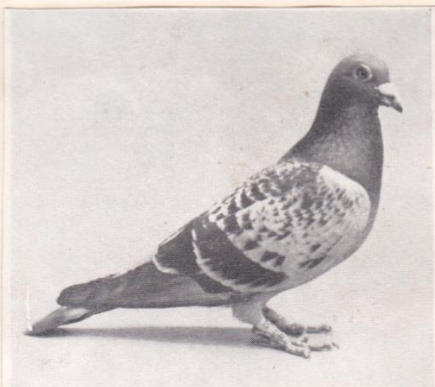
a bird of the Red group is not necessarily a better bird than one of the blue group. I have outlined the different colours and marking of domestic pigeons in the Appendix. The novice might notice though that only one in four birds in the average loft is of the Red group, but again I stress the fact that this is of no significance. Meatys & Red bleggers have won many of the large races along with the Blue variety.

The importance of the bird therefore is not the colour, but the build and power. A good racer is balanced in every way, deep in keel with a wing stretch which is expansive without being out of proportion to the rest of the body. It should be firm in flesh but definitely not flabby. The perfect pigeon should also be well covered with body feathers, the moult of course being excepted, and his prime condition should be reflected in the lustre of his plumage.

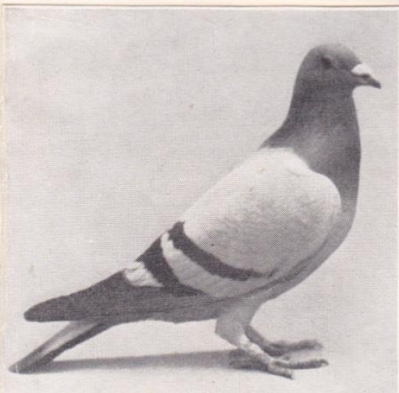


By gracious permission of H.M. the Queen

The late King George VI's Mealy Racing Pigeon



Two-Times, bred and raced by Mr. A. Neilson Hutton. Consistent long distance racing cock. Three times Rennes (550 miles) winning 49th Section, 77th Open in S.N.F.C. race, 1938. Rung SHU. 35.L. 6258.



The Nantes Hen, bred by J. T. Clark of Windermere, and raced by Mr. A. Neilson Hutton. Rung NURP. 32.WNC. 2033. One of the most outstanding long distance performers of her day. Flew Granville (500 miles) 1932. Won Midland Open Nomination race from Weymouth (400 miles) 1933. Five times Nantes (600 miles), taking positions in all races, in 1935-6-7-8. Also flew Guernsey (450 miles) 1938, and first Guernsey 1939.

A SELECTION OF
FAMOUS
RACING PIGEONS.



Mac, winner of the 1948 National race from Guernsey (450 miles). Red grizzle cock, rung SURP. 46.G. 5297. Owned by Mr. W. Gray, Chryston.

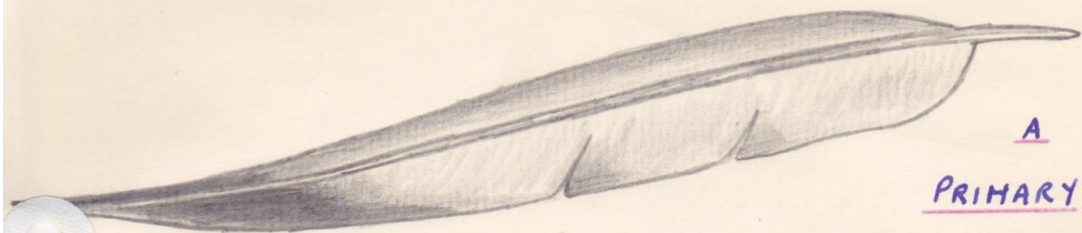
The ideal Racer should also be keen without being nervous, sensitive without being too highly strung and lusty, but not least, he must possess stamina.

Some breeders pay great attention to the eye of the Racer and declare that a good performer often can be told by the appearance of the eye, whilst the evidence for this is not conclusive, many experienced fanciers give it much credit.

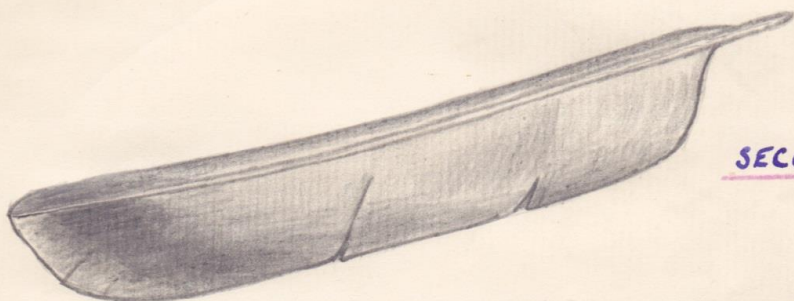
One very successful fancier declares that a grey tint in the pearl eyed bird was a good sign of a promising Racer and that a greenish cast in the red, brown or yellow eye could often be taken as an indication of the true racing instinct in the possessor.

More Pigeons are spoilt by overfeeding than by under feeding them. There is no sentiment about a Racing Pigeon and it must be remembered that he comes home as much for his food as for anything else. From the very beginning

THE FLIGHT FEATHERS of a
RACING PIGEON.



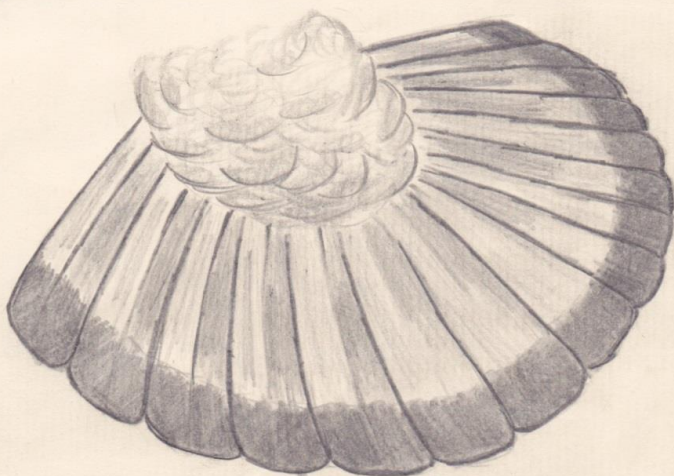
A
PRIMARY.



A
SECONDARY.



A PARTLY DOWNY
BODY FEATHER.



THE SPREAD TAIL
AND ITS UPPER COVERTS.

The Racing Pigeon owner should instil this love and desire for food in his stock and should concentrate on making the pigeons know that home is the place where they get their food and warmth.

Whilst the young birds are confined to the loft, the owner should get them accustomed to his presence in and around the loft. While the owner is cleaning the loft out every day, he should keep the birds where they are and not move them. This will accustom them to the noise and to his presence in the loft.

All this training will pay dividends, in the literal sense of the word, in time to come when he is actually racing.

Handling is of great importance in Racing Pigeons as this will enable the fancier to easily pick the birds up when they have returned from a race. It is easier with birds bred in the loft as the novice can pick them up out of the nest box at a very early age and

teach them that no harm will come to them in the owners hands. Pigeons should never be frightened whilst in or around the loft as this will make them nervous. The fancier should be able to pick them up anywhere in the loft and replace them gently on the floor or in the perches.

Once the novice starts training his birds in this manner, he will find it much to his benefit. When his birds are older and more confident, they should fly up to his outstretched hand and take food from it.

Providing the novice has taken care with his birds in breaking them in and during the moult, he finds that as early spring approaches, his birds will tend towards their other main instinct, and that being mating.

Chapter 4.

Mating and Breeding.

Generally speaking, the breeding season starts at the end of March, but some experienced fanciers who want early bred birds breed a month earlier, but never before that date.

The fancier should have had in mind all through the winter, the pairs of birds he intends to mate. It will be remembered that during the winter the cocks are separated from the hens to prevent premature mating. During the exercise periods, he will have watched his birds and picked out the good ones and the not so good ones. Keeping these in mind, he can then set about mating them.

Each nestbox must be numbered and once the cock has chosen his box, the details of the pair must

be entered in the stud register. The mated pair can then be referred to by their nest box number.

The methods used in matching two birds are many in number, but the general method is outlined below.

If the cock has already chosen the hen intended by the owner, then he can just leave them alone to get on with it, but if they are pairing up against the owners plan, he should take the following course.

The cocks and hens should again be separated for a few days, and then one by one, the pairs are allowed to see each other through a dowselled compartment of two boxes in the corner of the loft, but not actually allow them to come in contact.

After two or three days like that, they should be allowed together for a few hours each day, gradually increasing the length of time spent together, until at last, the pair

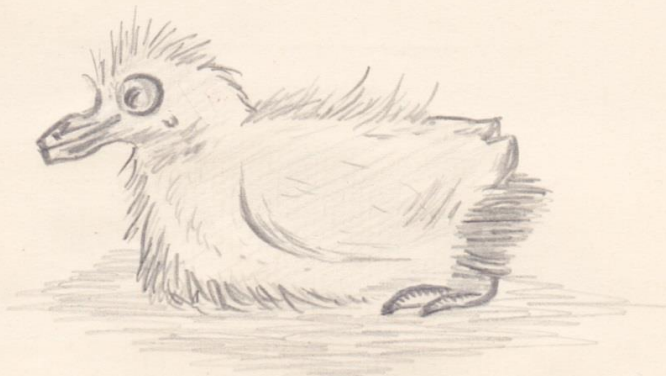
will have taken to each other and they can be released in the main section of the loft to select their nest box.

The fancier can apply this method to several birds at one time using nestboxes placed next to one another, but he must ensure that a cock does not see another hen not intended for him.

Once the fancier has achieved successful mating, and the pairs have chosen their nestbox, the birds will then settle down to lay.

The actual sexual act between pigeons is indeed a work of art and a novice's first experience makes him feel that the humans, on an average, make a farce of it. The period preceding the act is taken up entirely by the cock trying to prove to the hen that he is the best and most handsome male in the loft. He will strut before her and puff out his chest and drag his tail

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
OF A YOUNG PIGEON.



3 or 4 DAYS OLD.



3 WEEKS OLD.

feathers along the ground in an effort to win her round. If the hen is objectionable and moves around inside the loft, the cock will follow her, all the time keeping up his flattery. In the end however, the hen will agree and after exchanging kisses in which contact is made between each other's beaks, the pair will retire to a corner of the loft and then the cock does his final persuasions. He will walk around the hen, many, many times, cooing softer at her and perhaps he will stop once or twice for another kiss.

Then the hen will crouch down on the floor and the cock jumps on to her back. He clings there with his feet for maybe three or four seconds and flapping his wings to keep his balance. After he has fallen off, they will retire to a perch to preen themselves and await awhile before continuing with the same procedure.

Copulation will continue for two days

and as much as six or seven times a day.

After this the cock will turn to driving the hen to their nest and also, if provided with short pieces of straw, they will build their own nests.

Under normal conditions, pigeons can be expected to lay their first egg after the six or seventh day when they were mated. A good indication that laying is almost due is the fact that during the last day or two, the cock will become increasingly excited and he will follow his mate wherever she goes. This can be a danger sometimes, for a very excited cock will even try to prevent the hen from eating and drinking. A fancier will have to take steps to combat this and he will most likely separate the pair for a few hours to give the hen some peace and quiet. This driving period varies in intensity with individual birds, but generally speaking, younger cocks become more excited and boisterous

at this stage than older birds.

The second egg is laid at about thirty-six hours after the first.

After the second egg has been laid the birds settle down to the period of incubation which lasts about seventeen to twenty one days from the laying of the second egg. The cock will usually sit on the eggs during the middle of the day and the hen from late afternoon through to early morning.

The novice will find that both birds will not want to go out for an exercise fly at the same time, but the hen will wait until the cock comes back before she leaves her eggs.

Around the seventeenth day, the novice can begin to look for signs of hatching.

These appear in the form of small cracks on the shell and they work their way around the shell until it breaks in two. The young bird's beak is sufficiently strong at this stage to do this and

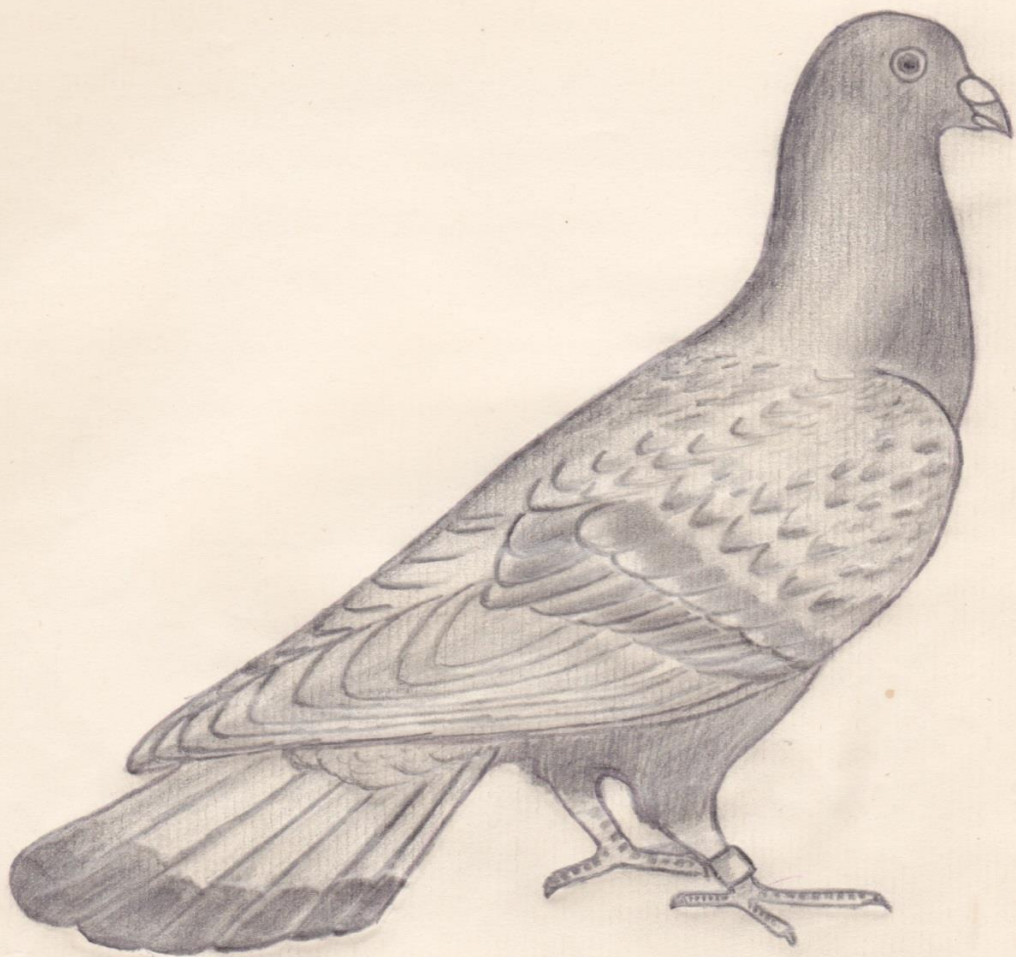
despite its apparent helplessness, it will be quite capable of chipping the shell the whole way round.

When at last the squeakers emerge, they will look nothing at all like future champions as they will be covered completely in yellow down and totally blind. This down will gradually fall off and will finally disappear when the birds are fully feathered and almost ready to fly.

The food that the parents eat is digested in their stomach and crushed into small pieces by the pieces of grit that all pigeons swallow. It is then fed to the young birds in the form of a white solution. The birds are fed through the mouth by the parent bird and water is given to the young much in the same way.

It is a very natural instinct, indeed so natural that squeakers can be fed by birds other than their parents.

Within a week of birth, the squeakers will have developed a great deal



A YOUNG RACING PIGEON

SIX TO SEVEN WEEKS OLD.

and they will begin to make the nestbox look small with their enormous size. The beaks will still be very soft at this stage and it is not until they are a few weeks old, will they be able to pick up food for themselves.

When young birds are just a week old, they should have a very thorough examination and any weeklings or deformed birds should be destroyed immediately.

This is also the time to ring young birds which are to be kept and raced.

Rings are obtainable from the local Racing Club and bear the registration number, the Pigeon Union to which your club belongs and also the year in which the bird was born.

The process of ringing a young bird is very simple. Hold the pigeon firmly in the left hand and with the legs outstretched, between two fingers. Then place the ring over the fourth toe until the latter assumes its normal position. Providing all

The three front toes have been safely positioned through the ring, it should stay on the leg and rarely will they come off. It is wise though to look over the youngsters every other day for about a week afterwards just in case one has come off. The ring numbers of the youngsters should always be recorded in the stud-book, as the performance of the birds can be noted and used for future reference.

The age at which young birds should be removed from the nest boxes to fend for themselves varies considerably in individual lofts. My personal preference is somewhere between twenty five to thirty days old, but much depends upon the bird itself, whether it is forward enough to feed and drink. By placing the youngsters in such a position so that they can see their parents eating and drinking, the birds will soon learn to follow suit.

Some youngsters find difficulty in appreciating the way a water fountain

works, and a good way to teach them is to dip their beaks into the fountain for a few seconds. This will soon teach them just what is there, and once they take their first piece of grain & drink from a fountain, the battle is won.

After being taken away from its parents, the young birds might mope for a while, but pangs of hunger in an empty crop will soon take these feelings away.

As soon as they are ~~old~~ enough the birds may be placed on the loft roof or landing board so that they can see the older birds trapping. Also they will learn to recognise the sound of food rattling in the grain tin and they will know that a meal is waiting for them.

By watching the things that the other birds do, the youngsters will soon pick up all the ways of the loft and, as they get stronger, they will want to use their wings and the novice must take care that his birds do not come

to any hen in their maiden flights.

About this time, the parents will be thinking about another batch of eggs and before long, two more white objects will be seen under the hen.

If the fancier does not wish to breed any more from that particular pair, he will substitute china dummy eggs under the birds. After three and a half weeks of fruitless sitting, the old birds will give up and decide to try again, but it is best to separate them at this stage as extra test boxes and birds laying on dummy eggs can be a nuisance.

Chapter 5.

Flying Out Young Birds.

As soon as young birds are taken away from their parents, they should be kept in the young bird compartment for at least a week, so as they might custom themselves to their new way of life.

At this stage in their life, youngsters develop very quickly, and so no time must be lost in teaching them the basic facts of Racing. They should be taken out in the open and be allowed to view the scene around their home, so that they might easily recognise it from the air. A few hours spent on the rooftop watching the older birds will suffice, and the novice need not worry about his birds developing fright in their early flights. When the birds are first taken out of the loft, it is well to put them out through the trap, as their natural instinct will be to get in

again by the same way and thus save them any bewilderment. It is also a good thing to teach them just what a trap is, and by pushing or dropping the youngsters through the trap, several times a day, will soon show them the way in which they enter the loft.

The best time to take your young birds out for a look around, is late in the evening, when they are less likely to feel inclined to try their wings. After a few outings on the roof of the loft like this, the youngsters will gain confidence and begin to take short flips in the air, which will gradually be extended until they are flying steadily around the loft. Once the youngsters have reached this stage, they can be let out with the older birds at regular intervals during the day. It would be a wise thing though, to keep the old birds in the loft when the youngsters first take to the wing, but as soon as they

begin to grow steadily stronger, then no harm will be done.

Extreme care should be taken though to prevent young birds panicking and flying away from the loft, and then drop to the ground exhausted. It is better, therefore, that if you have old birds with bad habits, to keep them apart, but if the novice has broken in his birds well, he will not find this trouble.

In a week or so after their first tentative efforts to find their wings, the young birds will begin to pack together in the air and will gradually extend their flying range until they are covering considerable distances around the locality of their loft.

One of the most common dangers at this stage is what is called a "flyaway". This is a bird, which, for no apparent reason, takes to the wing as usual, but instead of returning, they fly completely away. A few sometimes work their way back

to the loft within a day or two, but usually they are never to be seen again. In my five years experience in Racing Pigeons, I have only once had a flyaway and that was a Nealy Hen, which just did not return from a routine exercise flight when she was about two months old.

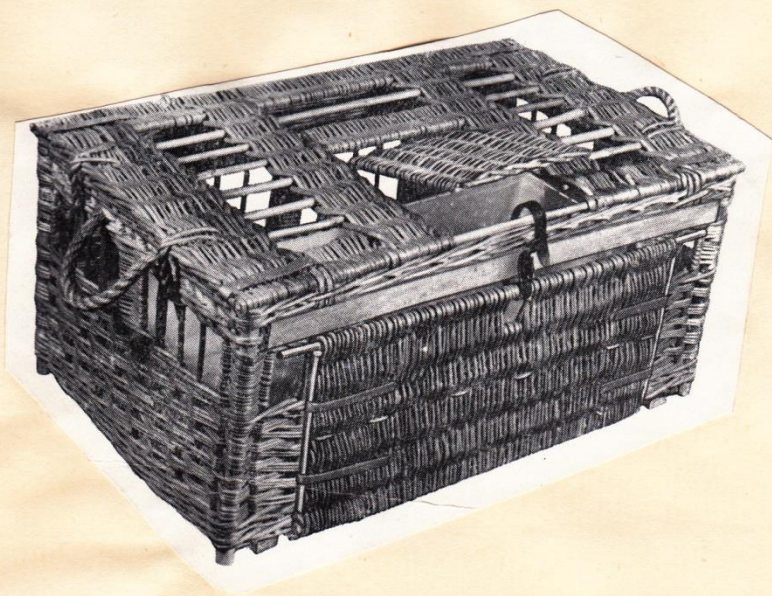
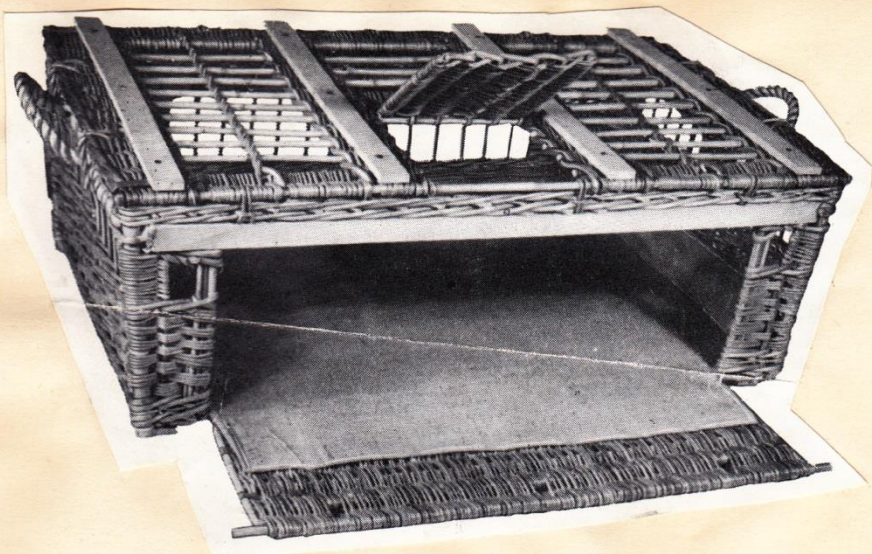
Various theories have been put forward as to why young birds, who for several weeks have been steadily flying around the loft, should suddenly take a mad notion to stampede, sometimes for hundreds of miles, until they are completely lost, tired and hungry. One theory, and is the most widely excepted in the fancy, is that the natural exuberance of young birds suddenly overcomes them, and their domesticated instinct not to stray too far from their loft. Before they realize it, that pent up exuberance has developed into a mad fly which ends up

in complete exhaustion, in some part of the country with which they are completely unfamiliar with.

The regular exercise periods each day are advised in the late afternoon or evening rather than to send them out in the early morning sunshine. Brilliant morning sunshine has a tonic effect on youngsters, and it is suddenly graded to this brilliance which may result in a flyaway. It is seldom that young birds will stray far from the immediate vicinity of their lofts in the dullish conditions of the spring evenings.

When the young birds have reached the stage of flying freely around and particularly when they have been given some initial training in the basket, there is little danger of them being lost in a flyaway.

At this stage it cannot be too strongly emphasised that any young



RACING PIGEON BASKETS
SHOWING
METHODS OF RELEASE.

birds showing definite signs of weakness or deformity, should be destroyed at the earliest possible moment. The best and by far the most efficient way is to wing the bird's neck, and if performed correctly can be done both quickly and quietly with no undue fuss.

The whole future of the loft depends largely on the type of stock bred in any season, and the rearing of the weak may cause disappointment in the later stages of racing.

Chapter 6.

Training Young Birds.

The first and most important thing to train young racing pigeons in, is the basket.

Before a fancier can start sending his birds away to any liberation point, he must make sure that his birds have had sufficient basket training. A bird which is taken out to its first homing flight, and which has not had previous basket training will probably be so scared that it will become lost quickly on release.

A few nights spent in a basket will get them accustomed to the somewhat similar conditions they will eventually experience in the actual race panniers.

The birds should not be crowded into the basket as this can be the direct cause of birds failing to return after a toss as they become battered & bruised in the

melee of fluttering pigeons. Normal eating and drinking facilities must be provided for the birds whilst they are in the basket, and this will install in their minds, that they are in a small, mobile loft. Every now and then, it would be a good idea to pick the basket up and place it down somewhere else, preferably facing a new direction. Don't, repeat don't handle them with too much care, do as the employees of a certain Nationalised concern do!

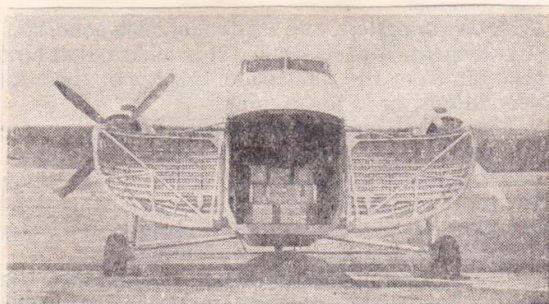
After the birds have spent a few days and nights in a basket, their fright should have left them and when they are taken for their first training flight, they will accept the basket as something very familiar.

Nowadays many firms produce all sizes of pigeon baskets and they are generally the same in design. A thick layer of sawdust in the bottom of the basket will prevent the birds dropping

Typical liberation scene at a railway station. "Field" for the London Championship young bird race being sent up at Northallerton.



Go!



Air travel is playing an ever-increasing part in getting convoys to the race-points in the big Cross-Channel events. Photo shows a Bristol Freighter, specially constructed for transport of livestock.

Taxi!

from clinging to their feet, and it also acts as a cushion or shock absorber when the baskets are being moved around in transport.

In the front of the wicker framework, there should be a large drop front, which can be opened with ease and allow the birds to fly out.

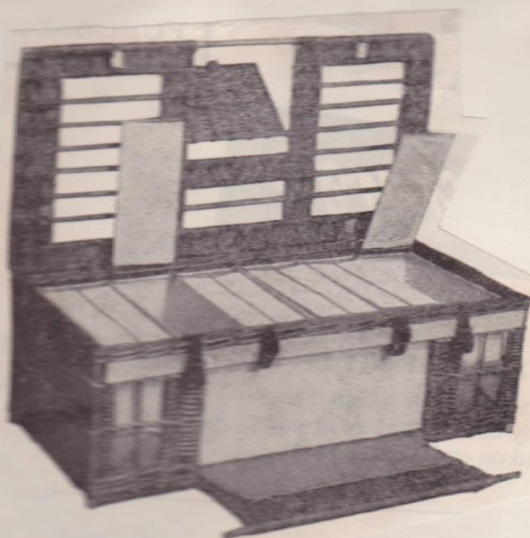
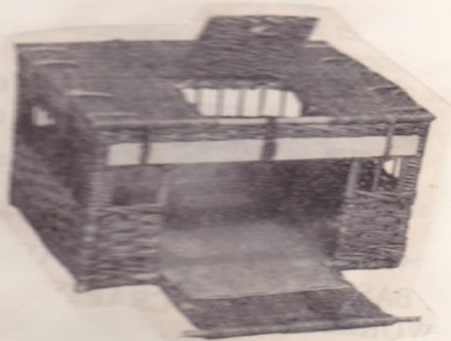
One other very important thing that the birds must learn before their first toss, is quick trapping. This is by far the most important factor of all in racing pigeons, as a medium-fast bird which is a fast trapper is a lot better pigeon than a fast but medium trapper.

In today's fast times and in short races, every single second can count towards the final placings. Here again training should commence long before the birds are sent for their first training toss, in fact it should commence immediately they begin to fly.

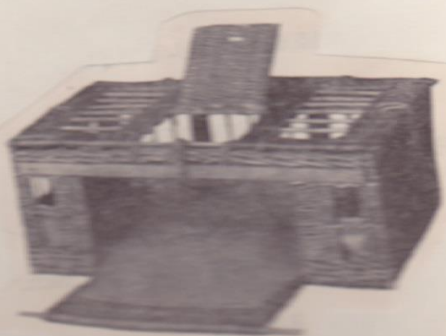
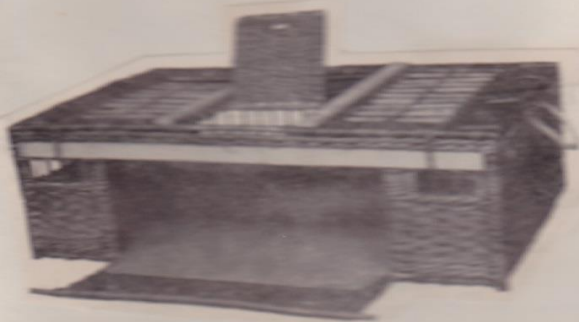
out regularly around the loft. With my own birds I taught them to trap as soon as they could take short flights from one landing board across to the other. Some fanciers, however, allow young birds their freedom for much of the daylight hours and don't bother either to give their birds proper exercise or get them into the loft immediately their following the exercise fly. These are generally fanciers who are not particularly interested in young bird racing as such, but being more concerned with allowing the young stock to obtain the benefit of sun and fresh air.

For the novice, keen on winning his share of club races with both young and old birds, however, quick trapping is vital.

If young birds which on being sent out for exercise flights on empty crops, are trapping well, then half the battle is won. If, however, they are hanging



A
SELECTION OF
RACING PIGEON
BASKETS.



about on the roof for considerable periods of time and refusing to enter the loft, then immediate steps should be taken to correct this failing. This might well develop into a habit which will be hard to break and may cost a fancier many a race. If a good habit is instilled at an early age, then its influence will last a lifetime. If, on the other hand, it is allowed to develop into a bad habit, it will be extremely difficult to get rid of.

The first method of breaking bad trapping is to cut down on young birds food. Provided your birds are reasonably treated and well looked after, no harm will come to them if they miss the occasional meal. The pangs of hunger will almost certainly bring even the most stubborn bird in, and once the fancier has got to the stage of getting his birds in quickly with an empty crop, he must continue this practise for at

least a week, so that the birds can recognise the rattle of the corn tin as being a sign of an approaching meal. The novice must always feed his birds on return to the loft, no matter what the circumstances are. This will teach his birds that their loft is the only place where they get their food, and if the novice treats them so, he will have no trouble from slow trappers.

Once basket training and fast trapping has been successfully achieved, the novice can now turn his thoughts and actions to training his youngsters over distances.

Some fanciers believe that youngsters should be gradually trained out at comparatively short distances, commencing at two miles or so from the loft, until the birds reach the forty or fifty mile mark, prior to taking part in the first race. Other fanciers declare that a youngster is not worth its salt if it cannot be jumped

into the twenty five to thirty miles stage right away and return in a reasonable time.

Normally races are won by the birds who strike the shortest route between the liberation point and their home loft. The novice will at this point find it both interesting and enlightening if he obtains a reasonably scaled map and draws a line from the first race point to the city, town or village where his loft is located.

For the first toss, the birds should be taken approximately two miles away from the loft in the direction of the line drawn on the map, and liberated together. If they tend to hang about before striking off for home, some adjustments must be made. Firstly, release them later on in the evening, when the sun is slowly sinking and also, instead of their usual light feed in the morning,

give them their full meal the night before.

This will undoubtedly cure any tendency to hang about, and the novice will find his birds winging their way home after just one circuit on liberation.

For the second toss, however, instead of releasing all the birds at the same time, put them up in pairs, waiting until the previous pair heads for home, before releasing the next pair. Repeat this procedure until the birds strike for home immediately they are released.

Properly carried out, a few tosses will see the birds head for home as soon as released, and trapping immediately they land. They can then be released singularly instead of in pairs and a note taken of any particular individual which persistently does not strike off for home at once.

Any inclined to hang around

after being liberated, should be kept to the last, as it may have the effect of influencing other youngsters who are responding well.

When it is seen that the birds are wasting no time in reaching home from the first mile stage, the distance should gradually be increased, first by a couple of miles and then by five or six miles until the twenty mile stage has been reached.

If facilities are possible, this distance can be extended right out to the forty - fifty mile stage, using the same basic principle as outlined for the first loss. If however, it is found impossible to personally liberate the birds after the ten mile stage, the novice will find it necessary to send his birds for release to a railway station on the line of flight of his first race.

There is one very important point the novice must bear in mind

during his first season, and that is the fact that he cannot judge his success in racing on his first season.

When a particular youngster comes racing home one Saturday afternoon to give you that long loped for win, do not let your natural enthusiasm lead you astray in believing that you have a champion in the making.

Young bird racing, under reasonable conditions, is often very much a matter of mob flying in which success depends to a great extent on good trapping and loft position. Every Saturday afternoon, one can see flocks of birds passing by and then one or two suddenly drop out towards a nearby loft, whilst the rest carry on.

All these young birds have to do now is to trap quickly and maybe earn a race position.

So far as the beginner is concerned therefore, if he has set his

ambitions towards flying the longer distances, neither success nor failure with his first season's birds should be taken as any indication of how they are likely to perform in future years.

A steady programme of training young birds, without any undue check to their natural development, must be the chief aim of a beginner intent on building up a team of long distance racers. Given the right foundation stock, a policy of patience will eventually be fully justified by results.

Chapter 7.

The Moults.

The moult is a perfectly natural function, not unlike a dog throwing its old coat and growing a new one, and if the novice's pigeons are allowed to take their normal exercise, and are fed, watered and generally well managed, he need feel no anxiety for the welfare of his stock.

Many writers have described most alarming statements about the effects of the moult, and state that; - "the moulting season, whether for old or young, is a very serious and critical time, for the removal of the plumage is a great drain on the blood." That statement is absolute rubbish, for all healthy and normal pigeons come through the moult just the same as a human does when taking off an old

coat and putting on a new one.

The only danger in the moult, is when a fancier has a cold and draughty loft and his birds will suffer, of course, as a consequence. If the novice has built himself a loft as I have described in the first two chapters, then he need never fear the harms of nature's course.

The moult usually starts around September and October each year and is usually completed by New Year's Day.

The moult undergoes various phases of intensity starting with the barely noticed casting of a feather and reaching a peak in which the birds are extremely ragged for want of feathers, and gradually dying away again as the new coat is completed.

The first indication of the moult is the casting of the first inside primary flights on both wings which normally can be expected after the

birds have reared their second batch of youngsters. In place of the feathers thrown come new feathers and as each of these become fully grown, the next flight is thrown in a steady sequence until the ten primary feathers of the wing have been replaced.

After the fifth or sixth flights have been thrown, the moult becomes more advanced and spreads to the secondary flights, and then it gradually ~~extending~~ all over the body and tail.

In the latter, which is made up of twelve feathers, the last to moult are the outside pair.

The beginner should at all times turn a deaf ear and unseeing eye to suggestions that this annual period in his birds life is a critical phase. Plenty of common sense will see healthy stock pass through the so called dangers of the moult with little trouble either to themselves or their owners.

Chapter 8.

Diseases.

Generally speaking, the modern racing pigeon is an extremely robust specimen, and if kept under clean conditions with a sufficient amount of sound food and fresh water, he will have a very high resistance to disease.

The experienced fancier can generally spot at once any bird which is not up to scratch, and on examination can make a fair guess as to the possible cause and take the necessary action. The following are a few hints as what to look for, and what to do as a result of his observations.

The beginner should suspect all birds which do not display a normally healthy appetite between reasonably spaced meals and birds, when feeding, spread out their wings. An exception to the

latter is a bird which has just returned from a long race and is obviously acutely hungry.

Sitting perpetually hunched up, with ruffled feathers, drooping wings and with little or no inclination for normal exercise. Other points to look for in unhealthy pigeons are half closed eyes, wet nostrils, loose or fetid droppings, dirty and greasy wattle (except when feeding youngsters).

All the above are visible signs of a pigeons lack of good health, but the novice must not let his imagination run away with him, for racing pigeons are like humans in many ways and they also have their "off days."

In examining the suspect, the first thing to look for is any visible sign of injury. There are dozens of ways in which a bird may injure itself both outside & inside the loft and this may be indicated by blood clotted feathers, a lump or swelling on the body

wings and legs. Pigeons are very liable to damage by telephone wires or other overhead obstructions. Many of these can prove fatal, but birds which survive contact with these, usually suffer from cuts or tears to the outer skin. This may, to the novice, appear to be beyond aid, but a little gentle aid plus the amazing toughness and constitution of the pigeon itself will however cure its wounds.

Canker is a dreaded word in any pigeon loft, but very often it is a term which is either very loosely used, or applied in the wrong sense. Actually, it is a yellow deposit which is nothing more than pus, and signifies that the affected area is septic. When a bird develops canker in the throat, it is however generally useless to attempt to cure it, and the victim is better destroyed immediately the trouble is found.

going light is not really a disease, but a condition in which loss of flesh and weight occurs for which there is no apparent external cause. The bird may have the disease badly or lightly, and if bad, it is best destroyed to prevent it from spreading to the other birds.

A one-eyed cold is a watery discharge together with a partial or complete closing of the affected eye. If the eyelid is treated with spirit of camphor, the condition usually clears up in a day or two.

Diarrhoea is mainly caused by digestive disorders as a result of a too relaxing diet. Birds suffering from diarrhoea should be fed very lightly on such substance as brown bread crumbs, rice lentils or barley.

One other form of canker is Pox. Pox is recognised as tiny blisters developing into wart like swellings on the

skin of the eyelids, around the beak, on the head, on the legs and toes and less commonly on other parts of the body. Pigeons suffering from Pox, which is shown as pocks on the skin, almost invariably recover with sound treatment.

All these diseases which I have described above can easily be overcome if checked at an early stage. The infected bird should always be isolated and treated with the various medicines that any vet will prescribe. The section of the loft should also be scrubbed daily and most important, the fancier should thoroughly cleanse his hands after handling an infected specimen.

Providing their loft is clean and free from draughts and food is good and applied moderately, the novice will experience very little of these troubles in his racing years.

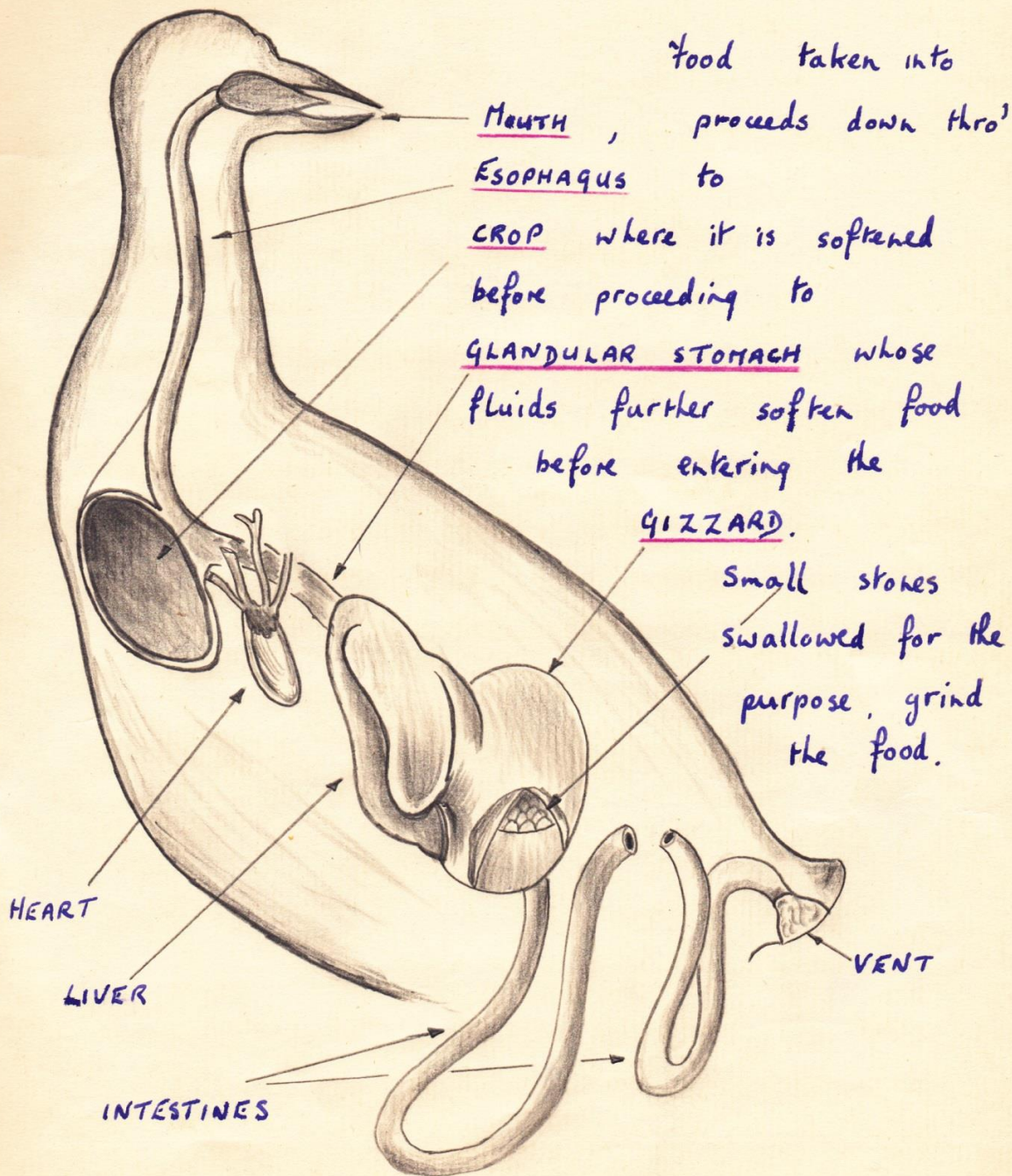
Chapter 9.

Pigeon Feeding.

Since the war, the corn available to pigeon fanciers has steadily increased in variety and nowadays almost every type of prewar seed is back on the market. The novice's pet shop dealer will give him some advice about which are the best grains to buy, but some of them are apt to think too much of their trade than to worry about starting a novice off on the right path.

Pigeon's diet falls mainly into two broad sections :- the first is the corn mixture, and the second the seed mixture. Opinions vary as to the exact blends used, but the table overleaf gives a broad average of the food used in thousands of lofts over the past years:-

DIGESTION of FOOD.



corn Mixture.

Tares	...	1 Part (by weight)
wheat	...	1 Part "
Hard Maize	...	4 Parts "
Unpolished Maple Peas	...	5 Parts "

Seed Mixture.

Linseed	...	2 Parts (by weight)
Canary Seed	...	2 Parts "
Millet Seed	...	4 Parts "
Hemp	...	4 Parts "
groats	...	4 Parts "
Rape	...	8 Parts "

These are not the only foods which can be fed to racing pigeons. The corn mixture can also consist of lentils, barley, oats or rice, whilst additions to the seed mixture may be of maw seed, niger seed or

sunflower seeds.

During the war, with the almost complete absence of such seeds as millet and canary, some fanciers fed buckwheat and red shank.

The diet above can be taken as an almost ideal one as it provides for everything that a pigeon will ever need in the way of nourishment.

Quantities of food vary immensely with the season, the age of the birds and the task put to them, but it cannot be over emphasised that over feeding is disastrous, but the opposite extreme should of course be avoided.

My own personal standard is that the birds should always feel slightly hungry, even after meals they should be ready to eat some more. If the novice follows this example, and it is set by thousands of fanciers, he should never fear of over or under feeding his birds.

A few other necessary items in a pigeons diet is as follows.

Grit is a "must" in every loft, because this is swallowed and helps the parent bird to grind her food into small pieces to pass on to their youngsters. Also a little salt placed in the grit box will do some good to racing birds.

Greenfood applied in moderation will do the birds no harm. A bunch of dandelion leaves, chicory or watercress may be hung in the aviary where it is accessible to all the birds. Lettuce, cabbage, kale or brussels sprouts may also be given.

If the novice ensures that his birds are getting fair quantities of all the above foods, he will never need to worry about the health of his birds, providing of course that it is clean.

A. J. Beard

Glossary of Racing Pigeon Terms.

A.U.	American Racing Union.
Aviary	Enclosure of wire netting in which the birds have a degree of freedom for exercise (flypen) - American.
Band	American term for metal registration ring
Bar	Strip of dark pigmentation across the part of the wing. Usually two bars parallel to each other and slightly curved. Black in Blue Pigeons and Red in Meakes.
Barren	Term applied to hens who fail to lay.
Basket.	Pannier or carrier to transport birds to the point of liberation.
Beans	A safe and reliable food for Racing Pigeons.
Bloom	Gloss or sheen accompanied by a white powdery substance found on the feathers of healthy pigeons.
Bib.	Coloured feathers below the beak of white pigeons.

Beard.	White feathers below beak of coloured pigeons.
Cere.	The skin surrounding the eye. It varies in colour and may be white, pink or dark grey.
Channel Races.	Pigeon Races which involve the crossing of the English Channel.
Chequer.	A bird marked with checks.
Chequering.	Wing marking. Dark chequer has the appearance of having light coloured checks on a dark background, while a light chequer has dark checks on a light background.
Clock	Instrument to record the time of arrival of race birds. Only clocks approved by recognised Unions may be used.
Clock dial.	Paper dials used in certain makes of clocks, which record the setting up time, time of arrival and checking.
Crop.	Organ in which food is stored and partially prepared for digestion.
Dam	Female Parent.

Doo	Scottish term for a Racing Pigeon.
Droppings.	Excreta; waste products of the intestines and kidney.
Fancy	Fanciers as a body.
Feather legs.	A few pigeons are found with feathered legs but mainly on some fantails and show pigeons.
Flights.	The principal feathers of the wing.
Flown Down.	Term used to denote a pigeon which has lost a considerable amount of weight through racing.
Fluff.	or down; most feathers have a little fluff at their roots, but there are a number which are composed entirely of fluff, principally around the root of the tail, thighs and abdomen.
Foul Feathers.	Feathers which are of the wrong colour according to the variety.
Green food.	Lettuce, chickenweed, watercress & cabbage etc.
Hackle Feathers.	The long feathers of the neck.

Hempseed.	A seed rich in oil, used as a titbit.
Henny Cock.	A cock with the physical appearance of a hen.
Hopper.	utensil in which food is given to pigeons.
Impossible Velocity	A velocity which is considered impossible when all the factors concerning the race are taken into account.
Inbreeding.	The mating together of close relations, such as father to daughter, mother to son, or brother to sister.
Iris.	Circular coloured portion of the eye, with round opening in the pupil.
I.H.U.	Irish Homing Union.
Line Breeding	Mating of birds together which are related but not too closely
Linseed.	A seed rich in oil.
Maize.	A cereal; a valuable ingredient in any mixture and it has a high fat content.
Maple Peas	Small, dark brown in colour, generally included in pigeon mixtures.

N.E.H.U.	North of England Homing Union.
N.F.C.	National Flying Club.
N.H.U.	National Homing Union.
North Road.	Term given to the route where the birds fly from the North to the South.
N.P.S.	National Pigeon Service. A wartime Government organisation.
Outcross Overdue.	The mating of two unrelated birds when pigeons are sitting on eggs for over 20 days.
Overfly.	The term used to denote that one fancier has a greater distance to fly than another.
Pen Feather.	The new feather as it first bursts from the follicle, and still enclosed in its sheath.
Race Controller.	Person who collects weather information, and decides in consultation with the convoyer when the race birds will be liberated.
Race Point	Point of liberation, usually a railway siding.

Race Marking.	The process by which pigeons entered in a race are identified and the race ring put on each birds leg.
Race Ring	A specially prepared rubber ring having a visible, outside number, and a hidden number inside which only the club secretary knows. This ensures that there is no cheating by fanciers.
Ringer.	An apparatus for putting the rubber race ring on pigeon's legs.
S.E. Route	The route flying from South to North, crossing the channel at its narrowest point.
Sire.	Male Parent.
S.H.U.	Scottish Homing Union.
Single up.	Term used to denote that a pigeon was liberated alone.
South Route	The route by which the birds fly from South to North.
Squab	A pigeon up to four weeks old.
Squeaker.	A pigeon from four weeks to eight weeks old.

Stock Bird.	A bird kept for breeding purposes.
Strain	A family of pigeons cultivated by an individual. The name of the family are usually identified by the breeder's name.
Stray or Strag.	A loft pigeon, a stranger in any loft.
Timed-In.	Having timed in a pigeon from a race.
Toss Transfer.	To liberate on a training toss. When a pigeon changes ownership, it's registration with the union should be transferred also.
Velocity	A pigeon's speed on the wing. obtained by dividing the time taken into the distance flown. e.g. 1284 = 1,284 yards per minute.
Wattle.	white fleshy lump on top of the beak.
Widowhood.	A system of racing where the cocks are only allowed to see their mates on entering the loft after exercise, training tosses and

- Widowhood. on their return from a race.
- Wing Butts The leading edge of the wing.
- Wing Coverts The first row of feathers partially covered over the primary flights.
- White Flights White flights are one or more white feathers sometimes found in crossing two different types of birds.
- Y. B. Young Bird.
- Yearling Derby A race for young birds in which the birds are entered before actual competitive racing starts.
- Yearling. A pigeon one year old.
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Colours and Marking of Racing Pigeons.

Racing Pigeons can be divided into two main colour groups, Red and Dark.

Characteristic markings are as follows :-

On the wing :- chequering, barring and pencilling.

On the neck, head or body :- grizzling, patches of white on Red or Dark + splashes of black on Red.

<u>DARK GROUP</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION.</u>	<u>RED GROUP.</u>
BLUE	These birds have dove grey wings and two bars of their basic colour running across the lower part of the wing. The Blue's bars are blackish blue and the Mealy's are red. They are quite narrow.	MEALY
LIGHT BLUE CHEQUER	These birds are the same as the above birds except that they have checks of their basic colour on the lighter background of their wings.	LIGHT RED CHEQUER.

<u>DARK GROUP</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>RED GROUP</u>
BLUE CHEQUER	The markings of these birds are not so clearly defined as in the above, the area of chequering and light patches being more varied and the bars much broader.	RED CHEQUER.
BLACK or DARK CHEQUERS	These birds give the opposite impression to the light chequers in that they appear to have light checks on a dark background.	DARK RED CHEQUERS.
BLACK	These birds are completely self coloured, showing no signs of any markings.	RED.
DARK GRIZZLE	Grizzles can be any of the foregoing colours and markings. They are distinguished by a pepper and salt effect which is superimposed upon the other colours especially around the head and neck. Some be almost completely white.	RED GRIZZLE

Racing Pigeon Unions.

National Homing Union.

Secretary: J. Selby-Thomas, 22 Clarence St.
Gloucester.

North of England Homing Union.

Secretary: F. Potts, 51 Newcastle Road,
Blester-le-Street, Co. Durham.

Scottish Homing Union.

Secretary: A.R. Smillie, 5 Manse Road,
Whitburn, West Lothian.

Welsh Homing Union.

Secretary: T.G. Buffett, 13 Gwalia Road,
Rhyd-y-felin, Pontypridd, Glam.

Irish Homing Union.

Secretary: D. Jackson, 85 Glenwood Street,
Belfast.

Bibliography.

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:-

The Racing Pigeon Weekly	R.P. Publishing Co.
Pigeon Racing	Barker.
Pigeon Keeping and Racing	Ditchfields Books
Homing Pigeons	H. S. ZIM.
Racing Pigeons	Osman
Pigeons and how to keep them	Osman

The Bird has flown.