

# **KEITH & BETTY MOTT OF CLAYGATE**

## **The story of a life time in the sport of Pigeon Racing**

### **Introduction**

At the time when I saw a recent London & South East Classic Club San Sebastian result, I felt I had to ring Keith and Betty Mott to congratulate them on their wonderful performance in that, the classic's longest old bird race. To send eight birds to 560 miles and get four in the first fifty open result, in such a testing race was great flying. The Surrey partnership clocked another to take 69<sup>th</sup> open and when returning from the clock station found the sixth pigeon was home, and was quite badly injured from an obvious hawk attack. What makes this performance even more incredible was the fact that Keith and Betty had a very small set up. Keith told me he had received a number of telephone calls that day congratulating him and I suggested it was about time he had a write up in the fancy press, on him and Betty. He is widely known in the Racing Pigeon world as one of our premier 'scribes', but many people don't know that Keith is an outstanding fancier, with a wonderful racing record over his 45 plus years in the sport. I am sure many readers would like to read a bit of the history of Keith Mott's forty five years in the sport, so I have written the following article!

### **Memories of the swinging 1960's!**

I asked Keith if he had ever thought of writing about his days as a Rock drummer in the 1960's and he told me, 'I have been asked many times to put pen to paper and record some of my best memories of the 1960's when I played drums in a rock group, but it is something that really needs a lot of thinking about and it was a very busy time in my life, a long time ago. I will try and tell you some of my personal memories of the 1960's and 1970's. I was born in Feltham, near Heathrow Airport in 1950. I can remember my dear grandmother, Caroline, telling me at a very young age that her brother was a drummer in a dance band, but no one in the family was a pigeon fanciers. Myself and my younger brother, Phil, started keeping pigeons in our early youth and the Mott Brother's pigeon career started when we obtained a pair of birds, 'Alma' and 'Charlie', from a school friend, which were housed in a small rabbit hutch. This pair of pigeons was bred at the loft of Terry Smart, who was in partnership with the Groombridge family of Kingston and it is common knowledge that Terry with his wife Carole, became the secretary of the London & South East Classic Club some 25 years later. After a few years of flying our pigeons around the rooftops, we had to give them up for a short while, as we moved house. I played the drums and was very involved at the time with the top rock n' roll band, 'The Impalas', and we played with many top artists, including, Dave 'Screaming Lord' Sutch, Shakin' Stevens, Heinz Burt (The Tornados) and Gene Vincent at the London Palladium in 1969. I was 11 years of age when my parents, Fred and Iris, purchased my first drum kit and I used to practice in the back bedroom to all the old Beatles and Rollin' Stones records. I attended Rivermead Secondary School in Kingston and I did my first drum solo in public at a big school 'gang' show, when other local schools, and all the parents attended. Our next door neighbours, in Chestnut Road where we lived soon got fed up with my drums beating out to the best of the 1960's music scene in the spare bedroom and called the police in a couple of times to shut me up. My dad couldn't wait for me to join a band and was highly delighted when I finally took the drum kit on the road. I was soon sitting in on recording and television dates playing the drums, and was lucky enough to record tracks at 'Morgan' studios, which was one of the best recording studios in the UK at that time and Shakin' Stevens was recording there that same day. One of 'The Impala's' tracks was played on BBC Radio One several times at that time.

'As I've previously stated, I have been asked many time by friends through the years if I would do a write up on the 1960's, but really it was all traveling up and down motorways, playing cards in the back of a van and playing. They say if you remember the 1960's you weren't there! As the saying goes, it was all drugs, sex and Rock n' Roll for some, but I not for me, I never went near or took drugs or alcohol. I still don't drink or smoke today! I played with several top groups in the 1960's, with the main one being 'The Impalas' and for most of the time, the line-up was Tony Clayden on lead guitar and vocal, 'Charlie' Chaplin on rhythm guitar, Keith Read on bass guitar and vocals and myself on drums. In the early days Tony's wife, Una Ellis sang with us and she was a 'world class' singer, but in the late 1960's she had to retire from the band, when the Claydens started a family. We had one or two changes in personnel through the years, one of note, was the classical trained pianist, Johnny Hawken, who came in and he was formally with 'The Nashville Teens', who had had a massive hit record with 'Tobacco Road'. My first drum kit was my white 'Olympic' set up and I learnt on that great set up, and used it on the road for several years after going on the road. The sec-

ond kit was my big blue pearl 'Premier' kit which consisted of bass drum, snare drum, two mounted tom toms and two floor tom toms, the same as used by Keith Moon of 'The Who' at that time. That was a lovely kit and I used that one on the London Palladium in 1998. My third and last drum kit was a mixture of what I thought was the very best in percussion at that time, with the main kit being a light blue 'Hayman'. At that time the George Hayman were the very latest in top drum design, along with 'Ludwig', 'Rogers' and 'Slingerland', which were used by all the best in the business. The drummer who played in two of my favourite groups, Simon Kirk of 'Free' and 'Bad Company' used a 'Hayman' drum kit at that time and I first became aware of them when my ol' mate Doug Argent and I went to a 'Hayman' drum clinic and the late great Phil Seaman demonstrated them. What a great night that was! My kit was made up with the 'Hayman' bass drum and tom toms, 'Ludwig' chrome snare drum, 'Ludwig' Speed King bass drum pedal, 'Premier' lock fast stands and 'Zildjen' cymbals. I did a lot of my recording with this wonderful drum kit. We played all over the UK, every night of the week if the work load required it and we had our own club at 'The Swan', Mill Street, Kingston, where we played every Sunday night and practiced there on a Monday night. That brilliant club ran for many years and it got so packed on a Sunday night, the sweat ran down the wall of the dance hall. Wonderful days! We played at most of the big venues in the UK, including several times at the Nottingham and Swansea universalities, which were two of the biggest gigs at that time and I can remember we played on several pleasure boats on the River Thames in central London, and we played while passing all the famous land marks, including Tower Bridge and The Houses of Parliament. I did a drum solo at every gig to a number called 'Manhattan Spiritual' and on one practice night I did a sponsored none stop five hour marathon drum solo for charity, which raised funds for an electric disable wheel chair. I had known a wonderful girl named, Betty North, for a few months in 1970 and I asked her out for our first date while at the big Gene Vincent gig at the Kingston Coronation Hall, when we were playing on the same bill. I knew she was there that night and I went out in to audience to find her. My life started on that night in February 1971 and we got married in May 1972'.

'It was a great time in my life, but as you get older you want different things. Music was my life in the 1960's and early 1970's and is still very dear to me today, and I still derive a lot of pleasure from listening to all types of music, from Guns n' Roses through to Katherine Jenkins. When I was a kid and kicking a drum kit all over the UK, I always maintained that to be a good musician you had to appreciate all types of music. The main music we played was Rock, but in our spare time our bass player, Keith Reed, and myself used to sit in on Jazz jam sessions around the London area. The best drummer I ever heard was the late great John Bonham of Led Zeppelin and he was everything I wanted to be as a musician! Another drummer I really rated from the other end of the spectrum was Brian Bennett of The Shadows; just listen to his solo on 'Little B'. A fantastic musician! I think I was lucky to be a teenager in the 1960's, because that's where it was at and bands played live in those great times, and were not 'Karaoke' singers, performing with backing tapes running behind the stage curtain, as they do today. As I've previously stated I enjoy all types of music, but love Rock music! I really like Steve Winwood (The Spencer Davis Group / Traffic) and have been buying his albums since 1965, and have seen him play live twice. My cousin, Peter Creswell, was a top session guitarist in the late 1960's and recorded with Steve Winwood at that time and promised to take me to one of the studio sessions, but I never did get to meet Winwood. My choice in music isn't every ones cup of tea, but I enjoy listening to Guns n' Roses, Paul Rodgers (Free / Bad Company), David Gilmour (Pink Floyd), Lynyrd Skynyrd, Gary Moore and Led Zeppelin'.

Being a busy rock drummer and playing at all premier venues all over the UK was Keith's life for many years, but in 1970 Phil and Keith decided to start up pigeons again, this time to do the job properly. They obtained some good stock and start racing, which they had never done before. The brothers acquired some Kirkpatrick and Kenyon stock from the late Johnny Winters of Kingston, which formed the basis of the Mott Brothers loft, and joined the now disbanded Molesey & District H.S. They won many firsts and averages in the early years, mostly in hard channel races, and were top prize winners in the strong Molesey club in 1975, winning 1<sup>st</sup> club Avranches, 1<sup>st</sup> club Rennes, 2<sup>nd</sup> club Nantes, 1<sup>st</sup> club Niort and several inland races that season. The premier pigeon for Mott Brothers in the 1970's was their great dark pied cock, 'John Boy', winner of many good positions including, 1974: 1<sup>st</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> Surrey Federation (2,673 birds), 3<sup>rd</sup> open S.M.T. Combine (6,823 birds) Nantes, winning the Federation by 23 ypm, with a velocity of 995 ypm, 1976: 1<sup>st</sup> club, 4<sup>th</sup> Surrey Federation, 12<sup>th</sup> open S.M.T. Combine (4,234 birds) Niort. This wonderful pigeon was a Kirkpatrick / Kenyon cross, bred from the original Johnny Winters stock and won several premier trophies, including 'Pigeon of the Year' in the Molesey club. Keith and Phil never looked back in channel racing, winning in the best of company! They considered Niort their personal favourite race point in the early days, winning three firsts in four seasons. Mott Brothers won the second longest old bird race four times in five seasons and the year they missed out, they won Bergerac (455 miles), the longest old bird race. The 1979 season saw the Mott Brother's pigeon partnership split up as Phil got married and moved out of the area,

and he took the 1978 young bird team to make a start at his new address. Phil raced in partnership with his wife, Pauline, and they were very successful in the channel races with the West Middlesex Federation. Phil left the sport in 1990, but still has an interest and comes out every winter and judges at one or two top shows with Keith. On the split in 1979, Keith then teamed up with my wife, Betty in 1980 and started racing at their present address at Claygate.

### **The 1960's revisited.**

Keith's has re-written the above walk down 'Memory Lane' in to an article on the 1960's and published it in the pigeon fancy press. Being very happy with the good response to the article he said, 'I've been blown away with response the 1960's article has generated from friend, family and the pigeon fancy in general. It all happened over forty years ago and until recently; I've never given it much thought and certainly have never been tempted to write about those great days, which I thought were dead and gone. Several people have previously said I should record it in an article, but really it was Matt Bentley on my back and chewing my ear off for months, saying I should be recording that time in my life, which got me on the job. Since I put it in my column a few weeks ago the response has been many, many emails and phone calls from music lovers like myself and many of them telling me about their memories of the great 1960's. I have visited and judged at several premier shows this winter (2015) and many fanciers approach me to talk about the article and the music.

After the events of recent weeks I thought to myself, I wonder if there was anything on the Internet about the Gene Vincent tours, but I was very doubtful as it was 45 years ago. I Googled in 'Gene Vincent London Palladium 1969' and to my utter disbelief up it all came! On YouTube there was an audio recording of one of Vincent's eight songs sets at the Palladium, which someone had recorded in the audience on a portable tape recorder. As you can imagine being recorded on a 1960's recorder it was very crude and noisy, but man, it was really great to hear! We were all in the wings of the Palladium stage listening to him that night and that old tape recording bought it all back. We played two shows with him at the Palladium and the 'Swan' PH ran a coach up to London that night, and my mum and dad were in the audience, so it was a great occasion for us all. I don't know how many people the London Palladium holds, several thousand I would think, but both shows were completely sold out. When you are on stage at that great old theatre, you can't see the audience because of the stage lights and it is like looking out at a big black screen. In our set on the night we played a slow number and the stage crew dimmed the light down for its duration, and all I could see was thousands of people's faces from the floor to the roof. I don't know if this was our biggest gig audience wise, but we played at some big auditoriums, including the open air Norwich Music Festival with Heinz Burt (The Tornados) and there was several thousand people there that day. Heinz was the blond bass player with The Tornados who had a massive hit record with 'Telstar' and he had a solo hit with his Eddie Cochran tribute single, 'Just like Eddie'. I did session work from time to time and was on loan to another top group on the UK circuit, The Houseshakers for two weeks, with their drummer being away on holiday and played two sets at the Norwich gig, one with The Impalas and the other with The Houseshakers. I went home knackered that day! An interesting fact about the Palladium gig was they used one of the biggest PA systems on the planet that night, wattage wise and the super groups these days are ten times louder. LOL! They were asking for photos taken at the show on the Internet and I have several, including Gene Vincent and us in the dressing room, Emperor Roscoe, who compered the show and Gene waiting back stage to go on and perform. Delving further into the Internet I found all Gene Vincent's tour dates and we played with him twice on the 1969 tour and then again twice on his last tour in 1971. To my amazement I found an old press cutting advertising the Palladium gig on the Internet and had to laugh, as the most expensive tickets were 40/- (£2). LOL! The Impalas, Shakin' Stevens & the Sunsets, Screaming Lord Sutch, The Houseshakers, Wild Angels, The Rock n' Roll Allstars, all played regularly on a circuit of clubs and three of the venues were at the 'Fishmonger's Arms' PH in Woodgreen, the 'Northcote Arms' PH, Southall and the 'Gun' PH Croydon. Our second gig with Gene Vincent on the 1969 tour was at the 'Fishmonger's Arms'. I also found a ticket for the Coronation Hall, Kingston gig displayed on the Internet, which was on the 1971 tour and was the night I first asked my wife, Betty, out for our first date. After finding the ticket (number 1623) on the Internet, Betty went through her personal effects draw and found her ticket (number 1164) for the 1971 Coronation Hall gig. Just amazing! This was our last show with Gene Vincent, previously playing at the 'Northcote Arms' with him on the 1971 tour and he died in the USA in October 1971.

Still delving even further into the Internet, I Googled 'Morgan Recording Studio'! We worked at several recording establishments, but the main one was 'Morgan' in Willesden, North West London and I can remember Shakin' Steven & the Sunsets were also recording there that same day. I can remember, after we had all put our tracks down we had a couple of hours in the studio bar with them, before they went home to

Wales. I personally always thought 'Shaky' was a major talent and of course he went on to have a string of hit records in the 1980's, and it was funny then to see my kids, Mark and Caroline going out and buying his records. I still have a copy of the first Shakin Stevens and the Sunsets 1960's vinyl album, 'Legend', and still enjoy seeing the ol' boy singing his Christmas hit on the TV every year. Trevor Hawkins was the piano player in The Sunsets and later on he joined us in The Impalas. I played at Trevor's wedding and I will never forget that day, he wore a bright red drape suit and his best mate, Graham Fenton singer with The Houseshakers, was his best man on the day and he wore a drape suit and wellington boots! LOL! Graham Fenton went on to have a major hit record, 'Rockabilly Rebel' with a group called 'Matchbox'. We were produced by Donnie Marchard that day at Morgan Studio and he was a top man in the USA, producing many top artists, including Bobby Darren. We were there at Morgan in 1970 and although it was still a young establishment, being opened at Maybury Gardens in 1967, it was one of the best in the UK at that time. Looking at the history of the studio on the Internet, I was amazed to see the list of people who have recorded there over the years since, including: Blind Faith (Steve Winwood and Eric Clapton), Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd (David Gilmour), Gary Moore, Cat Stevens, Paul McCartney and Rod Stewart, but to name a few. I can remember the Morgan Studio was a white building on the corner of two roads, but I see the building has now been greatly modernized, including a loft extension. I still have a copy of the vinyl LP and they took photos of us in the recording studio, one of which appeared on the LP sleeve. I have included the old black and white photo of us from the record sleeve, which shows us in the studio and you can see my drum kit miked up ready for recording. The second picture is of Shakin' Stevens and The Sunsets taken in the Morgan Studio bar. The photos are 45 years old, black and white, and very grainy, but they are priceless to me. Great days!

All the lads I played Rock n' Roll with in The Impalas were in main a lot older than me, in fact Shakin' Stevens is about two or three years older than me, so my favourite music was 1960's. As a musician the late 1950's music was far better to play and from that era I enjoyed the music of Eddie Cochran and Buddy Holly best. I played in a 1960's pop group called 'Ram Rod', but it was never as good as my seven years playing at the top level with The Impalas! I finish my playing days with Tony Collick, ex Rock n' Roll Allstars singer, in a group called 'Rockmobile' and that was a brilliant trio. Although I kicked a drum kit around the UK for many years and loved listening to great drummers like John Bonham and Brian Bennett, it was and still is great guitarists who 'blow' me away. I love the Rock music of Steve Winwood (Blind Faith / Traffic), David Gilmore (Pink Floyd), Gary Moore (Thin Lizzy), Paul Rodgers (Free / Bad Company), Guns n' Roses, Led Zeppelin, Lynyrd Skynyrd and so on'.

### **The start at Claygate**

The 1979 season saw the brother's pigeon partnership split up as Phil got married and moved out of the area, and he took the 1978 young bird team to make a start at his new address. Phil raced in partnership with his wife, Pauline, and they were very successful in the channel races with the West Middlesex Federation. Their performances were outstanding with the Denys Brothers and Alex Fleming pigeons and won several hard races with the only bird home on the day of liberation. Phil left the sport in 1990, but still has an interest and comes out every winter and judges at one or two top shows with Keith. On the split in 1979, Keith then teamed up with his wife, Betty and started racing at their present address at Claygate. At the start of the 1984 season, most pigeon fanciers in the British Isles were glad to see the back of 1983, with its paramyxovirus ban on channel racing, which left the racing and show programme in total disarray. Despite the ban, Keith enjoyed a brilliant season racing and showing. Winning many major positions in the Club, Federation and Combine, including ten times 1<sup>st</sup> club and lifting fourteen trophies. All this won with a very small racing team of eighteen birds! Keith and Betty were premier prize winners in the Surbiton F.C. and third highest prize winner in the London Columbarian Midweek Club, flying only half of the midweek programme. Keith and Betty raced their team on the natural system to their smart 15ft x 6ft loft. The basic loft was a 'Kidby', but Keith being a self-employed carpenter made his own alterations, including a small stock section.

The main families kept in the 1980's were Alex Fleming of Esher, Denys Brothers of Belgium and Dordins from Ron Wasey of New Addington and Mr. & Mrs. John Hopwood of York. The Mott pigeons were paired up on 14<sup>th</sup> February, as this usually meant the birds were laying their second round in time for the first Federation race. Pairing on this date, says Keith, the birds are good up to 350 miles, but were normally over the top for the longest old bird race from Bergerac (455 miles). With such a small team of pigeons it was very hard to win right up to the end of the old bird programme. The Dordin pigeons from Ron Wasey and John Hopwood were brilliant racing and in the show pen from the outset, with the main one being a Mealy late bred named 'Ronnie', which was gifted to the Mott loft by Ron Wasey. This handsome cock won on the

road and bred many good winners, including the ace racer, 'Gold Strike', winner of: 1<sup>st</sup> club, 3<sup>rd</sup> Surrey Federation, 9<sup>th</sup> SMT Combine, 21<sup>st</sup> open Amalgamation (8,614 birds) 1<sup>st</sup> London Coly Nantes, winning five trophies including the 'Brooker Gold Cup' and was the grand sire of a 1<sup>st</sup> open SMT Combine winner for Mrs Annette Boyd of Tolworth. The best pigeon of the 1980's was Keith's famous Champion 'Kenny' and this Denys Brothers grizzle cock won 37 positions in the first six, including thirteen times 1<sup>st</sup> club, also 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> in the Surrey Federation. This 'once in a life time' pigeon was eventually put to stock, breeding many winners and his daughter bred 2<sup>nd</sup> open Up North Combine for a fancier in the north east of England. Champion 'Kenny' had several outstanding brothers, the best one being another grizzle named 'Warrior', and he won seven times 1<sup>st</sup> club, also 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> in the Surrey Federation. These brilliant cocks were raced on the natural system and never raced further than Plymouth (180 miles). The third brother, 'Double Top', won three times 1<sup>st</sup> club, including 1<sup>st</sup> club (by 75 minutes), 5<sup>th</sup> Surrey Federation, 7<sup>th</sup> open S.M.T. Combine Penzance. The 1980's were a golden decade for Keith and Betty Mott, winning up to ten firsts in most seasons and were the premier prize winners in the Surbiton F.C. three years consecutively. Being one of the sport's workers, Keith was secretary of the Surbiton and Esher clubs for several seasons and was also at one time chairman of the London Columbarian. Two important pigeons of the early 1990's were the Denys Brothers blue chequer pied cock, 'Apollo' and his mate 'The Besant Hen', which was bred by Kenny and Bobby Besant of New Malden. 'Apollo' won several races and was 'Pigeon of the Year' in the Esher club, also he was an outstanding breeder, being the sire of many winners with 'The Besant Hen'. A late bred from this pair was gifted to Paddy Kelly of Harlow, which bred a bird to win 1<sup>st</sup> open London North Road Combine Lerwick (600 miles) in the 2003 season. It also bred 2<sup>nd</sup> open London N.R. Combine and a 'Hall of Fame' winner. 'Apollo' was featured on Sky News TV in the November of 1994. A wonderful pigeon!

### Pigeon Fancier's Lung Decease by Keith Mott.

Pigeon wise the year of 1995 was a very bad one for and Betty and me. I kept having constant bouts of flu and coughs which got more and more frequent, to the point where I was having time off work, sometimes twice a month with ill health. After months of visits to the doctor, I was referred to a specialist at Kingston Hospital and they concluded that the problem was my pigeons. After discovering that I had the dreaded Pigeon Fancier's Lung, I had to give up my beloved pigeons, after 25 years in the sport. Giving up the pigeons was the hardest thing I had to do in his life, not only did I feel sorry for myself but was shattered for my daughter, Caroline, who was a very good pigeon fancier and new member of my pigeon partnership. After the clearance sale in 1995 I stepped up the writing and video side of my participation in pigeons and became even more involved in the sport.

In 1997, whilst at the British Homing World Blackpool Show, I met a pigeon lung suffer, Tony Grinsil of Wakefield and he told me that he had overcome the problem by using a 'rabbit hutch' type loft. You do not have to walk into this type of loft to look after the pigeons and on my return from the Blackpool trip; I built myself some rabbit hutches, so I could keep some old timers as pets. In 1998 I obtained a few choice youngsters from my good friends Eric Cannon and Tom Gilbertson, with the view to racing in the NFC Pau Grand National event, which I think is one of the premier races in the sport. With such a small team of pigeons, I couldn't hope to enjoy weekly Federation racing with the same success as I had in the past, so it was more realistic to have a go at one good race like the Pau National. In the winter of 1998 I built my eight section 'rabbit hutch' loft, with natural long distance racing in mind. **The loft was 10ft long, 2ft deep, and 6ft high, or height of the fancier and had six spacious sections to house six pairs of long distance racers. It was made of 3/4in ply and was set on a nice 3in x 2in timber stand. Each rabbit hutch had a bob wire trap and all wire doors were fully removable so they don't flap about and damage the birds as they flew out. When not in use the bob hole trap was blocked off with special 'gravestone' shut off boards and the stand had a nice shelf to store the pigeon bath and nest bowls etc. Each old bird section was kitted out with two 'V' perches, fixed to the right hand side and back walls, a nest bowl, sited at the left hand back corner, and a small drinker, sited on the floor at the front opposite side to the bob trap. After building the old bird rabbit hutch I constructed a new matching 4ft double to house ten young birds each season.** The loft set up at Claygate had again been increased, as in the Christmas period of 2000; I built an aviary type loft to house the stock birds and his small team of young birds. As I've stated my rabbit hutch loft system was brilliant for racing the old birds but, although the hutches are very roomy; the youngsters tend to fight a lot and dominant cocks hold the floor and stop the others feeding and drinking. I always wore a mask when cleaning out the rabbit hutches, which was a very quick job, carried out at least once a day and the whole set up was kept spotlessly clean.

I only kept 14 pairs in our 'rabbit hutch' loft set up, including stock birds and the main family kept were the very best of Eric Cannon's champion 550 mile family. I did say at the time, I had only been in long distance

racing for a few seasons and loved it! I was not interested in any other type of pigeon racing and I wished we had started long distance year ago. The Claygate loft housed the Brian Denney of Strensall lines which had crossed with Eric Cannon's pigeons successfully. The loft normally had five pairs of stock birds which were paired up in January each season and I was very proud of the fact that I owned probably one of the best Brian Denney and Eric Cannon stock teams in the sport. The stock section housed several direct children of Brian Denney champions, including 'Tuff Nut'. All the main pairs in the stock loft had bred several pigeons to score well up in Classic and National results in long distance events. One of the early star racers at the Claygate loft was the red chequer cock, 'The Gilbertson Cock', and was bred by Tom Gilbertson of Carlisle, being one of the original gift pigeons to start me up again in 1998. This wonderful pigeon went missing for two months as a young bird, but went on to win: 2000: 2<sup>nd</sup> clock station (beaten by a loft mate), 305<sup>th</sup> open NFC Nantes (9,074 birds), second bird clocked on the winning day NFC Pau (552 miles), 2001: flew nearly 1,000 miles north road in three weeks, 90<sup>th</sup> open L.& S.E.C.C. Perth (very hard race), 1<sup>st</sup> clock station, 51<sup>st</sup> open L&SECC Thurso (516 miles), scored in 500 mile cocks class at BHW Blackpool Show, 2002: 2<sup>nd</sup> clock station, 204<sup>th</sup> open N.F.C. Pau (552 miles), 3<sup>rd</sup> in the B.H.W. Pau Sporting Challenge, 2003: flew Dax (528 miles), won Best in Show at the Esher open show. This wonderful cock was bred down from Tom's 'Red Alert' bloodlines and bred several good 500 mile racers, including the mealy hen, 'Foxwarren Javelin', winner of several premier positions from 550 miles, including 20<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Pau. 'The Gilbertson Cock' my first great racer, flown to the 'rabbit hutch' loft system!

### **Early racing positions won flying to the 'Rabbit Hutch' loft.**

Betty and I only race a very small team in the 500 mile plus National and Classic races and achieved a fine record over those first five seasons racing to the 'rabbit hutch' loft:

**2000:** 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Godalming clock station, 276<sup>th</sup>, 305<sup>th</sup> open N.F.C. Nantes (9,074 birds), a very hard race, sent three birds to Pau N.F.C. race, clocked two birds on the winning day recording, 5<sup>th</sup> Godalming clock station, 311<sup>th</sup> open (3,941 birds). The third bird was home next morning.

**2001:** This season saw our loft compete in only two old bird races and with only eight old bird racers recorded, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> Guildford clock station, 77<sup>th</sup>, 80<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup>, 91<sup>st</sup>, 92<sup>nd</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Perth (370 miles), 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Guildford clock station, 51<sup>st</sup>, 52<sup>nd</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Thurso (516 miles), only six birds sent, all south road pigeons.

**2002:** Sent four pigeons to the Pau NFC race, recorded 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Guildford clock station (only three birds clocked), 204<sup>th</sup> and 252<sup>nd</sup> open (4,071 birds), 7<sup>th</sup> National Yearling and 3<sup>rd</sup>. in the B.H.W. Pau Sporting Challenge.

**2003:** Sent eight birds to Dax (528 miles) L&SECC race, clocking five on the winning day and recording 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> Guildford clock station (very hard race only two clocks returned in clock station), 32<sup>nd</sup>, 121<sup>st</sup>, 154<sup>th</sup>, 155<sup>th</sup>, 174<sup>th</sup> open.

**2004:** Sent eight birds to San Sebastian (560 miles) in Spain with the L&SECC, clocked five on a this very hard race and recorded 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>. Guildford clock station (only clock returned), 23<sup>rd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 69<sup>th</sup> open, with only 79 birds clocked in race time. I returned from the clock station to find the sixth bird, 'The Allwright Cock', was home and had been badly hawked. The first bird clocked from San Sebastian was the two year old blue hen, 'Foxwarren Express', and she was sent due to hatch on the day of liberation, to win 1<sup>st</sup> clock station, 23<sup>rd</sup> open. This was her first race from over 500 miles and she is a daughter of my number two Eric Cannon stock pair, being a granddaughter of Champion 'Culmer Marion', 1<sup>st</sup> open N.F.C. Sartilly, 'Culmer White Flight', 1<sup>st</sup>. sect A, 14<sup>th</sup> open N.F.C. Pau and 'Culmer Channel Queen', the N.F.C. Pau Merit Award winning hen. 'Foxwarren Express' flew through to Nantes as a yearling and won B.O.S. in the Esher open show the following winter. My second pigeon from San Sebastian, to record 2<sup>nd</sup> clock station, 29<sup>th</sup> open, was his good blue chequer hen, 'Foxwarren Complete', and she is a Cannon/Denney cross, being a daughter of that fantastic Brian Denney stock hen 'Pathfinder'. 'Foxwarren Complete' was sent to San Sebastian sitting twelve day old eggs and in 2003 was clocked on the winning day from Dax (528 miles), to win 1<sup>st</sup> clock station, 32<sup>nd</sup> open.

**2005:** Sent eight birds to Pau (552 miles) with the L&SECC and clocked three birds on the hardest weekend of the 2005 season. The team recorded 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> Guildford Clock station, 20<sup>th</sup>, 116<sup>th</sup>, 119<sup>th</sup> open, with only 119 birds clocked in race time. First bird on the clock was the mealy hen, "Foxwarren Javelin", and she has plenty of previous good form having flown 550 miles four times, winning: 2005: 20<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Pau, 2004: 69<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC San Sebastian, 2003: 155<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Dax, plus 3<sup>rd</sup> 500 mile hens at the B.H.W. Blackpool Show. She was a daughter of the ace 500 mile racer, "The Gilbertson Cock", when mated to the premier Eric Cannon hen, "Pat's Girl". The same weekend as the Pau classic, three yearlings were sent to the B.I.C.C. Tours smash race and a Cannon blue cock was recorded to win 111<sup>th</sup> open.

Having not raced Pau or Tarbes for several seasons because of the lack of pigeon time due to his massive commitment to other activities in the sport, we decided to send to Tarbes with the L&SECC in June 2011. We only had two candidates for the 560 mile Classic, but sent them in good order and got both birds home, recording 48<sup>th</sup> open. First bird on the ETS was the four year old Eric Cannon blue cock, 'Foxwarren Ryan's Express' and he had been in the stock section for two seasons before being brought back to fly the channel four times in 2011. This handsome cock had bred some super 550 mile racers and is an inbred grandson of Eric Cannon's Champion 'Culmer Marion', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open NFC Sartilly. He had raced and was clocked twice from Tarbes (560 miles), flying it again in 2012, recording 52<sup>nd</sup> open L&SECC Tarbes and 67<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Bergerac. In the 2012 season 'Ryan's Express' flew over 1,000 in a three week period!

### Life after the 'Pigeon Fancier's Lung'.

February is the time of the year when fanciers receive their results from pigeon lung blood tests taken at the BHW Blackpool Show, by the British Pigeon Fancier's Medical Research Team. Some will be pleased to see a reduced reading of their pigeon lung count and many will be shocked and puzzled to be told that they are now suffering from the dreaded pigeon fancier's lung. I think it's common knowledge that I suffer from pigeon lung and I get countless phone calls, especially at that time of the year, from fanciers who are very worried and want to know the facts about the dreaded 'lung'. The first thing I tell them is **don't** get rid of the pigeons as I did, to take their time and try better ventilated accommodation for the birds and this will reduce their pigeon lung blood test count drastically. My own pigeon lung problem came to a head in 1995, although I think I had probably had it for years but wouldn't admit it, for fear of having to pack up my beloved pigeons. 1995 was a very bad year for me. Firstly I discovered that I had pigeon fancier's lung after 25 years in our great sport. It was the hardest thing I have had to do in my life, when I had to get rid of my team of pigeons on doctor's orders. Not only did I feel sorry for myself, but was shattered for my daughter, Caroline, who was a very good pigeon fancier and my partner. On giving up my birds I decided to carry on as secretary of the Surrey Championship Club, an office I had held for 9 years at that time and increase my hobby in pigeon journalism. My second bit of bad luck that year was an accident at my work as a carpenter. I fell head first 10 feet through a rotten roof smashing my nose and right elbow on the concrete floor below. I had a stay in Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton, and had two screws inserted in my shattered elbow. This set-back meant a year off work and I wouldn't write. They say when one door closes another one opens and from the sale of my small team of birds I could afford to purchase a professional standard camcorder which I had always wanted, and the time off meant I could make some pigeon videos. Well, four camcorders and two cars later we had produced 18 highly successful 'Many Miles with Mott' videos, which in turn produced articles on premier fanciers for the British Homing World.

While I was in Scotland shooting 'Many Miles with Mott' Number 12, I visited the Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow, home of the British Fancier's Medical Research Unit, for a one to one video interview with Dr Gavin Boyd, the pioneer of research into pigeon fancier's lung. In my interview I asked Dr Boyd what were the symptoms and he replied, 'Well I think the classic symptoms are flu-like aches and pains with a temperature, shivering, feverishness, sweating, and coming on 4 - 6 hours after fairly heavy contact with the birds.' I then asked him if it could be cured with drugs and he said, 'I think the real treatment is to avoid heavy exposure to bloom and get exposure to the pigeons to a level below that which triggers of the clinical problem'. My next question to Dr Boyd was, 'So would you be saying that fanciers should be using an open aviary type loft?' His reply was, 'I'm not going to tell pigeon fanciers how to race their pigeons but the truth is, if you are sensitised and then you have to be able to adjust the way you make contact with the birds to limit the amount of bloom that you are exposed to. In 1997, whilst at the BHW Blackpool Show, I met pigeon lung sufferer Tony Grinsil of Wakefield and I had a chat with him about the problem. He was in a bad way with pigeon lung and had to pack up the sport under orders of the specialist at Mexborough Montague Hospital, where he had various lung function tests and x-rays, much the same as myself. Tony had the idea of having a loft that you didn't walk into, so didn't get exposed to the bloom. The result was that the loft was 7ft long, 3ft wide and 3ft high and was set up at waist height, almost like a rabbit hutch. The loft worked so well that in December of that year he was discharged by the specialist, but had kept four pairs of pigeons since early October. As I previously stated on my return home from that Blackpool trip I was offered a pair of my old pigeons back, which had gone past their sell-by date and I built two rabbit hutches, so I could have them as pets, and the result was no bad effect! When the birds were taken out in the car they were carried in reeded widowhood baskets in the car boot and the driver's window was always kept open. The baskets were cleaned out every time after use, and re-chipped regularly, always with a mask on.

There is pigeon racing after pigeon fancier's lung and prizes can be won racing to rabbit hutches! The 1999 season saw me race 5 yearlings and 11 youngsters to my rabbit hutch loft. I won several good positions in the Saturday Club and 56th and 116th open in the London & South East Classic Club Guernsey Young Bird Classic in a strong east wind, lifting £500. It's a wonderful way of keeping racing pigeons and the birds keep so well in the rabbit hutch type loft. We housed only about 15 young birds and in 2001 we started racing with 14 youngsters, flying the programme, including two Channel races, and finished with all 14 birds. The youngsters scored several times in the very strong Esher Club, including 1<sup>st</sup> Club Blandford (160 birds) and in the London & South East Classic Club won 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> clock station, 107<sup>th</sup>, 126<sup>th</sup> and 132<sup>nd</sup> Open Guernsey recording 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Futurity and lifting £1,300. My champion 550 mile racing hen "Foxwarren Complete" was born in and raced to a rabbit hutch and she laid the egg in that 'rabbit hutch' that produced Bobby Besant's "Half Crown", the dam of Champion 'Noble Dream', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open International Agen (10,500 birds) in the 2015 season.

I had nine really enjoyable years as chief convoyer for the London & South East Classic Club, which may sound horrendous for someone who has pigeon fancier's lung, but most of the work was done in the open air and I always wore a mask and coat when feeding, watering and liberating the birds. I loved driving through France to places like Bordeaux and Pau, and I never had any real ill effects from my convoying work. Over the years I have made thousands of pigeon loft visits all over the UK, for my video and writing work, and if I said it hadn't affected me I would be a liar, but my pigeon lung attacks are much milder and less frequent because I don't go into a dusty, closed in pigeon loft every day. Not everyone who has suffered will be able to keep pigeons, but I believe that modern enclosed lofts are a major factor in encouraging the problem. Few fanciers had the allergy when racing 30 years ago to the old type dowel fronted lofts, and generally fewer pigeons were housed in them. I have been amazed at the number of fanciers I have spoken to who say they have the symptoms but have not been tested. However, if I'm honest, I think I had it for about 15 years, before it peaked in 1994, when I was very ill. I get many phone calls from all over the UK asking me about the problem and I'm always happy to have a chat about the allergy, but the two people who really knows about the problem is Dr Gavin Boyd and Dr Philip Lynch, at the Research Centre in Glasgow. I can't praise these two wonderful doctors enough for their excellent work. I am amazed at the great interest which has been shown in my old 'rabbit hutch' loft system. I've had countless phone calls and letter from pigeon lung sufferers from all over the world.

### **Eric & Pat Cannon of Wormley**

Keith and Betty's very close friends, Eric and Pat Cannon of Godalming, gave him youngsters every season to build up his long distance team, which are performing brilliantly in the long distance National and Classic events. When I asked Keith about Eric he said, 'when Eric passed away in the July 2000, I lost my mentor and my best friend, and the sport of pigeon racing lost one of it's greatest fanciers. He was always there for advice, putting me right, not only on pigeon matters but on life in general and was a true friend'. Keith has a very good knowledge of Eric's wonderful long distance family of pigeons, being close to Eric and his pigeons for well over 25 years, he had the sad job of arranging and running his dispersal sales in the winter of 2000. Here we are over fifteen years on and there have been many reports of fanciers putting up premier performances with Eric Cannon's pigeons, including two National Flying Club winners. Keith's opinion is that the name, Eric Cannon, will live on in the list of racing pigeon greats forever!

The Cannon loft has won countless positions in the NFC through the years, but the highlights have been: 5 times winner of the Langstone Gold Cup, for best average of three N.F.C. races, 16 times 1<sup>st</sup> section in NFC races, 1<sup>st</sup> open Sartilly, 2<sup>nd</sup> open Pau, 4<sup>th</sup> open Pau, 5<sup>th</sup> open Sartilly, 5<sup>th</sup> open Avranches, 6<sup>th</sup> open Pau (twice), 8<sup>th</sup> open Sartilly and so on. The Cannons had 74 positions in the first 100 open positions in Pau Grand Nationals and lifted the 3 bird Average from the Pau National six times. At the 1999 National Flying Club prize presentation held at Bedford, Eric and Pat Cannon, were presented with their fourth NFC Pau Certificate of Merit, which is won by a pigeon that has taken three positions in the first 100 open in the Pau Grand National result. Their fourth certificate winner was the blue hen, Champion 'Culmer Bess', whose record reads, 1996: 4<sup>th</sup> section, 47<sup>th</sup> open Pau / Saintes, 1997: 2<sup>nd</sup> section, 6<sup>th</sup> open Pau, 1998: 170<sup>th</sup> open Pau, 1999: 2<sup>nd</sup> section, 26<sup>th</sup> open Pau, to lift the Certificate of Merit. 'Culmer Bess' proved to be a wonderful breeder, being the grand dam of Champion 'Night Flight', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open NFC Saintes / Pau Grand National in 2003, for Mark Gilbert and the two champion breeding cocks, 'Foxwarren Fred' and his brother 'The Old Cannon Cock'. A wonderful hen! If the NFC Pau Certificate of Merit had started a few years earlier, Eric would have won three other awards, with the three hens, 'Culmer Julie Girl', 'Culmer Beauty' and the great champion blue hen, 'Culmer Blue Bird'. Keith and his wife, Betty, were good friends with Eric and Pat for nearly 30 years and out of all their many champions through the years, 'Blue Bird', was Keith's fa-



vourite. She was perfect in the hand and in the late 1970's she recorded 6<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 57<sup>th</sup>, 118<sup>th</sup> and 251<sup>st</sup> open NFC Pau, winning 1<sup>st</sup> section twice and was the grand dam of 'Culmer Lass'.

Eric once remarked that he enjoyed Combine racing years ago, but in later years all his energy was spent on the National races. In spite of that, the loft won the Combine four times, with the blue chequer hen, 'Pat', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open London S.R. Combine Bordeaux, grizzle cock, 'St. Swithin', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open London S.R. Combine Bordeaux, dark chequer cock, 'Evil Eye', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open London S.R. Combine Le Mans and the champion blue hen, 'Culmer Lass', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open S.M.T. Combine Bergerac, only bird on the day of liberation in the Combine. The Cannons won the Surrey Federation's longest old bird race shield outright for winning it three times. Eric's most recent Combine winner, 'Culmer Lass', went on to win 1<sup>st</sup> section, 12<sup>th</sup> open N.F.C. Pau the year after her Combine win and this game hen also won two more positions from the Pau National, plus 49<sup>th</sup> open N.F.C. Nantes, and was the grand dam of Champion 'Culmer Marion', 1<sup>st</sup> open N.F.C. Sartilly in 1990.

Keith told me, 'the great Champion 'Culmer Gold' was rated by many as Eric Cannon best ever champion, but he was certainly one of Eric's favorites. He was always flying up on to Eric's hand for a tit-bit! Over the years many premier winners have been reported through the 'Culmer Gold' line, including 1<sup>st</sup> open NFC Saintes and 1<sup>st</sup> Amalgamation Bourges (580 miles). This great old cock must have rate as one of the greatest long distance racers in the world when he was alive by recording 1st club, 2nd Surrey Federation, 9th open SMT Combine Niort (340 miles); 1st club, 3rd Surrey Federation, 11th open S.M.T. Combine Bergerac (440 miles); 21st, 70th, 83rd, 103rd, 111th open Pau NFC (540 miles) winning the NFC Pau Merit Award and in one season recorded 163rd open Nantes NFC to win the best average from Nantes and Pau in the NFC. 'Culmer Gold' one of the best that I have had the privilege to handle'.

Keith uses Eric Cannon's natural racing system. Keith says being a close friend to a fancier like Eric for over 25 years, something must rub off, and he cannot remember ever having a conversation with Eric, when Eric didn't say 'Pau National'. The racers are paired up in mid-March, with date being worked back from the Pau National and every pair rear youngsters to kick off their season and develop a bond between mates and nest box. Keith trains at all points down the A3 to Portsmouth, with the odd toss from Worthing (50 miles) on the south coast. The basic feeding is 'Breed & Wean' mixture; with a 50% extra maize added to the feed three weeks before the main event and is fed on the hopper. Eric Cannon was a great bean feeder, sometimes 100% right through the season, but Keith prefers a mixture of 'Breed & Wean' and Maple peas. The birds are well trained off the south coast, then into Nantes (300 miles), which used as a stepping stone for Pau, hoping they have a good fly of at least eight hours to tighten them up. The nests are broken down on their return from Nantes and the whole loft is set up on twelve day old eggs for the Pau or now Tarbes race. The yearlings are given two or three channel races up to Nantes and then stopped, although Keith has sent the odd yearling to 550 miles and scored with them.

### **Champion 'Foxwarren Complete'**

I asked Keith what his favourite bird of recent years was and he replied, 'probably my best all round long distance pigeon was the 2001 blue chequer hen, 'Foxwarren Complete', the champion 550 mile racing and breeding hen'. 'Foxwarren Complete' was the winner of 2003: 32<sup>nd</sup> open L&SECC Dax (530 miles), 2<sup>nd</sup> East Grinstead CC Dax, 2004: 29<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC San Sebastian (560 miles), 2005: 116<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Pau (552 miles), 2007: 109<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Pau. A real class hen! Her sire was 'The Cannon Cock' bred by Eric Cannon and winner 331<sup>st</sup> open NFC Pau (552 miles), 77<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Perth (370 miles). This cock was the original pigeon Eric bred for me on my restart in 1998 and was a grandson of 'Culmer White Flight' and Champion 'Culmer Sam', being a son of the great 'Culmer 14 Hen'. The dam of 'Foxwarren Complete' was the brilliant blue cheque stock hen, 'Pathfinder', bred by Brian Denney and her dam was Champion 'Blue Pau' winner of 41<sup>st</sup>, 201<sup>st</sup> open NFC Pau (738 miles) and dam of many premier long distance racers including Champion 'Classic Lad' winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open Northern Classic Saintes (573 miles on the day of liberation). 'Pathfinder' was lightly raced before being put to stock and in 2001 flew 900 miles in three weeks to record 91<sup>st</sup> open L&SECC Perth, 52<sup>nd</sup> open L&SECC Thurso (520 miles). 'Pathfinder' was a champion breeder, producing many premier 550 mile racers, including 'Foxwarren Complete' and 'Foxwarren Pretender' dam of Brian Denney's Champion 'Brian's Blue' winner of: 2008: 1<sup>st</sup> section K, 61<sup>st</sup> open NFC Tarbes Grand National (4,035 birds), National Flying Club record holder being clocked at 748 miles on the day of liberation. Also winning 1<sup>st</sup> North East 700 Mile Club, 1<sup>st</sup> RPRA UK Long Distance Champion, plus RPRA Region Long Distance Award. A fantastic performance!

'Foxwarren Complete' proved to be a 'gold mine' stock hen breeding many top 550 mile racers, including 37<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Tarbes and a late bred from her was donated to the British Homing World Blackpool Show Charity Auction in 2010 and was sold for £740. 'Foxwarren Complete' is the dam of Bob and Anthony Besant's champion stock hen, 'Half Crown', who is the dam of Champion 'Noble Dream', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open International Agen (10,510 birds) in the 2015 season. 'Foxwarren Complete' is also the dam of the fantastic stock hen, 'Foxwarren Northern Complete', dam of many premier 550 mile racers including: 2<sup>nd</sup> Federation Bourges (581 miles), 3<sup>rd</sup> Federation Bourges, 4<sup>th</sup> Federation Bourges, 5<sup>th</sup> Federation Bourges, 8<sup>th</sup> Federation and is grand dam of 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Federation, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Amalgamation, 8<sup>th</sup> open NEHU (2,355 birds) Bourges (581 miles) in recent seasons. She is the dam of Fred Dickson's champion cock, 'The Five Times Bourges Cock', winner of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> Federation Bourges and sire of 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Federation, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Amalgamation Bourges (581 miles). Northern Ireland long distance 'ace', Ronnie Young has a full brother to 'Foxwarren Northern Complete' and he is the sire of many premier racers including: 2011: 191<sup>st</sup> open INFC St. Milo (OB) National (1597 birds), 2012: 215<sup>th</sup> open INFC St. Milo (OB) National (1408 birds) and grand sire of: 2012: 200<sup>th</sup>, 250<sup>th</sup> open INFC Yearling National (4319 birds). The wonderful record of 'Foxwarren Complete'!

### **The winter shows**

Although Keith is a keen pigeon racer, he also loves showing his birds and says, 'I can't turn off in September, as soon as we finish racing, I switch into show mode! If I had a big garden and not the postage stamp we have now, I would defiantly have a second loft for Show Racers as well as my long distance racing team'. He has won hundreds of prizes and trophies through the years showing his birds, and has won at all the National Shows. He is well sort after ever winter as a judge and travels hundreds of miles carrying out the duty, and tells me he has judged at most of the big Show Racer Society Open Shows countless times, four times at the BHW Blackpool Show, twice at the RP Old Comrades Show at the NEC Birmingham and three times at the NEHU Peterlee / South Shields Show in Newcastle. Keith had been associated with the RPRA Southern Region Show for many years and derived great pleasure judging at this great annual show through the years. This great event was one of his favourite one day shows and had attended the show most years, since it started at Ascot Racecourse over 30 years ago and in recent seasons has booked the judges for his good friend and show secretary, Ron Lacey. Years ago he used to show and won many firsts with his racing pigeons, which he always considered a good achievement, with the 'red hot' competition at the Region show.

I asked Keith if he thought the show scene was in decline and he replied, 'I defiantly think there is a massive decline in 'bread and butter' showing at local club level and to see this in recent years is very up setting. For me true exhibiting of Racing Pigeons and Show Racers is when they are handled and in our Surrey area, most of the club and open shows are through the wires. Fanciers these days seem to like to grab their birds out of the loft, with no preparation, and put them in the pen to be judged through the wires. They almost seem to be frightened to have them handled and at our local show they seem to prefer fancy colours classes. When I'm showing a lot of time is spent in preparing my pigeons for the pen and we have won the local 'Open Show Points' cups about 18 times, but I don't show at local events anymore, because of the lack of quality competition. I think the whole thing comes down to 'pounds, shillings and pence' and the people who run the club shows are looking to make money for the club, which can't be wrong, but they are not really interested in quality pigeon showing, the like of which we enjoyed years ago. I think it is a bigger achievement to win a handled class competing against 25 birds, than it is winning a through the wire class against 50 entries! The National show scene is still brilliant and getting better every year, and that's where you have to exhibit to get the quality competition these days. Look at the great old RPRA Southern Region Show, still going after all these years and even bigger and better this year! I think the fancy should be very proud of our mother show, the British Homing World Blackpool 'Show of the Year', a wonderful spectacle and raising thousands of pounds for charity every January. I get my buzz at the Nationals events these days and very rarely attend the local club shows, only on the odd occasion to judge handling classes'.

Back in October 2013 Keith received a letter from the RPRA, inviting him to judge at the British Homing World 'Show of the Year', Blackpool in January 2014 and he was delighted to except, as he has always loved do the job and consider it a great honour to be asked. This was his third time judging at the premier show in the UK and the last time he judged was in 2007 when the BBC sent a film crew to the Winter Gardens to film him and Peter Taylor for the 'Inside Out' programme. Keith told me, 'I then received a phone call in December from the Blackpool Show committee inviting me to take on the premier judging job in the show world, to judge the specials and Blackpool Show 'Best in Show'. I have been judging at top National

and Show Society shows for 45 years and to judge 'Best in Show' at Blackpool was the crowning glory of all those years doing the job. I was highly delighted and accepted the invitation immediately. My ol' mate, Peter Taylor, has travelled all over the UK as my steward for many years, but in recent times has not travelled because of his 'dodgy' knees, but I managed to get him to Blackpool to steward for me, on this great occasion. We knew the Friday of the show was going to be a hard day, with the 250 mile drive up to the Hilton Hotel in Blackpool, then attend the RPRA dinner that evening and after that the late night judging in the Winter Gardens, so we left Claygate early that morning. After a good run up to the North West, we arrived at the Hilton Hotel on the North Promenade that afternoon in fine weather and managed to get a couple of hours rest in our rooms before we attend the RPRA 'do' in the evening. The dinner was a very grand event held in the hotel and was attended by several premier pigeon parties from Europe and Mr. & Mrs. Eddie Collett, the Lord Mayor of Blackpool. It was nice to meet up with some ol' friends at the dinner, including Steve Richards and Helen Edwards of the BHW, John and Pamela Robilliard and former RPRA General Manager, Peter Bryant, there with his wife Glenys. John Robilliard introduced me to David Trippett, the Blackpool Show committee chairman and David was to take Peter and I to the Winter Gardens in a taxicab after the main judging had finished, to do our final judging job. It was late when we arrived at the Winter Gardens, just before 23.00hrs I think, and we were greeted by chief steward, Dora Pounder, and what a nice lady she was! Dora has been doing the job at the Blackpool Show for many years and was so efficient, directing us to all the pen numbers to sort out the show specials. I spent quite some time judging the 29 class winner and needless to say I went through them with a fine tooth comb! From the outset of judging there was only one winner of Best in Show, a wonderful Show Racer red hen and she was medium appled bodied, with good balance and brilliant feather quality. I loved the hen as soon as I picked her out of Pen 4 and from then on she was the one the others had to beat! A beautiful mealy was her runner up, but I found a major fault in her on her second handling and Reserve Best in Show went to a stunning looking Show Racer blue chequer hen. I gave Best Racer to a handsome pencil blue pied cock and although it wasn't confirmed, I was told it might have won at the Blackpool Show in 2013. It was a great judging session to remember and we finished just before 01.00hrs, after which we jump in a taxi and went back to the Hilton Hotel. It was a very long day and I finally got to bed just after 02.00hrs! We got up on Saturday morning and after breakfast I was keen to get down to the Winter Gardens to see who owned the red hen and it was finally confirmed that John Robilliard owned that wonderful Show Racer and had won his second Best in Show at the BHW Blackpool Show. I was so delighted to hear that great news as John has given a life time's work to our sport and deserve every success he has with his wonderful Show Racers. Talking to John after the event, he said, the hen is now called 'Rocquaine Queen' and she won as a young bird, and won a first at the Duchy Show in November 2013. She was bred from a pair of stock birds that John obtained at the Ken Jeffery of St Ives dispersal sale. That Blackpool Show in 2014 and judging 'Best In Show' was my greatest judging experience'.

### **The Pigeon Fancy Press and the Media**

Keith has been writing in the fancy press since 1972 and enjoys doing his regular pages every week in the pigeon fancy press. Keith told me, 'The very first article I did in the fancy press was the prize presentation, in the winter of 1972, for the old and now disbanded Molesey club and very soon after that had my own regular page in the Weybridge based Pigeon Racing 'Gazette', then run by Roy and Audrey Bishop. Later in the 1970's I was judging at the Inter Counties Federation show in Hertfordshire and met Mike Shepherd for the time. Mike worked for the 'Racing Pigeon' newspaper at that time and invited me to submit some articles and photos for inclusion in the 'Pictorial', which was then and still is today the premier glossy monthly pigeon magazine. Really at that time Mike was the man who took me to the top level of pigeon journalism and set me up for what I do in the fancy press today. Mike is my mentor and we have been good friends all through those many years! I have got many good friends in the pigeon racing journalism world, but another man I respect and consider a good friend is the former British Homing World editor, Cameron Stansfield. Cameron is a nice guy and his knowledge of long distance pigeon racing is second to none. I made my first pigeon photography box on a building site on a cold winters day at the end of the 1970's, with the sole purpose of enhancing my pigeon article and it is a practice I still carry out today. Nothing looks better than an article with plenty of quality pigeon photographs! I think I must have been the press officer for every organization I've belonged to and in the 1990's I was press officer for the National Flying Club. Writing is what I do and still enjoy it, even after all those year'. In recent years, Keith's big involvement in the writing and photography side of the sport has prevented him from racing his birds properly, but has enjoyed the breeding side of pigeon racing and producing winners for others. He says, whatever he does, he will always have a few pigeons at the bottom of the garden to play around with! He admits his competitive edge has diminished over the years and gets his enjoyment from other aspects of the sport these days. His work in the fancy press over many years has been a gate way to him meeting some of the all times greats of the

sport, which has always considered a wonderful privilege that he has enjoyed very much. He met two of his oldest friends, Ronnie Wasey and Peter Obertelli, through his writing and says, 'both these great pigeon racers are family friends. Ronnie is one of the best fanciers I ever met, with him winning at the very top level for many years, including 1<sup>st</sup> open NFC Pau, through hard work and great dedication. The 'Italian Stallion' is from a farming family from the mountains in northern Italy and wins out of turn using his great livestock knowledge'. Keith says he has made many good friends through his writing and some of the nicest people he has met in the sport work in the fancy press, and added, 'I have worked with all the fancy press editors through my 45 years doing articles and thinking back they were all quite fair when it came to putting red lines through lines in my work'.

Keith has appeared eight times on the television with the pigeons, the first time in 1984 and has made countless appearances on the radio. His favourite appearances on the TV were two of his most recent, BBC 'Inside Out' in 2007 and Channel 5 'Extraordinary Animals' which was screened in June 2008 and then repeated in February 2009. Keith says he has fond memories of the time he went to the Sky studios in Isleworth, to appear live on 'Sun Rise' and taking his two children, Caroline and Mark, who were only young at that time, and the buzz they got seeing the TV studio and sitting in the 'green' room. He is always willing to front up to the media, to promote and enhance our great sport, but hates and will never get involved with what he calls the 'Trafalgar Square' element of the media, who want to insult pigeons and the people who keep them.

The B.B.C. television producer, Ray Hough, sent a camera crew to the B.H.W. Blackpool Show to film Keith judging, which was planned to be linked up with a filming session at his loft in Claygate. The eight minute film, which also featured an in depth interview with Keith's good friend Peter Bryant, general manager of the R.P.R.A., was for the popular B.B.C. 1 show 'Inside Out' London. The programme went out at prime time on a Friday evening and featured many items of interest from the London and South East of England area. Ray Hough and Keith had two meetings at his home in Claygate and a Monday in February was the day set for the film crew to visit and Keith told me, 'I must say we were very lucky with the weather; it was brilliant, but a bit cold. The programme presenter, Mirander Sawyer, turned up about 30 minutes before the crew, as her taxi had had a good clear run from her home in South London, which was great, as it gave us a chance to have a cup of tea and get acquainted before our days' work together. Mirander originally came from Manchester, moving to London about 15 years previous and was a regular writer for the 'Observer' newspaper. Ray Hough, his assistant, Jane Brookes and the crew knocked on my front door soon after and my house was very soon full with their equipment. The lighting seemed to fill the back garden, which must have impressed my next door neighbours and I was amazed at the time and effort the lads put into getting the light right for different shots. The cameraman, Mark, was a big lad and he like all the T.V. cameramen who have visited my garden in the past, was soon in the loft kicking over all the water fountains. I must remember to leave them empty next time! My filming lasted all day and was light hearted, being more about the racing and showing side of the sport. Miranda started by asking me about the time I got my first pair of birds in the 1950's and it finished that evening with them filming me photographing pigeons in the 'factory', my spare bedroom where I do all my pigeon work. In those many hours filming we talked about most of what I've done in my 40 years in pigeon racing, writing, pigeon photography, video production, conveying and the normal racing and showing things. Ray Hough was at the very top of his profession and is a great Director, who knows exactly what he wants. I found Ray a very friendly and down to earth guy, but was a perfectionist when it came to his film work. He had been in the industry for many years and had won many Royal Television Society Awards for his films. Ray invited me to go to the studios at Boreham Wood to see them edit some of the programme, which I must say was a great experience and when the 'Inside Out' programme was finally aired I was highly delighted with the end product'.

In the May of 2008 Keith had just returned from France after conveying the London & South East Classic Club birds to Alencon and he received a phone call from the Channel 5 TV producer, Aneeta Chana, asking if they could come and film him with the birds for the long running 'Extraordinary Animals' series. Keith told me, 'well I'm an ol' boy now and it took me about a week to get over my conveying trips to France with the Classic birds, but I told Aneeta that I would agree to do it as long as they could make my eyes up to hide the black tiredness rings! Only joking! The lads turned up on the Wednesday for a full afternoon shoot and I must say, I really enjoyed filming, especially when they dragged my wife, Betty, in for a shot. They asked me questions on the history of the sport, pigeons in the war, record speeds and distances, and we talked in great length about my work with the British Homing World and London & South East Classic Club. Mike Reilly was the Director on the day and he originally comes from Glasgow, although his family comes from Ireland. He had been working in television for 12 years at that time and had been involved in the Generation Game, Fifth Gear, and had worked with Lenny Henry and Ali G. 'Extraordinary Animals' was a new se-

ries of ten programmes starting on Channel 5 at 7.30pm on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May. Mike told me the pigeon programme would be number eight or nine and when he let me know the date we published in the BHW. I was talking to the camera man, Luke Atkinson, and he told me his camera costs £25,000 and the super duper lense cost another £25,000. Luke originally came from Ealing, but had only lived about five miles from me in Molesey and he has been television for 17 years in 2008. He was a freelance cameraman and had worked on many premier programmes including the highly successful Bad Girls series. Our sound man for the day was Lisala Dolo and in his nine years in the job had worked on Tonight with Trevor McDonald and Life of Grime. As usual I was busy in between takes with taking my photographs and own personal filming. They were very interested in the pigeons and were very pleased with their footage'.

Another enjoyable filming session was for the Sky programme 'World Business' and Keith reflected saying, 'a few years ago I received a phone call from T.V. reporter, Alex de Jong, of NCBC Europe television asking me if he could bring a film crew to my loft in Claygate and interview me with the pigeons. The recording was for a five minute sports slot on his 'World Business' programme, to be screened on Sky and the programme was also screened on 18 channels globally and on 20 International airlines. The interview covered every aspect of our sport including, long distance and sprint racing, and of course I gave a good account of our problems with Hawks and the recent 'bird flu'. After the filming, I joked with Alex saying that the media have nick named me 'One Take Keith' and he said after the filming had finished that he would have to book more editing time, because I talked too much. What could he mean? LOL! I'm always happy to appear on the national media, to tell them what a great hobby pigeon racing is and it's not all Trafalgar Square, dirty street pigeons under the railway arches and pigeon droppings. It seems to me that most times I see pigeons featured in the national media, whether it is Television, Radio or in the Newspapers, it's detrimental to our sport. I've now appeared on national T.V. eight times and on several occasions have turned down an appearance on national T.V. because I knew it was going to be a 'micky take' and detrimental to pigeon racing. I feel very strongly about this and I hate to see anything adverse about pigeons in the national media'. Keith has made many films on pigeon racing and showing, which have been used by the major television companies and he tells me he thinks he might have the biggest archive of pigeon articles, photos and films in the pigeon world.

### **DEFRA visits Keith Mott's loft in 2008**

Since the outset of the 'Bird Flu' problem in Europe several years ago the sport of pigeon racing and showing has had to suffer several crippling restrictions and temporary 'blanket' bans to it's general functioning, in some cases with catastrophic affect. We have seen out breaks of 'Bird Flu' in the UK and Europe, and had major races and shows cancelled at a last minute. Everybody has their own opinion if these restrictions are too strict or in some cases even necessary, but the main factor is our government body dealing with the virus, DEFRA, think they are necessary. Peter Bryant, the general manager of the RPRA at that time, had been in constant contact with DEFRA in one form or another since day one and had been our 'champion' on this major problem of restrictions on our sport and in some cases had gained us races we probably would not have had, especially from France. Peter had represented us, the pigeon fancy, brilliantly and the fancy in general must be grateful for his wonderful efforts! All through the 'Bird Flu' campaign, Peter, had been asking DEFRA to make a visit to a pigeon loft, so they could see first-hand how we keep our birds and talk to a fancier to gain information on how our sport operates. DEFRA decided a loft visit and a chat with a fancier would be a good idea and Peter Bryant emailed Keith, and asked if I would host the meeting. As always, He was more than happy to help! If he could say or do something to get the restriction eased and improve our present state of racing and showing, it would be great. After several emails and phone calls between Peter, DEFRA and Keith Mott, the visit was set for Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

The day arrived and it was perfect for viewing racing pigeons, being nice and warm, with a blue sky and sunshine. Keith's front door bell rang and on opening the door, he found two lads in their early thirties standing there with smiles on their faces and not the expected suited government types. Keith's first words to them were, 'Hi lads! It nice to see you are human. I fully expected to see two little horns sticking out of the top of your heads'. They had a good laugh and that really broke the ice for the very important loft visit. Keith has visited thousands of pigeon lofts in his 45 years as a pigeon scribe, but this one must rate as one of the most important of them all! The officers were David Middleton, who corresponded with Peter Bryant over our pigeon restrictions most of the time and Balazs, a DEFRA vet who came from Hungary. They had a short chat in the Claygate back living room, and then the officers got dressed up in grey hooded suits and plastic bags on their feet, for the viewing of the pigeons in the loft. David said this protected clothing was very necessary, as they didn't want to risk bringing anything in to the Mott's loft.

David and Balazs were at Keith Mott's home for just under two hours and they never stopped talking about pigeons for the duration of their stay. Keith assured them that all the information he gave them would be accurate and he had done nothing special to the loft or pigeons for their visit. Everything was as normal. Keith cleans his loft out twice every day and it had been scraped that morning, and the birds exercised as usual. They covered every aspect of racing, including the widowhood system for sprint racing and the natural system for the long distance events. They did talk in length about racing from the continent and in particular Keith's experiences as convoyer for the London & South East Classic Club. They asked if all the birds got home on the day from Pau (550 miles) and he told them the 2007 Pau Classic was one the best races in the history of the L&SECC and they had about 100 birds recorded on the day of liberation. He also explained that most of the birds worked home over the next couple of days. David asked Keith about the feeding and training of the racers, and seemed to enjoy looking at the youngsters in the nest bowls, in the stock loft. They appreciated the performances of one or two of the better racers, in particular the Mott's good blue chequer hen, 'Foxwarren Complete', which had scored well four times in Classic races over 550 miles. Balazs asked Keith about our Paramixo vaccination programme and told me there had been a recent outbreak of Newcastle's Disease in Germany. In our conversation Keith kept bringing up the DEFRA seven day rule on pigeons that fly from the continent and told them it was very detrimental to our pigeon racing and clubs were suffering badly with it being in place. Pigeon racing clubs were losing out on their sport and it is affecting them with big financial losses. Keith told them if it could be reduced, even to six days, it would be a great help to our sport. He also told them about all the activities of the pigeon year, from pairing up in January, racing in the summer, the moult period in October, through to the winter shows in November and December.

They spent a lot of time talking about the winter shows and how they had suffered financially and activity wise. Many major shows had to be cancelled at the last minute in recent years, including the RPRA Southern Region Show, NEHU South Shields Show and the 'Old Comrades' Show, and the organizers had endured big financial losses. The previous winter Keith was booked to judge at the two major West Country events, the Duchy Show and the Devon & Cornwall Show Racer Society open show, and both these were cancelled because of the 'Bird Flu' outbreak at the Turkey processing firm in Norfolk. All these societies had booked hotels for the travelling judges and big halls to stage the events and when their shows were called off at the last minute, they incur big financial losses, which they could ill afford. The financial loss was one thing, but the Show Racer lads had a very short season, with only a few Classic events, and missed out on a lot of their sport with these cancellations. On Keith's meeting with the DEFRA lads he reminded them of the many thousands of pounds these winter Classic shows donate to charity every year. He mentioned to David that the situation seemed to be getting better with less 'blanket' bans accruing with the recent 'Bird Flu' outbreaks and more localized zones being set up around the affected areas. He told Keith the containment procedure for say the Turkey farm in Norfolk and the Swan sanctuary in Dorset were different, with a shed full of Turkeys being easier to handle than Swans flying loose.

After looking at the pigeons and loft they had a nice cup of tea on the patio. Keith presented David and Balazs with three of his own pigeon DVDs each, so they had additional information on the sport. One of the DVD's was Keith's favourite, the BBC's 'Inside Out' programme on pigeons, which he thinks is a brilliant advert for our sport. David took several photos and Keith supplied him with several others for his information. Keith said, 'the DEFRA lads appreciated the skills of racing our birds out of the short and long distance, and they witnessed the great affinity we have with our birds. I for one would like to applaud DEFRA for their efforts to find out how our sport clicks and familiarize themselves with the 'grass root' of pigeon racing and showing, in an attempt to help us with our 'Bird Flu' restrictions. The two officers, David and Balazs, were really nice people and Betty and myself enjoyed their visit very much'. Keith did an article on the DEFRA visit to his loft, which had to be approved by the Government Press Office, after which it appeared in the fancy press the following week.

### **London & South East Classic Club**

At the 2010 A.G.M. of the London & South East Classic Club, Keith Mott was given the great honour of being elected in as the new President and at the time told me; 'I thank the committee and members for their vote of support and confidence'. The Classis was very close to his heart and he had put a lot of work in to the club over many seasons, and had run many Phone-In fund raising squeaker auctions, which had realised nearly £20,000.00 for the transporter fund. Being elected as President of the Classic had presented him with an exciting challenge which he has enjoyed and relished! The main thing he admired in Gordon Marsh, the previous L&SECC President, was that he was a great working President, which is something Keith thinks is very important and he has carried on in that same vain. Keith had served on the L&SECC

committee for about 15 years and had been Press Officer and a Life Vice President for most of that time. Reluctantly at the end of the 2008 season Keith retired after eight good years as chief convoyer of the London & South East Classic Club, which took him to all the major race points in France, including twice Tarbes and six times to Pau. He says he loved convoying and could write a book about his experiences while driving the pigeon transporter on the continent, but maintains he would never go to Guernsey for a holiday as he took the Classic young birds there 15 times and has had enough of the place. While convoying the young birds to Guernsey he first met his close friend, Matt Bentley, who then lived on the island and now lives in Nottingham, with Keith's goddaughter, Kelsey. Matt is a close family friend and he makes the 150 mile drive down to Claygate for a visit and one of Betty's dinners several times a year. I recently spoke to Keith and he told me, 'I have served all my pigeon racing life on committees and been at the cutting edge of pigeon politics all that time and on most occasions I have finished up getting my 'arse' bitten. I felt very honoured and really enjoyed my three years as President of my beloved London & South East Classic Club. Now that I've hit 65 years of age (2015), I keep clear of pigeon clubs and pigeon 'politics' and do what I have really enjoyed doing for the last 45 years, racing a few pigeons, photography and writing quality articles in the pigeon fancy press.

### **A racing pigeon convoyer's story**

On one cold winter's night in the mid 1990's Keith's phone rang and it was his good friend, John Tyerman, who at the time was the President of the London & South East Classic Club. After a few minutes 'chewing the fat' about the sport in general, Johnny asked him if I fancied joining the Classic's convoying set up and assisting Doug Went, who at that time Keith considered to be one of the best convoyers in the country. Although it was a job he had in the back of my mind, that he would like to have a go at, Keith had to think about it long and hard, because at that time he was suffering badly with Pigeon Fancier's Lung, and pigeon convoying was not the obvious thing to do. He decided that with a bit of common sense, using a mask and coat, and with all the feeding and watering being carried out on the outside of the Classic's lorry, he should get away with it, and if it did affect him badly he could resign at the end of the season. Keith first started when he and Doug Went convoyed the first Classic of the 1997 season from Alencon, which had a record entry at that time of nearly 2,400 birds. Keith says, 'Doug Went was one of the greats of convoying racing pigeons, with many years' experience on the South and North roads and I must say, working with him for 18 months taught me a lot about being on the road with the pigeons. I took over as chief convoyer for the young bird Guernsey Classics in 1998 and I think at that time the best liberation site we visited was Bordeaux. It is very spacious and has full facilities for the pigeons and convoyers. This site is the main lorry drivers stopover car park in Bordeaux and has a truckers hotel and petrol station, so it's easy to water the birds and for the convoyers to get a meal and shower. This site is very near to a river and, like Pau, is prone to early morning mist'.

Keith loved convoying the pigeons through France to places like Bordeaux and Tarbes, but says it is very hard work, and is a young man's game! He retired from convoying at the end of the end of the 2008 season, as he thought at 58 years of age he was getting to old for the pressure and sleeping rough in lorries. He had no intention of ever doing 'big time' convoying again, but the Central Southern Classic Flying Club chief convoyer's job was offered to him at the end of 2009, which involved no driving and the prospect of the luxury of the use of one of the premier transporters in the country. Keith had convoyed South and North Road inland, but the main enjoyment for him was convoying the pigeons to France and it gave him a great buzz to produce good Classic racing from over the English Channel. He says. 'It must be the 'gipsy' in me that made me except the CSCFC job in the 2010 season, which gave me the opportunity to visit some new liberation sites in France, including, Messac, Carentan and Bergerac. I must say that in my time as a convoyer, I've never seen a perfect pigeon transporter or been to a perfect liberation site. We don't live in a perfect world and we can always find something to criticize! I personally like the old fashioned baskets, the like of which we used in the L&SECC for many years and were used by Catterells Pigeon Transport of Blackpool who served our sport so well for many years, before packing up a few years ago. When you are in France with the pigeons it's nice to know you have a good team behind you at the home end and I was lucky enough to have my good friend Steve Appleby doing my weather for me! I think convoying racing pigeons, whether it is for a big Classic or small club race is the most responsible and demanding job in the sport! The only advice I can give to any youngsters who have dreams of becoming a racing pigeon convoyer, is when you are away with the pigeons in France be your own man, with your utmost priority being the bird's welfare and producing the best race possible, with the situation you are presented with that weekend. Do not be influenced by outside voices or follow club rules if I think it will be detrimental to the welfare of the pigeons in your charge. Your paramount priority when convoying is the welfare of the birds!'

The highlight of the 2011 racing season for Keith was to see his good friend, John Tyerman, win the Central Southern Classic Flying Club's longest old bird race from Tarbes. Johnny had not enjoyed good health over the last couple of years, which had created a worrying and distressing time his wife Linda and his family in general. I'm happy to say he is back in some good form now! John had spent a life time working for our sport, most of the time at the detriment of his own pigeons and for Keith and Betty to see him win the CSCFC 'blue Riband' race in such great style was the great thing that season! Keith told me, 'John Tyerman and I have been good friends for many years and we have been through several pigeon campaigns together, including serving on the NFC and L&SECC committees and conveying pigeons together. We roomed together when we travelled for the National Flying Club committee meetings and in 2003 we conveyed the International birds to the waiting train in Belgium, when Brian Sheppard of Trowbridge won the race with his wonderful blue chequer cock, Champion 'Legend'. When the members of the NFC sent their birds to their first International, no one really knew what an outstanding success it would be and that British racing history was in the making. John and I were in the NFC delegation that went to Belgium to negotiate our Nation taking part in its first International race, then we conveyed the birds to the train in Belgium after marking and on the day after the race, as NFC Press Office, I drove down to Trowbridge to do an article on Britain first ever International winner, Champion 'Legend'. That Dax International marked the start of a new era in British long distance pigeon racing and John and I were very proud to be a part of it! John was a founder member of the London & South East Classic Club and in the early days of the club, he was one of the main workers in making it a success, including conveying the Classic birds out to France on a lorry. He was a great committee worker for the L&SECC for many years until he moved to Bracklesham Bay and was the Classic's President for three years. He was on the NFC committee for nine years and is currently President of the BICC'.

### **The new loft set up (2009)**

Keith was told that moving house is one of the most stressful things you can do, but he thinks changing pigeon lofts comes very close! After several months of thought he decided that my old 'rabbit hutch' loft was getting on a bit in years, with a lot of it needing replacement because of rot and so decided in October 2009 to replace it with a new 'L' shaped structure of his own design. Keith and Betty's garden at Claygate is the size of a postage stamp and the new loft had to be small, so a lot of thought had to go into the design to make it workable for what he had in mind for the coming seasons and of course with his 'pigeon lung' problem in mind. His good mate, Bobby Besant, invited him around to his home in Worcester Park to have a look at his new loft that he had made in the winter of 2008 by Park Hall Lofts in Derbyshire and on viewing it Keith knew that was the loft for him, and he needed to give Andy at Park Hall a phone call to discuss his design. Bob's 26ft loft, which is very inconspicuous in the garden and is made of tanalised Loglap timber, and never needs to be painted. He races on the roundabout system so the front is made up with obscure Perspex doors and is fully kitted out with a trapping system for the ETS.

Keith's main problem is his pigeon fancier's lung and the new loft had to be ultra-well ventilated. Although he cleans out twice a day with a mask, he never spends much time inside the loft, doing any observing of the inmates from the outside in the garden. Over the last ten or twelve years he has raced his Brian Denney and Eric Cannon pigeons with great success on the long distance, which is what he enjoys, racing from 550 miles, but has now found he needs more racing each season, so has added a few of Mark and Dick Evans' Gaby Vandenabeele pigeons to his team and he can now race the shorter National and Classic channel races on the widowhood. Flying the widowhood system means a closed in loft, which is quite the opposite too what he has to have, so when designing the loft he made it closed in with Perspex doors for the widowhood cocks when they are out exercising and once they are in the rest of the loft opens up almost like an aviary. The Park Hall's buildings are very well ventilated so he was half way there anyway! The new loft has the same spec as Bob's, with tanalised Loglap timber, which is nice and thick, Perspex windows and a trapping system for the ETS. Keith designed the loft so he can race both the widowhood and natural systems, and includes a section for eight widowhood cocks, one for 15 young birds, a nice big section for eight natural pairs including flying out stock birds, a small section for one or two pairs of prisoner stock birds and a widowhood hens section which has eight boxes, with a nice squeaker weaning pen in the floor area. The new structure is the same lay out at one end as his old loft and has cupboards built in under the nest boxes to store nest bowls etc. Keith is really pleased with the new set up and said, let's hope for a bit of racing success in the coming seasons!

### **Brian & Thelma Denney of Strensall.**



Keith told me recently, 'because of the vast amount of pigeon work I do outside the garden, I have become a 'pigeon keeper' in recent years and not a pigeon racer, which I intend to change in the next couple of years. I love long distance pigeon racing and am very lucky to have direct children of Brian Denney and Eric Cannon's champions in my stock team. My good friend Brian 'Mr Long Distance' Denney, has one of the best long distance lofts in the world today. He flies 748 miles from the NFC Tarbes Grand National and has won Section K many times, including 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> open. Brian clocked Ch. 'Brian's Blue' on the day of liberation from Tarbes (748 miles), to be the longest flying pigeon clocked on the day ever in the NFC. A brilliant fancier! Brian and I have exchanged youngster over the years, since 1999 and he has been really good to me, giving me children of his best birds, including Champion 'Blue Pau', Champion 'Tuff Nut', Champion 'Brian's Blue' and Champion 'Dark Charm'. One of the favourites here in Claygate was my good dark cock stock cock, 'Sasha's Boy', bred for me by Brian Denney in 2007, and he is a full brother to Champion 'Dark Charm' and Champion 'Dark Dancer', being bred out of the Champion stock pair, 'Maxi' and 'Dark Jan'. 'Sasha's Boy' has bred several outstanding 550 mile racers, including Federation winners and a late bred from him was donated to the 2010 BHW Blackpool Charity Auction and raised £740. 'Sasha's Boy' is the sire of 'Half Crown' the dam of Champion 'Noble Dream' winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open International Agen (10,500 birds) in the 2015 season for Bobby & Anthony Besant. This champion stock cock bred Federation winners mated to 'Lady Tuff Nut' in the later seasons and she is a daughter of Champion 'Tuff Nut', one of the best long distance racers and breeders of all time'.

In his 45 years visiting premier lofts all over Europe and doing pigeon articles in the fancy press, his favourites and most memorable were his two visits to his friends, Brian and Thelma Denney of Strensall. Keith first visited Brian and Thelma Denney in 1999 when he went to the Yorkshire loft to video 'Mr Long Distance' for his 'Many Miles with Mott' video series and since then have become good friends, meeting up at the BHW Blackpool Show every year, and Keith kept saying, 'I will pop up and see you both this summer'. Well ten years had flown by and he still had not been back to Strensall. In late April 2009, Keith and best mate, Peter Taylor 'bit the bullet' and headed north armed with his pigeon photography box and a battery of cameras, including the video units. The weather was brilliant and the thought of looking at one of the best long distance lofts of pigeon in the sport excited Keith and Peter! After some tea and a chat Keith set up his pigeon box in Brian's garage and photographed 13 of the current 'Bri-Den' 750 mile champions. Keith took over a hundred photos of Brian and Thelma, and the lofts, which brought his file up to date on this fancier, who is one of our greatest long distance champions of all time. He shot nearly an hour of video and just like those ten years since his last visit, the time flew by and after a nice lunch put on our Thelma, it was time to make the 240 mile drive home. What a great day they had!

After Keith and Peter's visit in April, Brian and Thelma enjoyed a brilliant 2009 season racing in the National Flying Club. The month of June saw Brian's favourite race take place, the NFC Tarbes Grand National, and the Denney's enjoyed a brilliant race of a lifetime! The 3,800 birds were liberated at 13.45hrs on the Friday in no wind situation and with adverse weather in northern France that evening, the convoy experienced a very difficult race, with many members not clocking in on the Saturday. Brian and Thelma sent a team of 20 birds and flying 748 miles in to Yorkshire, clocked seven of their entry on the Saturday, to record a fantastic 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> section K, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 56<sup>th</sup>, 153<sup>rd</sup> open NFC and 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> open North East 700 Mile Club. The Denney's first two birds were on the clock within three minutes, with the 1<sup>st</sup> section K, 3<sup>rd</sup> open winner being the five year old widowhood blue chequer hen, 'Northern Lady', and she is a daughter of the sire of the Brian's loft, Champion 'Tuff Nut'. Keith always laughs and reminds those who were present on that visit to the Strensall loft in April 2009, that on handle her on the photo session he picked out 'Northern Lady' as his fancy and he is happy to say she hit the jackpot in the very hard Tarbes Grand National that same season! Keith says, Brian and Thelma Denney are two of the nicest people he has ever met in pigeon racing.

### **Peter Taylor of Guildford**

Peter Taylor of Guildford has been one of Keith's best friends for over 30 years and every one who knows him will tell you, he is a great out spoken guy, who 'shoots from the hip'. Keith told me, 'a bit like myself, there is no 'bull' with our Peter and he tells how it is'. Years ago, he raced in partnership with his later friend, Jack Hedges, at his home in Burlington Road, New Malden and in 1998 moved to South Wales, to start his retirement from work, racing his pigeons in the valleys. He soon got fed up with that, when a pair of Peregrine Falcons living about a mile behind his loft, took his young birds every day until he had none left. He returned and set up home and pigeons in Guildford about ten years ago. Peter's best pigeon was his good natural blue hen, 'Selina's Express', who won 4<sup>th</sup> open London & South East Classic Club Bergerac (450 miles), with only half a dozen birds home on the day of liberation. This beautiful pigeon was bred by

David Williams of Chessington from a son of Eric Cannon's 1<sup>st</sup> open NFC Sartilly winner, Champion 'Culmer Marion', which he purchased as a youngster at Eric's dispersal sale in 2000, and a Janssen hen. This mating certainly clicked, as Peter Taylor has a full brother to 'Selina's Express', which won: 71<sup>st</sup> open L&SECC Guernsey, 63<sup>rd</sup> open NFC Guernsey as a young bird in 2002 and he was called 'Orlando's Express'. 'Selina's Express' was sent to the Bergerac Classic sitting four day old eggs and she has some good previous racing form, winning: 2003: 87<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Guernsey, 2005: 31<sup>st</sup> open L&SECC Pau. A wonderful hen!

### **Other interests in sport**

When I asked Keith if he had any other interests out the pigeon racing and showing sport he said, 'I love sport, so much so, I would watch two fly's race up the window pane! I could not survive without Sky Sports and watch a lot of sport on the television. My best mate, Peter Taylor, comes up to my house ever Wednesday evening for our regular 'boy's sports' night and we drink tea, and watch mostly Speedway, Boxing, Athletics, Rugby and Darts. My wife, Betty, introduced me to Speedway when I first met her 45 years ago and at that time she was really into the sport, having visited several European countries to watch world champion meetings. Our second date was on a Thursday evening at Wimbledon Speedway and we used to watch all the great riders, including Ole Olson, Barry Briggs, Ivan Mauger and of course the 'Dons' wizard Ronnie Moore. It was great to see Tai Woffinden become the Speedway world champion at Torun FIM Grand Prix, Poland in October 2013 and again Melbourne, Australia in 2015. His championship wins have been a good 'buzz' for Peter and me, as Woffinden is the first British world champion for many years! He enjoys boxing very much and says his all favourites were Mike Tyson and Nigel Benn, and he says, 'win or lose, when those two guys were in the ring you always saw a great boxing match'. Keith has great admiration for the Smith Brothers of Liverpool, with the four lads all winning British titles. A fantastic family achievement! The eldest brother, Paul, has had two cracks at the world title and of course he is a Racing Pigeon enthusiast up there in the north west of England. Keith has been very keen on Rugby since his school days and told me, 'I played a lot when I was young and when I was in my second year at school, I played for the fourth year 'colts'. I don't live too far away from Twickenham Stadium and have been there many times through the year and seen some great matches. I can remember, all those year ago, the school Rugby team use to have an annual outing to Twickenham to see the Oxford and Cambridge Universities match, and we all used to go by train to see some really great Rugby. When we went to see that match in the early 1960's, Twickenham wasn't the world class stadium it is today, the stand were big sheds painter green. Great days! One of Keith's sporting heroes is the great Eric Bristow of the darts world.

### **Main achievements breeding winners for others**

'Foxwarren Lofts' have a wonderful record of breeding countless top class winners for themselves and other fanciers over many years. The Keith and Betty Mott loft in Claygate has gifted a lot of youngsters to their friends and charity auctions over the years, and in the 2013 season their birds produced several premier prize winners including 1<sup>st</sup> open Combine, 1<sup>st</sup> open Amalgamation, 1<sup>st</sup> Federation (twice), and 2nd Federation (Twice) in that season. The loft has produced 1<sup>st</sup> open Combine two years on the trot and their birds have also produced 1<sup>st</sup> open Amalgamation Bourges (581 miles) two years on the trot.

One of Brian Denney's greatest champions was 'Brian's Blue', winner in 2008 of 1<sup>st</sup> section K, 61<sup>st</sup> open NFC Tarbes Grand National (4,035 birds), NFC record holder being clocked at 748 miles on the day of liberation. Also winning 1<sup>st</sup> North East 700 Mile Club, 1<sup>st</sup> RPRA UK Long Distance Champion, plus RPRA Region Long Distance Award. A fantastic performance! Keith told me, 'the dam of Champion 'Brian's Blue' was 'Foxwarren Pretender' bred by Keith & Betty Mott at 'Foxwarren Lofts' and she flew the English Channel twice as a young birds, recording 4<sup>th</sup> club Guernsey and then as a yearling flew Bergerac (455 miles) on the day of liberation to win 151<sup>st</sup> open L&SECC. 'Pretender's' nest sister, 'Betty M', was gifted to Brian Denney out of the nest and she bred several top performers for the Strensall loft including: 'Elton' winner of 30<sup>th</sup>, 182<sup>nd</sup> open NFC Tarbes ( 748 miles) and 'Class Blue' winner of 2<sup>nd</sup> section K NFC Fougères. 'Foxwarren Pretender' was loaded to Brian for a season when she bred Champion 'Brian's Blue' and she was a half-sister to our champion racing and breeding hen, 'Foxwarren Complete', being a daughter of 'Pathfinder' who was bred by Brian Denney out of the wonderful racing and breeding hen, 'Blue Pau'. Champion 'Brian's Blue' proved to be a great breeder of winners, including: 'Blue Boy', winner of 12<sup>th</sup>, 130<sup>th</sup> open NFC Tarbes (748 miles)'.

After Clive Turner's great success in 2011 when he won 1<sup>st</sup> open London & South East Classic Club Alençon (1,811 birds), he repeated his very high quality performances the following season, winning 1<sup>st</sup> Hors-

ham RPC, 1<sup>st</sup> South Coast Federation, 1<sup>st</sup> Combine Saintes (374 miles), 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Horsham RPC, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> South Coast Federation (800 birds) Fougères (192 miles), plus many other premier prizes in the club and Federation. Clive won the Combine from Saintes with his good widowhood mealy pied cock, 'The Saintes Cock', and he was bred by Keith & Betty Mott of Claygate from two Busschaert / Staf Van Reet stock birds bred by Richard and Ken O'Connor of South Norwood. The Saintes Combine winner was latish bred in 2010 and had very little racing, but as well as winning the Combine he won several top positions inland in the strong Horsham club this season. His sire was the mealy pied stock cock, 'Young Roman', who was the sire of several good winners and is son of the champion Busschaert, 'Roman Nose', winner of four times 1<sup>st</sup> Federation, when mated to the Paul Arnold / Staf Van Reet hen, 'Dawn', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> Combine. The dam of 'The Saintes Cock' was a daughter of the O'Connor's 'Champion of Champions', 'Batman', winner of 17 first prizes, including five times 1<sup>st</sup> Federation and 4<sup>th</sup> open Combine. Champion 'Batman' was a Busschaert and half-brother to Champion 'Roman Nose'. A fantastic family of winners! Clive's 3<sup>rd</sup> South Coast Federation Fougères winner in the 2012 season was also bred from Keith & Betty Mott blood lines.

Keith and Betty's small team of Mark and Dick Evans / Gaby Vandenabeele stock birds have really been breeding fantastic and have produced some brilliant racers, including 1<sup>st</sup> open Combine and 2<sup>nd</sup> Three Borders Federation in 2013. The key pigeon has been the blue WF, 'Myrtle Exile' and she has produced premier winners with two of Keith's M. & D. Evans stock cocks. The partner's Gaby Vandenabeele stock birds were mostly bred by Mark & Dick Evans of Whitley Bridge and 'Myrtle Exile' is a granddaughter of the world famous Champion 'Golden Gaby', winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open National Orleans (12,875 birds). What a fantastic breeding hen! 'Myrtle Exile' produced, being paired to Keith and Betty's grandson of 'Pre-Olympic', a cock they gifted to their great mate, Terry Haley of Watford and he recorded as a young bird in the 2013 season: 14<sup>th</sup> Spelthorne open Yeovil (650 birds), flew the L&SECC Guernsey Young Bird Classic (a really bad race), was then clocked from the NFC Carentan (France) Young Bird National to record 415<sup>th</sup> open (3,330 birds) and seven days later was turned 205 miles North Road to Aycliffe to win 1<sup>st</sup> club (by 20 minutes), 1<sup>st</sup> Thames Valley Federation, 1<sup>st</sup> open North Thames NR Combine. 'Myrtle Exile' and their grandson of the two 'Myrtle Lofts' legends, 'Shadow' and 'Lord of the Rings', 'Myrtle Supremacy' was their original pair of stock birds from Mark & Dick Evans and they have been mate together for most of the time Keith and Betty have owned them and have proved to be a champion pair of breeders. 'White Tail', a daughter of 'Myrtle Supremacy' and 'Myrtle Exile' produced 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> Federation in recent seasons for Colin Crook and Andy Iddenden. A fantastic Gaby Vandenabeele stock pair!

Fred Dickson of Cramlington sent four birds to the Bourges (581 miles) race in 2013 and with the race turning out to be a very hard push home, the birds clocked in the Combine on the day of liberation could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Fred lives at the top end of the NEHU and clocked his good Eric Cannon blue chequer cock, 'Northern Expected', at 06.03hrs next morning to record 1<sup>st</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> Federation, 1<sup>st</sup> New North Amalgamation and 8<sup>th</sup> North of England Homing Union open result (2,355 birds). This wonderful round about cock has flown Bourges (581 miles) three times and won 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Federation. A fantastic achievement! 'Northern Expected's' half-brother, a 100% Eric Cannon blue chequer cock, recorded 1<sup>st</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> Federation, 1<sup>st</sup> Amalgamation Bourges in the 2012 season and his dam, 'Foxwarren Northerner' was bred by Keith & Betty Mott. 'Northern Expected' is a son of Fred's champion 'Five Times Bourges Cock' which was killed by a Sparrowhawk in front of the Cramlington loft and was the winner of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> Federation Bourges and sire of 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Federation, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Amalgamation Bourges (581 miles). 'The Five Times Bourges Cock' was bred from 'Foxwarren Fred', a red chequer cock bred by Keith and Betty at Claygate and he has proved to be one of the best 550 mile stock cocks they have ever owned and was bred from the very best of Eric Cannon's wonderful long distance family. 'Foxwarren Fred' is the sire of many premier long distance champions including: 1<sup>st</sup> Federation Bourges (581 miles), 2<sup>nd</sup> Federation Bourges, 2<sup>nd</sup> Federation Bourges, 2<sup>nd</sup> Federation Bourges, 3<sup>rd</sup> Federation Bourges, 5<sup>th</sup> Federation Bourges, 8<sup>th</sup> Federation Bourges and is grand sire of 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Federation, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Amalgamation Bourges (581 miles) in the 2012 and 2013 seasons. Later in the 2013 season Fred Dickson won with a yearling blue chequer cock bred by Keith and Betty, and he recorded 1<sup>st</sup> club, 2<sup>nd</sup> Federation, 12<sup>th</sup> New North Amalgamation Arras (377 miles) in a strong north east wind. This game cock was a son of the good Eric Cannon stock hen, 'Foxwarren Katie' when mated to a son of the Number 1 Brian Denney stock pair, 'Sasha's Boy' and 'Lady Tuff Nut'. 'Foxwarren Katie' is a granddaughter of the Eric Cannon champions: 'Culmer Marion' winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open NFC Sartilly and 'Culmer Channel Queen' the NFC Pau Merit Award winner. 'Sasha's Boy' is a full brother to 'Dark Charm' and 'Dark Dancer', with 'Lady Tuff Nut' being a daughter of the champion of all champions, 'Tuff Nut'. This Brian Denney stock pair have produced Federation winners and 'Sasha's Boy' is grandsire of 1<sup>st</sup> open International Agen (10,500 birds) in the 2015 racing season. There were several other good winners bred from Keith and Betty Mott's birds in the 2013 season including: Clive Turner

who recoded 2<sup>nd</sup> open London & South East Classic Club Bergerac (450 miles) with a pigeon bred from K.& B. Mott birds.

Bobby and Anthony Besant won 1<sup>st</sup> open International Agen (10,500 birds) in the 2015 season and they named their winner 'Noble Dream', and their wonderful champion is a two year dark cock, raced on the widowhood system. Bobby remarked at the time that he thought it was a decent time when he came in from Agen and 'Noble Dream' did his usual party trick of landing in next doors tree before coming in to the loft to be clocked. He had won several premier positions before his Agen (499 miles) International win, including 3<sup>rd</sup> Three Borders Federation, 4<sup>th</sup> SMT Combine (699 birds) Nort sur Erdre (278 miles) as a yearling in the 2014 season. The dam of Champion 'Noble Dream' was the dark pied hen, 'Half Crown' and she was bred by Keith and Betty Mott of Claygate. She was one of three sisters that the Motts gifted to Bobby and Anthony in 2009 and Keith donated a full brother to the BHW Blackpool Show Charity auction in 2010, which raised for £740 for charity. 'Half Crown' was also the grand dam of Bob and Anthony's second bird clocked on the day from the Agen International and she was crossed out with Mat Rakes and Geoff Cooper pigeons to produce this game dark cock. The sire of 'Half Crown' was the champion stock cock, 'Sasha's Boy' and he was bred by Brian Denney. He was bred for the stock loft from Brian's champion stock pair, 'Maxi' and 'Dark Jan' and is a full brother to the champion racing cocks, 'Dark Charm', 'Dark Dancer' and half-brother to 'The Chequer Cock'. 'Sasha's Boy' had proved to be outstanding at stock and had bred several top 550 mile racers, including Federation winners!

The dam of 'Half Crown' was Keith's champion hen, 'Foxwarren Complete', who was a great 550 mile racer and has now proved to be a champion breeder. 'Foxwarren Complete' was the winner of 2003: 32<sup>nd</sup> open L&SECC Dax (530 miles), 2<sup>nd</sup> East Grinstead CC Dax, 2004: 29<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC San Sebastian (560 miles), 2005: 116<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Pau (552 miles), 2007: 109<sup>th</sup> open L&SECC Pau. A real class hen! Her sire was 'The Cannon Cock' bred by Eric Cannon and this cock was the original pigeon Eric bred for Keith on his restart in 1998 and was a grandson of 'Culmer White Flight' and Champion 'Culmer Sam'. The dam of 'Foxwarren Complete' was the brilliant blue cheque stock hen, 'Pathfinder', bred by Brian Denney and her dam was Champion 'Blue Pau' winner of 41<sup>st</sup>, 201<sup>st</sup> open NFC Pau (738 miles) and dam of many premier long distance racers including Champion 'Classic Lad' winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open Northern Classic Saintes (573 miles on the day of liberation). 'Pathfinder' was lightly raced before being put to stock and in 2001 flew 900 miles in three weeks to record 91<sup>st</sup> open L&SECC Perth, 52<sup>nd</sup> open L&SECC Thurso (520 miles). 'Pathfinder' was a champion breeder, producing many premier 550 mile racers, including 'Foxwarren Complete' and 'Foxwarren Pretender' dam of Champion 'Brian's Blue', the winner for Brian Denney of : 2008: 1<sup>st</sup> section K, 61<sup>st</sup> open NFC Tarbes, being clocked on the day of liberation flying 748 miles, 1<sup>st</sup> RPRA UK Long Distance Champion 2008. 'Foxwarren Complete' proved to be a 'gold mine' stock hen breeding many top 550 mile racers, as well as Bob and Anthony Besant's champion stock hen, 'Half Crown', dam of Champion 'Noble Dream'. 'Foxwarren Complete' is also the dam of the fantastic stock hen, 'Foxwarren Northern Complete', dam of many premier 550 mile racers including: 2<sup>nd</sup> Federation Bourges (581 miles), 3<sup>rd</sup> Federation Bourges, 4<sup>th</sup> Federation Bourges, 5<sup>th</sup> Federation Bourges, 8<sup>th</sup> Federation and is grand dam of 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Federation, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Amalgamation, 8<sup>th</sup> open NEHU (2,355 birds) Bourges (581 miles) in recent seasons. She is the dam of Fred Dickson's champion cock, 'The Five Times Bourges Cock'.

### **Fund raising work over the years**

The month of October 2015 was a very busy time for Keith; as he ran three fund raising Phone-In Auction Sales on three weekends on the trot. The sales were run on same lines as the Phone-In Auctions he ran for the London & South East Classic Club several years ago, which raised nearly £20,00-00 for the transporter fund over those years.

The first sale was for the Three Borders Federation in aid of our transporter fund and this took several weeks to arrange. Although the Federation had purchased a vehicle to start the 2015 racing season, the committee were looking at fund raising to offset the £12,000 debt incurred by this very necessary purchase. The Federation chairman, David Lebby, kindly gave the Federation a £12,000 interest free loan to purchase the new vehicle. Keith offered to organize a Phone-In Auction Sale and obtained a draft of seventeen 'world class' 2016 youngsters to have the phone in auction, to help raise funds for the Federation's transporter. His good friend, Dom McCoy, then added six more youngsters of their equal, to make it very special event. This was a 'golden' opportunity for the general fancy to obtain young birds from some of the very best lofts in the world of pigeon racing, sprint and long distance. Lot 1, a youngster donated by Brian & Thelma Denney of Strensall was the top priced bird and it was purchased by Clive Powell of Wales. 'Mr Long Distance', Brian has one of the best long distance lofts in the world today. He flies 748 miles from the NFC Tarbes

Grand National and has won Section K many times, including 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> open. A brilliant fancier! This was a rare opportunity to get one direct from this Strensall loft. The grand total for the sale was £2,270-00 and after expenses for advertising etc. the Three Borders Federation finished up with £2,000-00 clear for the transporter debt.

The third sale was on the weekend of Keith's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, which made the climax of the Phone-In a bit manic, as Caroline, Mark, Claire and the five grandchildren were over on the Sunday for the birthday celebration. Jo Cuthbert, Matt Bentley and Keith's god daughter, Kelsey, also visited Claygate on the Sunday evening for the sale and to wish the ol' boy Happy Birthday. Jo Cuthbert wanted to raise some money for the S.U.D.E.P. Charity (Sudden unexplained death in Epilepsy) and the Seizure Alert Dogs Charity and Keith offered to do a sale to help out. Jo was raising money for two reasons, the main one being Libby Phillips, the six and a half year old she has worked with since she started Nursery aged three. Libby has a rare form of Epilepsy which means she is in the 30% that cannot be treated with medication because it just doesn't work. The other reason is because Jo came in contact with a fellow pigeon fancier, Ross Sheridan, who tirelessly supports these charities; his daughter was also one of the 30% that could not be treated and sadly passed away aged 26 due to S.U.D.E.P. With her parent's blessing Keith and Jo named the sale, 'The Libby Phillips Charity Appeal' after this wonderful little girl. Keith obtained another wonderful draft of 'world class' 2016 youngsters and the top priced was Lot 14A donated by Keith & Betty Mott of Claygate. The 2016 youngster was purchased by Trevor Taylor, the good looking member of the Slight & Taylor partnership of the Esher club and it is inbred to 'Foxwarren Lofts' champion Brian Denney stock cock 'Sasha's Boy', the breeder of Federation winners and is grandsire of Champion 'Noble Dream' winner of 1<sup>st</sup> open BICC, 1<sup>st</sup> open International Agen (10,510 birds) in 2015. This wonderful stock cock was bred by Brian Denney and is the sire of 'Half Crown' the dam of the Agen International winner. The 'Libby Phillips' sale raised £1,730-00 for the two charities and several other cash donations were donated after the Phone-in.

### **Jo Cuthbert of Dunstable.**

Keith says, 'one of my most favourite people in the pigeon world and is my close and dear friend, Joe Cuthbert, who is not only one the keenest pigeon racers I've ever met, but she is also one the nicest fanciers I've ever met. Betty and I think the world of our Jo! She wears her heart on her sleeve and would help anyone out, most times to her own detriment and financial loss. She is the former secretary of her local north road club, Houghton Regis and also helped out local fanciers with the training of their pigeons. Nothing is too much trouble for our Jo, when it comes to helping someone out! Jo has worked very hard with her birds in the 2015 racing season and has enjoyed a brilliant old bird season, winning eight firsts in the club, and many top positions in the Thames Valley, including, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Federation, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Federation and 2<sup>nd</sup> Federation, 3<sup>rd</sup> Combine Thurso (480 miles). Brilliant pigeon racing for a young girl, who works full time at a school and races on the natural system! Her good friend, Nye Williams of Shepperton, bred her 3<sup>rd</sup> Combine Thurso dark cock and the two 1<sup>st</sup> Federation winners were bred by Peter Briars and Terry Haley. Well done to Jo!

Jo Cuthbert has now become one of our leading writers in the pigeon fancy press and she always says the first time we met was in the mid-1970's when I visited her dad, Arthur Maycock's loft in Hersham, but the first time I can remember was in the motorway services in 2007. Peter Taylor and I travel up to the BHW Blackpool Show on the Friday every year and in 2007 we made our usual mid-day break at the first motorway services past the M6 Toll, where we sometimes meet up with a few of the pigeon lads. We had a meal in the 'Little Chef' and ongoing to the desk to pay, a beautiful young girl came up to me and said, 'Excuse me, are you Keith Mott?' I was a bit surprised as it's usually 'old boys' that come up to talk to me. I was delight when she told me that she was, Joanna, the granddaughter of the late Hersham legend, Charlie Maycock, and was now racing pigeons her own right. It's so refreshing to see young people coming into our sport! Her late father, Arthur, and Charlie were regular Federation winners for many years up to the early 1990's and were legends in the Surrey pigeon fraternity'.

### **The Mott Family**

Keith and Betty are very family orientated and say, 'our five grandchildren sleep over at our home in Claygate most weekends and they all have their own interests. Sasha, the oldest, use to spend most of her time in the pigeon loft, Ryan playing games on his X Box, Katie likes fishing with her dad, Mark, and the

youngest, Sophia and Connie; well they just spend most of their time getting on your nerves. Not really, they are both the next generation of animal lovers! Sophia also spends a lot of her time with the pigeons and for a little girl with tiny hands, she handles them really well. Connie was saying 'Gaby Vandenaabeele' at the age of three and knew all the birds by name in the loft, and on her regular visits to Claygate enjoyed feeding the pigeons. When she was just a toddler, she was walking down Working High Street with her mum and on spotting some pigeons on the pavement in front of them, she said, 'look mummy, Vandenaabeeles'. LOL! Our daughter, Caroline, was always in the pigeon loft when she was a toddler, carrying pigeons around under her arm and was judging at major shows when only a young girl. Her fifteen year old daughter, Sasha, is following in her foot steps and judges at major shows with me every winter, including the Southern Counties Show Racer Open Show, RPRA Southern Region Show and the Emsworth & Havant Open Show in December 2013. Sasha spent a lot of time in the summer months sitting in my young bird section, hand feeding the inmates and makes them tame, which gives them confidence. Caroline recently moved out of her flat and into a big house with a massive garden in Weybridge and it would be great to see the kids get their own pigeon loft there eventually'.

Keith and Betty have a 'side-line' hobby and for many years have enjoyed the odd day in the summer fishing on a river or lake. Keith says, 'I'm a pigeon fancier who loves coarse fishing. I'm no expert, but have caught one or two decent fish through the years and have enjoyed the hobby very much. I enjoy the experience of sitting by a river or lake, catching fish is a bonus! My whole family like fishing and since we have had the kids, it's been a hobby we could do together, as a family. In recent month my grandchildren have started to take an interest and have caught fish at our local club lake'. Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011 turn out to be a very special day their nine year old granddaughter, Katie, which kicked off at our local fishing tackle shop in Hinchley Wood. The shop had only recently opened and on that Saturday John Wilson, the world's number one angler and television personality was making an appearance to meet the local fishermen and mark the opening of the new shop. John Wilson was Keith and Betty's son, Mark's boyhood hero, as they use to watch all his 'Go Fishing' TV programmes in the 1980's, so Mark thought he would take Katie along to the new shop met the angling supremo. They had a chat John and then had their photo taken with him, and while in the shop, Mark, purchased two packs of dead bates with the intention of going Pike fishing in the afternoon. They invited Keith along, so the three of them made off to a Pike 'hotspot' at the drains on the River Wey at Old Woking for Katie's first Pike fishing session. It was a nice warm sunny day and as Keith has said on many occasions, 'you can't beat sitting by a river in the country side on a summer's day. If you catch a fish it is a bonus'. Mark's first cast in to the river produced a 3lb 'jack' Pike, even before his dad had even put a bait on the hook! A while later Katie had a Pike take the Roach dead bait on her rod and she struck into it, starting a tug of war. It nearly pulled her over, but she hung on for dear life to that rod handle and played it to the bank, where her dad netted it. The fight produced her first ever Pike, a 7lb cracker! A great day for our Kate!

On packing up his pigeons, because of the dreaded 'pigeon fanciers lung', in the mid 1990's, Keith, Betty and the kids hit the bank every weekend and enjoyed some great success fishing their local River Wey, and local club lakes. Keith told me, 'If I'm honest, I have to confess that my wife, Betty, is the 'ace' fisher person in the Mott family and has shown many an angler we have met on the river bank how to catch good fish on none productive days. Fishing is like pigeon racing, or any other sport come to that, you get good days and you get bad. Betty always seemed to pull something out of the bag! I can recall an evening session on our favourite stretch of the River Wey at Jacobs Wells, called the Swift, and no one was catching a thing. It was as dead as a door knocker! There were many anglers sitting on the bank for several hours, with thousands of pound worth of poles and equipment around them, and they never got a bite. Betty had her beloved Centre Pin reel set up and she trotted down small pieces of sprat, on a 2lb bottom and size 18 hook, and landed several big Chub. On another occasion, I can remember her landing a 10lb Mirror Carp on a 3lb bottom and a size 16 hook, which took her a good while to land it, but she did! She always likes to fish away on her own in a little quiet place on the fishery and hates having fish out of the water for photos and looking at. If she had her way she wouldn't bother with photos and would release them back, straight out of the landing net. She had been fishing long before she met me 45 years ago, as she went with her late dad, Alf North, when she was a youngster. Alf flew pigeons for many years in the old Chessington and Surbiton clubs, so she knew what to expect when she married me'.

Keith's daughter, Caroline, was always a pigeon fancier and never an angler. When she was a kid, Keith would put a maggot on her hook for her and that would last the whole session if it stayed on. Half a dozen maggots would last her all day! She used to catch little Roach and Rudd, and at the end of the session she would only have the stretch skin of the maggot hanging on the hook. She has been interested in pigeons all her life, being introduced to them when only a little baby and as a toddler she carried them around under

her arm. She was Keith's pigeon partner when she was a young girl and won a first with her good mealy hen at the big 'Racing Pigeon' Capital Show in London, many years ago. Caz is a good judge of a pigeon and has judged many shows, including twice at the R.P.R.A. Southern Region Show. Mark, Keith's son, is the complete opposite to his sister and is an angler, never a pigeon man, although he has convoyed the London & South East Classic Club birds with Keith a couple of times. He really enjoyed the work and the travel with the pigeon transporter. Mark's two god fathers are two of the Motts oldest family friends, Terry Haley and Mick Worsfold. Keith says, 'these two guys are two of the all-time greats of pigeon racing in the London area and dear freinds'. Mark has been a very good angler from a very young age and when he was ten years of age he caught a 10lb Pike, which was nearly as long as him. His mum took him fishing, as Keith was working and he landed, unhooked and returned the big Pike on his own. When he was very young, he used to sit on his fishing box ledgering for Chub and hooked some beautiful fish, but lost them at the landing net. That little boy got so frustrated with that, he just sat on his big box and cried! Mark has caught some very nice fish through the years, including double figure Carp and Pike, and some big Chub, Barbel and Tench. He has been a keen angler all his life and has met many of our present day fishing champions including, Bob Nudd MBE, Tom Pickering, Jan Porter, Clive Branson and the great Ivan Marks. In May 2004 Mark went to Cancun in Mexico for a holiday and fished for game fish in the Caribbean. He fished with his friend, Chris, and three other anglers off a boat, ten miles of the coast of Mexico. They fished dead bait and lures static off the side of the boat and trawled, with the best fish of the day being a 100lb Marlin. Mark bagged up with many quality fish, including three Barracuda to 20lb, three Yellow Finned Jacks to 25lb, three Red Jacks and five big Tuna. Mark has always had a big rivalry with his dad over the years, comparing who catches the biggest fish, but Keith says, 'I can't compete with Barracuda and Yellow Finned Jacks! I've probably had the slightly bigger English course fish, but my best catches have been quality, but not world beaters and as I have stated previously, I enjoy sitting on the bank, catch good fish is a bonus. I have had double figured Carp and Pike, 4lb Tench and probably my best fish was my 5lb 9oz Chub caught on the River Mole'. Keith's brother, Phil, is also a very keen angler and owned a holiday caravan at New Milton, about a five miles drive from the Royalty Fishery in Christchurch, and he was always on the bank there drowning maggots, but caught some brilliant fish. In the 1980's he caught a wonderful 3lb 11oz Roach on the Royalty and at that time wasn't too far away from the British record. In fact the British record Roach at that time was caught just up the road on the River Stour!

### **'BETTY MOTT' BY KEITH MOTT.**

I first met my wife, Betty, in late 1999 and this was through my friendship with her brother, Alfie, who raced pigeons and was a keen on 'The Impalas', the band I played drums in. Alfie North was a regular visitor to the bands Sunday night gig at the Swam PH in Kingston and with our mutual interest in pigeons and Rock music, we used to talk 'shop' during my midsession break. From time to time he would bring his sister, Betty, to the 'Swan' gig and in the end it was mostly her and me talk about her main interest of those days, Speedway racing. I had known this wonderful girl named, Betty North, for a few months in early 1971 and I asked her out for our first date while at the big Gene Vincent gig at the Kingston Coronation Hall, when we were playing on the same bill. I knew she was there that night and I went out in to audience to find her. My life started on that night in 1970 and we got married in May 1972. We had two wonderful kids in Caroline and Mark, and in turn they have given us five brilliant grand children in Sasha, Katie, Ryan, Sophia and Connie. When we married in 1972 she said that it might only last about two years because of my 'Rock 'n Roll' life style and all that entailed, but here we are 43 years later and still madly in love and still happily married! Then came pigeons! At that time I thought to myself, well she is from a pigeon racing family, with her late father, Alf North senior, and her brother racing in partnership in the Surbiton FC for many years, so she knew what she was committing to by marrying a pigeon fancier. With my massive commitment to the sport she has put up with a hundred times more disruption in her life with pigeons over the year than other pigeon fancier's wives. She had seen me go away for weeks on end on pigeon matters, sitting at a computer in the 'factory' doing pigeon articles and photos for hours on end, had thousands of pigeon fanciers phoning me day and night, and through the years the countless fancier visiting our home in Claygate to have their birds photographed, and leaving all their mess and shaving all over the carpets. A fraction of what she has put up with in those 40 odd years has finished many other 'pigeon' marriages! I will say that, I've always known where to draw the line and have always put her and the children first. We always try and get away for an annual holiday with the kids and in our marriage there has never been man's work or woman's work, we both worked full time and have always shared the household chores. I defiantly can't cook and if she ever left me I would starve to death in a week. Well, looking at me lately, maybe in a fortnight! My Betty is the greatest person I've ever met in my life and I must thank her for putting up with a 'pigeon maniac' for all those years. Love you, babe!

There you have it the Keith Mott story! A pigeon fancier who has dedicated over 45 years to the sport at the highest level. (See 'Album' for the photos).

**MIKE SHEPHERD (UP-DATED JANUARY 2016).**