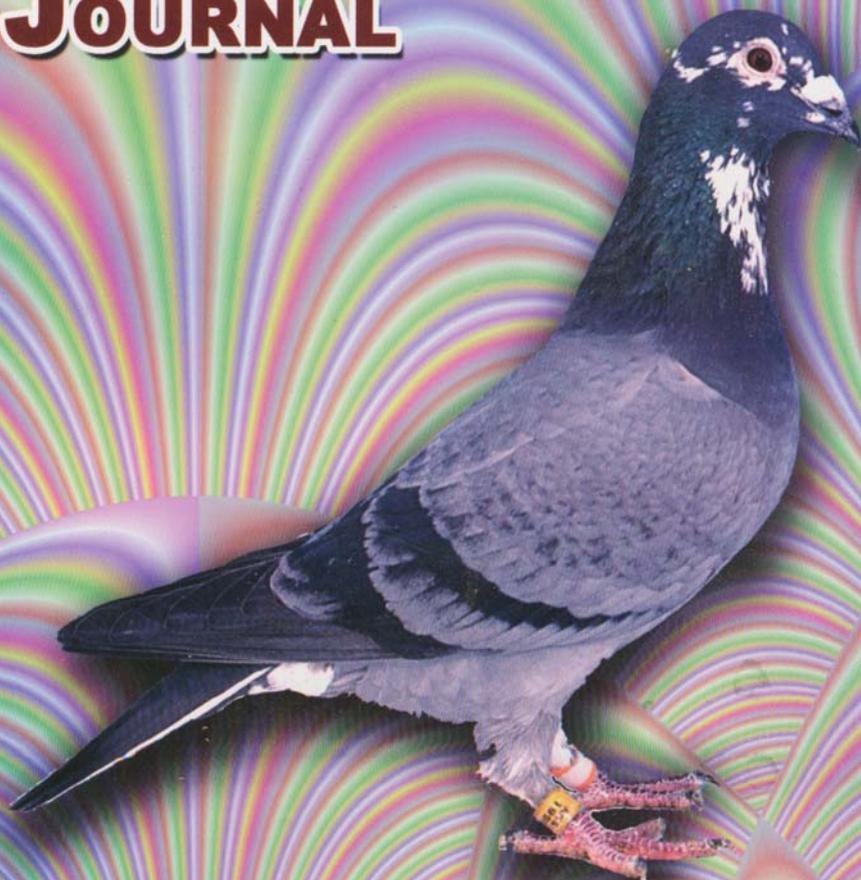


Courtesy of The Australian Racing Pigeon Journal

Australian RACING PIGEON JOURNAL



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The Mighty Harrison's And The Maximilian Foy Influence - Part 1 ***By Leo Turley***



In a previous article I said that Australia in recent years has almost been overrun by Janssen based pigeons of one modern name or another and as such are short to middle distance birds. These are opposed to long distance pigeons predominantly underpinned by the Harrison strain - a strain that we all came to make our own, particularly during the forty year quarantine lockdown from 1948 to 1988. The Harrison strain originated in the English village of Oakamoor in North Staffordshire in the northern region of the West Midlands at the turn of the 20th century. Oakamoor, Near Stoke-On-Trent, is nestled in a beautiful country setting just outside of Cheadle, with buildings dating back to the 16th century and a Roman Catholic Church as a major attraction. The folk lore surrounding the Harrison's of Oakamoor and their relevance to the Australian pigeon racing scene, for almost 100 years, is rich and bountiful. There is no ready or convincing evidence on where the strain actually originated, prior to George Harrison, indeed there is little point in finding out – there was just one pair that bred super pigeons. A chance happening, just simply a happy collection of genes that came together, like race horses – a once in a life time find – and then only if you are extremely lucky. Originally the pair was termed a "sport" or a "freak" with the one exception that takes these out of that realm immediately - their offspring and subsequent generations also performed magnificently and very much replicated their like. They were of a type not readily recognised in modern lofts today, but anyone that has been around pigeons on the Australian scene long enough knows what they look like and what they can do.

There are still "Harrison's" in safe-havens all across the country and if long distance racing is to be preserved, then these modern Harrison's are likely to be the ones to do it. Maximilian Foy, of Foy Harrison fame, was the original purchaser of all of George Harrison's birds and proceeded to cross them out once and then directly back into the strain and the originals were so dominant that the main features remain preserved even today – long cast, fine boned, smoky blue bars and chequers. The Oakamoor pigeons all came to Australia and they set the Australian scene on fire, no less than they had done in the heartland of pigeon racing in England. They just happened to belong to a little man in an era and a location when little people were not rightfully recognised; such was England's loss and Australia's gain. This sounds a bit like the Cricket at the moment too, doesn't it?

When Maximilian finished writing the first of his five chapters in *The Australasian Pigeon Keeper* in January 1927 he was an old man and by his own admission he was a rich man, but by now he was out of pigeons altogether and he wrote *"let me state that I have no birds now and I am not financially interested in any way."* It is not easy looking back across the years to picture the timeframe in which he wrote, or the period in which he made "the little working man" George Harrison an offer he could not refuse. You can well understand how Maximilian acquired everything from a man that was obliged to get his priorities right and place his family's welfare ahead of his hobby. For most, the 1920's were a time of peace and great prosperity. The "Roaring Twenties" was fuelled by increased industrialisation and new technologies including the radio and motor car. Air flight was well onto the drawing board and a reality for the idle rich. It was a prosperous period and very much like today with lessons to be learned in the short term, particularly on the Western Australian scene. It was also a special time for me, where the ink had no sooner dried on Maximilian's first chapter than my maternal grandfather died in Sydney of an ailment that hardly bears a mention these days - appendicitis. My grandfather was also a rich man – on paper, but that all turned to dust and more than likely Maximilian's fortunes also took a turn for the worse in the great Stock Market crash of October 29 1929 and the subsequent run on banks that followed and the heartbreaking stagnation that took years to turn around. Very few escaped unscathed. My Grandmother came home to the West with my mother and uncle in tow and within a year was working as a kitchen hand on farms



in the north eastern wheat belt, taking in laundry, ironing and sewing to make ends meet and keep the two children in school. What little was left of Grandfather's legacy, the lawyers took. It was a hard twenty years to follow for more than sixty-percent of the city populations all across the country; between the Great Depression that followed the "crash", and the gathering black clouds of war from 1939 to 1945. Those that had cash in hand did very well and pigeon racing actually survived and in some respects thrived, but everything went at a more careful and sedate pace. The "Harrison's" were no longer in the hands of the super rich in Australia and actually in later years became the working man's bird. They were not at all an attractive pigeon – smoky blue bars and blue chequers; they were long cast and light-framed and eminently suited to the harshness of our outback and is fair to say they are probably the only birds that can still handle the long distance, particularly the waterless inland conditions we find today. My memories of the late Harry Laque and the almost straight Harrison's that he brought with him from Kalgoorlie where money was plentiful at the end of the war, are still very vivid. Harry remains one of the greatest fanciers the West has ever seen. I had the pick of Harry's loft at \$100 each in 1981, but that is another story, so back to Maximilian Foy.

Maximilian, in his own words 55 years earlier writes "This strain won my admiration by sheer extraordinary merit and it was no easy task, for I was an "old hand" when I first heard about them. I flew pigeons in Victoria in the days when F G Edmondson first imported Wormalds. Until that grand old man of the Victorian fancy, W Bendall, got "Young Osterley" from Sydney to Melbourne, I had the previously best distance (300 miles) to my credit in Victoria, more years ago that I care to think about. However, about 1907, being then in England, I decided to import some for racing in Sydney. I got them from three "cracks"; that is, Mercer of Kent, Osman and T H Burton from Liverpool and having all confidence in my own judgement meant to leave it at that. Therefore, when I first heard of George Harrison of Oakmoor of North Staffordshire a good deal went in at one ear and came out the other. Let it be understood that at this time I was in a position enjoyed by few Australian importers of racing pigeons, as I was personally in England and money was no object. I "knew the game" to such an extent that Mr AH Osman, years afterwards, stated in an article dealing with the "Fancier's Eye" that he was simply astounded at the ease at which this fancier from the other end of the world, walked into the loft and not only picked out the best, one after the other, but also pointed out birds likely to make their mark in the future and in every case Mr Foy's judgement was correct." Maximilian goes on to say, "I write this to emphasise that the "Harrison's" started "from behind scratch" with me, as I had fully decided that I could not improve on those strains, which I already had purchased. Then I received a letter of introduction to Mr. S Johnson, Esq; the President of the North Staffordshire Federation, one of the biggest Feds in England. I found him a gentleman and a fancier after my own heart. He had just won either 3rd or 8th from Bordeaux in the Grand National of England. He had also won the prize for the best essay on "mating" open to all England. A request to handle a bird of Johnson's would meet with quiet, but firm refusal. Now Johnson and I visited a small loft belonging to a team fancier and while there I could not keep my eyes off a couple of "torpedoes" of birds that looked as if they could go like the proverbial "scalded cat".

"Fancy anything?" commented Johnson. "My word, that and that!" "You'll do," says Johnson. I had just seen the first two "Harrison's" of my experience. I had picked up first prize winners (brothers) from Weymouth and Nantes, both in the first dozen in Fed against 4,000 to 5,000 birds. Even then I did not realise their value and did not visit Harrison. However, at parting, Johnson said "Mr Foy, I believe I am talking to the J Logan of Australia! You are taking some of the best in England over there. Now do not miss the best of all, I am quite satisfied that my life's reputation, as a fancier, will be safe in the wings of George Harrison's birds. Before he is finished, even the 7 and 8 pair of Baker's and the 28 and 27 Bonamis will be nothing to Harrison's stock pair. There are many consistent pigeons, but these are consistent winners!"

I then did not visit Harrison, but Johnson's words stuck. On my return to London, I looked up the official race



records in the R.P. and then I "woke up"! Race after race, 80 to 400 miles, any wind and weather, with one name nearly always first prize in a club averaging 200 birds and Fed win after Fed win, also against thousands. Then I asked myself, "Why is this fancier's name not a household word?" Was it poor class of competition? A study of the map answers this. 200 birds out of the first 260 homed to Staffordshire and vicinity in the 1907 Grand National of England. Why? It was the best of competition. Then I saw more daylight! George Harrison was not a Member of Parliament, not a professional man, not a landed proprietor, not an owner of shares in the Fancy Press! No! Horror on horror! Harrison was an ordinary "working man" beneath notice! Yes, you Australian fanciers. Out here we care not whether a man drives his own motor car or drives the butcher's cart, provided he is a decent sort and a good fancier. It is vastly different in England. At any rate, I sent Johnson a cheque and asked him to do his best with the said "working man fancier" and I never regretted it. What pigeons he had! All sons or daughters, or grandsons of the famous "Stock Pair".

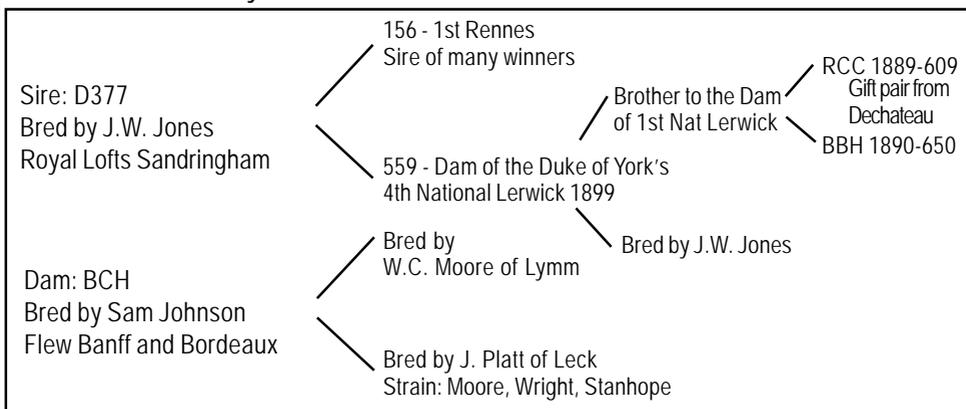
How would you, Mr Reader, like these three (of many) sitting on perches in your loft. A Blue Cock, won 27 first prizes in five years racing (an average of 200 birds) did his 500 miles five times and well in the money each time against the cream of England and in Federation (3000 to 5000 birds) winning from 80 to 400 miles. Blue Chequer, brother to the blue above, had seven starts, seven 1st prizes in a club averaging 200 birds. Seven starts in Federation for four 1sts and two high places – 32 clubs! The third bird in a race from 300 miles, 100 miles of it across salt water, in a fog with 100 pounds first prize! About 600 birds competing, the race was open to first prize winners only. The Convoyer reports "One bird away by itself out of sight for half an hour, before the rest tackled it." And Harrison won by over an hour in front! Is this strain any good? Harrison seldom flew more than a dozen in his racing team and his performances were such that had he lived in Belgium they would have needed to run special trains to carry visitors to his loft. Take the Guernsey smash of 1906. Pea soup fog over 200 miles of the course. There were less than 150 arrivals in three Federations, out of about 14,000 birds. In North Staffordshire Fed only 8 home in race time. Harrison! Of course, 2nd, 3rd, and 8th prize with two sisters and a brother!

Maximilian went on, "to understand how Harrison eventually was regarded, I cannot do better than state what the Oakmoor Secretary informed on my second visit to England – "Mr Foy, it is an understood thing that George always wins 1st prize, but we don't mind. We back our club against other clubs! Good luck to George!" My experience with this strain was such that I wrote Harrison asking why he did not enter for the big pools (that's where the money is in England) and especially in the 500 mile races. His reply showed him a very cautious and retiring man and it struck me that even he himself did not realise how good his birds were. They had "donkey-licked" everything else I had imported (good though these were) a pretty fair trial gallop, so as George did not care to "throw money in the air" I fixed that! "Here is a pretty rod in pickle for the English heads" was my comment when I sent the pool money from Sydney to England to back Harrison versus the rest of the Midlands, the cream of England. About this time George was racing the famous "Sudden Death" with such results that some other clubs considered something was wrong, so Harrison asked three Federation officials to see him time from Guernsey. Sudden Death was the first arrival and flew 5 minutes, then his sister came 3 minutes later and then a 9th daughter of the stock pair and the three condescended to trap. Harrison topped the Federation by 20 y.p.m. It was a nice "pool" and Harrison repeated the dose a week following the Nantes and shortly after that "Who is this man Harrison" was being asked right through the Midlands. The pool money from Australia had gathered a golden harvest." To be continued.

Thanks to the Australasian Pigeon Keeper of 1926 and 1927 this little known background of the mighty Harrison's, the backbone of which is still heavily prefaced in today's Australian long distance pigeons, can be appreciated by yet another generation of readers and with four more chapters still in the pipeline.

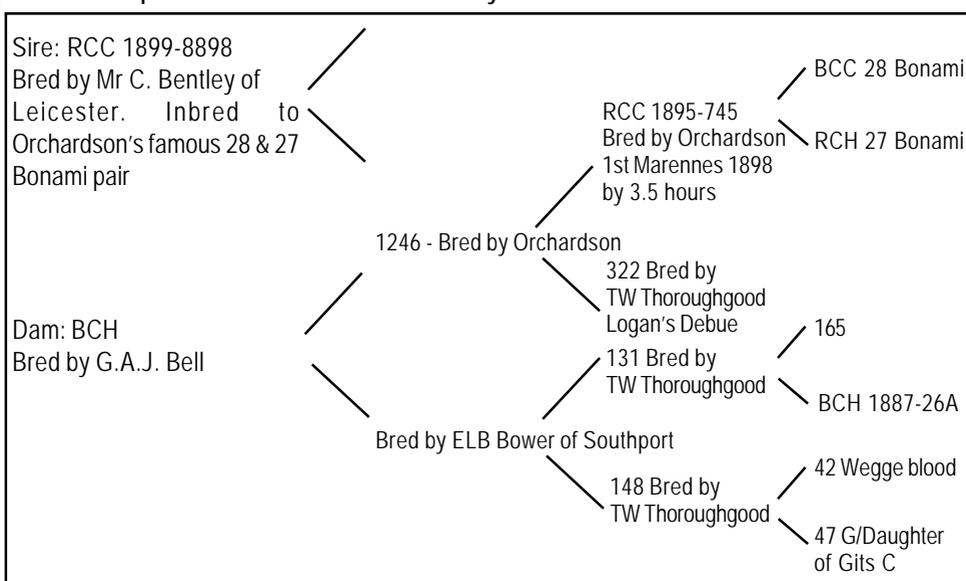
Pedigree of the cock of George Harrison of Oakamoor's famous pair.

BCC 1901-N26 Bred by Sam Johnson - Unflown



Pedigree of the hen of George Harrison of Oakamoor's famous pair.

Mosaic Chequer Hen NU-1900-AJ829 Bred by Albert Mellor - Unflown



The Mighty Harrison's And The Maximilian Foy Influence - Part 2 from Leo Turley

Thanks to the Australasian Pigeon Keeper, it is possible to look well back into the past and note many things that might still be relevant today. I started in the game in the early 1950's. I had Harrison's - everybody had Harrison's. I still had Harrison's as late as 1987. Whether they were the real McCoy, who knows, because most Harrison's had disappeared under the mantle of another name, but their looks still gave their ancestry away. Like I have always done, I read everything I could on the Harrison's and particularly the Max Foy connection, but it was all vague stuff being related to me, or written by older fanciers. Today, looking back twenty five years

to the early 1980's, is like yesterday. That is the trouble with getting older, time goes so fast. In the 1950's, stories being told to me about the Foy and Ling Harrison's was only twenty five years on from when they had read it themselves – they got it from the "horse's mouth" - like yesterday. Last week, I was searching for something else in the substantial collection of APK's I hold and there it was I was looking straight at it! The Maximilian Foy reminiscences of the Harrison Strain – this is where the old flyers got their information. The more I read, the more I am convinced that another generation needs to see it, before it disappears into dust – forever! Maximilian had a style of his own and in the main it reflected the period in which he lived. To broadly relate the information, as one would normally do when dealing with another person's article, is to kill off much of the flavour of what the whole thing is about. Maximilian wrote these words 80 years go and has long departed the scene. Copyright for his work expired 30 years ago and under the US, Australia, Free Trade Agreement of January 2005, copyright that had not already been extinguished has been extended to 70 years from the date it was written. From there, the material in question can be freely used within Australia. I think it would please Mr. Foy to no end to find his words still worth reading 80 years after the ink had dried on them – it is possible he used a typewriter, as the manual or mechanical typewriter had been standardized into something the public could use by 1920. We left off previously by Maximilian writing: "The pool from Australia had gathered a golden harvest. First in the five pounds pool, first and second in the one-pound pool and second ten-shilling pool in the Great Midlands Combine from Marennes, 500 miles, against the cream of the English fancy. The famous hen "Gipsy" (of Flint's) sold for one-hundred pounds ran second in the five-pounds nomination beaten by 80 yards per minute, over a 500 mile course, by the "unknown" working fancier's representatives. Shortly after this, Harry Steele of Longton repeated this dose with a blue Harrison hen. First prize Great Midland Combine and pools! 500 miles! Harrison was not the only one to win with this stuff. In Sydney, the Harrison blood was for years kept in a few hands, those having them (in most cases) recognising their value. Also, all races to Sydney finish at "dead end" with the ocean behind and what with restricted radius, keen fanciers and rattling good pigeons, the tendency is in nine times out of ten, for good "position" plus quick "trap" on the day to award the first three prizes. There is not the 25 to 30 miles radius available to split the birds that there is in the Old Country. However, the Harrison's have proved here that, when dirty weather, or long distance (or both) breaks up the mob, they are well to be reckoned with. 1st and 2nd Mildura (500 miles) two hours in front; 1st Mildura, a day in front (fifty pounds vainly to the early 1980's, is like yesterday. That is the trouble with getting older, time goes so fast. In the 1950's, stories being told to me about the Foy and Ling Harrison's was only twenty five years on from when they had read it themselves – they got it from the "horse's mouth" - like yesterday. Last week, I was searching for something else in the substantial collection of APK's I hold and there it was I was looking straight at it! The Maximilian Foy reminiscences of the Harrison Strain – this is where the old flyers got their information. The more I read, the more I am convinced that another generation needs to see it, before it disappears into dust – forever! Maximilian had a style of his own and in the main it reflected the period in which he lived. To broadly relate the information, as one would normally do when dealing with another person's article, is to kill off much of the flavour of what the whole thing is about. Maximilian wrote these words 80 years go and has long departed the scene. Copyright for his work expired 30 years ago and under the US, Australia, Free Trade Agreement of January 2005, copyright that had not already been extinguished has been extended to 70 years from the date it was written. From there, the material in question can be freely used within Australia. I think it would please Mr. Foy to no end to find his words still worth reading 80 years after the ink had dried on them – it is possible he used a typewriter, as the manual or mechanical typewriter had been standardized into something the public could use by 1920. We left off previously by Maximilian writing: "The pool from Australia had gathered a golden harvest. First in the five pounds pool, first and second in the one-pound pool and second ten-shilling pool in the Great Midlands Combine from Marennes, 500 miles, against the cream of the English fancy. The famous hen "Gipsy" (of Flint's)

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Barton Queen - This fine hen of the Harrison strain flew 1000 miles from Barton to Perth in the record time of 26 hours, 51 minutes and 40 seconds to break the Australian record for that distance in the 1930's for Mr Lance Williams of Inglewood. Amazingly the second placegetter in the race was a mere 2 seconds behind her, with 3rd place a further two hours behind.

worse. This time Jack was half an hour out on his own! I do not think my old "pal" Jack Ling will mind me saying that a year previous to this; he only had one prize to his credit in the previous four years of racing. An enthusiast? Yes, for Jack was never at home to see his birds arrive, he being always on his round driving his boss's cart. Today, thanks to energy and ability, Jack owns two big butcher shops. However, the first start of his "capital" dated from the day he secured a blue daughter of imported "Wedgewood". After that he "wore a track" from his chair to the prize money table. This game little fancier once said to a well-known Sydney fancier: "Look here Mr., you have good ones, so have I. Come over to my loft and take ring numbers of two of the "Harrison" squeakers now in nest and I will bet five-pounds that I beat you with one of them in the first race and I beat you with the other at 500 miles. He did it too! Jack Ling finally got such a reputation that five blackguards on bicycles came miles (with sacks) one night and cleared his whole loft. They were not traced and convicted until months after and even then some of the best were never recovered and so many more were ruined that it broke Jack's big heart and he now keeps no birds at all.

Take again, a couple of my own, those little terrors "Shrapnel" and "Cyclone". I have vainly offered odds of 4 to 1 in sovereigns in the pools with these. I think their best was when (through driving rain) they practically together topped all Sydney velocities from either Nevertire or Girilambone - five arrivals on day. And "Deadly Poison" a daughter of "Sudden Death" an hour out in front from Walcha Road 250 miles (roughly). Take Richmond's "Lady Harrison". 1st for the one-hundred pounds shield after a tight go with that rattling good fancier, Mr. Stone, whose Soffle blood is not to be sneezed at in any company. I understand this Harrison blood is well liked in Victoria and South Australia and possibly those who have tried it could give a few interesting reminiscences. In my opinion, the best "Harrison" blood sent from Sydney to Victoria went to a Mr. Balfie in Melbourne. However, by this time there are a good number of lofts containing descendants of "Harrison's" and the following may be useful to their owners. Please bear in mind (without any wish to blow my own trumpet) that there is

probably nobody in Australia better qualified to describe the "Harrison's" than myself, for I eventually bought his entire loft when he moved and I have bred from the old "Stock Pair" in Australia. I owned "Lloyd George," "Sensational," "Sudden Death" and others of their best young. I should know this strain, if anyone does. Now, for a few words on breeding: Dame nature is a marvellous old lady. She will plod along, year after year, step by step, in the process of evolution, with bird, beast and plant. Then – suddenly, she will make a giant's stride forward. The result is what is called a "sport", viz., something "new" resembling very little (or not at all) its pedigree and generally a "ton" better than any of them. Take for instance the 28 and 27 Bonami's. Monsieur Bonami never before, nor since, has (nor has anyone else with Bonami's) bred the equal of the young which Orchardson got from the 28 and 27 pair purchased from Bonami! Their descendants were good also. Why? Well, it is simple enough. This pair bred "sports". I am convinced that Harrison's stock pair also bred a very big percentage of "sports". Do not confuse a "sport" with a "freak" or a "throw back" to one good ancestor in a family of duffers. Eminent scientific breeders agree that a "sport" is prepotent. In ordinary words, the "sport," when crossed with something else will usually "smother" the other strain; most of the young throwing true to the "sport" in type, though possibly not in intelligence. Usually, with "Harrison's" I found the same apply. In type they resembled neither the "Stock Pair" nor anything else in their pedigree. They were far better racers than anything in their pedigree. Their young generally "smothered" a cross. Here is a sample. A "Harrison" cock mated with a "Burton" hen bred typical "Harrison's". One of these (in another loft) was still further out-crossed with a Mercer cock (principally Stanhope). Even then, the next generation bred many birds the image of "Stock Pair" blood, and every one of these were terrors of racers! Therefore, if careful attention be paid to the Harrison type is should be easy for any fancier (of the right sort) to build a really good Australian strain on the "Stock Pair" foundation." To be continued. The next instalment deals with the style and physique of the Harrison and including the eye and how they need to be trained for results.

The Mighty Harrison's And The Maximilian Foy Influence Part 3 From Leo Turley

This chapter deals with the actual physiology of the Harrison pigeons. As I said earlier, these birds that came from the number one pair, the "stock pair", the producer pair, were tube-like, long caste, smoky blue bars and blue chequers, fine boned, light weight, actually I do not see any birds these days that would perfectly fit the mould, although I had them myself and know what they looked like. Maximilian talks about mealies and chequers as grand-children of the "stock pair", but these were first crosses from George Harrison's reds that eventually did not make the grade. Max also talks about eyes in the number one pair, the "stock pair," thirty years before SWE Bishop proposed his eye sign hypothesis. Maximilian also talks about the pairing up of birds coming from the number one "stock pair" and others. Modern thoughts, by comparison – like refraining from putting like eyes together. I am not into eye sign, but will leave what Maximilian has to say to the eye sign experts, remembering, this was 30 years before the eye sign concept was even explored. I discovered another stunning aspect about Maximilian's article, but I will leave that to the end, and it is quite a revelation. These Harrison birds from the number one pair remind me of Emil Zatopek, the legendary Olympic marathon runner (1922 – 2000). He was one of the greatest runners of the 20th Century; Emil Zatopek achieved legendary status when he won the 5,000, the 10,000 and the marathon at the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki. "The Locomotive" or the "Bouncing Czech" as he came to be known dominated long distance running from 1948 until 1954 when he won a remarkable 38 consecutive 10,000 meter races, including 11 in 1949 alone. I remember seeing him in the news reels. He set 18 world records over various distances, including every record from 5,000 metres to 30,000 metres, and won four Olympic gold medals and one silver. He was the first to run 10,000



metres in under 29 minutes and the first to run 20,000 metres in one hour. There was nothing of him, literally, skinny, 170mm tall (5 ft 8 inches) 66kg (145 lbs) he just had attitude and a will to win. This represents the Harrison's of the number one "stock pair", the style that wins modern long distance racing, there is nothing of them, but guts and determination, and probably the like we will never see again. We just need to take notice; it is simple, Janssen type, the Carl Lewis and Michael Johnson's, for short to middle distance and Harrison, Zatopek, type for long distances.

In this segment, Maximilian goes on to say. "Now here is the Harrison winning type as I know them. I have asked Mr. Tom Palmer, or Mr. Jack Ling to supply a photograph (taken by me) of "Sensational" a daughter of the stock pair. Note the streamline effect. Absolutely nothing for the wind to catch hold of. A real "aerial torpedo". This build will go straight into and through the "eye" of a gale when everything else is being blown 100 miles off its proper line of flight. Medium in size, but very "reaching". Light in bone, yet strong. Note the carriage. "Ready, get set, go" style with rather long legs, set well forward in the "Harrison crouch" as I have heard it called. Balance perfect! I have never yet seen a "Harrison" which "sat on its tail" and held its head up in the air. I have never seen a good Harrison with a short tail. There is plenty of tail on them, but it is very tight and fits the body as it were part of the bird's backbone. "Hinges on the tail" are seldom seen in this strain. Whenever it did appear, I simply cut the tail off (as close to the back of the head as possible) and pigeon pie is very nice.

The necks were fairly long, but well developed. No suggestion of an "Adam's Apple" about them. The head is typical of the very best Harrison hens. With the cocks the head was generally a little (only a little) longer in face, and body masculine. Eye cere and wattle very fine indeed. Colour; every youngster (without exception) from "stock pair" was either a rather smoky blue bar or blue chequer. The blue chequers were rather light in chequer, but a bit more heavily marked on the shoulders. In grandsons and grand-daughters also the blues and blue chequers preponderated, but with an occasional mealy or light red chequer. These were rare. The mealties were good, both as racers and for stock. The red chequers (with one or two exceptions) were as bad as the rest were good, though they looked alright. George Harrison told me that when any of the progeny of his strain had the top of one of its nest flights slightly "grizzled" that I could expect a real good one. He stated that "Lloyd George", "Sudden Death" and the "Little Favourite" had this peculiarity. I found it myself in "Bile Beans", "Cyclone" and in "Shrapnel". A slight "tick" of white behind the eye occasionally cropped up in a real good one. Eyes; in human beings or in racing pigeons, there is no better index to "family" than the colour of the eye. When eye colour changes, the "family" changes. Harrison's "stock cock" had a nut brown eye resembling Grooter's. Harrison's "stock hen" had an eye of which the inner ring of the iris was pale greyish-white surrounded by a narrow ring of vivid rose. Every one of their young, however, had eyes in which the inner ring of the iris was dirty clay yellow surrounded by a narrow ring of brilliant vermilion red. This yellow-red eye preponderated in the next generation, but with these I also bred a few which, while true to type in body, yet showed the rose and white eye of the old stock hen. While I preferred the yellow red-eyed birds, nevertheless the rose and white-eyed ones proved really good, both for stock when mated with yellow-red eyed Harrison's. Faults; the Harrison's are shy breeders. It pays to put eggs from the very best under old-stagers of some other strains. They are also very "nervy". It is not a strain for the fancier whose loft abuts a railway line, or a tennis court, or who has a neighbour who insists on chopping wood on a Saturday afternoon. Training; yearling Harrison hens must be flown unmated. They can and do win up to 500 miles as yearlings, but as there are six good Harrison cocks to one good hen, my advice is to keep every brilliant hen for stock, once she has done 350 miles. It will pay you. Yearling Harrison cocks will paralyse a lot of the old birds at 500 miles. Do not be scared to send them, if fit. Train these yearlings unmated, to 280 miles, then give a steady old hen as a mate; do not allow much "driving" and then jump from 280 miles to 500 miles. Arrange to have him sitting on eggs 9 to 14 days (no more, no less) on date of basketing for 500 miles. Also arrange to put a 3 or 4 day old youngster under him (from some

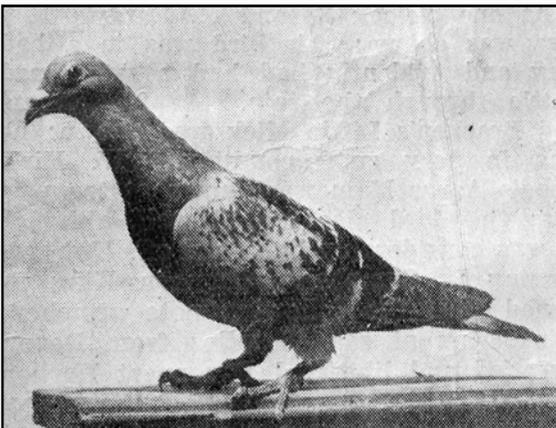


other nest of course) a day before basketing day. I race yearlings, nothing but yearlings, and at that I am very careful to see they are rather late bred. Harrison hens bred for racing should be hatched early in December. Harrison cocks should be hatched a month earlier. Avoid early bred hens, as often two of them will get too forward, pair up together and start laying eggs even though no cock is with them.

My ideal bird for a hard 500 mile race is a 10 or 11 months' old "Harrison" cock. Next to that, an 8 or 9 months' old "Harrison" hen. I don't think it is too good for the hens afterwards though. In this system, the sexes are divided by a partition of upright (not horizontal) lathe work and can (if they like) make love through the bars – but that is all. Revolutionary? Yes, I admit it. In fact it would ruin most strains. However, the test of any system is "will it work?" and this certainly works with the "Harrison's".

Under my own supervision, three yearling Harrison cocks won 1st prize (hours in front each time) in three different 500 mile "smashes" into Sydney, while another was 2nd (home before breakfast) and still another for Mr. J Ling. In this case a neighbour's youngsters were flying out on his arrival and after 500 miles in tough weather His Lordship, the "Foy Blue" (as he was known) joined them and careered around under the eyes of the whole neighbourhood (a nest of fanciers) for a full half hour and then was about 12 minutes behind 1st prize winner." In reading this chapter, it becomes more evident that nothing has changed substantially in 100 years and that which was valid then, is probably more important today. In an earlier article I had pointed out that we are literally killing our birds by putting too much distance into training flights instead of taking it easy and putting more thought into their preparation. Those that know about "Brain Washing" today are practicing shades of George Harrison more than 100 years ago and to good effect. Those that want to take on the long distance need to build the birds up slowly and carefully to 500 kilometres and then jump them to the 800 and 1000 kilometres stations. Properly prepared birds are less concerned with landmarks, as long as they are pointed in the right direction. Fly the straight line, give them confidence that the sun is always in the same location at sunrise and it becomes head down, tail up, until noon and by then they are in familiar territory. How many good flyers today take a bird or two to work each day? Nobody will admit it, but good flyers do, and George Harrison's birds went on a workmate's bicycle handle bars to 8 miles every day, a hundred years ago. Same time, same place and they did not fly with any other birds, until race day. A mob flight was foreign to them and they didn't like it at all and cleared out from it as soon as they could, with devastating consequences for the opposition. No doubt the Harrison birds were exceptional pigeons, but the methodology was there to match the talent too – it went hand in glove.

Following on, Maximilian wrote as follows: "Everyone of the foregoing 500-mile winning yearling "Harrison" cocks bred prize winners afterwards, including two first prizes in Federation, so it did not hurt them. I've never yet seen a yearling Harrison cock (sent fit) return tired in a race. When "Bile Beans" won the 1909 "smash" from Mildura, 75 were reported out of over 2000 birds in race time. I got 19 home before Sunday night. I sent 3 Harrison yearlings, got two of them 1st and 2nd! When "Bile Beans" dropped (two hours in front) he was so fresh



Sensational - RPT-1904-3357

A daughter of the original Harrison pair, she was imported by Foy. In 1911 in Australia 3 of this hens grandsons won 11 prizes from 16 races with an average birdage of 600 birds per race.



that the Leichhardt F.C. (expert fanciers) near my loft thought I was playing a joke on them, with some bird let go close by! I think they would do 600 miles as easily.

Harrison and I are agreed that mated and on eggs is safest for older birds of this strain. I strongly advise that young "Harrison's" be not raced at all. Leave young bird races severely alone! It will pay you afterwards. The fancier who starts the old bird season with twenty bold, alert, well-reared Harrison's "smoky blues" need fear no other loft. But it is a case of "First catch your hare, then cook it."

Bear in mind that one attack of "squirts" or one bad cold, as a young bird, and "good by" to that bird's chance of being a "terror" of a racer, though he may possibly turn out a fair bird. My own experience, visiting hundreds of lofts in Australia, America and England, France and Belgium is that there are ten fanciers who can make a fair fist of "training" a bird, for everyone fancier who can 'rear' well. Your Harrison yearlings must be birds that have "never looked back" from the day of hatching. This strain is "unsociable". Try and make them more unsociable still. Teach them to simply detest flying with the "race mob".

While your mates are racing young birds, you do what George Harrison (and I) did. Harrison had a mate who bicycled eight miles every day to his job in early morning. Every day, wet or fine, old "Lloyd George" and one of Harrison's best young birds went on the handle bars of that "bike". Two at a time, day after day, never more than eight or ten miles, while my club mates were feeding the hawks in young bird races, was what I did principally at "Roseville" lofts. The result was that when these youngsters became yearlings, they simply refused to fly with the "race mob" and broke away at the word "go." This is a proven fact. My loft (at Roseville) was 12 to 14 miles off the line of flight, usually taken by 2,000 to 3,000 Sydney pigeons. In addition, I gave 2 miles overfly to the rest of Sydney! If my birds came with the mob (even if leading it) this meant giving at least three minutes every race to my club mates, and from five to seven minutes to the Sydney men. Yet I was seldom outside prize money. My birds "broke" at the start, or even "speedy Harrison's" could not have done it. In my very first race (to Roseville) I sent 18 birds, 16 of them "Harrison's". The 16 Harrison's dropped together, winning 2nd prize, the race being open to all Sydney. (Note, I take my hat off to the bird that beat me).

The Convoyer's report was: "One kit of North Sydney birds went frantic. They put their heads down and charged, before the lids had been properly dropped, in fact they nearly blinded me, and this lot (about 20) were out of sight before the rest had started." A couple of other fanciers looked at me and smiled when they heard this. They were at the Roseville lofts watching! They knew what birds those were! If more proof is needed, here it is: Mr. J Chambers of Motherwell, winner of 1st prize in the Grand National of Scotland, brought some good ones (Rome, Excel and Julienne blood) out here and built his loft within stone throw of mine at Roseville. His birds came with the "race mob" up the South Coast and right over the lofts of men with 2 and 3 miles overfly, back to his own loft, and it nearly broke his heart. There was not an atom of jealousy in this grand old gentleman. He came to me: "Mr. Foy, I never thought I would come to Australia to learn to fly pigeons, but oh, man! How dae ye do it?" "Your burr-r-r-ds at exercise are like specks in the sky, half a mile awa' over the top of mine, and as for race-day, why, I hae stoppit looking for mine until I see you get half a dozen. I hae written to Scotland that there are burr-r-ds here beyond their dreams, and fanciers here to whom we are bairns."

My reply was to show him George Harrison's performances and tell him, "I fly that strain, I fly unmated, I fly yearlings only, and I teach them to detest flying with the "mob". A partition went promptly into Mr. Chamber's loft, all nest boxes came out, in went 10 young "Harrison's" and Mr. Chamber's got a "break" 2nd or 3rd prize in his next race, and about 3 weeks later "topped the table" for the first time since his arrival.

I believe these birds can be trained to fly at night. My own birds were always at exercise 20 minutes before daybreak. I took care to let the hens out first in the afternoon and then kept the cocks out until well after dark, once they were anywhere near "racing fit". Occasionally, some would be away all night, but it did not hurt them. I well remember a race from Hay (366 miles) about 1911. Mr. W.H. Wiles started that season with 8 pigeons, five of



them "smokies" and went right through to Mildura, 500 miles, with them winning a prize in nearly every race, in a big club. On this day, sheets of rain over the whole course, something like three pigeons arrived just on dark out of all clubs "up" at Hay. I called on Wiles at 7.30pm (the rain driven by wind stinging like shot) to see how he had fared and was told "I left the loft half an hour ago. No earthly chance of a bird then. Only three home to everyone." We yarned about "pigeon" till 9.30pm (rain simply pelted down) and then as I was going "something" made me say, "Wiles, you sent two "Harrison's" fit today and if other birds at all are home, I expect yours to be mighty close to them. Please have a look." Wiles laughed (it did seem absurd) but agreed and found his two "Harrison's" waiting for him! There were no "pictures in the sky" that day!

I was feeling glum myself (for flying another route) while I had "topped" everything at 300 miles with two birds, yet I was "out" ten clinking good birds, badly needed for the 500 mile race. I was up at about 3.30am next morning, pitch dark and still raining, to find two more in my own loft, one having eaten a bit of tucker left in the trap, the other bird empty. Goodness knows what time the bird arrived, which had had the feed? Unless this strain does a bit of night flying I cannot account for it. Possibly this may not pay in these days of aerals, telegraph wires etc.

Apropos of this, can any fancier give an instance of sheer dogged determination to get home to beat the following? I think it ahead of even the V.C. bird for that had the power of flight. That good fancier, Tom Palmer, now Secretary of the L.F.C came from Sydney to visit me at Roseville, about 3pm one day. He found, feebly struggling on the footpath, vainly trying to get under my front gate, and absolutely unable to fly, in fact "dead beat" a yearling with half its crop torn out and the small bone of its wing fractured. I had missed this bird at 5.0am that day, after exercise. Tom brought it to me and I said "hawked" and as cripples were not required in that loft, I was going to kill it. Tom begged its life (a Harrison-Grooter) and I gave it to him. A few days later, I learned from the milkman, that when it was just light enough to see, he had noticed my birds (only one loft anywhere near) fly into a couple of isolated telegraph wires, and that one pigeon went "head over heels" into some nearby scrub. This was between four and five miles from my loft, with some big gullies in between. Yet that plucky bird had tried to get home, had in the effort snapped his already damaged wing and had, with crop cut open and trailing the useless wing tackled the rest of it on foot and got home taking 10 hours for the journey. Is it any wonder this strain "takes beating" in hard weather and in long distance races? There is a small loft in Bathurst today that has won good prizes for years. Its owner built it up on his No.1 pair and describes his birds as "The gamest that ever grew feathers". If he ever reads these lines, he will know why they are plucky, for his No.1 cock is a grandson of the little hero picked up by Tom Palmer." To be continued with the final chapter.

The Mighty Harrison's And The Maximilian Foy Influence - Part 4 From Leo Turley

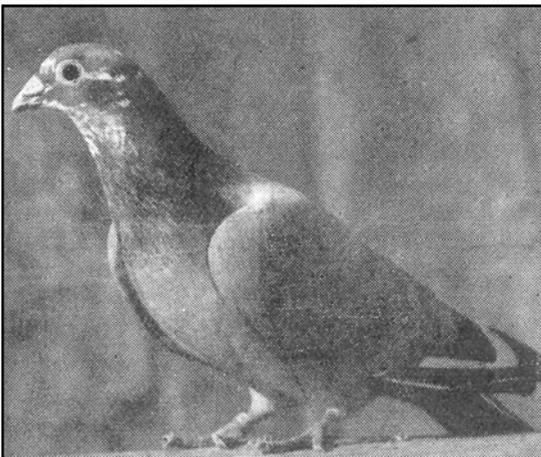
There has probably never been a pure Harrison that made it much past the 1930's. Even Foy crossed them as soon as he got them in 1907 with his Grooters from Mercer of Kent, Lt-Col. A.H. Osman and TH Burton of Liverpool. Others later crossed these with the Jurion, the Stanhope's and so on. Australia virtually found itself in a sixty-year time capsule from 1929 until 1989. English and European birds found their way here via the whim and fancy of wealthy fanciers, pre World War 1, and there were not a great lot of them and, as their newness wore off, they were eventually and fortuitously disseminated throughout the broader pigeon racing fraternity. By 1918, at cessation of hostilities, Europe had been decimated and there was very little recovery between there and until the end of World-War 2. A ten-year window of opportunity, created by the Roaring Twenties from 1919 to 1929 found more imports arriving to our shores in substantial numbers, but supply was choked when the

Stock Markets crashed and sent the world into what seemed like an eternal and spiralling depression, that did not recover until the 1950's and is clearly marked by the "Baby Boomers" – nature responding in time of plenty. The Australian pigeon world had scarcely recovered its posture, when outbreaks of Newcastle Disease in poultry, during 1946-48, put a blanket ban on live poultry imports, including pigeons in 1949 and this lasted for our pigeons until 1989. Over the 60 years, from 1929, we melded and forged the Australian racing pigeon, using the Harrison style, as a nucleus, and persistently pushed the boundaries with these mixes in this harsh and unforgiving landscape, and truly made them our own.

Overseas, "nature abhors a vacuum", and new strains were lining up for supremacy, with the nuclei of past glories coming down out of attics and up out of cellars at the cessation of World War 2 - all across Europe. The harsh selection

effect, brought on by the war, the occupier's security ban on the keeping of pigeons; the non-availability of food to even keep the family alive meant that selection had been exceptionally drastic. From these, a new order prevailed over Europe that did not find its way substantially across the channel until the mid to late 1950's, when the Busschaert pigeons took Britain by storm. The old families had no answer to this melding of emerging European strains, skilfully put together by that Master of selection and breeding, Georges Busschaert. Whole clubs converted to Busschaert and it took another twenty years for a handful of the same to take the Australian scene by storm – mainly Palmer Busschaert. Again, the local strains, based on their long distance Harrison/Zatapek style of pigeon had no answer. In the wings, a new manifestation was developing across Europe based on the Schalieblauwe of 1932 – the Janssen Brothers. It will never be any different. Fanciers will flock to that which offers them the greater chance to capture their own slice of the action, but it must be said that there has never been a pigeon so suited to Australian conditions, beyond 650 kilometres, than the descendants of the Harrison's, and yes, the Logans, Gits, Vassart, Soffle, Moore, Delmotte, Taft, Deurink, Le Brique, Debue, Bonami, Moss, Putman, Van Cutsem, Van Schingen, Junius, Van Hecke, Baker, Barker (TA Booth) Jurion, Wegge, Hansenne, Highnam Hansenne, Chadwick Hansenne, Chadwick Barker and all those other tough little birds that went into that 60-year melting pot, with the Harrison's, and Australian fanciers would be mistaken to think otherwise.

Of course, no strain of pigeon is the panacea for lack of good management. There seems to be a sea-saw balance with good fanciers that often peaks around the age of 45. That common age for the masses, where the shackles of mortgages and family expenses loosen and where energy still abounds – and it is that *energy* that is the secret to success, not good pigeons, not money, these are secondary to having the energy and the knowledge to do what is necessary and right for the birds and to pursue that goal with all the effort that can be mustered. Before handing over for the final words from Maximilian Foy, let me say that the pigeon racing world has moved on. There have been huge strides taken in the past thirty years on the



Electricity

Bred by Pierre Vanderhaegen of Ghent, Belgium and imported by Foy in 1906. Sire of Bile Beans which was 1st Mildura 500 miles in 1910. This was only its 3rd race, he won by 2 hours in a race where only 70 birds homed from a field of 2000 due to gale winds, heat and extensive bush fires. Electricity was 15/16th Grooter and 1/16th Wegge, and is one of two crosses put through all of the Foy Harrisons.

Australian scene that makes yesteryear pale by comparison. We not only have much better and faster pigeons, today, better conditions, a more scientific approach, but also a vast and sharp awareness about us of where we fit in the scheme of things. Councils – local government and Animal Welfare, we just need to look back occasionally, as we move forward, knowing, confidently, where we are going, by understanding where we have been. Now, on to Maximilian Foy:

"I practised the comeback with success. I mated "Harrison" with say "Burton". The young would be crossed back again with "Harrison" or with a "Harrison" and "Mercer" cross, so that "Harrison" blood would preponderate. Then, this with more "Harrison". I like close breeding, but there are two things to guard against. (1) loss of size (though I do not like too big a bird). (2) Deterioration in intelligence. Therefore an occasional cross (of the right sort) does good. I have found "Harrison's" cross well with Grooter's (W E Lowes, or Vanderhaegen's, but emphatically not C E L Bryant's) also with Jurion's (must be blue chequers) also with Mercer's Stanhope blood, also with T H Burton's "Alfonso" blood, also Soffle. Pick for a cross a fair sized cock, with (note this well) plenty of colour, which has done his 400 miles fairly well. Then use hens, bred from the cross, in your stock loft and you will not go wrong. It takes time, but is worth while.

For these Harrison are fast! The day of the "homing pigeon" is gone. What is now wanted is something which will "race" from the word go, even at 500 miles. Let those that choose to sneer at "*Swiftings that go to the wall on the first hard day.*" Here is a breed of "Swiftings" that will be feeding comfortably at home, when thousands are visiting farm houses for their tucker on the road from "500 miles" in as dirty weather as can be experienced. Bear in mind Harrison's own performances (or a few of them) were entered by me (Harrison being unfortunately not a very well-lettered man) in the Stud Register of England for the world to challenge. The only criticism ventured was by Norman Rhead Esq; convoyer for many years in the National Flying Club of England, and also Convoyer for the North Staffordshire Federation and other big Feds. Mr. Rhead took me to task for "not giving Harrison fair play." It appears that time after time, Harrison beat over 5,000 birds, when according to George's own figures (supplied to me) I had wrongly put down about 3,000 birds! Well, Mr. Rhead ought to know. Incidentally, this fancier told me the "Soffles" were the fastest strain in England until the "Harrison's" arrived on the scene, that, however, he thought the Harrison's just a shade faster at 200 miles and as the distance lengthened they increased their superiority. Sam Johnson Esq., put it this way. "With a world's record already behind it, I believe this strain has even yet to achieve the summit of its greatness."

I must however hang out a big red danger signal to any fancier studying this strain. Some breeds will stand imprisonment. The "Harrison's" will not. Any "Harrison" kept a prisoner for two breeding seasons will be useless, no matter how good he once may have been. I would not dream of buying a young bird from any "Harrison" kept a prisoner for long. Were I purchasing any, I would go to some small loft which has a fair proportion of Harrison blood, which races them and wins with them. From such a loft I would pick a few typical of stock pair blood and the breeder could ask his own price and get it. I've refused 12 pounds 12 shillings (LT note; 12/12/- = 12 Guineas) for a pair of eggs. I will personally promise a fair prospect of the following experience to any fancier who studies this strain and can rear and train them.

Saturday, 12.30pm home to find the birds are "up" at 400 miles in cloudy weather and a light headwind. "H'm,' should arrive about 3.30pm." Now for dinner.

1.30pm; Weather closing up, but fortified by dinner, feeling quite optimistic. 2.30pm; Wind swinging to S.East and East, sky like lead. Don't like it, but still cheerful. 3.30pm; Half a gale and driving rain. Keenly on look out. 4.30pm; No arrivals. Wife calls out, "have some tea dear," but there are more important matters than a cup of tea! "No thanks."

5.30pm; Wind dying a bit, but still drizzling rain. No arrivals. Decision, "Confound that Convoyer." 6.0pm; No arrivals. The gas lamps start to glitter on the wet pavements. "think I'll shut up. The other chaps must be home

an hour ago. It's too dark to see now."

6:05pm; "Whirr-r-r. Hello, here is one home. Game enough bird, but I'm bound to be nearly last. 6.15pm; At tea. "Dad, you've got another bird." "Alright, go and look after it. I'm busy." 6.30pm; "Ding-a-ling-a-ling." "Hello." "Yes, who won?" "Have not heard." "I've got nothing." "What, I've got two!" "Think I'll take the clock along."

7:00pm; (Scene changes to headquarters). "Hello, Mr. Secretary, who won?" "Anything home before breakfast will win!" "Eh, What! Why I've got two now!!!" And the next half hour is spent dazedly looking at one solitary clock on a vast sea of empty table. Must be a dream. "I'm going for a drink" and the back door of a friendly "pub" opens soon after.

9:30pm; Scene at headquarters as (very unobtrusively) you return, wondering if you have timed in a truant from some previous race. "Who is he," "some coot that nobody every heard of." "Fluke." "Not another loft timed in." "Heard it's a yearling." "That settles it; it's a (adjective) fluke." "Impossible day." "Hello, I hear he got two." "Might not be such a fluke." "Hello, Mr. Secretary, what strain has this cove got?" "What, Harrison's? H....ll."

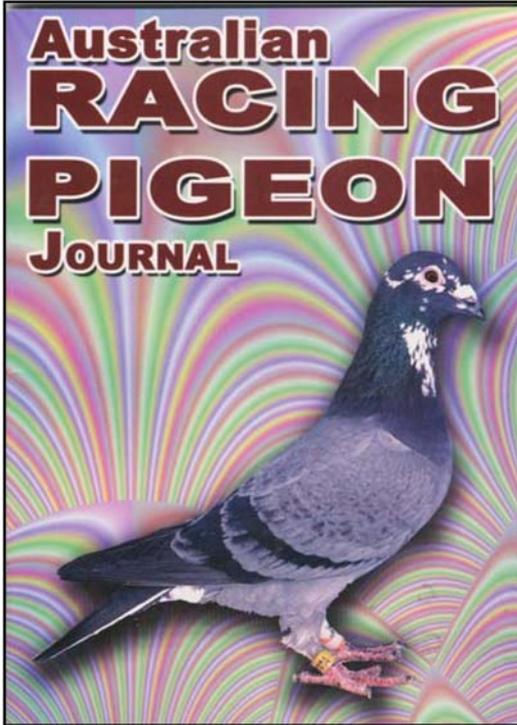
How do I know? In the language of the Australian classes, "I've been there. I've had some." And I'm not the only one! Now Mr. Editor, Mr. Crocker has done his share. I have done mine. What is wrong with say Mr. Felix Booth giving us a few reminiscences of those plucky black Hansenne's which so materially improved long distance work in N.S.W? Or an article on the gallant Jurion blood from some South Australian fancier? With good wishes to the Australian Racing Pigeon Fancy and its plucky representative "A.P.K." I conclude this series of articles." This series would not be complete without asking the obvious – what of Maximilian Foy? Well, unfortunately, I don't know, as my leather bound volumes of the Australasian Racing Pigeon and the Australasian Pigeon Keeper record complete from 1917 runs out at the end of 1927 and I think that is the full extent of the publications. Others may well know and I would be interested to hear. I can only speculate, as I honestly cannot readily make the link, but it would seem that Maximilian was one of four son's of Francis Foy of the Foy dynasty established by grandfather Mark Foy and the company Mark Foy Ltd and earlier Foy and Gibson, which was based in both Melbourne and Sydney (and elsewhere) and dealt in drapery, Manchester and related fashion stores. Foy also introduced Sydney's first escalator and a motor delivery service amongst other diverse activities. Francis was a popular and flamboyant turf identity and imported many race horses from Ireland and England and sent mares to stud in France. He raced for pleasure and it is said to have given away all his prize money and winnings and delighted in donating cups to racing clubs big and small. Each year he went to the Melbourne Cup and his horse Voyou ran 2nd in 1899. The Foy family was heavily steeped in sports. Maximilian had a thing for racing pigeons, but he also appeared to have followed in his father's footsteps and had a string of race horses in work and it is this latter penchant which largely contributed to his woes, as can be read further on. Maximilian lived in an age of strong views on good standing, public perception and honour and reacted accordingly when "taken to the cleaners" and "hung out to dry" by a trusted employee in charge of his horses. Reading between the lines, a plea of unsound mind at the time of the offence led to a conundrum that is summed up by the APK editorial of the day and I must say I was not aware of this until after I had started the series.

The APK editorial comment of 15 January 1927 gives some startling insight as follows: "The very clear and



Mr H Burton's "Alfonso" 1901-24. He was 4 times a winner from 500 miles and 1st from Spain 700 miles. On inspecting Burton's loft, Foy paid double the catalogue price for the two grandsons in the loft which most resembled Alfonso. The Alfonso birds were one of the crosses Foy put through all of his Harrisons.

concise articles appearing in the "APK" on the "Harrison" strain of homing pigeons are penned by a Mr. Maximilian Foy, a member of a well-known and successful trading family in Melbourne and Sydney. The merit of the article and subject will be of more than ordinary interest founded as it is on the observances in breeding and racing this high class strain of pigeon by a man who had the enthusiasm and the leisure to apply himself to his hobby. The most unique circumstances associated with the series of articles, distressingly sad though it be, is that they have been written whilst the author is detained, subject to His Excellency the Governor's pleasure as an inmate of one of our State Hospitals for the Insane. The incident which leads to his enforced incarceration created a large amount of comment at the time for Mr. Maximilian Foy was well known as a most generous patron of sport. Among other things, he kept a string of race horses in training and finding himself being systematically victimised and robbed of his money and the honour of winning, he brooded over the matter so deeply that he took the law into his own hands and attempted to shoot the one whom he considered had deceived, cheated and wronged him. It was very wrong of course, for Mr. Foy to act in such a way and no doubt he was temporarily unbalanced or suffering from an aberration of mind arising from his grief and disappointment at being made a victim, or to appear a weak tool at the hands of the man whom he had generously employed and trusted. Mr. Foy, now in his right mind and possessed apparently of all his faculties is still detained awaiting the Governor's pleasure. A movement has been started to have the unfortunate case of Mr. Foy again considered and we sincerely hope that everything favourable to the normality of his mentality and the kindly gentleness of his nature will lend those to whom the responsibility of considering his case is given to temper their judgement with mercy. We feel sure that Mr. Foy's series of articles on the Harrison strain of pigeons which he has just written for "APK" are regarded as an evidence of the state of his mind; they would surely prove a clearness of vision, a logical reasoning and a memory for details that should materially assist his case when considered."



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