

EARLY DAYS OF PIGEON RACING IN THE PORT ADELAIDE DISTRICT

and its history and my sport of Pigeon Racing

By C. C. Lodge

Pigeon racing has always been to the forefront in the Port Adelaide District. Even in 1894 Alberton and Glanville districts both had prominent clubs. Racing was conducted a little different than it is today. The first race north usually from Smithfield and then from Roseworthy. The stationmaster would release each bird separately at 15 minute intervals, he would send a telegram giving the time of each bird released, with this method each bird had to fly home on its own. In these races one bird per member. South line racing started at Mt. Lofty and then on to Mt. Barker Junction. All birds nominated had a name such as "Harbour Lights", "Pale Ale", etc. Later Semaphore and Ethelton clubs came into being. I can well remember in the early days a new member of the Port Adelaide Club, the late Arch McGregor who conducted a drapery store in Commercial Road Port Adelaide who had his loft attached to the outside wall on the second floor of his building.

I was first introduced into pigeons at the age of 5 years, a Mr Bollen of Newcastle Street, Rosewater who had fancy pigeons gave me several birds and my late father built me a very nice pigeon house. The late Mr Jack Turnbull who was a member of the Alberton club until the 1914 war started up pigeon racing again in 1918, he secured a number of youngsters and the first time he let them out six came to my loft which was situated about 800 metres away. He called in that evening and asked if any had strayed to my loft. I told him I had six of them. When he picked them up he said to my dad, get rid of those mongrels and I will start the lad up in racing pigeons, which he did.

It was 1919 and a lot of my pals lived in the Woodville area, they had racing pigeons so we formed a club. Although I lived nearer to Alberton I could not afford to join this club. We called it the Woodville club, and our first race was from the Grange, taken in a box by one of the members in the train. We had to run with the ticket off their leg and me always on the heavy side my young brother use to run for me up through the Cheltenham race course to Woodville, a distance of one and a half miles. So as to save money for entrance fee I use to walk to Woodville on hampering nights as in those days money was a scarce item. It was a very rough track, no road or footpath, only a track inside the railway fence, and large boxthorn bushes most of the way. Long before Holdens factory was built this area use to be a wheat crop each year. In 1920 we all bought a tin clock from a Mr McMahon who brought to our shed which we used as a club room. Cost two pounds each. After a few years with Woodville club I joined the Alberton club, as I was now working a push bike was my mode of transport. Some of the members of Alberton club included the late Alf Hemson, Steve Coleman Dave William all prominent fanciers in the Port District.

The Riverside club came into being in 1924 and has been a successful club in the Port Adelaide District. In 1926 the West Suburban Association was formed which is now the Port Adelaide District Racing Pigeon Association. Our metal rings we had struck WSA. Meetings of the WSA were held in the Ward Street Hall Semaphore. Three members elected to draw up rules of WSA namely E. Shaw, Chapman and Casey. Rules passed at meeting held

25/11/1926. At this meeting a lively discussion came to be re boundaries. Some members moved for Kilkenny Station, others for Gibson Street, Bowden. After a lengthy discussion it was decided to leave in abeyance. In 1927 the WSA decided to race the East West line. At a meeting held on 10/3/27 it was decided to procure from the SAHPA 2,000 rubber rings and from the ARP Sydney 1500 metal WSA rings at 6 pounds per thousand. It was also passed to print 50 rule books. The Semaphore Homing Club which had ceased to exist in 1927 hired their meeting place to the WSA for 5 pounds per year. Racing the East West line it was moved to send the Station Master at Kingoonya 50 pence to release the birds and to send and collect telegram advising time of release. At a later meeting it was decided to send peas to the SM at Terowie so he could feed and water birds en route and instead of 50 pence postal note to the SM at Kingoonya, 25 pence to the SM at Terowie and 25 pence to SM at Kingoonya. (money must have been tight in those days, yes I can well remember).

My late father Geo Lodge became Secretary in 1931 and in 1932 it was decided to build our own WSA clubroom. Permission was sought from the S.A. Railways and a site was allocated in the Glanville Railway yard. From memory rent was 20 pounds per year. Although the original building still stands it has been extended considerably. My brother Wally Lodge use to look after my birds as being a commercial traveller I was away a lot so we raced under the name of C and W Lodge. My brother took over from my father and was now Secretary of the Port Adelaide and District Racing Pigeon Association, he was also Secretary of the Riverside club.

The 1936 Centenary year the PADRPA conducted a special Centenary race which was won by the late Geo Hawke who was one of the original members of the Riverside club. His three sons have followed in his footsteps namely Colin, Don and Ken. In the early 1930's through the efforts of the late Mr Jack Woods, Secretary of the SAHPA, decided to convey the PADRPA pigeons along with theirs to race points. In all Pt Adel Assoc., races 4 prizes only 1st 50%, 2nd 25%, 3rd 15% and 4th 10%. In 1929 the WSA shifted its meeting place to a hall at Alberton, which was offered to them to purchase in 1931 for 600 pounds. It was decided it was not central enough, in later years this place was worth with land 60,000 pounds and was converted into a factory (a golden opportunity missed). Then unfortunately in 1939 the war came, my brother joined the services like many other fanciers. Although pigeon racing continued limited flying, I like many other had to go into recess.

By 1948 pigeon racing started to get a good hold again. Through the efforts of Mr Albert Hall who financed the importing of continuous running clocks the PADRPA changed over from the old stop and start tin clock, fanciers who could not afford to purchase outright Mr Hall sold them on time payment basis. So a new era was born at Port Adelaide. In 1951 the Commonwealth Jubilee year, an Oscar was given by the Commonwealth for each sport. I was lucky enough to win the affiliated clubs race from Oodnadatta thanks to my good wife who clocked the first bird in the metropolitan area at 12.18pm on the Monday, birds release Sunday morning owing to bad weather on the Saturday. I, like many fanciers, over the years am indebted to my wife, without their help many would not be able to race pigeons. So to the ladies I say thank you for the help you have given me in training the pigeons and your efforts each year when the annual social comes around.

In 1951 the SA Homing Pigeon Combine was formed and the PADRPA became a member and I was elected President, a position I held until the Combine ceased to function in 1974. In 1958 a year book printed by the Combine was well received by fanciers. My years of racing pigeons has been a delight. I will complete 60 years this year and during that period I have met a lot of good blokes. My period of travelling around Australia I came in contact

with fanciers around Australia. I came in contact with fanciers who always made you welcome. On a visit to the U.K. I had the pleasure of meeting one of nature's gentlemen Mr Colin Osman who when I phoned him at his office the well known address Doughty Street London said he could give me 20 minutes of his time the next morning, however this 20 minutes turned out to be a whole day. I visited his home had lunch with his very attractive wife Grace. Met his loft manager and handled his pigeons. What a wonderful day with a most knowledgeable gentleman. My visit to the Queens Loft at Kings Lynn U.K. will always be a memory here again handling the silky feathered birds which they have in the UK. The Queens loft also have an attractive lot of Show Homers in a special loft away from the racing birds. The telephone wires near the loft have all been corked to make it easy for the birds to see. I travelled by British Railways from London to Kings Lynn arriving back in London at 11pm. My wife thought I had got lost in this historical place. Unfortunately I had to refuse pigeons offered me owing to import restrictions, however I am of the opinion we have birds equal to those in the UK and we fly our birds a lot harder than they do, but in most instances they keep fewer pigeons than we in Australia. You cannot compare the two types of racing. It is unfortunate the great sport has been in the doldrums for some time. Our media coverage is very poor and so as to progress it is up to every fancier to try and give pigeon racing a lift. Help the young lad to get established and interested in the sport. I like many others have given away good pigeons to get someone started up, this is one way of making the sport popular. We are most fortunate in Australia and especially South Australians as our pigeon feed is at our own back door, overseas countries have to import a lot of their feed which is very costly compared to prices we pay. I am asking all fanciers to make a drive to secure sponsors or trophies for our association. Up to date I have been fortunate in getting a sponsor for \$500.00 for Benalla and a couple of \$100.00 trophies. If you are interested in helping the sport and securing any donations or trophies please contact me through the Association. It is up to all pigeon fanciers to make the sport grow in S.A.

Footnote from J. Hofman

This letter was written by Corry Lodge around about 1979/80. It would have been after the demise of the PADRPA (whose clubrooms at the Glanville Railway Station were demolished sometime in the 1990's) and the establishment of the WDF, Western Districts Federation. His call for trophies etc., is directed at the membership of the WDF which numbered about 80 at the time. Corry himself was successful in getting numerous sponsors to donate cash and trophies for races conducted by the WDF including sponsorship from Simsmetal for \$500 cash trophies for a number of years for races from Oodnadatta and Benalla.

I remember Corry going to England and visiting Colin Osman. It was 1969, the year that I was Secretary of the PADRPA, Jack Wasley took on the Treasurers job and Corry was Chairman. Corry was away for a good part of that racing season and Charlie Newman as Vice Chairman took over the chair in his absence. It was years later in 1991 that I visited Colin Osman's son Rick Osman and the Racing Pigeon Editor Steve Dunn at their new 21 Wren Street London premises. A few years later they moved again to 13 Guilford Street.

Corry was a travelling salesman for Simpson Pope at Beverley and was friends with Keith Wickham and Bill Verco, both whom worked for the same company.

This article will give current flyers some insight to the long past of the sport in Port Adelaide and Western suburbs of Adelaide.