

# Graham Binnion

1st Farina 3-bird Special

When Graham Binnion clocked his blue state Janssen hen to win a tough Farina 3-bird special in August, 2004 it was the culmination of 40 years of pigeon flying.

Binnion, currently the president of the powerful Salisbury club, had been trying to win an Association race for that period. Not that he hadn't enjoyed plenty of success in the Elizabeth and Salisbury clubs. Five times he had been runner up, including a lose second to Ron Hall, of Gawler, in the 2003 Coober Pedy.

This time there was no bridesmaids tag as his two-year-old hen finished the 300 miler at the head of a classy field.

It had a been a head wind all the way with the place getters spread right across the metro area - a great nine hour test for the fastest birds.

Graham's hen is bred down from the original Red Fox Janessens imported into Australia tossing mate Reg Muller. They have been good birds for Reg as well with the pair having featured in a similar Association

win for Reg Muller about six years ago.

Graham and Reg toss together mid-week and weekends, although Reg has been known to sneak out of an afternoon. To Graham's credit, he has been able to stretch Reg's family out to as far as Marla proving they are more than just sprint pigeons.

This winning he's grand-father had put up a top performer from Marla(600 miles) being clocked at 12:09pm on the second day. Her grand-mother won the pools in the Flying Doctor Charity race.

Graham Binnion has threatened to quit the sport a couple of times in recent years but thankfully they were idle threats. His loft is certainly capable of matching the best on its day.

Graham has a theory on the Janssens. He believes they race better as two-year olds if they have not been hammered as babies.

His Farina winner has been retired to the stock loft and certainly has the right credentials to breed many winners in years to come.

## Pigeons reveal map reading secret

A 10 year Oxford University study discovered some pigeons turn off at certain motorway junctions and use landmarks to remember where they are.

The scientists behind the study were "knocked sideways" by their findings.

The researchers worked with a team from the BBC's natural history unit, which placed a tiny camera on one pigeon to capture what it could see for a new programme.

### 'Plain to see'

The pigeons' routes were mapped to within four yards by tiny tracking devices and global positioning system technology.

Research team member Dr Tim Guilford said the results were "plain to see".

"They don't follow linear lines all the time and sometimes when they're flying at 200 or 300ft above built-up areas it's difficult to see exactly what they are following.

"But when they do follow a road, it's so obvious.

"We followed some which flew up the Oxford bypass and even turned off at particular junctions. It's very human-like."

### Saving energy

Dr Guilford said pigeons' used their ability to navigate by the sun when they were over unfamiliar territory.

He said they did not always fly "as the crow" - making diversions to follow roads home when there were more straightforward routes.

"That's the exciting thing, because we knew then there was something more important to them than just saving energy."

The team believes the birds use the technique to keep their journeys as simple as possible.

Footage from the pigeon-mounted camera will be shown on the Animal Camera series, which starts on BBC One on 11 February.