

# PIGEON NOTES

By Graham Badger



● Merv Hatch

**For members of the South Australian Homing Pigeon Association winning a place in the top ten flyers in any one season is a major achievement.**

**And last year West Torrens flyer Merv Hatch had this distinction.**

He finished ninth behind Hampstead competitor Fred Delsar.

Merv is a milkman at Henley Beach.

His interest in the sport began when he was a youth at Port Pirie. During war service overseas, his parents took charge of his pigeons for him.

After being discharged in 1946 he settled in Adelaide, and has been flying birds in Adelaide since.

He has flown as a member of the Henley Beach club (1965-71) as well as with his present club, winning the points on a number of occasions.

Pigeons from the Hatch loft earned their owner third place in the SAHPA aggregate points in both 1970 and 1971.

An added bonus won by Merv last year was the trophy for the most points earned in the six middle distance and in the South Derby.

Merv's main objective now is to take out top position in the points.

During the past year Merv received the "thrill of my life" when he clocked the treble from 1,710 birds in the SAHPA Benalla race. All three birds homed in the dark, the first two arriving at 7.50 p.m. and the third at 2.45 a.m. the next day.

The last time a SAHPA treble was achieved was in 1937.

Merv has had three families of pigeons which have flown very well for him. He has now mated them together and formed his own strain.

He has six SAHPA race winners and numerous placegetters in his loft today, and many of these he has bred himself.

Age of his champions does not deter him from attempting to breed better progeny. One of his old Gurnay cockbirds is 17 years of age and still breeding winners.

Merv finds that pigeon racing is not a lazy man's sport and that pigeons must be looked after the whole year through — not just at racing time.

Both feeding and hygiene play an important role in the success or otherwise of any man's loft.

Like all fanciers Merv would be at a loss in the sport without his wife.

Every day she lets the birds out for exercise when they are in training. In addition she will, if necessary, keep a look out for birds returning on racedays, particularly on the long distance events.

Two prominent owners who have strains represented in the loft include Ron Eitzen, and the Blatchford loft of Victoria.

In the past Merv has paid up to \$70 for one pigeon for breeding; however the results have not been of value.

A mark of a good loft is that owners keep their champions and don't sell them to other competitors. This is the case with the Hatch loft. He has however given some away to friends in the past.

About 150 pigeons are housed in the now established loft. However the Hatch family also met with pigeon racing success when they previously lived at Seaton Park for 10 years.