

Basil Beebe of Horncastle

The home of Gurnays and Hermans

Pigeons have featured in the lives of the Beebe family for many years. Basil's grandfather kept pigeons for many years up until he died in 1926. After his death, Basil's grandmother brought the best of the birds to Basil's home and Basil at the ripe old age of seven was given the job of looking after them. His father and mother provided the necessary finance and Basil started competing on his own in 1935. He told me that he still proudly keeps that first R.N.H.U. membership card.

In 1936 Basil won the Young Bird Average Trophy in the Club, this Trophy was presented by the late George Flintham, a wealthy local farmer whose friend the great actor Tom Walls was present when Basil received his trophy. Tom Walls owned a good race horse known as 'April the 6th' which won the famous Lincolnshire Handicap at about this time. Basil's wife Theodora is also a keen fancier having her own loft, housing six pairs of Karel Hermans pigeons, she helps with the Club work and holds the office of Treasurer. The original stock was of the old Logan and Barker family from grandfather. In 1936 Basil's father purchased some Gurnays for him, together with a new loft and clock. Over a period of time some of the finest Gurnays available arrived at the Beebe Lofts. These and their progeny went on to put up many fine performances to this part of Lincolnshire. During the war years 1939-45 these lofts were on service with the National Pigeon Service and many youngsters were bred for use in the Japanese War Area.



Karl Hermans and Basil Beebe together in Belgium in 1963.

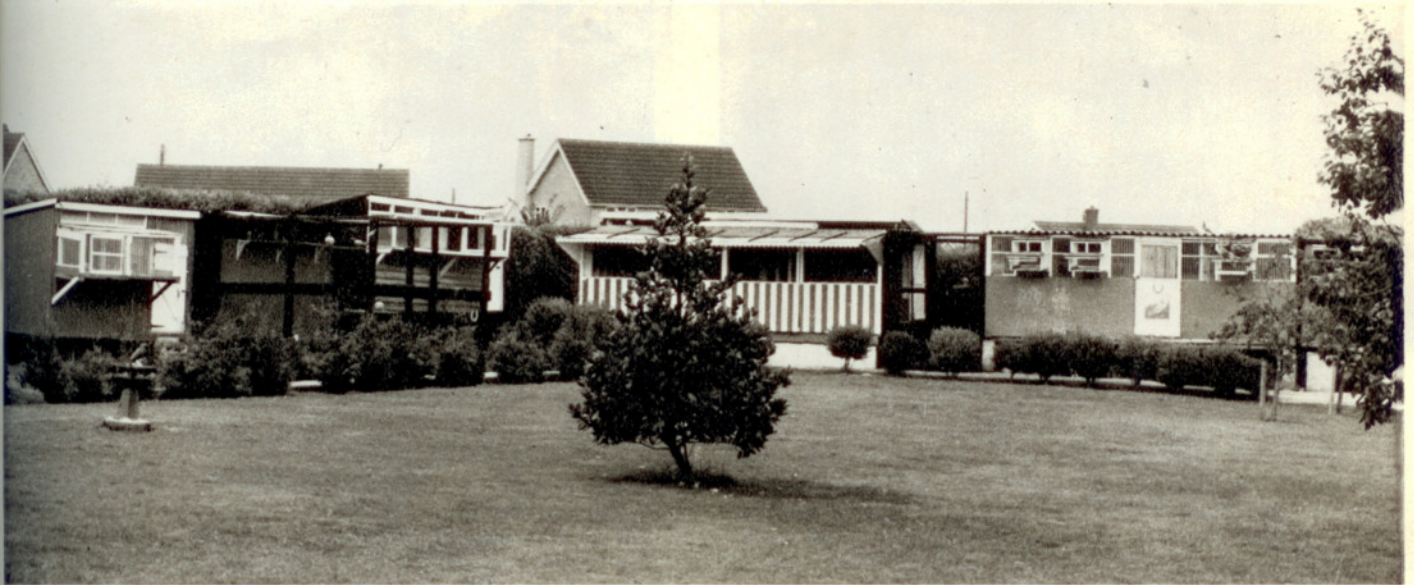
Basil is a butcher by trade, and during the war they used to get a lot of visitors coming to see their wonderful Gurnay pigeons, although Basil and his father often wondered whether it was the pigeons they came to see or was it just for a piece of excellent ham they all used to go away with from the family shop. At the end of the War Basil went over to Belgium and whilst there he had the good fortune to meet Karel Hermans of Wespelaar. Basil and Karel became great friends and as a result many fine Hermans pigeons were to arrive at Elmhirst lofts. Unfortunately Karel Hermans died in July 1975 and his old stock birds were sent to Elmhirst to maintain the family.

Karel's nephew, Dr. Paul Hermans, himself a successful fancier has also sent over some birds to help maintain the strain.

The house Elmhirst stands in attractive grounds extending over one acre, there are seven lofts in the grounds, these include Basil's main racing lofts. Mrs. Beebe's racing loft and five smaller lofts for the various stock birds. The racing loft is open and well ventilated, the birds trap through an open door.

Normal standard size nestboxes are used as all birds are raced on the natural method. I asked Basil if he could name two or three birds that had been responsible for the many fine birds in the loft at present. He found this rather difficult as there have been many fine pigeons at Elmhirst over the years. However, it was very obvious that he had a favourite, and that is a pigeon named 'Red Mon II' it is 14 years old and still as fit as it ever was, 'Red Mon II' won nine 1st prizes during its racing career. It was bred by Karel Hermans from his Red Mon whose brother was exported to Mexico and subsequently went on to win the Mexican National race. Apart from racing, Basil's greatest love is breeding the birds. Always aiming to keep the type within the family, Gurnay fans often tell Basil that his Gurnays are the same now as they were back in 1930. Basil said that he also intends to keep the Hermans as a family. Birds are selected for pairing on parentage type and performance, always if possible putting best to best.

photographs by Anthony Bolton and F. J. Harvey



Elmhurst Lofts, Lincolnshire.

Old bird training starts as soon as the first round of squeakers are weaned. This is usually about three weeks before the first race, training is then continued throughout the racing. Training tosses are usually from about 20 miles, two or three times a week. Birds selected to go to the big races are never overworked, prior to the destined race they only have two or three races up to 200 miles. Selection for the long races is always based on previous performances, nothing is left to chance. Young Bird racing is a slightly different problem, Basil races with the Peterborough Federation which conveys anything from 5,000 birds upwards every week over a 50 mile wide area, this plus having an early drop, causes problems of trying to get

birds to drop off of large batches, Basil has used various methods, all have been successful in their turn. The methods that have been used are as follows – rear 12 youngsters in January, train them with the old birds in April and then pair them up and race them in the early young bird races.

Another method that has been employed is to rear a large team of youngsters, train them on the line every day from 40 miles and hope for them to pull the bunch your way on race days. However, Basil said, one of his most successful methods of recent years has been with 30 good May or June bred birds, these birds are trained behind the main batch of

youngsters and then dropped into the 4th race at about 120 miles and then sent on. Basil said those proved to be his best birds in 1974 and 1975.

The birds are always well fed, Basil said his wife feeds the birds, and she won't see anything go hungry. Food consists of locally grown tic beans, wheat, a little barley, plus maize and maples early in the race season. Red Band is also used as a conditioner. Medicines are not used, both families of birds being very healthy and constitutionally sound, this is one of the joys of an old well established family. I am sure the pigeons of Mr. & Mrs. Beebe will continue to be a force to be reckoned with for a long time to come.



NU75 P43288, a promising young pure Gurnay, a son of 14619 and 10103.



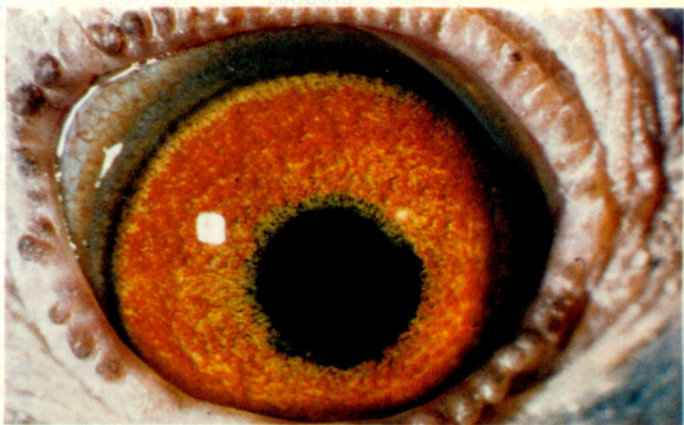
NU75P 43277, another promising young pure Gurnay, this is a daughter of 'Double 16'.

Eyesign Commentary

The birds of Basil Beebe



Dark Cock NU75 P43288, Gurnay. In this eye we have an example of a superb recessive violet, which shows a tremendous width of sign, with good composition or shading towards the lower part of the sign. The iris colour is very strong, denoting that a great deal of inbreeding has been used in this bird's background. The mountainous effects in the iris show that the bird will be a force to be reckoned with as a breeder. The presence of excellent serration is very much in evidence, and this in itself denotes outstanding quality. Notice the iris with its rich colour and mountainous effects in the layers, the distance lines can be easily seen both in the iris and the sign. In my opinion I would expect this bird to be a hard determined racer, but as this is only a yearling, I would expect in the years to come, this bird will breed more birds to distinguish themselves in the basket, and so take its place amongst the top stock birds in this loft. An excellent dual-purpose eye, breeding first, racing second.



Dark' Chequer Hen. NU75 P43277, Gurnay. Again here we have another very good eye, the basic sign is very dark, with composition and the most desirable serrations evident. The colour of the sign is green, the iris shows plenty of character and this bird being only a yearling is not showing its maximum quality yet as the sign does not reach its fullest potential until the bird is approximately 18 months old. It is also very evident that there has been a good deal of inbreeding in its parentage. The breeding characteristics are very strong indeed and the serrations on the sign itself are also very strong. This is the sort of eye that could found a loft, and I would not be surprised in a few years to find that this bird is one of the top stock birds in the Elmhirst Lofts.