Left: The late John Pryor, a man who investigated and mastered every facet of pigeon racing, as demonstrated by his extraordinary success. Right: Two of John’s four winners from Alice Springs, 1320km North of Adelaide. Above is BCH SA-87-17155 the winner of the 1990 race and below SA-82-31363, winner of the 1964 race whose daughter was also 2nd from Alice Springs. Truly an embarrassment of riches.

John Pryor - An Embarrassment of Riches
The Allen Goodger Story - Part 4 - by John Capel

Below: At the final sale, Ruth Pryor held the 14 year-old Reference ‘B’, while Curly Maricic held the pied 12 year-old Reference ‘D.’ They were to sell for $2,500 and $2,000 respectively.
It is often said that the best stock pigeons many fanciers have come by, are those that have been gifted to them. Allen Goodger’s “Elliott hen” most certainly fits into this category. Another case of an outstanding “gifted” pigeon is John Pryor’s “Reference A,” (BCC SA82 11829). The story begins at Allen Goodger’s auction in 1982 when Ray Rowe, a fellow Hampstead Club member, purchased a number of pigeons suggested by Grant Paterson. Included among these purchases were Lots 53 and 60, who were in future years to become prolific breeders of producing pigeons.

Ray mated 53 to 60 in late 1982 and they produced several pigeons including 11829. The offspring of 53 and 60, together with other birds purchased at Allen’s auction completed the 1983 SAHPA race program with a good number being present in Ray’s loft at the conclusion of that season – SA82 11829 being one of them. Ray, like many South Australian fanciers, had a strong preference for racing hens - and little desire to race second year cocks.

He generously agreed to gift several of these yearling cocks to some industrious SAHPA honorary workers. Grant Paterson collected the yearling cocks from Ray and took them to his Manningham home where the delighted recipients decided upon their distribution. John Pryor selected a Blue Barred cock from which he bred his Booroorban (560km) winner, and 11829, which was instrumental in raising John’s status from a good pigeon fancier to an outstanding fancier.

For the record, SA82 11829 produced 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Alice Springs (1320km), 1st Benalla (690km), 2nd Pakenham (700km), 3rd Temora (820km), 3rd Farina (535km) plus another eight SAHPA positions. This goldmine pigeon also proved to be a wonderful grandsire.

Another pigeon in the basket was a brother to 11829. Selected by Alan Thede he produced 15th Gosses and 17th Coober Pedy (745km) in his first season at stud. Obviously not all gifts are this successful - being in the right place at the right time also helps!

John Pryor is something of an enigma: it’s hard to know if anybody really understood him fully, because he was almost in a league of his own. For a period in excess of a decade he blitzed racing within the SAHPA in a manner rarely seen anywhere within our sport. Yet there were close friends who had a wonderful chance to learn from his enormous understanding and study. John could be dogmatic to a degree that annoyed some people. He could make comments which were unkind and upsetting to close friends who thought him sometimes less than generous. But much of this started with his intensity, because John drove himself relentlessly toward continuing success. And through it all he shared a wonderful philosophy with friends.

“Pigeon racing is like watching mushrooms come up,” he’d tell them. “Get the right conditions, and the predictable must happen.”

Think about it and it all sounds right: learn the trade, stick to winning principles, and certain foreseeable things must happen. He feared none of his competitors, in fact he told one friend:

“I’ve got the best pigeons, I can train them better than anyone else, and I know how to feed them to get the best results.”

It sounds somewhat bombastic, yet John was widely admired as a man who made a significant contribution to the sport, and its worthwhile to study how he took three Goodger cocks and built an enduring family around them. The first cock rarely figures in anything we find in the 2000 sale catalogue, mainly because the formidable 1982 bred 11829 eclipsed anything seen before… and then his son 24469 came along, son of the two Goodger-line champions 11829 x 51397, Grant Paterson’s ace producing hen of extraordinary capacity.

John Pryor’s breeding methods.

It is interesting to note that John’s stockloft comprised just twenty cocks, and ten hens, and the numbers were strictly maintained. In order for a new bird to enter the stockloft, one had to go. There was no compromise, and it explains how people could easily buy stockbirds from John - and these usually improved their own teams.
The extensive influence of 11829 x 51397
Top Left: The famous winner from Coober Pedy in extraordinary circumstances. Top Right: The Coober Pedy winner’s magnificent wing. Second on Right: The Temora winner. She was an appropriate demonstration of John’s wing theory. Third on Right: The wing of the Benalla winner. Class and ability combined in this magnificent champion. Bottom Right: Michael Lucas’s VHA 600 mile winner of 2003, a magnificent hen which homed in darkness after almost sixteen hours. She carries three crosses of the Morundah winner. Bottom Left: The Emmdale winner. Like the Coober Pedy and Temora winners, she came from a meeting of the two sides of the 11029 family.
When the breeding season came, the ten stockhens would be mated to their chosen mates, and the remaining ten cocks would meet with hens directly from the racing loft. Many of the best young pigeons were bred from these yearling hens, and it provided several benefits:

1. John didn't have to maintain a large team of stockbirds.
2. The yearling hens used could race again as two-year-olds.
3. If these young hens produced superior racebirds, they could then be quickly identified as producer hens and would then permanently move to the stockloft, usually dislodging an older hen.
4. The process enabled John to keep the average age of his stockbirds (stockhens in particular), low.
5. John placed a premium on the first eggs a hen ever laid, referring to them as 'Golden Eggs.'

The actual pairing of the birds could be a somewhat tortuous affair for John. He would agonise over the selection of the pairs, and even after pairing it wasn’t unusual to find a hen suddenly removed from the stockpen to be replaced by another hen subsequently deemed more suitable. It’s a feature of the behaviour of many top fanciers, in that they spend many, many hours arranging their pairings. As the famous international racing pigeon scribe Piet de Weerd was to write:

*The most important thing, as I have never ceased to stress, remains that an owner must be able to form worthwhile pairs of breeders, or else he is doomed to failure.*  

Friends remember John being a meticulous note-taker, keeping record of almost everything that happened in and around his loft, or to any of its inmates. He had a great appreciation for wing-theory, and placed much emphasis on it. He believed strongly in birds with ‘large wings and small bodies’, as one person put it, emphasising what he termed their ‘power-weight’ ratio. Greg Kakoschke remembered that John preferred “small hens with tight feathering.” No wonder he was successful with Goodger pigeons, for they were just made for him….small, and silkily feathered. John believed that any pigeon to be brought into the family needed to have similar attributes.

It was evident in writing the story of the Goodger birds that many fanciers lost this family’s racing prowess when they tried to make the Goodger birds conform to their idea of what a ‘good pigeon should look like.’ These small racing machines were ideal for what John proposed.

When it came to breeding, John was a keen advocate for what he called the ‘diamond’ method. It is not known if John learned the technique of the ‘diamond’ from Allen Goodger, however it is distinctly possible. Barney Horsman was a respected fancier at the time, and was known to be a follower of the practice. Allen Goodger apparently used it, and Bill Walford was to relate that he thought both men may have learned it from Old Hand books, plus the great knowledge possessed by Allen and John’s clubmate Harold Webber. Harold was one of
those men who had an enormous understanding of animal husbandry, the ability to ‘handle, understand, and use’ animals in ways other didn’t find so easy.

John, who had spent a lot of time at the Goodger premises, made no secret of the fact that he favoured the matings of Uncle-Niece, and Nephew-Aunty… just as Allen Goodger and the Kakoschke brothers did when mating their pigeons. John had an excellent knowledge of the flow of chromosomes within any pairing, and paid particular attention to the pathway of the Y chromosome, which of course can only come via the hen. On occasions he might put together a pair which produced excellent sons but poor daughters, and he’d go over and over their pedigree until he’d identify what he thought was the contributing factor to his dilemma. He’d tell friends:

“Breeding pigeons is a bit like driving a car, in that sometimes you find yourself going down a dead-end, and you have to do something about it!”

His diamond method is particularly difficult to describe in detail, however it would be laid out as in the chart shown alongside (see diagram). It would allow John to purposefully, and deliberately design his matings with the aid of considerable information

In all cases, the diamond would allow John to utilise one of his champion Goodger cocks, or a chosen descendant. The chosen pigeon (on the left, joined to the diamond along the dotted line) would most likely be an uncle, great-uncle, nephew, half-nephew etc in relationship to the featured hen (or cock) shown alongside the straight line on the right-hand side. After two generations of such breeding, an outcross would be sought.

Greg Hamilton, who had spent a lot of time in consultation with the late champion, told me:

“It could also be a cock but the Y chromosome will not follow that line and case studies through the Pryor family will show that the performance by-product is not as good. You obviously will still get some good ones along the way but not as good as following the hen line where ace pigeons are expected in every generation once the producer hen has been identified. Having said that, don’t under estimate the importance of the cock on the broken line side of the diamond. (11829 son of Lot 60). The cocks used were often sons of a proven producer hen, minimising the risk of breeding in a weak link.”

John wasn’t alone in his emphasis on the female line. The famous author “Old Hand” was to write at one time:

“We know, and none better, how much the team depends upon the genetic influence of the hen. We have heard fanciers opine that the sire and dam of progeny exercise a 50-50 influence over their progeny, but I have never once found such a premise tenable. In fact it isn’t even a small consideration, Source: ‘Old Hand’ BHW Gazette, Dec 1981.

Anyone who studies the Goodger line will probably notice that the great producing cocks are usually sons of great hens. Remember, it was the famous Morundah winner whose three different sons provided 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in that race from Coleambally, and Lot 60’s three sons who provided 1st, 2nd and 3rd in that race from Temora. From the proximity of the diamonds to each other, you’ll see that a formidable chart of the various relationships could be tabulated, and John would spend many hours planning these matings in an attempt to avoid the possible ‘dead-ends.’

John was said to have fixed rules about the manner in which he thought top pigeons should be bred. His ‘Golden Rules of Breeding’ were based upon his study of many SAHPA winners from long distance, or difficult races where the conditions were not favourable….that is, pigeons that did something special…clear winners etc. People close to John said that he was adamant as to the accuracy of his analysis.

Rule 1A: 80% of all champion race-winners are bred from parents aged four years or less.

Rule 1B: 15% of all champion race-winners are bred from an older cock when mated to a hen aged four years or less. 5% of all champion race winners are bred from parents older than four years of age.

Rule 2A 80% of all champion race-winners are the result of an outcross.
**Rule 2B** 15% of all champion race-winners are the result of a cross within the family. 5% of all champion race-winners are bred from closely related birds.

We can quickly test his theory on the Association champions within the sale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Racepoint</th>
<th>Age of Sire</th>
<th>Age of Dam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBPH SA96 14093</td>
<td>1st Coober Pedy 1999 745km 783m.p.m. Only bird on day.</td>
<td>1yr</td>
<td>2yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBH SA94 05192</td>
<td>6th, 11th Alice Springs 1320km</td>
<td>4yrs</td>
<td>3yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBH SA91 16453</td>
<td>1st Morundah 1993 701km 3032B 882m.p.m. Only bird before dark</td>
<td>5yrs</td>
<td>1yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCH SA94 03275</td>
<td>1st Cooenbaullly 660km, 1997 366/B 1347m.p.m. 9th Farina 335km, 22nd Temora 820km, 29th Mt Gambier 380km</td>
<td>1yr</td>
<td>1yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCH SA94 05273</td>
<td>2nd Cooenbaullly 660km, 1993, 15th Coober Pedy 745km, 16th Morundah 700km</td>
<td>1yr</td>
<td>1yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCH SA87 17108</td>
<td>1st Penall, 1988, 690km 1012m.p.m.</td>
<td>3yrs</td>
<td>4yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCH SA85 12147</td>
<td>1st Alice Springs 1320km 1998 307/B, 931m.p.m. Only two birds on the second day</td>
<td>1yr</td>
<td>1yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCPH SA92 16892</td>
<td>1st Temora 820, 12th Little Topar 480km</td>
<td>2yrs</td>
<td>1yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBH SA96 14045</td>
<td>1st Cooenbaullly 660km 1997 2432B 1101m.p.m.</td>
<td>1yr</td>
<td>1yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCH SA89 18635</td>
<td>1st Alice Springs 1320km, 1992, 918m.p.m. 4th Emuclale 633km, 31st Eulahlie 1039km</td>
<td>3yrs</td>
<td>1yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCH SA91 16442</td>
<td>2nd Alice Springs 1320km</td>
<td>9yrs</td>
<td>1yr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the most interesting pigeons on the list is John's Alice Springs winner (SA95 12147) of 1998, for she allows us the chance to examine the manner in which he must have planned her deliberate pairing. We know that John would spend many hours planning these matings, so we can be sure that *few things that happened at Pryorsville, occurred by accident.* John’s blue chequered victor in 1998’s 1320km event, was bred from a grandson of the champion pair 11829 and 39313.

Her dam, however, was bred directly from 11829, thus allowing us the classic aunt-nephew mating... however the principle behind this type of mating is not quite as simple as it sounds, because there are two ways in which it is practiced.

* First we have the classic uncle/niece, or aunt/nephew mating.

* Secondly we have the half uncle/niece, and half aunt/nephew mating.

It was perhaps best outlined in Neville Kakoschke's catalogue for his sale in 1996, where he wrote within the preview: "Our family of racing pigeons have been linebred and inbred for a very long time (35-40 years), and at times in their purest form are possibly too interrelated to breed race winning pigeons when mated together. By far the best results for racing purposes will then be achieved by the mating of aunt and half-nephew, and half-uncle and niece. The prepotent bird being the common ancestor in all cases."

When we look at what John Pryor was doing within his pairings, we can see him incorporating both methods of pairing his birds, however it was undoubtedly 11829, the son of Lot 60 which took the pivotal role in *almost any pairing*, nearly all of them a form of linebreeding to this cock.

Now examine the pedigree of John's Alice Springs winner of 1992, SA89 18635, in particular the way the John had bred the dam of this absolute champion... in this case using 11829 in *linebreeding to the famous Lot*
It is of course, a classic Uncle-Niece mating, with the difference being that her sire was a half-brother to her Grandsire....the half-Uncle/niece pairing which Neville Kakoschke wrote about. Such a pairing would have been planned with great deliberation!

It also provides an opportunity to show John’s No2 cock 38566, also a son of Lot 60. He sired numerous top pigeons, including the hen which finished 2nd Temora when 11829’s daughter finished 3rd. Again, it’s a demonstration of using a powerful, prepotent hen.

To best demonstrate the ways by which John bred his champions, we might do well to look at his reference birds.

Reference ‘A’ SA82 11829, son of Allen Goodger’s Lot 53 and Lot 60, the famous producer hen, and matriarch to a long line of champion racing pigeons.

Reference ‘B’ SA86 24469, son of Reference “A” when mated to the outstanding Goodger producer hen 51397, dam (like Lot 60) of a long line of important winners through various partners. So far we haven’t strayed from the Goodger family.

Reference ‘C’ BBH SA91 16453, the famous Morundah winner, and producer extraordinaire. She was a demonstration that after two generations John would look for an outcross, and in this case he’d used the unrelated ‘Richardson Hen’ to mate to Reference B (24469) in order to produce this champion.

Reference ‘D’ BBPC SA88 22298, accurately described in the catalogue as “a pedigree full of successful long distance pigeons, and excellent breeder, and a potent grandsire.” He was a son of the “6th Mt Willoughby Cock,” (17175) probably the best cock John ever raced, being a half-brother to the Morundah winner, and thus a grandson of Reference “A’ (through his son Reference ‘B’.)

Reference ‘E’ BCC SA90 23588, a son of Reference ‘D’ when mated to a related hen which had won 2nd from Alice Springs.

It was a line of pigeons originating from Reference ‘A,’ and just as the Janssen Brothers had several linebred streams within their family, so John Pryor had a second stream through the mating of 11829 to his other great mate 39313. In order to demonstrate just how John used them, examine the chart included within this article. It contains two of the best racing hens to fly to the late champion’s loft, and they’re virtually a textbook-study of how John planned to breed his champion racing pigeons, clearly showing the way in which he utilized the two streams of his linebred family.

Example 1. The Temora winner.

Here is a wonderful instance of breeding to incredibly stout pigeons. When the days become long, and the daylight is fading from the sky, and a hopeful fancier is trusting that his birds are still trying to reach home, then its pedigrees like this one which provide confidence that the race entrants may be able to follow the behaviours of those within the pedigree - and keep going. The past foretells the future.

It’s quite a challenge for the majority of fanciers to look at this pedigree and consider that their own birds may be competing with a bird of this quality. No wonder John could become confident!

In this instance we see a classic (Temora) winning hen whose mother and father were both grandchildren of a champion hen which had won from Alice Springs (1320km) and then bred a hen that had finished second from...
the same racepoint. Such genes are priceless.

BCPH SA-92-16892 Owned and raced by John Pryor. 1st SAHPA Temora (820km) 12th Topar 480km.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sire: Ref &quot;E&quot; SA90 23588</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBPC Ref &quot;D&quot; BBPC SA 88 22398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Mt Willoughby clocked 10pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion sire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCPH SA81 36190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dam: SA91 16426</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GS: BCPC SA89 18710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCPH SA87 17135 Brother to 1st Alice Springs 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th Mt Wills (530km)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11829 x 53913)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sire: Ref &quot;E&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCPH SA-92-16892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned and raced by John Pryor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st SAHPA Temora (820km)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Topar 480km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that both sire and dam are grandchildren of the 1984 Alice Springs winner, yet the pedigree is very similar to that of Allen Goodger’s exquisite Nundroo winner, whereby the inner corridor (dam of her sire, and sire of her dam) are from a somewhat outcross to the Goodger family.

The use of the champion Goodger line producers thus becomes evident. Through the sire we have the champion line of Ref ‘A’ – his son Reference ‘B’ – his son 17175 (the 6th Mt Willoughby Cock) – his son Reference ‘D’ – his son Reference ‘E’. That’s a straight line of champion producer cocks, all starting with reference ‘A’.

Now look at the female ‘tail-line’ of the Temora winner. Her dam is daughter of the Alice Springs winner of 1990, daughter of Reference ‘A’ (11829), the ace son of Goodger’s Lot 60. Reference ‘A’ appears twice in the pedigree – once in the sire’s line when mated to the ace producing Goodger-line hen 51397, when they produced the champion Reference ‘B’.

Then on the dam’s side, Reference ‘A’ appears as father of the Alice Springs winner of 1990, when mated to the other ace producing hen 39313. We must never underestimate 39313’s role, for she had already bred a Boorooban winner (when mated to another Goodger-line cock) before her mating with 11829 with whom she
bred SAHPA winners from Benalla (690km) and Alice Springs (1320km).
The Temora winner wasn't the only instance where Reference 'A' and his two great female mates had
descendants which met in the stockloft with outstanding results. Note the photograph of the exquisite hen which
won from Emmdale 635 km). Consider her lines:

**Her Sire:** 17175, the 6th Mt Willoughby Cock, son of Reference ‘B’, the son of 11829 (son of Lot 60) and the
famous Goodger-line producer hem 51397.

**Her dam:** The famous Benalla (690km) winner, direct daughter of 11829 (Ref ‘A’) and his other great mate
39313.

So on the sire’s side, 11829 is the great-grandsire. On the dam’s sire 11829 is the sire. Again, it’s a half-aunty/
nephew mating… that’s linebreeding at its absolute best!

**Example 2. The famous ‘Coober Pedy Winner’**

They say that “luck’s a fortune,” and sometimes it truly is. Adelaide fancier Tim Fawcett told me of the time he
visited John Pryor in order to purchase a young pigeon, and John had selected a two year old hen numbered
SA96 14093, which at that time had won two good SAHPA positions. The blue pied hen was placed in his basket
until Tim said to John, “What I really want is a young cock.” So the blue pied hen was returned to the loft, and duly
replaced in the basket by a young cock. The following season saw the repatriated hen record an unforgettable
performance when she was the only bird to reach Adelaide on the day of release from a difficult event from
Coober Pedy, 745 km north of Adelaide.

John was in bed, asleep after a long day of watching for birds, hoping to awaken to an early-morning returnee,
as we all do in such circumstances. It was John’s wife Ruth who looked toward the loft before she turned off the
house lights for the night, and saw the gallant hen’s tail in the traps. It was an incredible performance, and she
offers us something special to study, because her pedigree also represents a joining of the two sides of the 11829
family.

· Reference “A” and his Goodger-line ace producing hen 51397 on the cock’s side, and
Here's how she's bred:

### Sire: BBC SA95 12111

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedigree</th>
<th>BCC SA81 428</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBPH SA98 11829 <strong>Reference “A”</strong> Ace Producing Cock</td>
<td>Lot 53 Allen Goodger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCPE SA81 593</td>
<td>Lot 60 Allen Goodger Ace Producing Hen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dam: BBH SA94 03192

- 6th & 11th Alice Springs (1320km)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedigree</th>
<th>BBPC SA88 22298</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ref “E”</td>
<td>3rd Alice Springs (1320km) 1990, 16th Little Topar 480km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBPH SA91 16453 11th Morundah 700km Ace producing hen</td>
<td>BBC SA86 24469 Reference “B” Ace Producing Cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC SA85 40748</td>
<td>Ref “A” 11829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCPE SA81 51397</td>
<td>BCPH SA85 51397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the Pryor sale on 6th August 2000, the Coober Pedy winner (as she was known) was Lot 2 in the sale, and duly sold for $5,500, and set the tenor for the remainder of the sale.

The pedigree clearly shows three significant 11829-line cocks mated to three incoming hens: 39313 (dam of three SAHPA winners), the hen 22310 (2nd Alice Springs), and 13649, bred by Alvin Richardson for a Sires Produce sale, to be bought and successfully raced by John to win 5th in the SAHPA’s Sires Produce race, a difficult two day event. They were three pretty handy hens, so again it can easily be said that John was breeding with very high class, successful pigeons.

Note the presence of the Morundah winner, and her daughter which classily won 6th & 11th Alice Springs (1320km). At John’s sale the nine-year-old Morundah winner brought $3,500, and her dual Alice Springs placed daughter $4,000. They were special hens!

Mention continues to be made that 11829 was the pivotal bird in the breeding program. However, 11829 wasn’t going to last forever, so to which bird was the baton going to pass after he was gone? Remember that 11829’s prepotent son Reference ‘B’ was fourteen years old at the time of the sale, so it was unlikely to be him. Reference
B’s son 17175, the wonderful 6th Mt Willoughby cock had been sent to Holland years earlier, and had bred birds of high class in his new country, so he wasn’t going to be available.

John told Greg Hamilton that the mantle would fall to his “Morundah winner,” his wonderful race and breeding champion, as the pivotal bird in the future, just as Allen Goodger had used the ‘Elliott Hen’ and the ‘2nd Oodnadatta Hen’ in similar roles. Keith Wickham had done the same thing with his incredible red pied hen ‘449’. There is plenty of evidence that a great hen can be used just as easily as a great cock, even though the textbooks often seem to indicate otherwise.

The new pivotal pigeon: The Morundah winner

If the Morundah winner was to have been John’s new pivotal pigeon, it would seem appropriate to look to see if there was any evidence that this could in fact have occurred had John been able to extend his years with these fabulous birds.

If I needed proof of this dual use of the Morundah winner, then it soon arrived once I’d received from Michael Lucas the pedigree of his incredible 600-mile winner of 2003. Her efforts tell a story which remains incredible, even in its retelling. Released at 6.40am, no birds were home at 8.05pm when night fell. This hen was clocked at 10.31pm, flying 15 hours and fifty-one minutes for her remarkable victory, being the only bird to return on the day of release. Her pedigree confirms the prepotency of the Morundah winner…. in fact having seen both hens, they could have stood alongside each other and easily passed as mother and daughter. Here’s how the Lucas champion was bred:

Pedigree: BBPH VHA-02 -27757, 1st VHA Barringun 600m (1000km) at 1047mpm for Michael Lucas, clocked after 10.31pm to be the only bird to reach home on the day of release.

| Sir: BBC SA00 09925 (G. Hodgson) | GS: SA98 20966 | BBC SA97 02270 | SA95 12132
|                               |               |                  | 4th St Arnaud
|                               |               |                  | = 1st Colesumally
|                               | SA97 02271    | BBPC SA88 22298 | Povy Reference 'D'
|                               | SA94 01874    | Ref 'C' SA91 16453 | 1st Morundah
|                               | SA97 02771    | BBPC SA88 22298 | Povy Reference 'D'
|                               |               | Ref 'C' SA91 16453 | 1st Morundah
| Dam: BCPH SA01 34618 (G. Hodgson) | GS: BCPH SA94 34946 | BCC SA97 18639 | Roy Dangerfield’s cock
|                               | BBH SA85 21774 | 2nd Alice Springs | |
|                               | GB: BBPH SA00 41343 | BBPC SA97 17316 | |
|                               | BPH SA92 16893 | BBPC SA88 22298 | Povy Reference 'D'
| Nestmate to 1st SAHPA Tenera |               | Ref 'C' SA91 16453 | 1st Morundah
|                               | SA91 25388    | BBPH SA92 16893 | Povy Ref 'E'
|                               | SA91 16426 Daughter of SA97 17155, 1st Alice Springs (11829 x 39313) | | |
Five of John Pryor’s Best

Top Left: Reference ‘A,’ 11829, he sired winners from Benalla (690km), and Alice Springs (1320km), and established two separate line-bred lines within the Pryor loft. Top Right: Reference C, the famous ‘Morundah’ winner. She sold at nine years of age for $3,500. Centre Left: The Morundah winner’s son SA-93-31901, sire of John Pryor’s Coleambally (660km) winner. Centre Right: Another son of the Morundah winner, SA-96-48500 BBC He has sired 9th SAHPA SRC Kulgera 1240km & 19th SAHPA Marla 1000km. Bottom Left: The Benalla Winner SA-89-17108 and dam of 1st SAHPA Emmdale (635km).
Above: John raced these two to SAHPA success: to the right the opal coloured hen with which he won Springhurst (725km), and the red chequered cock with which he won Moree (1215km) yet neither bird was bred in his stock loft. John was never a fan of reds and mealies, but insisted upon his birds having ‘silky’ feathering. Below: At the dispersal of the Pryor birds in Sydney; Rudi Diener (left) holds the Coober Pedy winner, Paul Zammit holds her dam, winner of 6th and 11th Alice Springs, and auctioneer Steve Bond holds her dam, the famous Morundah winner: three generations of champion Pryor hens.
Thus the Morundah winner (along with her mate ref ‘D’), becomes a pivotal bird in the pedigree, and if you go back to the breeding of the reference pigeons you’ll see the relationships each of them enjoyed to Reference ‘A’, the Goodger cock at the start of this family. Consequently, the success and succession continued, and continues to this day. The Goodger pigeons took their winning genes to the Pryor loft and installed them within the family built therein, and they have in turn relayed them further. And they’re still available for our use.

I sat alongside VHA champion John Brislin for a while during George Vella’s recent sale, and we noted the amount of money still being paid for good long-distance pigeons. We’d seen a similar story at another sale in the same venue, only two weeks earlier. Why is it that people still seek to buy these mercurial birds that don’t stop when the going gets tough? Perhaps the ultimate comment upon which we should reflect, was provided to me by a fancier with more than fifty years’ experience, in which time he’d formed close friendships with most of the great fanciers throughout Australia. He said to me, “Yeah, they’ll get these great bird, but how many of them really know what to do with them?” Maybe the answer is that many fanciers don’t have the patience, or the knowledge to put together a winning team of long-distance performers. Maybe there are lessons which might be taken from the story of the late John Pryor, to any fancier’s benefit.

Here’s some deductions/suggestions some top fanciers offered:

* Acquire top shelf pigeons which have a proven history of performing at the distances at which you want success. There is no substitute for class!
* Remember John Pryor’s “Golden Rules of Breeding,” and stay close to them, after all, they were based upon research undertaken by an intelligent man who became a great fancier and the word ‘great’ isn’t used lightly. Breed with a determined plan, carefully identifying the qualities and quantities of birds you need. Pigeon racing success seems to come to those who plan best… and actually expect success. Many top fanciers, John included, agonized over the selection of the respective mates in their stock lofts.
* Put your prejudices to one side for a while. Remember that John won the SAHPA’s event from Springhurst (725km) with an opal coloured hen, and from the marathon racepoint Moree (1215km) with a red chequered cock! John Pryor preferred small pigeons, yet so many of the fanciers who purchased the top Goodger birds tried to ‘build them up’ so they looked like their ideal for a pigeon, rather than what the champions from this family actually looked like.
* Note that the prepotent father of John’s Coleambally winner (see photo) had both wings filled with white flights. If you’re going to use a Goodger-based family, you’re going to get pieds somewhere along the way.
* Be patient with them, thoughtfully preparing them for the races which best suit their considerable abilities. There’s little to be gained from flogging them week-in, week-out in a quest to win races for which they’re not suited. The Pryor/Goodger pigeons excelled in races with a considerable degree of difficulty.
* Remember, that John had a lot of his finest successes when his birds entered their second (and even third) seasons of racing. There is a skill to be understood about knowing how to exploit the great merits of a hen (in particular) once she enters her second year of racing.
* John wasn’t afraid to send them again after they’d already taken positions. A feature of this family is their ability to win multi-prizes over several seasons. Such pigeons are rare.
* John had written alongside the traps within his loft “the basket is the ultimate selector.” Pryor pigeons needed qualifications to get into his stock loft!

I recall an Adelaide fancier telling me the story of how the late Fin Fraser had called at Allen Goodger’s residence one day, and after he’d left, Allen was heard to remark, “That fellow’s going to be a great champion one day, because he’s asking all the right questions.” Fin lived in a location considered poor for racing into Adelaide: it rendered it difficult for him to be consistently successful on the Adelaide’s north-line route, from which half the races were flown. Yet Fin was to win the SAHPA’s aggregate, because he’d set out on a quest to become a top
fancier, and furthermore he asked the right questions of the right people, and thus learned what he had to do to become a champion.

John Pryor was known to be free in exchanging information, however people close to him told me that to get to the inner secrets you had to really be able to ask the right questions, and you only learned that by thinking about pigeons with the same intensity that he did. "He would never lie," they told me, but many of those inner truths were only exposed in private conversation with those with whom he was very close, and who eventually learned to ask the right, intelligent questions. One such person told me "John constantly challenged himself to come up with the rationale as to how and why things happened." Sadly, another asked with some circumspection, "Do you think anyone’s going to take any notice of this information, even if we tell ‘em?"

It was a good question, but somewhere out there in readers-land someone will hopefully use this information to refine their techniques of breeding… and then, if John’s eloquent analogy about the mushrooms is correct, predictable things must follow!

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