

A visit at Henk Verhoork in Voorschoten and at Rene van de Wouw in Oss

Unravelling the secrets of the Ancient Tumbler

Tekst en foto's: Aviculture Europe

Introducing ... Henk Verhoork

Henk is 51 years old and he learned the Art of the Pigeon Fancy during his childhood. At the age of twelve he got his own pigeons for the first time, Barbary (Ringneck) doves, from his father. He had to keep them in a cage in the barn, because the whole garden was being used by his father; it was crammed with homing-pigeon lofts and chicken houses. And also rabbit pens; The Rabbits first bred were Flemish Giants, later smaller breeds and finally Dutch rabbits. Only much later he understood that this choice in breeds had to do with the number of mouths to feed; they were a large family.

Right:

Henk Verhoork in October 2001 with a couple of Ancient Tumblers.

The red female (L) died at 3 years old without any obvious reason.

The yellow male (R) is now 8 years old and still in good condition.



Eventually he succeeded in building his very own 'loft' - a long narrow construction called 'The Pipe-Box' fitting it in between the Barn and one of his fathers aviaries - and got himself his first 'real' pigeon breed: The Holle Cropper. Henk became members of the First South Holland Pigeon breeders Club EZHSV and at 16 year he exhibited his first pigeons at the show. Being very limited in space at home, his employer offered him a piece of land to build lofts and keep animals. With this extra space he had room also, apart from the pigeons (at this time Holle Croppers and Ancient Tumblers) to purchase and keep several Toggenburger goats. He had these Goats from 1983 to 1992; 6 years in a row he was champion of South-Holland. However in 1992, this came to an abrupt end, after his pigeons had been stolen for the third time. Angry and discouraged he stopped with the pigeon hobby, but after a while, encouraged by his brothers, he decided to start again. The Holle Croppers where gone and from his few Ancient Tumblers, there was only one left, overlooked by the thieves. Fortunately he was able to buy two pairs of Ancient Tumblers from Hartmund Eckert in Germany and from that moment a strong bond with this breed started, still being his major interest today.

What makes the Ancient Tumbler such an interesting breed, according to Henk Verhoork

Henk describes the character of the Ancient Tumbler as vivacious, confiding, active and very tolerant of each other. He supplies a special Grain mix for short-beak, but still adds a few ingredients, making the mix such that they have a bit less protein during winter season. With the short beaks you have to check regularly to make sure there is no grain stuck in the nostrils, the same holds for the sides of the beak, where sometimes a small feather may get stuck.

Left: Head of a black Ancient male, 4 years old. Cross between a white Ancient (m) and a Koenigsberg Reinaugen (f) that had a wrong (dark) eye colour.



Right and left below: Also a cross between an Ancient and a Koenigsberg Reinaugen tumbler, but it's already for 75% an Ancient. Eye-ceres are a bit too red and the colour of the feathering still needs some work.



Mating usually presents no problems; it can happen that during the time that the sexes are housed separated, strong bonds may develop between two cocks

or two hens. In this case it will be necessary to pen a newly formed pair (cock and hen) together for a while, so a new 'Pair Bond' may be formed.



Henk doesn't start breeding before April, using Tipplers as foster parents. The only drawback with this Breed is that they are rather shy. That's why he also has some Felegyhazer Tumblers, Dutch High Flyers and a few Dutch Helmet. These come from Theo Ruigrok, a fancier who is trying to get these old Dutch breeds back to 'fly' again.

Right: A foster pigeon with a perceptible amount of Dutch Helmet blood. There is a secure selection on foster pigeons; they are extremely important in the breeding of short beak Tumblers.



They all have 'a certain dose' of Birmingham

Roller blood, which shows especially when flying, so Henk really enjoys flying the foster pigeons. Especially when the skies are clear blue, his Amsterdam Tipplers fly unimaginable high. There is always the risk of sudden upcoming clouds though; that happened to him last year, when not a single bird returned.



Left above: Flying Tipplers, a joy to see them fly.

Right: The Flying Tipplers used as foster pigeons have freedom to fly, in and out the loft, all day long.

A certain flexibility is very important in foster pigeons. Of course it would be perfect if both the Ancient Tumbler and the foster pair would behave fully synchronised, and every pair laid their Eggs on the





same days! However this rarely happens! For this reason, Henk selects for foster pigeons that will sit more than the regular 18 days, and he has Pairs that will often sit two or three days longer.

**Left:
Young Ancient male of one year old.**

Fertilisation differs from year to year; last year was rather bad with relatively few fertile eggs, although other breeders in the Netherlands had the same problem that year, so he hopefully waits for an improvement this year. To successfully breed Short Beaks like Ancient Tumbler, you have to use

foster pigeons, so the eggs are moved to the foster pigeon's nests and the Ancient Tumblers get stone or plastic eggs to let them have an almost natural breeding period. In the last breeding round the Ancient Tumblers get the eggs of the foster parents to incubate, and sometimes they succeed in raising one young.

Right: Ancient Tumbler in black, old hen.



From experience Henk learned that the best Ancient Tumbler young, with the broadest heads and the shortest beaks, hatch difficult. After all this years of breeding the Ancient Tumbler, he is still alert and curious, and often quickly listens at the 17th day if the young is already ticking at the egg shell. Of course he will keep a close eye on the feeding by the foster pigeons. Also after weaning, he has to feed the youngsters some extra. The youngsters are ringed at 6 or 7 days old with 8 mm leg rings, always checking next morning if the rings are still there. At foot feathered pigeons it is important that the ringing is done in time; too late will result in

damaging the foot feathers. Of all youngsters he raised last year, only one could be selected to take part in the breeding strain of his Ancient Tumblers.

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Left: A Red tigered (right) and an almost Red whiteshield (left) Ancient Tumbler.



Because the number of fanciers that keep this breed is world-wide very restricted, I asked Henk if his pigeons sometimes show signs of inbreeding. He agreed they did, not as in the bad fertilisation last year, but sometimes he noticed that certain young – often those with the best head form – had a

**Left and below:
Black tigered
Ancient Tumbler.**

very small body in proportion and they also did not get very old. To prevent inbreeding, he used to swap birds with several German Ancient Tumbler top breeders, like Gunter Dhalen and Hans Schubert, but lately he prefers crossing with related breeds like the Königsberg Reinaug.



For the pigeons health he preventively vaccinates against *Paramixo* and also uses Ivomex, a remedy that is used as a Medication on cows and pigs against external parasites, but is also successfully used in the pigeon fancy. Twice a year, just two drops in the beak, and except from parasites your birds are also no longer bothered with *Trichomoniasis* and not even with intestinal worms. At Henk's the pigeons also get the opportunity to fly free, showing they are still very good flyers, which even practise some tumbling. However, the neck shaking, another breed characteristic of the Ancient Tumbler, which should be judged when the bird is performing, leaves much to desire. The pigeon does pose and stands on its toes, but the neck shaking is hardly performed. According to Henk this is due to too thick and too short necks, which are not fit for shaking. Moreover this gets too little attention lately when judged at the Shows, thus allowing this characteristic to recede into the background. To Henk there is too little real practice knowledge in an ever decreasing group of judges, who are able to optimally judge and attend the breed.



One of the breed characteristics of the Ancient Tumbler is the eye colour, which has to be pearl (except the white Ancient Tumbler, who has a bull-eye), although this should not be judged too severe. Henk thinks that the sunlight plays a part in this, and when aging the eye colour often gets better. The under wattle is another breed characteristic, appearing from the time that the birds are two years of age, at both cocks and hens. The typical 'cheeks' add to the grace of the breed, especially in the hens. Henk says that the cheeks really complete the picture of the breed.

Most seen faults in his Ancient Tumbler are: a too narrow head, eye setting not parallel, thin beak, especially the under mandible getting weak and sometimes even a cross beak.

Left: The crossing between Ancients and Koenigsberg Reinaugen Tumblers has almost become a necessity, if you want to prevent interbreeding. But it seems to be successful.

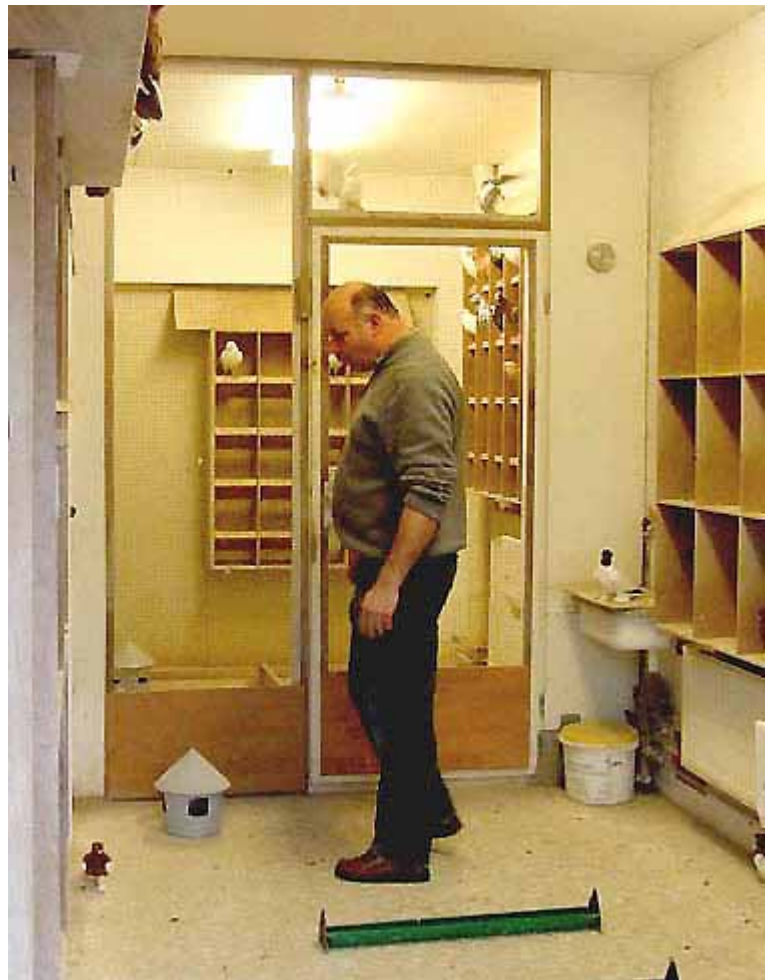


Introducing Rene van de Wouw

Rene van de Wouw is 53 years old and lives in the Village of Oss and as with Henk Verhoork, he learned the Art of the Pigeon Fancy during his childhood. In those days his whole family kept pigeons and he had his first Breed, Old Dutch Owls at the age of four, that flew from a dove cote on a pole in the garden and he remembers that they were very much admired by his school-mistress.

Right: Rene in his pigeon loft, with the Foster pigeons in the back compartments and his Ancients and Koenigsberg Colour heads in the front.

His first 'serious' pigeons were English Modena in black tiger and black mottle, purchased from Mr. Sebregts in Wouw. They brought him many years of pleasure, until he had to stop the Fancy due to study and career. But as it often goes, once you have kept pigeons, the desire to keep them again is always there. So some 10 years ago Rene took up the thread of his Hobby and started enthusiastically with breeding Short Beaks, beginning with some English Longfaced Tumblers that he purchased from Bertus van de Vegt. With this breed he gained his first 'Excellent' ranking at the Avicultura Show in The Hague.



Longfaced Tumblers that he purchased from Bertus van de Vegt. With this breed he gained his first 'Excellent' ranking at the Avicultura Show in The Hague.



Left: Koenigsberg Colour head Tumblers, ready for the breeding season, with clipped foot feathers. The flesh coloured beaks of these black marked pigeons are remarkable.

lands). He doesn't aspire to any function in the Fancy as chairman or judge, but he is coach junior coordinator and trainer at a local football club, in which he can put all his energy and free time. He still can find the time to enter his birds at the shows of his clubs and of course he enters some of his best pigeons at the National Show of the Fancy Pigeon Union, usually housed at the Avicorni Show. This years' Show was very much to his liking, partly because of the large number of entered pigeons, but also the ambiance between the many pigeon fanciers was great.

At the moment he is a member of the Local Club in Oss, the Pigeon Club Bois le Duc in 's Hertogenbosch and the Fancy Pigeon Association 'Het Zuiden' in Eindhoven. And of course the Specialty Club BKTC (the 'Foreign Short Faced Tumbler Club' in the Nether-

Right: The enlarged log-cabin, waiting for the first young pigeons.





Above: A collection of magpie Ancients in the aviary.

To Rene, this breed has more than a 'head', as is often asserted by some fanatic Short beak fanciers, who say: "All is well as long as it has a proper head". To Rene it is the whole pigeon that counts; a bird that is happy to show itself and pose. Still even he has to admit that the bird's main characteristic is the head.

Right: A Black whiteflight Ancient Tumbler cock, with a broad beak and well developed wattles, especially the characteristic under wattle (*Altstämmerwratze*).

The birds are fed a Garvo 857 short beak mix, which is very satisfactory. He praises



the services of this Firm; several times he inquired after a certain problem and was quickly answered with expert advice. Even when he asked their opinion on mixing the Garvo 857 with a mix of another Brand, in order to become a richer mix, the Garvo team was willing to sort that out for him. They reported that the 'new' mix would be too rich in nutritional value. For the same reason he was advised against additional feeding of Garvo pellets to his Short beaks.

Left: The best Ancient Tumbler in the loft of Rene.

There never is a problem when mating the pairs, no aggressiveness what so ever. They smoothly start nesting and in 10 days there are 2 eggs in the nest bowl.



The eggs are swapped with the foster parents eggs and the Ancient Tumblers can finish their breeding cycles with two plastic eggs.

Right: This bird is an Ancient Tumbler x English Short Face Tumbler cross, with the typical 'white feather mark' of the Ancient showing at the breast.



For Rene, the fertilisation of the Ancient Tumbler was rather poor last year, only 50%. While he had already 16 youngsters from his 9 couples of Koenigsberg Colour head in the first breeding round! Here the hatching of the eggs is not a problem, simply because in his point of view: a young that cannot hatch by itself, doesn't hatch. A bird like that isn't strong or healthy enough to live; for him 'Health' in the Breed goes without saying. The same holds for feeding; they have to be fed in a natural way by their foster parents. His most ideal foster pigeons are the Domestic Flights that he purchased some years ago from Willem van Zijl.

Left: Foster pigeons are important when breeding short beak tumblers. These Domestic Flights pigeons were recommended and made present by Willem van Zijl, a friendly colleague fancier. Photo: Rene van de Wouw.



Even the extra feeding by hand, that he used to do every evening with all his Short beak youngsters, is no longer necessary. He always checks though, just to make sure, and every now and then there is a youngster that needs a bit extra, but ever since the Domestic Flights are in the loft as foster pigeons, it is no longer needed to do this. It is a Fact, that when breeding short beaks, good fosters are of the same importance as the quality of the Short beaks. Possibly the Foster pigeons are the most valuable asset of the Fancier, and selecting the Fosters should be done with the same care as the Short beak Breeding stock. Rene advises to breed only from the best feeding birds; you are on the right road when the foster males feed everything that 'Begg for Food'!

Right: The First Young Ancient Tumblers are already in the nest bowl. Photo: Rene van de Wouw.

The ringing of the young Ancient Tumbler is done at day 7 with of course an extra check the next day. In fact you could select for 'show-quality' at this stage, as the colour and marking are already beginning to show and there is also





already a lot you can tell about the width of the head and the size and form of the beak. After the final selection only a few will stay.

Left:
This dun coloured Magpie Hamburg tumbler female is crossed with Ancient Tumbler for 'fresh blood'.

In this breed you have to be critical and only one out of ten will be good enough to be included in the breeding Loft. Still every young of a certain quality is welcome to be raised at Rene's, as there is always enough demand for the birds from Arabic countries. And also German fanciers with more spacious lofts always can use another bird.

In the meantime Rene is always looking for 'fresh blood' to maintain the healthy quality of the breed. He crosses with related breeds and at the moment he is doing an experimental crossing with a Magpie Hamburg tumbler. To purchase pure Ancient Tumblers he often has to travel over 1000 km, to Germany. In the Netherlands the real specialist – called the 'Guru' in Short beaks – is Rob Mast. Rene often contacts him by telephone to share the Short beak experiences. Fortunately there are no signs of inbreeding problems, as he keeps two separate breeding strains; the birds in the one strain come from the deceased brothers Huber and the other strain origins from the birds of Gunther Dahlem and Rosentahl. He also has a special bond with the German fancier Willy Michel, a well-known fancier of all sorts of short beak tumbler breeds, on average housing some 700 birds. The problem with Willy is that he just cannot part with his birds, but on mutual visits several birds always pass over the Borders.

When I asked if the breed is susceptible for certain illnesses and what he usually does for prevention, Rene told me that in his experience the breed is susceptible for paratyphoid; once he had birds with knobs on the wings. You may never know where this comes from; maybe there is a bird in the loft that carries this disease and it will cause an outbreak when the loft is crowded and the infection burden increases. So he takes no risks and gives his birds a cure once a year. Apart from that they are vaccinated against paramixo and at the start of the breeding season they are treated against trichomoniasis. He uses Ivomec to prevent or control parasites.

Right:
A splendid red magpie hen, imperturbable as ever on her nest bowl, even when the bowl was taken out of the cage for taking this picture.

Back to the selecting: to Rene the whole bird counts, and not just the head and beak. He pays attention to other characteristics like the neck-shaking, which can be hindered by a shorter or thick neck. To Rene this is



an important feature, but he thinks it is not given enough attention in judging. Still on average he is very satisfied with the judging, although he thinks the younger judges should more often have a chance to judge. Another point of interest is the wing carriage that is often too low, in combination with a high tail-cushion. This has his attention when selecting, the same as the eye colour. A bit of red veining is tolerated, but he aims for a true pearl eye. The typical under beak wattle starts to develop when the males are one year old, and when fully developed this is a true ornament and highly valued by the Ancient Tumbler fanciers. These fanciers use several peculiar traditional expressions relating to the setting of the short, broad beak. The eyes are rather forward in the head and the fairly broad eye-ceres should not touch the corner of the mouth. The 'Chubby' cheeks are another breed characteristic, although these are also found at several Owl breeds. Especially with the Ancient Tumbler hens, they underline the elegance of the breed. Most seen faults in Rene's pigeons are a thin beak and/or too narrow head, also lacking somewhat in type.



Left:
Close-up of the head of a black Ancient Tumbler at Henk Verhoorck's.

History

The Ancient tumbler is mentioned several times in history. The first mention, in writing, dated 1743, is by the German biologist J.L. Frisch and in 1856 an article from Dr. David Korth concerning the Ancient tumbler was published in a German pigeon journal. Afterwards in 1857 we read someone offered red - and yellow pied 'neck shaking' Ancient tumblers for sale. Around the year 1880 the breed was very popular in Berlin and surrounding Districts. In those days the local Berlin Pigeon club 'Cypria' has held an inquiry among its members to find out the history of the breed, but no information from the years before 1810 was found out by these inquiries.

The writer Spruijt (1935) states that you

don't need to be a specialist to imagine the many breeding problems that can arise when breeding such a special breed and the effort and especially the time it will have cost to bring this breed up to 'Quality' level. This is why Spruijt concluded that the Ancient tumbler at the time was at least 1000 years old. He assumed that this breed came from Central Asia, from countries such as Iran (Persia), Kazakhstan and India, where so many other old pigeon breeds found their origin and were transported to the Western European countries by means of commercial routes with merchants.

Right:
Black Ancient male at Henk Verhoorck's.

From the next story we learn that pigeons were valuable merchandise: One writing describing a sale of some Ancient tumblers, allocated for a trader from Poland, that were exchanged for a horse.

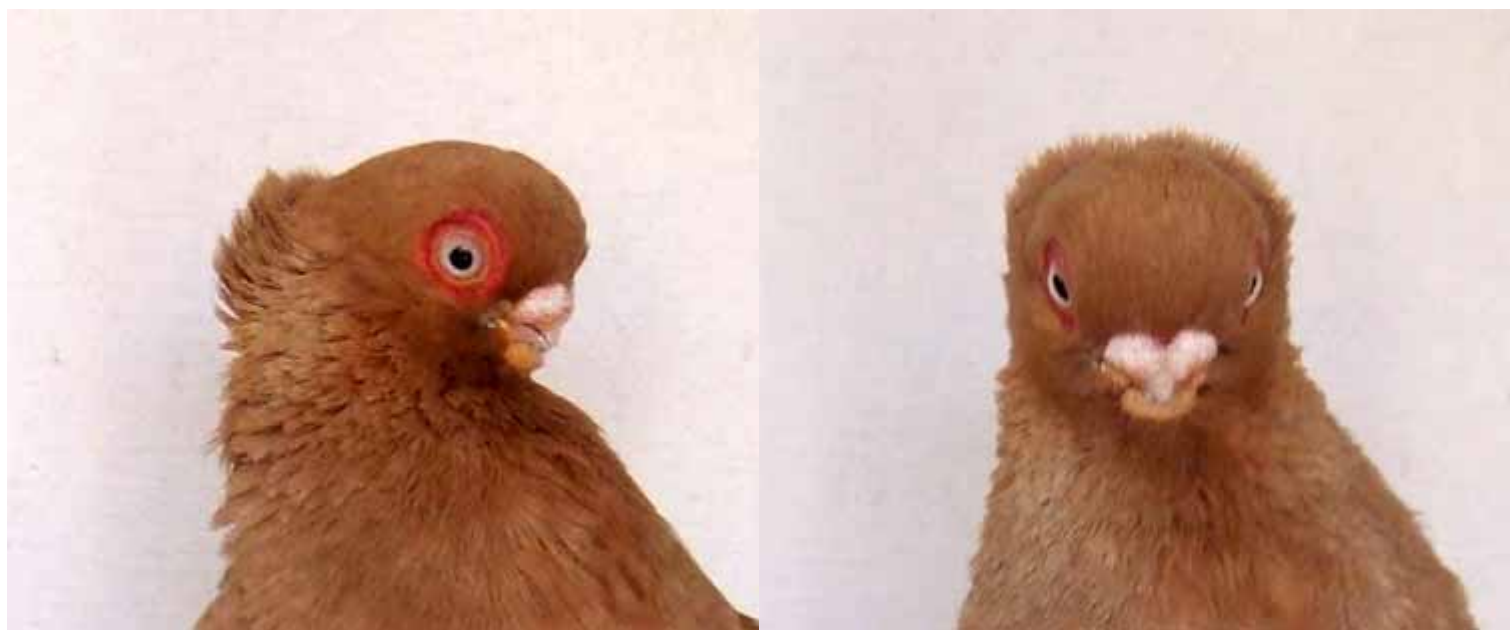
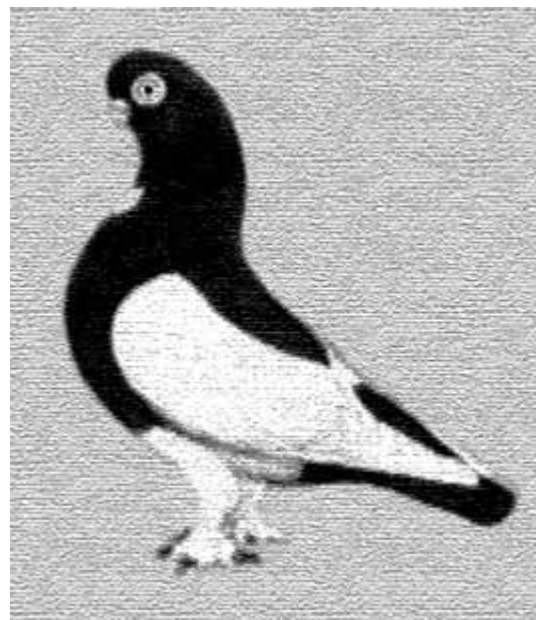


Concerning the last 200 years, everyone agrees that this breed, the Ancient tumbler, has been bred and supported in Germany and specifically in and around Berlin. The breed has had its ups and downs during the years.

Right: An old drawing dated early last century, picturing a black magpie plain headed Ancient Tumbler.

In the beginning the Ancient tumbler was mainly considered as a flying breed and served for improvement of several other flying breeds; it was then supposedly the name Ancient tumbler arose, because one asked for pigeons of the Old (real and pure) Breed (Old Tribe = *Alt Stamm in German*). When crossed with other breeds, the Ancient tumbler immediately loses its characteristic qualities i.e. its type. Still by inbreeding and strict selection the 'old type' this could be relatively quickly regained. According to Spruijt, regarding these Pre-dominant Traits, that can be relatively quickly re-gained, the Ancient tumbler also proves its ancient Heritage.

In 1906, in Germany a Specialty Club was founded for the Ancient Tumbler, the Reinaugen Tumbler and the White head and Coloured head Tumbler. Around the twenties this Club had a record membership of 820 breeders. This Specialty Club still exists; President is Harald Lindner Salzgitter-Barum Germany.



Above: Side view and front view of a yellow Ancient Tumbler male. The only remark is the eye-cere being a bit too reddish, still at the Yellows the eye-cere is always a problem. Owner: Henk Verhoork.

Related Breeds

To get an idea of which breeds the Ancient tumbler unmistakable had its influence, I give you the list of the following Tumbler breeds: Short faced Berliner, the Koenigsberg Reinaugen and the Koenigsberg Coloured head, the Elbing White head, the Stettin, the Hamburg breeds and the Austrian/Hungarian group, such as the Vienna Short faced, the Budapest Short faced Tumbler and the Prague Short faced Tumbler. Next a number of less well-known breeds such as the Polish Crest tumbler, the Posen Coloured head, the Erlau Tumbler and the Breslau Tumbler. These are all Short Faced Tumbler breeds which at a certain time were crossed with the Ancient tumbler, but also a lot of Mid faced and Long faced Tumbler breeds carry the Ancient Tumbler blood.

General description of the Ancient Tumbler (Altstämmer) *

(For the official 'standard' information, please consult your Union)

General appearance

Small and short, with an erect carriage and low in stand. Breast broad and carried forward. The ideal proportion in the body is of the same length as height and in action the total width is half of the height. Neck is shaking when in action. Round head with an almost short and broad beak.



Left: A Black magpie plain headed Ancient Tumbler, which is very rare.

Owner: Rene van de Wouw.

Head

Round and broad with wide and full cheeks and a broad and high forehead. Highest point just above the eye. Round crested (almost shell-crest) and plain headed. The shell crest is high placed and flat, with at both ends a rosette, on which however no high demands are made.

Eye

The eye is situated slightly forward of centre of the head. The eye is large and pearl colour; some red is tolerated. The whites are dark-eyed. The eye-cere is pale to reddish coloured, fairly broad in proportion to the head, but flat and with fine structure, and

almost reaches the corners of the mouth.

Beak

The beak is almost short, stumpy and tick at the base. Both mandibles are of equally form, the beak line passes just below the eye. Colour is light flesh coloured, with the blacks and blues a darker tip is allowed. Older birds develop an under wattle; this should be symmetric and is considered a typical breed characteristic.

Neck

Strong and reasonable well developed, curving to the rear, desired with neck "tremor" (shaking) when excited or stimulated. For a good action, the neck must not be too short neither too thick. A good clean throat enhances the impact of the cheeks.

Breast

Broad, well rounded and carried forward. A small vertical breast slit is considered a breed characteristic.

Back

The back is short, broad, and often slightly hollow. The back line passes fluently to the tail via a somewhat rounded upper tail-bone.

Wings

Wings are broad, tight to the body and carried as much as possible on the tail.

Tail

The tail is short, and well closed.

Legs

Short with short feathers covering the toes (normally the nails would be seen). Hocks are not allowed. The toes must stay flat on the ground during action.

Feathering

Wanted short, but well developed.

Action

An Ancient tumbler needs attention to start his action. There is no need to forge him to do so. The pigeon should easily pose itself and feel comfortable. If you gently approach the bird's beak with a judging stick, the neck will start 'trembling' (shaking).

Colour and markings

The original colours are black, dun red, yellow and white. Later blue black barred, blue checker and blue barless were admitted. In marking there are selfs, whiteflighted, magpie and tigered in the above mentioned colours.

Faults

Too large or too long body; too high on the legs; narrow forehead; flattened skull; too red eye colour; beak too pointed and/or too long; too long feathering; leg feathering too sparse or too long; wing carried below the tail; hocks; crest faults; and missing action.

Order of importance of the breed characteristics

1) Type and body. 2) Head and beak. 3) Colour and marking.

Ring size: 8 mm.



Left:

A Red whiteflighted Ancient Tumbler male, with a very good broad beak, with a lot of substance, equally for the upper as for the lower mandible.

Sources:

'De Tuimelaarrassen', author C.A.M. Spruijt 1935

'Onze Kortsnavelige Tuimelaars', published by BKTC , 1989, ISBN 90-800485-1-8

'Alles über Rassetauben BAND 6' Tümmelertauben by Erich Müller (Hrsg.) 2002, ISBN 3-88627-606-6

This breed, The Ancient Tumbler, is one of the breeds in the 'Foreign Short Faced Tumbler Club' in the Netherlands.

For more information about this breed, please contact:

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The Netherlands

<http://bktc.sierduif.nl>



In Germany this breed is supported by the specialty Club for the Ancient, Reinaug, and White head tumbler:

SV. der Züchter der Altstämmer, Reinaugen und Weißköpfe

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