

# AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

By Mark Rudd (UK), photos Lisa Weekes (Australia)



Above: View of Sydney Harbour Bridge, Opera House



Left: Elaine, Mark Rudd and Steve Cummins

I would like to start by thanking everyone involved with [the Pigeon Fanciers Society of NSW](#), who made my first ever trip to Australia as enjoyable as anyone could ever imagine. My girlfriend Elaine and I found Sydney and Australia an awesome place with very impressive surroundings with plenty of things to see and do. We stayed on the "Rocks" between the Harbour Bridge and the Opera house, what a setting!!

After spending 3 days in Sydney, it was time to set off on our journey to Wyong to meet John Hanson, who would be taking us to the NSW Young Bird Show the following weekend.

Our Journey was by train and took us through densely populated woodland and took in some picturesque places along the Hawkesbury River, which was a very enjoyable experience in itself. John Hanson saw to it that we were well taken care of, and the hospitality we received was second to none.



**Above: The Hawkesbury River on the way to John Hanson's.**

**Right: John Hanson – Blenhaven Stud show bus – this bus is used to transport birds to and from pigeon shows.**





**Left and below: Some of John Hanson's Pigeon Lofts.**

After spending a day handling and looking through possibly one of the biggest collections of quality racing pigeons, it was time to make our way to the show hall.

We set off on the Friday night down to the Pigeon and Poultry Exhibition Centre at the Fairfield City Showground.



On arriving at the exhibition centre I found a purpose made hall, which had 2000 permanent pigeon/poultry pens. The show hall was very well laid out with excellent lighting and many pictures of past winners adorning the walls. There were also storage cupboards where the club fanciers could purchase pigeon products at discounted prices, due to the forward thinking of NSW Committee. This was a credit to everyone involved and made me very envious of this amazing set up!

While not trying to get in the way of the fanciers penning the birds we were warmly welcomed by the hard working committee, and soon had a lovely cup of coffee made by Barry Shepherd, who manned his post for the entire weekend.

We got introduced to the show secretary Steve Cummings, who had everything under control, ably assisted by Catherine and Lisa Weekes and their dad, Club president Robert Weekes.

There were a number of fanciers busily penning their exhibits, which all came and thanked me for coming to judge at their show, and pigeon talk was the order of the day!

While standing in the company of these fellow fanciers I noticed passing the door of the show hall, what looked like a racing pigeon transporter. On making enquiries I found that this belonged to the strong Cumberland Federation, I found this quite ironic being from Cumbria, UK myself (formally known as Cumberland)! We left the show hall for our nearby hotel for the night, again pigeon talk was the main topic (heaven)!

Early rise in the morning and back to the show hall to do the job in hand – Judge. Started judging just after 9am and the first breed was the 130 or so British Show Racers. My steward Freddy Frendo ably assisted me. All the exhibits were free from lice and dirt, as you would expect from flying breeds.

My biggest concern for this 'New Breed' in Australia was the lack of classes; some decent birds were going to go home cardless! From the birds entered I picked a young mealy cock out, the best of breed, and a young blue bar hen was reserve. I later found out that these birds belonged to the same exhibitor who was my steward, but never once tried to influence my decision.



**Left: Next were the Australian show pen homers, and also a new steward Mr. Elvis Stefanoski, being a homer breeder - I was in my element. After my initial walk down of the pens I noticed an outstanding chequer cock and a red cock.**

After much deliberation I picked the chequer; his only real fault was how he held his tail. Another bird to note was a young pied hen. All these birds belonged to Barry Shoobridge. Later on after completing the judging, Barry made himself known and I gave him my run down on my awards. All the birds in this section were in great

condition.

Next it was on to the short face section; frills, turbits and African owls. Sadly there were no Turbits entered and only two Africans. The frills contained the largest entry, my best of breed/section was a red Blondinette cock. More attention could have been paid to keeping the beaks of the frills and Africans trimmed.

**Right: Satinette**





**Left: A red Blondinette cock.**



**Right: English Dragoon blue Grizzle.**



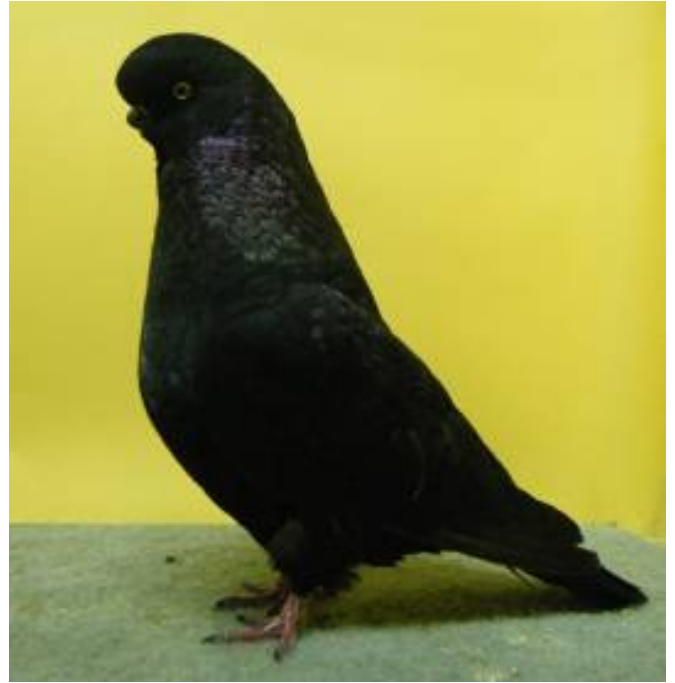
English Dragons were next, but only two exhibits present, these were of a fair quality.

Up next to judge was one of the biggest single breeds, Helmets. After judging my first class I was told that this breed was judged in a walking pen, unlike back home. All the Helmets present in my view were much of a likeness and made some of the placings very hard. Again these birds were shown in first class condition and a credit to their owners! Best in section, went to young fancier Josh Hall, with a medium faced crested young cock, very well done!

At this stage of the show I was asked if I was willing to judge the Fantails, this was a pleasure within itself, having stewarded as a young boy for some of the Fantail greats back in England, E. Swan, M. Adair, E. McKerlie and John Bragg to name a few. Also attending the UK Fantail club show with guest judge Bob Vincent (USA) this stood me in good stead. With over forty Fantails in most colours and laces again in various colours.

My steward on this occasion was the exhibitor of all the Fantails, Mr. Steve Pithers, it was good to know that some of these birds I was judging were descendants of Bob Vincent stock. These birds possessed good tails with plenty of top tail and good line of wings. My best of breed was a black saddle followed by a white.

While judging I noticed some useful Long faced tumblers and Muffs. I was later introduced to their owner Mr. J. Reid, a very keen fancier, who was interested in what I thought of his young birds.



Another breed that I judged was the "English Magpie", there was a good entry, with most of the birds being well marked, my only concern was that most of them, had very little "Reach" in the pen. Best belonged to club vice president, Des Saunders.

Next on my list was French Mondain "American Type", again all the birds in this section were well turned out, and I picked a young white cock, for best in section.

My last section to judge was the blowers. My steward for the blower section was Mr. Gus Gordon, who also is the Chief steward/security for the P.F.S of N.S.W.

We soon had our ring numbers noted and our walking pen full of Pigmy's. My best Pigmy was a young black hen.

Next up was the "Brunner's", this was the biggest section in the blowers with quite good competition, and some nice colours. Judging for best Brunner was quite difficult, with very good quality birds on show, my best was a hen, who "wanted" to show all day unlike some of the others present in the walking pen. At this stage all the birds were returned to their own pens for a well-deserved rest.

Being a novice "Blower" judge, I noticed some of the younger exhibits, and especially the cocks did not want to perform. When judging blowers again I will not leave them to the end, so giving them more time to "perform" and "work". Also, a big thank you to my "mentors" back home, Nick Dawyd and Graham Bates for a crash course in Brunner's and Pigmy's.

With all the sections judged, it was time to head off to our nearby hotel, for a great meal and also more pigeon "talk".

Again, another early start, has we headed off to the Exhibition centre at Fairfield City Show-ground. At 9.00am I started to judge Best in Show. With me the only judge I decided to judge "like breeds against each other"; Structure against structure, Form against form, and so on. While judging the twenty or so best in show contenders, I found some birds carrying lice; this seemed to be more apparent in some of the flying breeds.

After much deliberation, I ended up with my best of each section, and then gradually "Knocked" them out, until I had four breeds remaining.

These consisted of a saddle Fantail, white King, chequer Australian show pen Homer and white Brunner.

On my final judging I placed the Fantail - fourth, S.J. Pithers, good pigeon, needs time to finish off. Show pen homer- third, B. Shoobridge, again good pigeon, but his tail would not sit right. King – second. P. Bachner, shown in good condition. And Best in Show - Brunner, Blenhaven Stud, great condition, showed to me all the time in the walking pen, deserved winner.

Up next in my opinion, was the "Hard Bit", giving a speech in front of the members, I'm not very noted for public speaking, but was made easier due being among friendly people. On doing the prize presentation, it was good to see the awards being well shared out!

I would also like to thank Max Healy, and Vaughan Kelly for showing me the finer points of their beloved Australian Saddleback Tumblers and Australian Performing Tumblers; a credit to you both.





Overall I was very impressed with the quality of birds on show. The venue was first rate, with a great atmosphere.

Also the efforts of all the dedicated committee, to make this a successful event in the Australian show calendar. Also a big thanks you to J. Hanson, for donating many awards and trophies etc. Again, I would like to thank everyone who made our trip so pleasurable, and if anyone is ever in Cumbria, do look us up so we can try and return some of your hospitality!

**TO SUM UP MY AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE IN A SENTENCE.... EXCELLENT VENUE, FANTASTIC PEOPLE , WONDERFUL HOBBY!!**



**Left: Res. Champion King – Phil Bachner**

**Right: Best in Show, Brunner - Blenhaven Stud.**