

THE MOOKEE

By: Mick Bassett (Germany)

What can I say about the Mookie that has not already been said? Probably very little but maybe I can put the breed in a different perspective, from both the British and the European points of view.

Undoubtedly of Indian origin, as the Lahore (OK, we all know it came in first instance from Persia), Fantail, (all types) Parlour Roller, Tippler etc. This was the time of the East English India Trading company, which was granted a Royal Charter in 1600. It ruled large parts of India (and what is now Pakistan) with its own Military and Administration until 1858, when the British Crown took control - 'the British Raj'. Traditionally Pigeon Breeds have always traveled along trade routes, so first the British history. We know the Mookie was mentioned as early as 1676 by Willoughby, that is well documented. Another shipment arrived in Dundee 1870. (Port taxes were lower in Scotland, many ships unloaded at Scottish Ports to avoid paying the high Port Duty at English Ports).

**Right: A black and a lavender Mookie in the garden.
Note the "break" in the mane at the lavender, being a fault.**



Left: Young Mookie.

Note: Surprising to see a fancy pigeon sitting on a branch, holding on to something round. (editor.)

Right: A young lavender Mookee.

As a side, that is how the Horseman Cropper came about; Croppers from Spain and Holland landing in Scotland and obviously a few stayed and were bred to the local Homer Breeds, all this 'Ware' was transported by Waggoners, 'Horseman', as far as London. At the same time there was also a constant trade in Harz Mountain Roller Canaries from Germany, the forerunners of the Belgium Hare and the Netherland Dwarf (Rabbit Breeds developed in Britain), plus various Continental Poultry breeds.

The 'Contact' with mainland Europe was probably more constant than today!

OK, I digress (I do that a lot). Back to the Mookee. Another well documented collection entered the UK direct from India to the Cholmeley Estate (pronounced "Chumley"). Apart from this stud and whatever remnants may have remained scattered around the UK, the breed appeared to almost disappear in the UK until the 1960's when birds were imported from South Africa and the USA. Mookee from these sources provided the groundstock for present day birds, recently with an influx of German bred Mookee. (I have taken birds back myself from Germany from a top breeder here circa 1996) so I doubt there are any (unfortunately) pure bred 'British' Birds left in the UK. So much for the History.



In the UK smaller typey birds with good crest and mane have always been preferred, although Harry Wheeler in his Book 'Exhibition and Flying Pigeons' has them down as medium size, something that few if any British breeders would agree with. Most German Fanciers have simply laughed at me when I stated that 'Spot' marked (colour snip on the white forehead) was allowed (I have bred some in the past but only from English stock) and also Self colour birds could all be exhibited. (In India to this day White Flights are not wanted.)

Below: From L to R; 3 Magpies, 2 Mookees, 3 English Show Tippler, one very young Mookee, a bit overmarked in cap (under the eye) but no white under the beak and the under beak already black pigmented. If you do not occasionally use birds like this, the cap gets too short. (It is 3x3 flighted, so far no white under the beak.) This could be a perfect mate for a 0x0 and produce lots of well marked AND good type young. (Type comes first, then markings and peak crest, then colour.) All of my Mookees are small in size, the Magpies are also small and the English Show Tipplers, although bulkier, all take a size 7 ring(band).



Another 'aside' - When the EE requested the Countries of Origin and/or Development for Exhibition, to register their Breeds, the UK Clubs responsible for the Mookee, Lahore and



Chinese Owl, it appears had so much in-fighting/politics, these traditionally 'English' Show Breeds were taken by the German Fancy, what a loss!

Except that Germany at least got rid of the stupid/illogical 2x2 white flights as 'perfect' (bad for breeding and stock selection) and also allowed some beak cere pigment in young Lahores (it generally disappears with maturity anyway and ensures a minimisation of the ugly white foreheads that crop up in the best bred stock occasionally, the extra pigment brings the colour to the beak cere and as a plus, gives good 'claret'(wine red) eye ceres.

Above: A Mooker lavender, 6 years old and showing his age a bit.

From my own observations and talking to well respected International Judge and Mooker expert Dennis Ison (who has know the Birds from the Cholmeley Stud very well) the UK Birds until recently tended to be smaller and more 'pert' than the German birds. Also generally excelling in peak crest and mane, but often with less than good colour and due to the fixation on the '2x2' flights, the caps being often too short. Also in the UK any 'break' in the mane is generally far more heavily penalised than here in Germany, where the bird as a whole, the complete 'Balance' is more important than any one point.

Right: Mooker, black.

This young bird is still moulting but developing a nicely pigmented underbeak. This should be no problem with blacks and blues; paler colour logically not expected to have a black under beak, although it may be slightly pigmented.



Left: Mooker, black. This young Mooker has a crooked Cap (the other side) and Ox1 flights, but with the good type (which must be the first priority), fine for crossing to Self White and worth trying to an overflighted Black. Under flighted or Ox0 invariably have black underbeaks and no white under the beak, so valuable simply for that reason (if good Type!).

Now this young bird, on this page, was a show-off (Poser!) and the Sun was catching it right, so I took several pictures.



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So, going on to the Birds in Germany, the major point that I am very aware of is that the UK part in the Mookiee history is barely mentioned by fanciers/writers here at all; if it is generally not known or being ignored, I have yet to find out! Mention is made of the Netherlands and South Africa (obviously connected by trade) and later the USA as import sources.

Some opinions from the UK have considered the German birds overlarge, but from my experience here, not, at least not the best ones, although the Colour is not the highest priority. The German birds do excel in this respect, as stated, 'overall balance' is the priority, so an excellent bird with a minor failing can be well graded and off-course 1x1 - 1x2 -

2x2 - 2x3 - 3x3 white flights are all the same 'worth' allowing the breeder to concentrate on the overall breed points and giving far more selection for breeding. Far more good TYPE birds to grade well at shows = more popularity for the breed, Logic.

The German Club was grounded 1975 and has usually around 60 members, at the National Club Show between 200 and 280 birds are often entered in the 15 recognised colours, obviously 'Spot marked', Coloured self (except Self White) and 0x0 flights excluded.

**Right: Mookee, ash red barred (mealy).
This photo was taken on a German exhibition in November 2008.**



With this Breed, complimentary pairings are a must. In any stud 0x0 should not fail, this in effect, helps control the amount of white markings. I personally, unless I know the parentage, would not pair two 2x2 together. With Mookee and flights, less is more; the 0x0 allows otherwise excellent type overflight birds to be used with advantage and certainly 2x2, 2x3, 3x3 are better paired to 0x0. The essential with the 0x0 is first excellent type, the 'Cap' should go to the base of the Crest although a shorter Cap can be paired to an otherwise good, typey bird with a little too much cap, or a few small white feathers under the beak. I have never in many years seen a 0x0 with less than a black or at least dark under beak in Blacks and Blues. You would not expect 'Pastel' or pale colours to have a dark pigmented under beak; this is not so in any other breed, so why expect it in the Mookee!?

Left below: Mookee looking for minerals, they are crazy about it.



Right: A lavender Mookee and a Swiss Luzerne Goldcollar (in the front).





The evaluation might differ a little from that in the UK, being more tolerant of a kink/break in the mane, as long as the Peak Crest is well formed, but they are more critical of loose feathering in the mane and broad tails, or too long tails that reach the floor (so a compact bird ideally). Over-exaggerated stance or excessive 'Shake' is also not wanted; so the Eye in a vertical line with the Legs when standing to attention, so that the beautiful 'S' shape of the birds form can be seen.

Left: A well-fed young black Mookie, shows already the 2x2 (white) flighted.

Right: Last nest of Mookies (Lavender x Black bred).



Left: 2 Baby Mookies, lavender x black, hopefully one will be a hen, that will produce lavenders, maybe not the right colour tone but the next generation when paired back to lavender, certainly.

Left: Another Mookie baby + English Show Tippler and Magyar(Hungarian) Magpie Tumbler (left).

Below: On a blazing summer's day.





Left: A young black Mookie, in the garden.



Rechts: To prove how the camera can lie, this Mookie looks bigger and longer than it is because it is side on and slightly from behind (elongating the hind parts). Angle makes a lot of difference in photos, which is why, unless a picture is taken to show a particular point, it is not clever to be over critical of birds in a photo.



Left: This bird is correct 1x1 flighted, the line under the white flight is shadow. It is a young bird still moulting its flights, the adult black flights will be more intense colour.



Above: This Mookie is from a Lavender x Black mating.



Left: Young Mookie, first day out the Nest Box

Right: This black hen is from lavender x black, now paired to one of my old lavender cocks, has produced a Lavender. The colour will not be good, but bred back to a Lavender the offspring will be much improved. Importantly, the Black cross strengthens the Lavender's feathering.

When constantly bred together Lavenders tend to get 'soft' feathering, this is especially noticeable in cock birds with their tail feather tips get frayed very quickly and the tails spread. (Mookees should have narrow tails.)



A sex difference is also recognized; cock birds generally slightly larger, the neck longer and more developed (but never thick and heavy) when viewed from the side. The Mookee does have a wide neck, from front to back, due to the well developed mane, but from the front it should not be broad. The Breast is from the front, broad and from the side, lifted but not heavy. Overdevelopment in the breast and neck is breed untypical and just plain ugly. Ideally, according to the floor surface, a Mookee 'in action', should stand on its toes, a heavy built 'blocky' bird can never do that! You cannot expect a Mookee to show good action or on Tip Toes, on a floor surface it feels uncomfortable on. Also when selecting birds, a Mookee perched, you cannot critically assess, it needs to 'Stand' to properly show itself off. With the friendly Mookee much show/cage training is not needed, but a bird that is comfortable in its surrounding will generally exhibit itself at its best.



Left: The miss-mark young Mookee (front) still is mostly in nest feather (hence the washy flight feathers) and yes! it is a 2x0 but as a good stockbird (and these are needed with Mookees) that is no problem.

Right: One of the new Lavender Mookees.





Left: Mooker's eye cers are supposed to be flesh coloured. Red eye cers are a fault but can be caused by exposure to much sunlight (like Tanning!) and also by feeding oil rich grain/ seeds.

To counteract this for exhibition, shaded flights and the appropriate grain mix needs to be used.

As to selection? Apart from the obvious - alternating flights colour/white, no crest, (it happens but very rarely) and very bad cap marking, these are the obvious - other points you would be wise to wait. With nest feather you cannot access the crest/main and certainly not the stance, action or clarity of the colour. You need to wait until almost fully moulted. If I had a young bird with the cap passing under the eye cere, so not touching it, if it was really good type and did not have more than a few small

white feathers under the beak, I would certainly consider using it on a nice typy 0x0 flighted. In fact, by following this breeding system in the last two years, almost all my young birds have been 2x2 which is a total accident as I certainly do not breed for 2x2 flights! But it does show that the approach to breeding, complimentary pairings and choosing birds for overall balance, rather than a fixation on one or two characteristics, does work.

Mookers are not ideal for free flying, they are far too inquisitive, they investigate everything, especially at ground level and they are far too trusting. So unless you have a large area and are Cat Free, I would not risk it. Any Mooker owner will tell you they can be a pest, you have to watch where you tread, they are always underfoot, cleaning out. They love buckets; turn around and at least one or two will be in the bucket when you turn back. Some will decide to stubbornly nest in the most awkward places; I once had two pair that nested either side of the main door, which opened outwards! I managed to fix a board across to stop them falling out and they reared 3 nests each in this position. Not once did they attempt to leave the nest, or fly out when I opened the door, which I did several times a day, but these are just some of the endearing qualities of this lovely old breed.

Right: Young Mooker, black.

PS to size,

About 12 years ago in Holland, there was a collection of Blue Mookers at the Aviculture Den Haag Show that were good type but Oh! so big! The fancier was rather disgruntled on their grading (loft blindness?) but they were correctly judged on the day. Recently I have heard there are no known Mooker fanciers in the Netherlands, at least none that are exhibiting.



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