

BARNEVELDERS

By: Elly Vogelaar. Photos: Xavier De Buyser, unless stated differently.

Introduction

Barnevelders the most famous of all Dutch chicken breeds was created in and around Barneveld at the turn of the last century and achieved worldwide fame. The breed arose when local farmyard fowl were mated to the Asiatic fowl that arrived in Europe from the 1850s onwards. Apart from an increase in size the added benefit was their brown eggs and most importantly they laid these during winter when egg prices were at their peak.

Brown eggs

The egg colour of the Chinese or Croad Langshan in particular is said to have had a major influence on the brown colour of the equipment of the Barnevelder. However, the literature from that period indicates that the color of the eggshells of these first Langshans wasn't a dark brown but a pink buff. A.C Croad's book 'The Langshan Fowl' for example states that: " . . . hens imported from Langshan, North China, by the late Major Croad, Worthing. Upright serrated comb, black eves, feathered legs, red ear lobes, and pink buff eggs". When they arrived in Great Britain in 1872, rivalry and politics meant that poultry

authorities were less than keen to incorporate them as a separate breed. Instead they were classified as black Cochins. By fighting strong opposition Major Croad's nice Miss A.C Croad achieved their recognition as a separate breed.

However, if the eggshell colour of the newly arrived 'Cochins' had been distinctly different from earlier imported breeds, they would no doubt have been regarded as a separate breed.



How then did this persistent misunderstanding about the colour of Langshan eggs arise? And which of the Barnevelder ancestors laid dark brown eggs? Descriptions of the 'Shanghai fowl' at the time of their arrival in Europe and The United States rarely mention eggshell colour.



Right: A pair of black Langshans, from the book of Croad, no artist name mentioned.

Left: A buff Shanghai cock in 1853, drawn by Harrison Weir (UK). Later these became the Cochins, which can already be seen in the fluffy hens in background.



The brown egg colour of the Asiatic breeds was unique as up until then all known breeds produced white eggs; the descriptions were predominantly about the large size of the chickens and their excellent laying abilities. If eggshell colour was mentioned at all it was as an afterthought, not as a distinguishing feature.

I thought I had found another reference in Bennett's 1850 'The Poultry Book' by when he cites a letter of an English breeder discussing Cochin China: "... The eggs laid by the hen of this variety are large, of a chocolate color, and possess a very delicate flavor". However his description becomes rather unreliable when the latter writer states that: "They are very prolific, frequently laying two, and occasionally three eggs on the same day, and within a few moments of each other."

Over time the Shanghai poultry became the Brahma and Cochin, and the black Cochins were subsequently mated to the more 'recent' Croad Langshan. All these breeds were appreciated for their size and excellent laying abilities but nothing further is mentioned about the dark brown eggshell colour.

How brown was brown

How dark were brown eggs in those days? According to the literature the 'new' American breeds such as the Plymouth Rocks and Wyandottes laid brown eggs; not surprisingly as they were created using the Asiatic breeds. However a colour print by L.F. Swell shows silver laced Wyandottes next to a nest of eggs the colour of which is lighter than that of the nest's straw!



Left: Colour print by Sewell, with 'brown' eggs, 1891.

In 1912 John H. Robinson from the United States wrote in his book 'Principles and practice of poultry culture': "Brown eggs exhibit a wide range of color, from a light, golden brown to a reddish chocolate. Ordinary brown eggs are light brown. What are known to the trade as dark-brown eggs are mostly medium in the range of shades of brown found in eggs. Very dark-brown eggs are comparatively rare and are not often seen in quantity. the Commercially, darkestbrown eggs are not favored beyond the ordinary dark brown eggs."

Reading (and translating)

poultry literature from the United States without familiarity or knowledge of this explanation could have led to a lot of confusion.

The exact colour of the Langshan eggs in the USA remains a mystery. The same John H. Robinson writes in 1899 in his book: 'Poultry Craft': *"Langshans. General Description. Fairly hardy; dark brown egg breed, eggs sometimes have a purplish tinge."* (This means Medium brown as it doesn't state 'very dark brown'). However in 1904 Rees F. Matson, a dedicated breeder writes about Langshans in: The Asiatics; Brahmas, Cochins and Langshans a publication of 'The reliable Poultry Journal' (USA): *"Their eggs are large and of varying shades of brown and pink".* This 'brown' is a light brown and pink is lighter than 'purple'.

In those days there were breeders in the United States who selected for the desirable extra brown eggs, but this didn't lead to the creation of a new breed - the exception is perhaps the white Sherwood*, but these had already died out in 1924.

In the United Kingdom Langshans did exist but apparently brown eggs did not. This unique colour would have been remarked upon at the time, and there would have been a lot of interest in these, given their interest in our Barnevelders and their brown eggs around 1900! In the magazine Avicultura of 6 October 1920 Van Gink writes of the Barnevelders: "... one of the few breeds created due to the consistent demand for brown eggs, and further encouraged by an expanding export trade to the United Kingdom. The egg colour of many Barnevelders is as dark and only found in the Langshan but they lack the numerous dark deep redbrown spots as in the Langshan eggs, these occur less frequently and are sometimes completely absent."

Where these comments based on Van Gink's own observations? I didn't find this description of Langshan eggs anywhere in the British poultry literature. Without reliable colour prints we might never know, but we will investigate this further!

In an earlier article (Avicultura 1919) on the original Croad Langshan Van Gink wrote that the eggs of the original Asiatic Langshan are ".. the same brown and with the same spots as the eggs of the Capercaille." The Capercaille is a member of the Grouse family (Tetrao urogallus). The reference to spots is correct, but Capercaille eggs are not all that dark, as we can still observe today.



Left: Capercaillie eggs: Eggs of the Western Capercaillie. Former Collection of Jacques Perrin de Brichambaut; Collector René de Naurois. Photo: Didier Descouens. This file is licensed under the Creative

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For the time being I think it is most sensible to follow P.J. van Wijk's comments in the special edition on Barnevelders published in Aviculture in November 1921. He is of the opinion that one shouldn't try to back cross this breed to one of its ancestors and he states that: "... one

tends to forget that *none* of the ancestors produced a similar large coffee coloured egg."



The origins of our Barnevelder

In the lead up tot the creation of the Barnevelder – which began around 1865 – matings took place with all types of 'Shanghai' roosters. It is not clear whether these were Cochins, Brahma's or Langshans, or all of the above, as the Chinese imports had also been mated among themselves, as a result the very dark colour of the eggshell of the specific breed could have disappeared quickly. Buff Orpingtons too - which according to the literature were used in the creation of the Barnevelder - were produced by making use of Buff Cochins and hence genes of the Asiatics.

Te koop:

1-5 Amerikaansche Nuthoenders, Winterlegsters, br. '04, f 9.-1-5 vroegbroed kerngez. - 9.-1-5 vroegbroed t. d. leg - 9.ook genegen te ruilen tegen andere kippen, allen op zicht en raszuiver, bij L. HAZELHOFF,

Winschoten.

7885

According to an article in the magazine Avicultura of January 1899 the 'American Utility Fowl' were also used in matings. These chickens looked somewhat like a single combed golden laced Wyandotte, and it was remarked that they laid reddish-brown eggs. The article even included a colour print of these chickens.

Left: An advertisement in the Avicultura magazine September 1904, offering the American Utility Fowls (Amerikaansche Nuthoenders) for sale.

Nothing can be found on these 'utility fowl' in the literature from the United States. They could have been the forerunners of the golden-laced Wyandottes, however around 1900 these were already very close to their current standard and it doesn't seem likely there were still remnants of those forerunners around at that time. After a few years no further mention was made of them. In Aviculture of 8 June 1921 Van Wijk questions if they really were imported from America or just one of many matings that occurred regularly in and around Barneveld and merely named and marketed as such by a savvy breeder.

According to Van Gink many Wyandottes did arrive in the Veluwe, especially silver laced Wyandottes; when these were mated to other colours they produced golden-laced birds. He suggested in the special edition of the magazine in 1921 that it would be possible to create silver laced Barnevelders for use in sex-linked breeding. (When a golden rooster is mated to a silver hen the male chickens can be recognised by their greyish white down). This was never put into practice as it was considered to be of little benefit at a time when young roosters were sold for a decent price as meat birds.

It is likely that the first hen to lay dark brown eggs emerged by 'accident', and that the brown eggshell colour was subsequently selected for. In doing so the egg colour improved and became fixed over time, a great example of the skills of our Dutch breeders!

In 1911 Barnevelders made their first appearance at a major agricultural show in The Hague. Their colour was not yet considered important as long as they produced large brown eggs. Brown coloured eggs were considered tastier than white ones and people were prepared to pay extra for them. Furthermore it was thought that brown eggs stayed fresh for longer - not such a strange thought as brown coloured eggshells prevent the light from entering the eggs interior.

Dr Bert Mombarg's book 'Caring for Chickens' shows that at that time the Barnevelder was not regarded highly by the exhibition poultry establishment (a situation which was not dissimilar to that surrounding the recognition of the Croad Langshan in the United Kingdom). Bert extensively researched traditional Dutch chicken breeds and traditional poultry husbandry practices. In his book he quotes a comment by poultry expert Muijs from 1914: "The socalled Barnevelder chicken can best be compared to a mongrel dog; as among them one finds birds of all descriptions, including single combs and rosecombs; yellow blue, black and green-ish coloured legs, clean and feathered legs and no common feather pattern and colour can be identified".

Some further quotes from his book: "In 1919 (the committee members of the Dutch Poultry Club Ed.) debated whether or not to recognise not only the Groninger Meeuw but also the Welummer and the Barnevelder. The Welsummer was considered to be a real mongrel and in no way fixed. Opinions varied with respect to the Barnevelders. H.B. Beaufort, member of the DPC, advocated for the recognition of these 'excellent layers of dark brown eggs'. However not everybody shared his enthusiasm. When decision time came and the recognition of the vote, it lost".

In Avicultura of 6 October 1920 Van Gink writes: "Today's Barnevelders look like dark golden laced single combed Wyandottes, ... in addition to this colour variety there exist numerous others which gives the impression that the Barnevelders are a rather mixed bag. ... At certain times birds are predominantly of the Wyandottes' type while at other times they remind one of the Langshan, although the latter are in the minority."



Above: Laced Barnevelder (not yet double laced), a drawing by Van Gink in 1920. As you can see, also the plumage of the rooster is laced.

In 1921 the first Barnevelder Standard was developed, and in November of that year a special edition of Avicultura was dedicated to this breed and even included a colour print of the standard coloured bird.

In 1923 the 'double laced' Barnevelder was at last admitted as a breed to the Dutch Poultry Club.

The current colour, double laced, also arose pretty much by accident, and not as a result of matings with Indian Game as is often assumed. According to John Henry Drevenstedt in his book: "Standard-bred Wyandottes" of 1910: ..."*All buff fowls of Asiatic derivation are prepotent to throw pencilled or laced feathers when crossed*". The beautiful double lacing is obviously also the result of endless selection and again a fine example of the skill and ability of our Dutch breeders.



However, there were breeders who still stuck to the self black Barnevelders, which were said to be better layers. When the then Barnevelder club didn't want to recognize the Blacks, they founded their own Club for the Black Barnevelders.

Note: Incidentally the double-laced bantams were created by using Indian Game Bantams.

Breeding and caring for Barnevelders

About 10 years ago I had the pleasure of visiting Bert Oskam, who at the time was the chairperson of the Barnevelder Club. (Sadly Bert died in 2006 at a relatively young age of 66 years.) The Oskam family has been involved with

Barnevelders for three generations. First L. Oskam, Bert Oskam's father and now Bert's son Bastiaan, who is as dedicated and knowledgeable as his dad. We can in fact talk about a fourth generation, as Bastiaan's son Boyd Oskam is keenly involved with breeding and showing Barnevelder bantams.

Bert and his dad were famous and knowledgeable breeders and great promoters of the breed. His knowledge and enthusiasm led to Bert being the chairperson of the Barnevelder Club for 20 year like his dad before him for 18 years.



Bert described the Barnevelder as follows: body: broad and deep set with a concave curve flowing from the neck to the tail. The head is short and broad, the eyes are reddish bay, a strong yellow beak and a single comb, not too large, and without overly long wattles. Feathering is full but close, the tail is medium sized and the top of which stays at the same height or below the lower part of the head, the sickles and tail hackles largely covering the main tail feathers. In the

hens a cushion is not wanted. The legs are yellow, bright yellow for roosters, but permitted to be slightly tinged for the hens (except for the white variety), Spurs need to be present in the roosters. The preference is for a yellow coloured skin. Roosters weigh between 3kg and 3.5kg (leg band measurement 20mm) and the hens between 2.5 to 2.75kg (leg band measurement 18mm). For bantams this reads: roosters 1000 to 1200 grams, hens 900 to 1000 grams. With leg band measurements of 15 and 13 mm respectively.



Colour varieties

The best known colour variety is 'double laced' and refers to the colour of the hens, the head is black the neck appears black due to the broad lacing, but apart from these parts all other feathers are a dark golden brown double laced with a shiny beetle green black. The outer lacing should not be too wide or too much of the golden brown ground colour of the underlying feathers will be covered and



appear black at first glance. The colour of the rooster is for the most part black with a beetle green shine. The back and shoulders however are reddish brown with black markings, the wing triangle is reddish brown. The neck and saddle hackles are black with reddish brown lacing and black external lacing.

A number of other colours are also recognised: blue double laced, and self black and white. Bantams too are recognised in these three colour varieties, plus the silver double laced variety.

Left: Double laced hen feather. Photo: AE.

Bert Oskam recreated the blue double-laced variety. They were recognised in 1932 but didn't exist at that time. In this variety black is replaced by blue and the double-laced feathers have a golden-brown ground colour. They were created using blue-laced Wyandottes. The blue double-laced bantams were created by veterinarian Meijer in partnership with Bert Oskam. Right: A silver double laced bantam hen. Breeder: Bert Beugelsdijk. Photo: Kleindiermagazine/Archief AE.

Below: Blue double laced hen. Breeder: Frits Meijer. Photo: Aviculture Europe.

The white Barnevelders have shiny white feathers, including the quill. A yellow or grey tinge or peppering is regarded as a

serious fault as are wrongly coloured feathers.

Blacks have a green shine in their outer coat; the down is a dull black. A slightly lighter down colour is permitted in yellow-legged black poultry as long as it is covered by the outer coat. Males with some white in their down produce offspring with a beautiful beetle green sheen.

White and black Barnevelders also produce dark brown eggs.

Right: A white Barnevelder cock. Breeder: K. Hoogervorst. Photo: AE.

A relatively new colour is silver double laced. In this variety the golden brown ground colour is replaced by a silvery white; the feathers are black double laced on a silvery white base. Since 2009 this colour is recognised in the bantams.



They were created by Bert Beugelsdijk. Currently standard Barnevelders are being created in this colour. We will keep you updated.

The Barnevelder Club is wiling to recognise new colour varieties as long as these are double laced. Some of the new varieties that are currently being worked on in the bantams are: yellow white double laced (the black lacing is replaced by white, the golden brown ground colour is lighter and more of a yellow gold colour.) Silver blue double laced; a very delicate colour variety with grey-blue lacing and a silvery-white ground colour.

Barnevelders in Germany differ from the Dutch standard. The German standard demands a fully laced breast on the roosters whereas we Dutch breeders prefer a black chest, with a little marking being permitted. The ground colour of the German Barnevelder is darker than that of the Dutch (more of a red brown) Noticeable too are the longer tails especially those of the hens. In addition in Germany Barnevelders are recognised in a wider range of colours.

In Great Britain too the double-laced colour differs from that of the Dutch standard, there too the roosters chest is heavily laced rather than black.

The nature of the Barnevelder



Barnevelder is a per-The sonable and quiet chicken, which produces a nice dark brown egg. Laying ability varies from good to excellent and depends in part on the They become tame strain. quite easily. Hatching large numbers of eggs causes no problems as any surplus hens that don't quite measure up to the standard are easily sold to people who want to keep a few chickens in their backyard. Furthermore, roosters the taste very nice and young roosters are a real treat for the connoisseur and apparently

there is a clear difference in taste between hens and roosters. There is no need to be sentimental about this as chickens were originally utility animals kept for both eggs and meat.

The breeding pen

These days the markings of the doublelaced hens are virtually perfect. Whereas 25 years ago one was happy if the right markings were only present on the back chest and shoulders these days the tail too is expected to be perfectly double laced on a golden brown ground colour.

Bert Oskam advised breeding 1 rooster to 4 hens, he prefers the hens to be sisters. In his opinion a rooster should never be used over his daughters but he is less concerned about using their grandfather.



Selecting the right hens is a relatively easy task for most breeders, choosing the right rooster however is more difficult. Although a rooster that matches the standard is suitable, some breeders consider that roosters with hackles that are (too) rich red brown but with clear black markings are ideal for breeding show quality hens. What is certain is that roosters with neck hackles that are too light produce daughters with too light a ground colour.



Attention also needs to be paid to the leg colour: select roosters and hens with the required yellow legs. Hens can have a darker tinge on the scales but do require their feet to have yellow soles! Regular access to grass is a must for yellow-

is a must for yellowlegged breeds, but quality (brand) feed appears to be important too especially during the breeding season. Leg colour does not only rely on genetic factors but can also be increased through grass, corn or

artificial colouring. The leg colour of hens that are laying well fades as part of the yellow is used to colour the yolk.



In addition to the exterior, laying ability too is important when selecting birds for breeding. Not every breeder selects for this. Often the exterior receives more attention, however there are still strains that lay a large number of large brown eggs. Good laying ability is a feature of the Barnevelders. Approximately 175 to 200 brown eggs per annum of between 60 and 65 grams can be expected from a true Barnevelder.

The choice of rooster is particularly important when selecting for laying ability! To maintain or improve laying ability a rooster should be selected from a hen that is known to be a layer of many brown eggs.

Also include in the breeding pen a number of older hens that are proven layers.



Left: The colour of Barnevelder eggs can vary a lot. Also the egg above, keft, in the box was laid by a purebred Barnevelder hen. To compare: the egg below, left, is a Croad Langshan egg. Photo: Ute Bohnsack.

Barnevelder eggs should be a shiny even brown without spots. The gland that produces the brown shell cannot always keep pace with the number of eggs that are produced and the eggshell colour fades as more eggs are produced. Selecting the hens for inclusion in the breeding pen should therefore really start in autumn and winter as in spring the

lighter coloured eggs could be produced by hens that have never produced a dark brown egg, but also from hens that that are excellent layers and that started off laying dark brown eggs. Eggs from the latter are very valuable for breeding purposes. Here too the rooster is important in passing on the egg colour! A rooster that is from a hen known to produce dark brown eggs will pass this quality on to his offspring. When he is mated to hens that also produce dark coloured eggs a darkening of the egg colour can be the result. If such a rooster is bred to hens that produce lightly coloured eggs the brown colour will largely disappear en can be lighter than the average of the two colours.

A number of Barnevelders produce eggs in the shape of a sphere without clearly distinguishable pointy and round ends. These eggs should not be selected for setting as often their air pockets are not in the right position or the chick does not hatch at the right end.

Assessing the type of the birds to join the breeding pen is done most effectively if the birds can be caged separately. Owning a number of exhibition cages comes in handy as they can also be used to select those birds we want to cull and those we want to show. In addition it is always handy if young birds had an opportunity to get used to exhibition cages as they will show themselves better during judging and are more relaxed during the show.

Hatching

As with other utility breeds the unproductive characteristic of broodiness has been largely eliminated, but occasionally a hen still becomes broody when the days are lengthening. If this occurs they are able to do so successfully and at times even more so than artificial incubators.

The shell of the egg of the Barnevelder is rather strong and can give problems artificial incubator. when using an Increased humidity level during pipping is sometimes recommended (however only during pipping not during hatching! During that time the recommended humidity levels are required), when using a broody hen this is not an issue.

If one wants to show young animals the use of an incubator is often necessary as it takes between 8 to 9 months before a Barnevelder rooster is fully grown and at least 6 months for hens (for bantams these periods are 7 and 5 months respectively).



Right: The characteristic feathering of a young cockerel.

No longer a commercially viable breed

The arrival of hybrid layers heralded the decline of the Barnevelder as a utility

breed. Many breeding lines started to degenerate due to too narrow inbreeding and they were very susceptible to Marek's disease. Around 1935 French Marans were used to improve the eggshell colour and production, but also to reinvigorate the breed. This was only partly successful as the resulting colours were rather different from the standard and hence discontinued.

In the Netherlands, Barnevelders are now only kept by hobbyists about 200 of who are the members of the Barnevelder Club. A large number of these actively breed standard size Barnevelders, Barnevelder bantams or both. The remaining members keep Barnevelders as pets in their backyard and don't show these.



The whitish-grey chested baby chickens are generally roosters and those with a brownish-grey chest are generally hens. This difference is not always as obvious in the bantams. The more pure a strain the more homogeneity will exist in the down of the baby roosters and hens. Another characteristic is that hens tend to feather up faster than roosters with the latter the feathering up of the shoulders takes longer.



A little experiment

Ute Bohnsack (Ireland) did some 'historical re-enactment' crossings of Barnevelder x Croad Langshan. Her little experiment involved only one Croad Langshan hen who laid a light coloured 'plum' egg, and two different Barnevelder sires for the F1 and F2 respectively. First she mated one of her Barnevelder males, who was known to pass on a reasonably good brown egg colour to his daughters, to the Croad Langshan hen.

The F1 hens were black; two of the F1 hens laid a nice 'cafe au lait' egg, the third one laid a lighter coloured egg. These F1 hens were backcrossed to another Barnevelder rooster - this one however came from a Barnevelder hen laying very light coloured eggs - and now the offspring lays lighter coloured eggs. So she can't say that the eggs are darker than the original Barnevelder eggs. Of course it is hard to draw conclusions from such a tiny sample.

In the photo to the left you see a brown egg of a F1 hen and an egg with a 'plum' bloom laid by of one of the F1 x Parent breed hens.



Latest News

On 8 and 9 November 2013 the first European Show for Barnevelders will be held. This special show is organised jointly with the Gallinova Show in Barneveld. From across Europe standard Barnevelders and Barnevelder bantams will travel to Barneveld. We are very much looking forward to this event! Also visit www.barnevelderclub.nl. Below: One of the black F1 hens and a F1 x Parent breed one - amazing to see she already has a relatively clean double lacing. So in this case it really only took two years to get back to the double laced pattern, which is known to be so easily upset. In the second generation, double-laced hens with clean yellow shanks also hatched.



With our thanks to Xavier De Buyser, website <u>www.barnevelders.be</u> for granting us the use of these fine photos.

*Sherwood: an American white fowl, yellow legs and beak, somewhat Plymouth-Rock-like in character. Slightly feathered legs, single comb. Plumage pure white, very hardy, layer of deep brown eggs.

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