

100th Anniversary of the Old Dutch Tumbler Club

Foreword

Dear fellow fanciers,

It is a great honour to be invited to write the foreword in the book of the 100th Anniversary of the Old Dutch Tumblers Club. But how is one supposed to do this: in the style of the Founding Minutes of 1912 or in the style of 2012? One thing quickly became clear: I'm going to do this on the computer because I could not find the bottle of ink and feather among the many things that have been transferred to the various boards over the years, but a large part of it all is here even including the founding minutes of the first public meeting at Café Witteveen at the Rembrandt Square in Amsterdam on December 19, 1912. One day in December 1912, some breeders of Old Dutch Tumblers came together because the breed did not show to full advantage and was lacking a specialty club. They did not like the way things went during judging and the awarding of prizes at the show, giving the impression the Old Dutch Tumbler was more and more being pushed into the background.

The men (W. Lewis, W.F. la Croix, G.J. van Veelen and W. Kiers) felt that something had to be done in the interest of the Old Dutch Tumbler, so that the breed would not be lost. All those present on that evening of December 19th became members of the Old Dutch Tumbler Club, the membership fee was set at 25 cents per month, also a monthly meeting was held in those days. The first club exhibition was held on December 25, 1913. The rent of the hall was 25 guilders per day and the entry fee 25 cents per bird - how many pigeons were entered is not listed. The ladies of the members had free access to the exhibition.

Also in the archives is a hand-written catalogue of the 15th club show, where other pigeon breeds were also present. The number of Old Dutch Tumblers is not known but it is noted that there were 40 prizes to win of 2 guilders on average. What strikes me is the large number of colours already present in those years, including some that I myself have never seen, namely a blue tiger and a yellow tiger whitetail. Some data of the 22nd club show in 1934: 184 entries. What strikes me here is the large number of Whitetails, with 72 entries including 20 birds in Self Red and 27 Yellow Whitetails. The founders of the Club did have foresight and thanks to all the people involved during these 100 years, this beautiful breed as well as the Club are still here in December 2012. In the Christmas Season of 1913, the first club exhibition was held. We will celebrate our 100th Jubilee Show on 8 and 9 December 2012 in Enschede and it is going to be a memorable one, with 151 entries in 21 recognised colour varieties and in 6 different A.O.C. colour varieties. I wish the participants much success and enjoyment of their beautiful breed.

Thus wrote Tiny Weerts, chairman of the Old Dutch Tumbler Club, in the anniversary book published in December 2012 at the occasion of their 100th Anniversary.



In Amsterdam, a hundred years ago, on December 12th of the year 1912, a small group of fanciers started the Old Dutch Tumbler Club. A special club for an ancient breed, at that time, known for its friendly nature and good flying characteristics. In 1669, it had already been described as follows:

"In size they are like field doves, ranging in colour from blue, liver (brown or dun), black, white and sometimes yellow. Often they have white flights and wings and tail are spotted with white." In 1735 they were described by John Moore as follows: "A little pigeon with short body, full breast, lean neck, with a pointed beak and a short knob-shaped head and eye irises of a vibrant pearl colour". Most Old Dutch Tumblers were held at that time (19th century) in Amsterdam, it really is an 'Amsterdam breed'! Outside Amsterdam there was some interest, among others in Groningen. Around 1850 the breed was booming, which gradually came to an end due to the increasing racing pigeon hobby. Once the exhibits were introduced, they were mainly showed in Amsterdam. The difficulty was to get them judged at the discretion of the Amsterdam fanciers because outside Amsterdam there were only few connoisseurs of the breed. Due to the founding in 1912 of the Old Dutch Tumbler club there was more unity amongst the breeders and the breed again flourished.

A piece of history



These days, you hear more and more talk about flying with flying pigeon breeds. A growing group of pigeon fanciers are attracted to this sport and this enthusiastic group experience this to be great fun. Yet it is not so very long ago, that in some cities or country regions this sport was practised with great devotion. Also the city of Amsterdam proudly maintained its reputation of 'flying pigeon city' in the former century.

However, a curious phenomenon occurred in the city of Amsterdam. The keeping of pigeons was practised here on the roofs of houses because around the 16th century, Amsterdam was an important port with water everywhere; there are more than one hundred kilometres of canals and the roof was a dry place.

Left: A nice white male.

When the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was established in 1602, ships of this company sailed to the 'East'. From there spices, porcelain, silk etc. were brought from Asia. Such a trip on a sailing ship could take up to six months, with all the difficulties of that time. To take adequate provisions also live animals were taken on board and eaten during the journey. Probably sometimes some of these animals came ashore unharmed. Or possibly someone thought they were nice and thus were taken home.

In this way animals from different continents came to Europe and amongst them there were certainly also pigeons. We know from documents that in India, China, Afghanistan, Persia and the Middle East many breeds of pigeons occurred at that time, so it is not surprising a proliferation of pigeons took place through European ports. Amsterdam was one of them.

The Amsterdam roof lofts



Amsterdam took its name from the Amstel River, it was built alongside a dam at the mouth of the river. Because of the many water a concentric belt of canals were dug around the Amstel; the *Grachtengordel* (The Amsterdam Canal District). Alongside these canals it was almost impossible to keep pigeons other than on the roof ridge or on the flat roofs of the top floor of the houses. Around the year 1900 there were about 2500 of these pigeon 'roof lofts' within the canal area of Amsterdam, except in the main centre, because it was forbidden by common law to build such pigeon lofts. The Amsterdam inhabitants have always been pigeon lovers. Especially in the working class neighbourhood, such as the Jordan, on the islands and other working class areas you could see the wooden scaffoldings high above the city traffic, where the fancier spent many hours of the day.

Right: A so called pigeon cabinet.

What does such a pigeon roof loft look like? To tradition, the structure was built above a roof window, or placed on the flat roof. It was like a big box containing a landing board for the pigeons. The size of the cabinet was usually 2 x 2 meters and 3 meters high.

The fancier's house

Highly peculiar and interesting was the housing of the flying pigeon fancier, who often actually went to live for this reason on the top floor of the house. On the roof, the enthusiast fancier had the best view, there he could see his trained 'kit' manoeuvring in the sky and enjoy the drive, intent and possible seduce of other people's pigeons, back to their home loft. Especially the seduce of other pigeons could be a real challenge and was a thrill in itself, it is hard to describe, and must be experienced by yourself to understand the feeling.



In order to be high above the rooftops, it was necessary to build a loft above the sea of houses, from which the flying sport could be practised. Today, it would be almost impossible to imagine that one would keep pigeons above the living room, with all its limitations such as to all the time and effort to get the food, baskets and sand upstairs, but also the removal of the manure. The story goes that every now and then a loft floor collapsed under the pressure of the weight, or rot by the moisture of bathwater that was splashed around. You can imagine what a disaster that would have been!

The Old Dutch Tumbler today

The type has not changed over the years; still a deep and low carried body with low carried breast, short and broad at the bottom narrowing strongly towards the tail, pretty well-filled rump with slightly upward carried tail, suggesting the desired boat-shape. The flights are carried on tail and touching together without crossing. The tail has twelve broad tail feathers with rounded tips and is preferably carried slightly raised. From above we see the two middle tail feathers (partially) overlap, ending just past the wingtips. The neck is barely of medium length, narrow, gradually growing broader and fuller toward the breast. The head is wanted with a full forehead, wide behind the beak and a smooth, rounded skull line without flattening, the highest point just before the eyes. The eyes have a pearl-coloured iris with a small round pupil and the eye ceres are very delicate and narrow, narrowly enclosing the eye, light for all varieties. The beak is of medium length, thin and straight, slightly bent at the tip and is white or flesh-coloured. In blue, dilute blue, blue-and dilute blue grizzle, black white shield and black white shield tigered a coloured beak is permitted, as the beak colour adapts to the feather colour. In all other colour varieties, a white beak is wanted, without decolouration traces. The nose wattles are fine and the throat is cut well. The thighs are provided with long vulture-shaped hocks; shanks with heavily feathered wide round muffs, covered with gradually shorter growing feathers tapering toward the knee joints. When standing, the knee joints of the Old Dutch Tumbler are turned inside and backwards. The feathering is full and smooth, tightly fitting.

The colours

White: (see photo below)



The Whites are most common and often in a very good quality, beautiful short types, broad chest and beautiful heads. This is one of the colours that have the best standard birds of the breed. There are some points that need attention, such as a round shaped, not too short in head and you should be critical on the eye colour. A bad eye colour is no longer accepted.

You have to pay attention to the eye colour of your aging birds; often the iris is not pearl but somewhat yellowish and this is a fault when you want to exhibit your birds. Also, keep an open eye that the birds are not too short; the tail should be beyond the wingtips. If the tail is too short, then it is also often too broad. On the muffs there are the highest demands in this colour.

Black: (see photo right)



The Black are difficult to breed in the right standard quality and show and quality, because the beak should be white. Often there is a black mark or tip on the upper mandible which will make the birds loose points on an exhibition. The body types of the Black are generally okay in volume but a bit longer at the rear. Often the head should be better filled above the eye and wider behind the beak base. The judgement on the eye colour can not be the same as for the whites, but the eye colour of the Blacks is progressing slowly. The colour is usually intensive.

Red (see photo below) and yellow:



Lately we see more and better red and yellow birds. They were usually a bit too long, making the desired boat-shape harder to get and the birds are sloping in stance and for some time we saw larger birds with poor feathering, not having adequate shape to the body. The head and eyes are usually okay. Pay attention to the beak colour as they sometimes go a bit dark or have a brownish tinge.

The body colour still remains a concern, especially the belly colour which often is not intensively coloured but has a bluish or gray colour. Sometimes the flights are not well coloured throughout or the overall colour is not intense but is too light. The muffs are usually perfect.

Blue black barred (see photo below, left below) and dilute blue dark barred:



Together with the Whites, these colours give the best standard birds, often with beautiful birds in which the eyes have improved enormously in recent years. However, we see more and more birds that are too big and are too thick in the neck and are too large in the head and do not show the wanted clean-cut throat. The neck feathering is often not tight causing the neck to look even thicker. Another point that needs further attention is the correct wing carriage on the tail and back covering. So, as you see there is still something to improve in these colours. The muffs are fine and often even better formed in the Dun colour. (The Dun colour is not specifically bred and has the same problems as self black with the exception of the muffs, which for one reason or another, usually are of fine quality.)

Sometimes we see some twisted feathers in the front of the foot feathering causing the foot feathering not to lie completely flat. The back colour should not be too light, but well coloured, also the shield colour should not be too light. The bars should be clearly separated and not overlap, which is often the case.



Andalusian Blue: (see photo to the left)

This is a new colour in the Old Dutch Tumblers, which increasingly attracts breeders. Points of attention include the type, they are often a bit long in the back, and the colour is somewhat too dark, especially on the shield.

Blue Grizzle and Dilute Blue Grizzle:

The above applies also for these two colours, but because there are less breeders of Blue Grizzle and Dilute Blue Grizzle, these varieties are often slightly less in quality. The white in the feathers is always trying to expand and this shows first in the head. If the head is good in colour, the wing shields are sometimes too dark. In very dark birds the shield is more like chequered while this should indeed be grey.



Left:
Old Dutch Tumbler blue grizzle.



Right: Old Dutch Tumbler dilute blue grizzle.

Whitetail:

These are recognized in all self colours and barred colours except in Red barred (Meally) and Yellow barred (Creamy) and Andalusian Blue, but they are most commonly in black. Apart from breeding the correct marking of 12 white tail feathers and fully coloured upper and lower tail coverts, especially the size of the birds is a problem. They often have a too small body and a too small and too narrow head. The eye and beak colour is usually perfect as well as the body colour. In the barred pigeons however, the volume is usually fine. The marking is hard to get perfect, white feathers in the upper and the lower tail coverts is a problem, sometimes even extending into the back colour, or the other way, giving pied tails.



Left:
Old Dutch Tumbler Black whitetail:

Since this ideal Standard marking is very difficult to achieve, a not entirely correct coloured upper tail covert is allowed at the exhibition.

Whiteflight:

Whiteflights are also recognized in all these colour varieties, these are not popular, we hardly ever see them, and certainly not at exhibitions. The Whiteflights have a coloured body and only the outer 7 to 12 wing feathers are white, ideally only 10 primaries are white.

Whiteflight - Whitetail:

Here is a combination of the 2 above. Description: a coloured body with the exception of the tail, 7 to 12 primaries, vent and upper tail covert, which

are white. Muffs and preferably also thumb feathers are coloured. The difficulty is to keep the white clean-cut from the coloured body. One could trim a few small white feathers, as long as it is unnoticed. White feathers under the wing, not visible from outside the show pen, are allowed.

Whiteshield:

These are recognized in black, red and yellow, but the first is really hardly ever seen. They are sparsely bred by only a few breeders. Still they seem to gain popularity again in red and yellow; we see them regularly at exhibitions and in good quality. The Whiteshields are entirely uniformly coloured with the exception of a white oval shield and white secondary feathers. The primary feathers are coloured again. Some clemency is shown on the back colour.

Magpie marked: (see black-magpied Old Dutch Tumbler, below)

The Old Dutch Tumbler is also recognized in magpie marking in black, red, yellow, blue and

dun. This magpie marking is something special within the breed. The head is white as well as a large part of the front neck. This oval-shaped bib pattern must extend from 2 1/2" to 3" under the beak, exactly limited on right and left. On top of the head is a coloured spot the size of a cent coin (crown) and on either side of the head between the eye and the lower beak are pear shaped markings that should not touch the eye or the beak. These spots are as big as an almond. Exception in magpie marking: the eye, which should be in a white feather area, is dark coloured. The body, chest and tail are coloured as well as the 'heart marking' on the back and top of the wings. The wings, belly and muffs are also white.





Concerning the muffs, they cannot fulfil the highest requirements, because the foot feathers and hocks degrade faster in a softer feather structure than at the key colours, but the form has to be good without gaps.

Left:
Red-magpie Old Dutch Tumbler.

Faults

Abnormalities in type, too narrow chest, high position, not rounded head, wrong eye colour, bad back covering and a too long or too broad tail.

We also often see poor shape of the muffs and hocks: the foot feathering should not stab too far forward, causing the walking of the pigeons to be hindered. Long, narrow, short or thin muffs are a disqualification,

same as gaps in the foot feathering. Faults in marking or colour, although we should be keep in mind that it's not a colour pigeon breed.

Housing and caring

Keeping the Old Dutch Tumbler is pretty simple; they need a dry and draft-free loft with adequate ventilation. If a little sunshine is able to enter inside they will be easily satisfied. More demands are made on the perches. The best to use are the pedestals ('round-sits'), free of the wall and about 10 cm in diameter to avoid damaging the foot feathering. Also, it is recommended to cover the floor with dry sand or beech chips for a quick-drying soil cover, to keep the floor as clean as possible for the foot feathers. The Old Dutch Tumblers usually is an excellent parent and treat his youngsters with great care. Only the Whites can sometimes be more difficult. In these pigeons it may occur that a couple sit on the nest together and the youngsters are cold in between. Stock selection against this bad habit will be usually sorted after two generations. The Old Dutch Tumbler is easy to tame and is a quiet affectionate bird in the loft.

State of the breed

Due to the large number of recognised colours in the Old Dutch Tumbler, there are plenty of pigeons kept in this breed. But in each colour the numbers are fairly low. One should not forget how hard it is to get the rare colours, such as magpie, in good quality in the exhibition pens and therefore we should be understanding when judging the rare colours, otherwise they will simply disappear. Two things, however, that should never be neglected are the type and character of this breed, to be maintained in all colours and markings. The Old Dutch Tumbler is highly recommended for the loft. The special club has on December 12, 2012 celebrated its 100th Anniversary, it is a friendly club, where birds change hands without payment, or can be loaned or swapped

Sources:

Text: OHT van nu: Ed Meijer, July 2007 Kleindierenmagazine.

Photos White mail, de kast, duivenplatje: Jubileum booklet 100 years Old Dutch Tumbler Club.

Photos Jubilee show: Sytze de Bruine.

Composition: Sytze de Bruine.