

THE MEMELER HIGHFLYER

By Mick Bassett (Germany)

Photos kindly provided by Thomas Hellmann and Elly Vogelaar

This High Flying Breed is named after the Region and Town of Memel (after the River Memel that rises in White Russia and flows to the East Sea Coast) and had been bred in this region for many Generations. This region was East Prussia (therefore nominally German), until after the Second World War, when it became Lithuania, a Russian Province, as did other Parts of East Prussia/Poland; today the Republic of Lithuania and a member of the European Union. The city of Memel is now called Klaipėda.

A bit of history

According to tradition, the Memeler is of Dutch origin; its ancestors, like many other Tumbler breeds being taken by Dutch sailors around 1750-1790 to many Ports around the European Coastlines, in the case of the Memeler to East Prussia and the Town of Memel.

**Right: The river Memel.
Photo: Elly Vogelaar.**



In Germany, the specialist Breed Club was Founded in 1921.

We assume that around that time The Memeler was also known in Holland, as the famous Dutch author, Van Gink, published a piece on the Breed in 1919.

More remnants of the Breed came to Germany January 1945 with the East Prussian refugee's of German decent. (Some Families had lived in that region for 400/500 years or more.)

Richard Krosien, one Fancier bringing 23 Memeler High Flyers with him when he fled into Germany before the advancing Russian Army, at the end of the Horror March through Winter Snow and Frozen Rivers and Lakes and minus 25°C temperatures, many old and very young people also perishing. Only 7 Pigeons survived, considering the Trek Conditions that was a Wonder in itself.

While in the Federal Republic of Germany more and more Memel breeders – mainly refugees from East Prussia - joined the Memeler Special Club, a Breeders' Club was also founded in the DDR under the name 'SZG Memel high-flyers'. It attracted many fanciers, including the ones coming from the Memel region, who knew a lot about the breed and had been actively involved in breeding the Memel High-flyer. In 1991, after the reunification of East and West Germany, the two separate pigeon clubs joined and continued under the traditional name of 'Klub der Züchter des Memeler Hochfliegers'. One of the first tasks of the new / old Club was the draft of a uniform standard for the breed, which appealed to all breeders.

**Right:
Head study.
Photo: Thomas Hellmann.**

The breed today

At one time bred with a short beak, it is now bred with a beak long enough to adequately feed its own offspring. Apart from the stout Beak, other notable breed characteristic is the markedly flattened top of Head and downward angled Beak (downfaced).

In the loft, the Memeler is a quiet and "prudent" pigeon with a very good orientation. They are good parents and raise their young in an excellent way.

The Breed comes in many colours and markings (see standard), including some markings almost 'Breed Specific', so: White with a Coloured Neck Band, and the 'Bunte', (literally = Colourful), with the Head-Back-Belly-Tail and Flights mostly White, with the Wing Shield Schimmel (Grizzle) Marked.

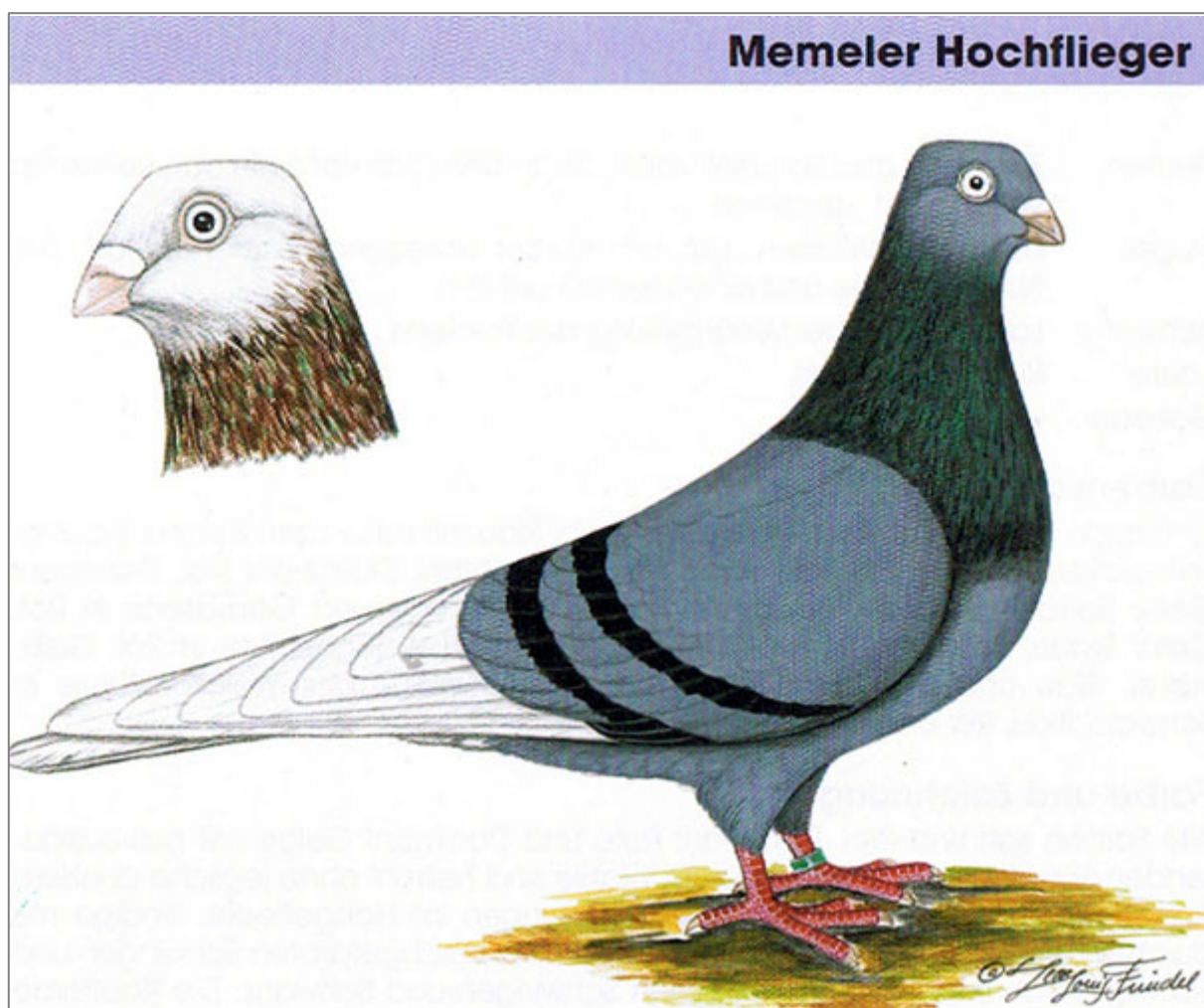
Unfortunately there are only very few High Flyer Breeds, which, like the Memeler, have both show and racing abilities. However, the Memeler is a beautiful dove, at the exhibition as well as in the air. Especially the solo flights are a feast for the eyes. They can fly very high, even high enough to fly out of range of the birds of prey, then again come down in a slow and stately sailing.



Standard of the Memeler High-Flyer

Origin: An Old indigenous Tumbler Breed from The Memel Region (what was East Prussia), first known outside that Area from the 1920's.

Overall Impression: a Strong elongated Form with Horizontal Posture and 'Close to the Ground' stance, a longish angular Head with a barely medium length Beak.



Above: Standard drawing of the Memeler High-flyer, Courtesy of the BDRG.

Head: Longish, with a visibly Flat top of Skull, the Forehead broad with a very slight curving slant line to the Beak Tip, this should be a smooth unbroken line from the Angular top front of Skull, to the Beak-Tip without any Break. The rear of Skull very slightly rounded but very definitely angular (forming the Flat top of Head).

Eye: Pearl colour, Eye-Cere, fine, smooth and pale.

Beak: Strong, barely Medium Length, and blending with the smooth slightly curving sloping line of the Forehead, the Mid-line of the Beak to pass through the lower part of the Eye, Pale in colour for Whites (or White Headed Birds) light Horn colour for others, a Darker Tip with the Darker coloured Birds is allowed. Beak-Cere fine and smooth.

Neck: medium length, broad at the Base and flowing from the Body narrowing to the Head, the Throat a very slight Curve (not sharply delineated).

Breast: carried forward, broad, deep and well rounded.

Back: broad across the Shoulders, sloping and narrowing to the Tip of Tail in a 'Keel' Form (i.e. Boat Keel-Not Flat across).

Wings: long and well closed, carried close to the Body almost reaching the Tail Tip and carried lightly on the side of the Tail.

Tail: long, forming a long unbroken line with the Back.

Legs: short and unfeathered.

Feathering: long, smooth and tightly feathered.



Above: A red White Tail-Marked-White Flighted Memeler.

Below: A Black white flight. Photo's :Thomas Hellmann.



Colours

Self in White, Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, Blue with Black Bar and Dilute Blue with Dark Bars and Barless, Ash Red, Dominant Red, Dominant Yellow, Mealy, Cream, Khaki, (Dilute Brown).

'Bunte'(Pied) (Ground colour with Schimmel(Grizzle) markings on the Wings, White Head with Schimmel flecking and White Tail, now known as Pied in the new EE formulation)

'Bunte-Neck' (Pied)(coloured Neck on a White Ground colour).

Gemaserte (Wings with indistinct Lacing as with the Danzig High Flyer) in Red, Yellow, Brown, Blue and Black.

White Flighted and White 'Tipped' in Red, Yellow, Brown, Blue and Black.

White Tail-Marked and White Tail-Marked-White Flighted in Black, Blue, Red and Yellow.

Below: Yellow white flight. Photos: Thomas Hellmann.



Colours and Markings

All colours deep, clear and even.

Dominant Red and Yellow with Pale shaded Feather Webbing to Flights and Tail. Ash to be Pale without any Dark shading except for the Neck Feathering which is streaked with Red Flecks.

Bars to be distinct and unbroken.

Blue and Dilute Brown (Khaki) to have Flights and Tail the same shade as the Body.

Reds and Creams with Paler Flights and Tail.

The Head colour of the Dilute/Pale colours should be in keeping with the Colour of the Body, ie. should not be too Pale, but with Reds and Creams some White in Head colour is allowed.

'Bunte'(Pied) have a White Head, Back, Belly, Flights and Tail, with the Wing Shield with a greater or lesser amount of Schimmel (Flecking),

'Bunte-Neck'(Pied) are white with a coloured Neck, the Colour should ideally form a closed 'Collar'.

'Gemaserte'* have a coloured Head and Neck, the Wing Shield 'Gemasert' or 'Laced', the Flights and Tail have Pale shaded Feather webbing.

White Flighted have 6-10 White Flights.

White 'Tipped' have 3-5 White Flights.

White Tail-Marked have White Tail Feathers and desired the Upper and Lower Tail Coverts white.

White Flights-White-Tail have 6-10 White Flights and a White Tail Combined.

*Gemserte is not a 'True' Lacing as the Feather edging is not (does not need to be) as uniform as with 'Laced' Breeds, 'gemasert' translates literally to Speckled, Grained or Veined.

Below: A Red Pied (Bunte) Memeler. Photo: Thomas Hellmann.



Faults

Too thin, weak or short Body, too high on the Leg, narrow, short Forehead, rounded Head, Top of Head/Forehead with depressions or a break in the smooth outline. Beak too long or thin, Eye-Cere Reddish, Yellow or a very thick broad Eye Cere.

More than 2 White flights difference each side with the White Flight, White 'Tipped' or White Tail+Flights Markings, Poor Colour and Markings.

Order of importance

Breed Type and Balance - Form, Head and Beak - Eye-cere Colour - Eye Colour - Feather Colour and Markings.

Ring Size: 8mm. UK size (B)

To end with

For the many pigeons in Memel that the refugees could not take with them, their familiar loft was opened permanently in the winter of 1945 - and off they flew, in the cold Memel sky! Who knows where to? A farewell forever? What has become of the abandoned pigeons, no one really knows. One thing is for sure, however: they will have intermingled in other fancy breeds and field pigeons. Pure bred

Memel high-flyers can no longer be found in that region. However, in today's Lithuania several pigeon breeders are selecting their birds to regain the breed characteristics of the Memel high-flyer. We are pleased that in the old 'Memel region' there is again interest in the Memel high-flyers.

Specialty Club Germany:

Sonderverein Klub der Züchter des Memeler Hochfliegers von 1921
Vors.: Joachim Böhme, Dorfstr. 11, 17111 Beggerow. Deutschland.
Tel.: 0049 39996-70335

For photos of the Specialty Show of the "SV Klub der Züchter des Memeler Hochfliegers von 1921" with all known colour varieties, please have a look at <http://www.giesecke-world.homepage.t-online.de/3dts-3.html>



Above: Memeler in the loft of Rinus van den Heuvel (NL). Photo Aviculture Europe.