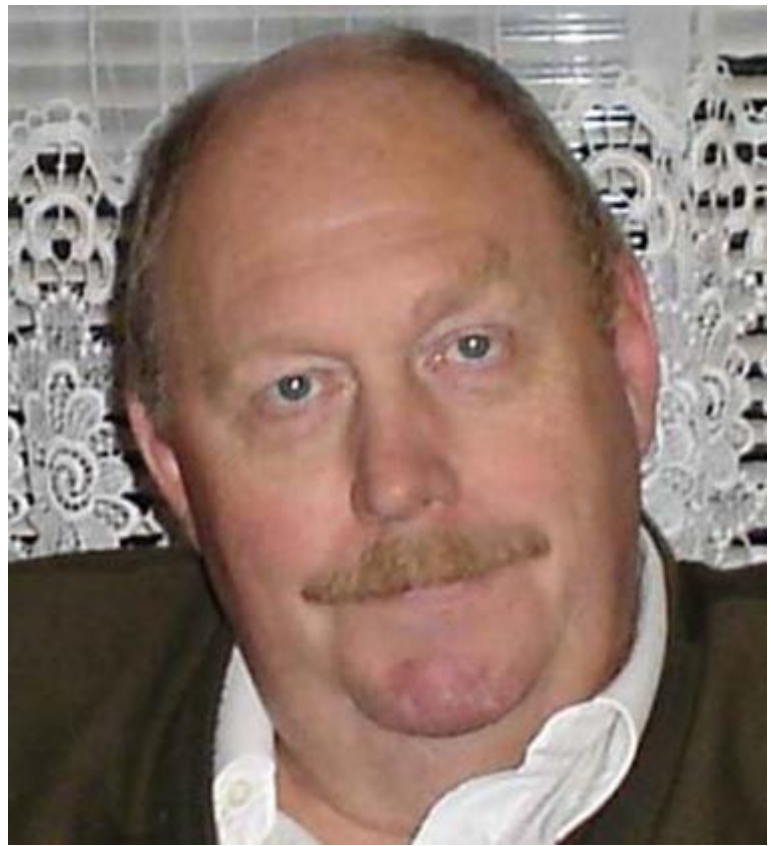


Interview

Roel Bijkerk

Since I was 13 years old I have had pigeons. First, for a short period Dutch High Flyers, Owls and such, and even a racing pigeon that wandered in. On the advice of my father, who, up to that time had nothing to do with pigeons, I began to focus on racing pigeons and in 1960 I participated for the first time as a junior member in my first Race.



At home nobody kept birds, my father had tropical fish and my grandfather had a pair of canaries. From my 6th year I have had birds, starting with a canary and a few tropical birds. From 1960 to 2000 I had pigeons without any break despite the fact that I've moved several times in that period for my work.

Below: The lofts and outside aviaries from Roel Bijkerk in the backyard in Winschoten.



At my current address in Winschoten I specialized in the so-called "over-night races", ie races between 900 and 1250 km. My greatest achievement was winning the first prize in a national competition from Ruffec (France 903 km) to the North of the Netherlands.

In 2000, I had a heart attack and ended up in the hospital. After that time my pleasure in the pigeon racing sport declined, not so much by the heart attack, but more for reasons of a poor understanding between the pigeon fanciers, also things like drugs, doping and more and more expensive technical progress (?), digital time clocks etc. which more or less obliged people to invest a great deal of money, so the hobby was no longer financially viable for a for an increasing number of people. I then decided regrettably, to say goodbye to the Racing

pigeon racing sport and move on to fancy pigeons.

When I started with the fancy pigeons, I initially was guided by a feeling of nostalgia and purchased again Dutch Highflyers and Dutch Helmet pigeons. For several years I dedicated myself especially to the Dutch Highflyer in the Brander Bronze colour with black flight and tail marking (Schornsteinfeger).

Left:
My new choice was the Amsterdam (beard)tumbler, the black.

Through my specialty club (Breeder Association of Dutch Tumblers) I came in contact with the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler. I was attracted immediately to this breed and I started to breed this pigeon.



Right: Amsterdam (beard) Tumblers in bath, known to be a favourite pastime of pigeons, the rivalry is forgotten.

Initially I bred it in all recognized colours except dun (diluted black). I soon learned that this was not the road to success, for a fancier like me, with relatively few pairs (21 breeding pens) I then decided to specialize in one colour, the Black.





Left: Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler, blue grizzle bar.

In that time, around 2005, black was the 'in colour', in which reasonably good pigeons were available, although there was still much to improve, especially in the feathering and eye colour.

The Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler is an easy bird to keep. They are hardy and make few special demands on housing and management. So it seems like a perfect breed for beginners, but beware! It's not so easy to breed a good one.

Two eggs, 2 youngsters, an expression that has stuck with me from the past with the racing pigeons, and it counts

also here, but two eggs, two good youngsters, that's another story. Now after 10 years, I breed a fairly inbred strain but even so, the main concern is the marking, only half of the youngsters being Show quality. This does not mean that there are no youngsters in that group suitable for breeding, but for the show, they are certainly not of the required standard (because of markings). The standard of the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler is quite strict concerning the marking, and then of course, there are also the type, stance, etc.

Right: Fortunately, the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler is still a good flyer. Although I do not fly them myself, I do know that there are people that fly well and long with the birds from my line.



Left: A nice Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler, silver dark barred, at the show.

Right: Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler, yellow.

Pairing is simple.

In the winter I put on paper how I want to pair them and when the time comes I put the planned couples at evening time, in the dark, in their breeding loft and in 90% of cases they are paired the next day. This method I have been using as long as I have pigeons, racing pigeons or fancy pigeons, for me it works the same.



Left: A black Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler female in the nest bowl.

Pairing than is generally going well, although old pairs that are split up do ask for some extra attention. They defend their breeding place well, but they are not aggressive. They are

tolerant towards other breeds. I kept the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler with my English Shortface Tumblers breed in one loft and this gives no problems.

My experience with the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler as foster pigeons for my 'Short beaks' are mixed. One pair is doing reasonably well, while other pairs are not usefull, so I'd rather not use them as foster pigeon, also because I use them for the show.

They can easily rear four rounds of youngsters per year and, especially in the summer, soon lay new eggs, often as the youngsters of the previous round are only about two and a half weeks old. I pair my pigeons usually in the second half of February. I'd rather do it a bit later, but at that time the days begin to lengthen and the pigeons often can no longer be held back from breeding. I usually separate them in August and mostly I don't usually let any youngsters hatch after the longest day, except when I still would like to have some, from a specific pair.



**Right:
Two young Amsterdam (beard) Tumblers, they are well fed. At this time, the correct marking already shows.**



Left: The breeding loft, where on the top shelf the eggs are incubated undisturbed while the youngsters of an earlier breeding round that are in the nest bowl in the below shelf, are fed as usual.

Whoever decides on the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler should pay attention to ensure the marking, the number of white flight feathers, all the thumb feathers are coloured, the shape of the beard, a fully coloured belly etc. the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler are nearly horizontal in stance (position), they must have a round head and eyes as white as possible (this varies

with the colour) and the feather colour must be as intensive/rich, as possible.

In my Racing Pigeon period, I was a really conscientious in cleaning the floor in the pigeon loft and did so daily. Nowadays, with my Fancy pigeons, I have both the floors in the loft and the aviaries equipped with grills. About 2 times a year, the grates are lift out and the droppings underneath are cleaned. When there are still youngsters in nest bowl, the Nest boxes are cleaned daily.

Right: Grates on the floor, cabinets right, seats against the side wall. All functional and easy to maintain.

I think ventilation is one of the main features of a loft. For my Fancy pigeons I use a Racing pigeon loft that has a roof with an open strip of about 60 cm over the entire width of the pigeon loft. This strip, although it can be closed, is always open, day and night, summer and winter. My loft faces East and in the winter I close the windows during the nights.



Left: The attached aviary is not only used by the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler, but also by the English Short Face Tumbler and the Koningsberg Reinaug Tumbler.

I feed a commercial blend of good quality, without maize. The birds receive the same mixture summer and winter. Grit and minerals are always available and in the breeding season, I provide an additional high-protein mixture on a regular base.

Right:

In this view through the aviary we see in the foreground a young English Short Face Tumbler in yellow agate and behind that a foster Pigeon, an Amsterdam Highflyer.

Medications are used as little as possible, and certainly not when there is nothing wrong with the birds. The only exception is that, when they sit on the first round of eggs, I medicate against trichomonas and after that for one day, I give a vitamin preparation in the drinking water.



Left: Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler in blue black bar.

There is the yearly vaccination against Paramyxovirus, honestly I must say that it is sometimes forgotten for a year. Treat your pigeons not like vulnerable plants, is my motto. If I have surplus good birds, I try to interest new breeders in this Breed.

Right:

This black Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler female was winner of the NBS Champion Diploma in 2014.

Each year I participate 4 to 5 times in Provincial Exhibition and the Dutch National Champion Show. I do not enter my pigeons at exhibitions abroad.

In Germany there is a lot of interest in this breed, there even is a Amsterdam Tumbler Speciality club.

My fondest memories are of an Exhibition that I participated in, the Dutch National Champion Show in 2011 and won Best in Show, but that was with an English Short Face Tumbler.





Above and below:
English Shortface Tumblers in red and yellow of different ages. These youngsters are extremely tame , especially when they are, as shown below, being fed by hand by the fancier himself. They really bond with you!



My Amsterdam (bearded) Tumblers are also doing well at the Shows. In 2009 at the Noordshow one of my Amsterdam Tumblers was awarded the max "97 points" and it was the first time ever 97 points were awarded to this breed. Since that time I have won several times a "97 points" award and this year I got my second NBS Champion diploma for the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler.

I am a member of two specialty clubs and in one I am treasurer. I am also a member of the German Specialty club from Amsterdam (beard) Tumblers, also

I am secretary of the National Dutch Pigeon Union (NBS) for almost 10 years now.

Right: *I also keep some chickens, in a spacious coop with free access to the garden.*





Above: I also keep tropical birds, mainly Australian finches.

I find being a board member, especially at national level, is an enrichment. It gives a lot of pleasure and a deeper insight into the hobby and organization that goes into it. This all takes time, and a position as secretary of the NBS takes a lot of time, but so far I can combine it well with my hobby. It would be good if every fancier would fulfill a function like this for a certain space of time, so that one becomes aware of what goes on behind the curtains and what has to be done in our hobby from a management position.

There should also be much more flow (follow-up/communication) in the boards and committees, thus avoiding the emergence of any 'Cliche' (separate grouping within the committee), there must be sufficient willingness and suitability (capability) to volunteer for this type of 'Position'.

Besides Amsterdam (beard) Tumblers I breed English Shortface Tumblers and I have some Koningberg Reinaugen Tumblers. As foster pigeons I use Amsterdam Highflyers and I experiment with Birmingham Rollers and Amsterdam Tipplers. I also have tropical birds, mostly Australian finches and I have a few chickens.

For more information about the Dutch Tumbler breeds including the Amsterdam (beard) Tumbler, please contact the secretary of the Breeders club for the Dutch Tumblers:

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