

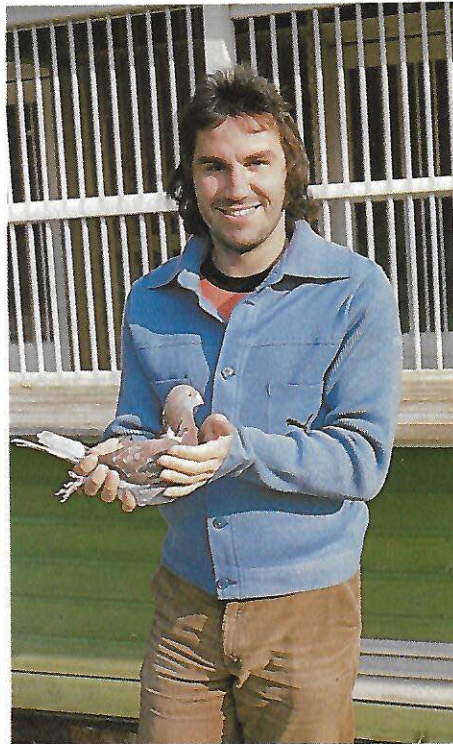
Gerry Francis, international

Some feathers in his caps!

Whenever one reads of Gerry Francis, one always reads 'Gerry Francis, Crystal Palace and England football ace, winner of many major awards including 13 International caps for England', but you never read of Gerry Francis the pigeon fancier, and how good a fancier he is despite the pressure on his time from his many footballing commitments. There are times when Gerry doesn't see his pigeons for days on end. It is at times such as these that his girl friend Lindsay takes over the loft management and I might add she does so with great confidence. Gerry has been in the sport on and off since 1959, he said his first loft measured 2 feet x 4 feet and it was something of an innovation as it was mobile, yes, mobile.

It was built and attached to pram wheels so that it could be moved in great haste when the rent man called as Gerry was not supposed to keep pigeons where he lived then. Gerry is from a pigeon racing family, his father Roy, and two uncles, Fred Harrington and George Francis were all active fanciers. He has a very high regard for his uncle Fred, who, he says, taught him a lot about pigeons.

Gerry became interested in pigeons when he was about eight years old and raced with his father in the City Arms H.S. at Hammersmith. His first pigeons were from George Harrowell of Shepherds Bush, these birds were carefully broken to their new loft by



Gerry Francis.

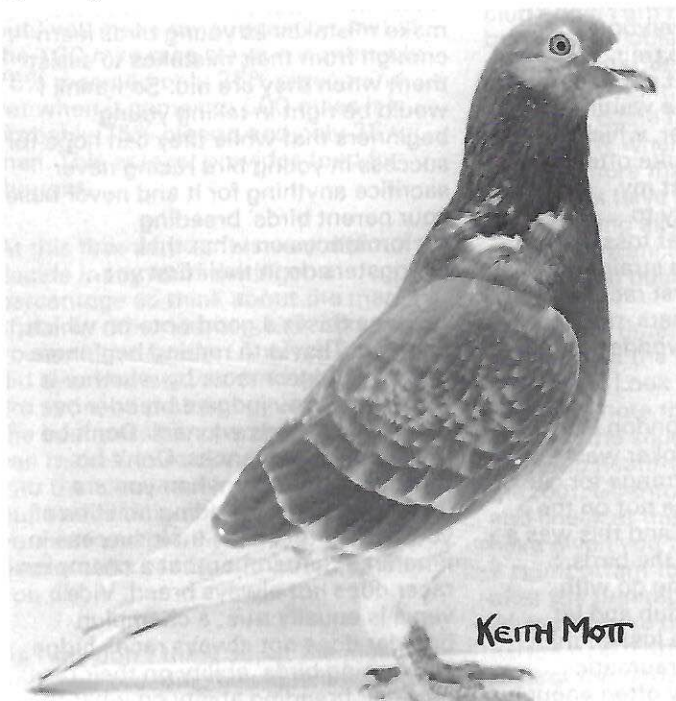
Gerry. After he had successfully broken them, the local council promptly ordered him to get rid of them.

It was my friend Mick Worsfold who took me down to deepest Berkshire to visit Gerry Francis' 'Thornlea Lofts' and for a change we had some sunshine on the lofts for the photographs. This is a standing joke as it always rains on my loft visits with

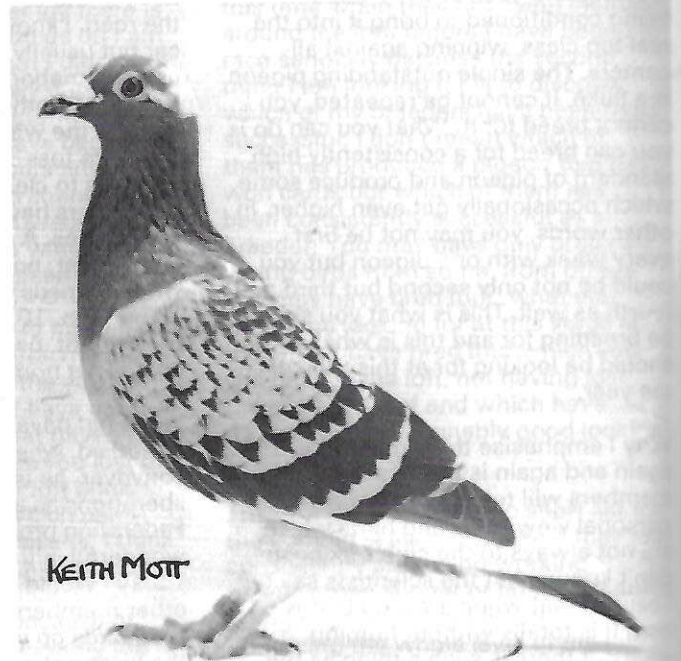
Mick Worsfold, and on the way down we were driving through thick fog, and I reckoned that the Worsfold curse was running true to form.

Gerry started racing from his present address in 1977 with seven Harrington latebreds from his father. One of the stars of the loft is a pigeon known as 'Thornlea Lucky Stumpy', he is one of those original latebreds and acquired the name 'Lucky Stumpy' because he returned home from a race minus three toes and suffering numerous other injuries. After recovering from those injuries this gallant blue chequer pied cock went back on the road and won in 1979 50th Section E, 83rd Open N.F.C. Nantes (10,367 birds), 4th club Bergerac (453 miles) with only seven pigeons recorded in the club in two days, he has also won 15th Fed. Weymouth (1,847 birds) and 4th Hansur Open Weymouth. 'Lucky Stumpy' is also proving his worth as a breeder, he is sire of a chequer pied cock 'Garth' who has only had four races and taken four positions, including 23d Fed. with 1,330 birds competing. Another of the Harrington pigeons to do well for Gerry is a blue chequer cock known as 'Thornlea Bourne End', he recorded 2nd club, 14th Fed., 26th Open B.T.B. Combine Niort (3,750 birds).

On the subject of eyesign, Gerry said he didn't know enough about it to base his pairings on it, but he did admit to having a liking for a pearl eye.



'Thornlea Fred's Red', bred by Fred Harrington and winner of 1st club, 8th Fed, 101st Sect. E Nantes N.F.C. amongst other wins.



'Thornlea Lucky Stumpy'.

footballer and pigeon fancier

text & pictures by Keith Mott



The Thornlea Lofts of Gerry Francis.

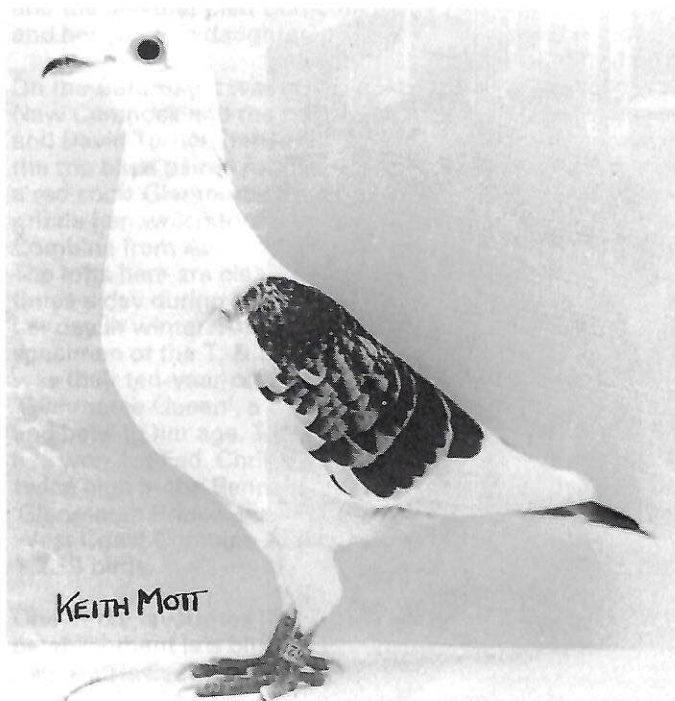
The lofts house various strains, the Harrington pigeons are of the Logan-Savage Barker-Osman lines, there are also Dordins from Paul Smith, Cattrysse from Les Davenport and pigeons from F Wiltshire of Oxford. We got onto the subject of young bird racing and Gerry said that he didn't believe in pushing youngsters hard, in fact he had found that his best pigeons in later life were those that

were only trained as youngsters and not raced. He also said that he disliked sending yearlings across the Channel.

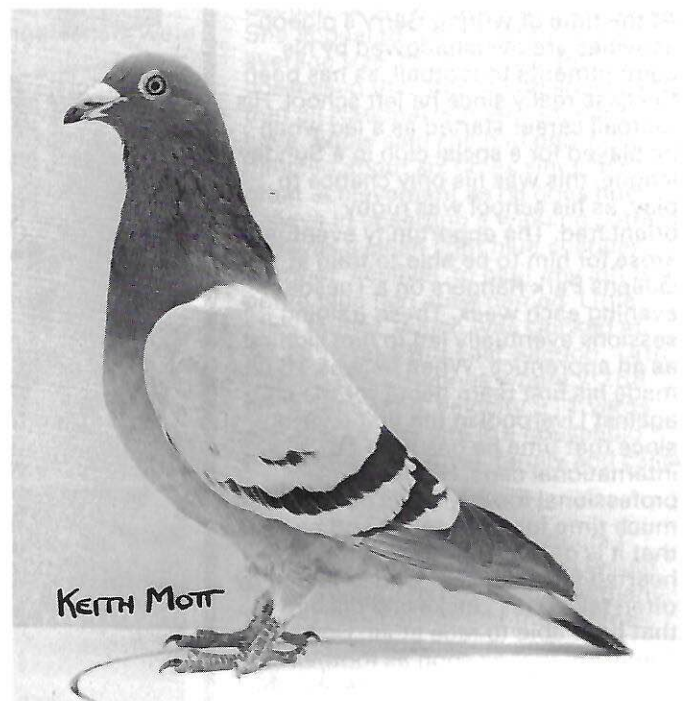
The lofts consist of a three section racing loft with corridor trapping, plus two stock lofts joined by a nice spacious aviary. There are 10 pairs of stock birds and around 15 pairs of racers, it is usual for him to breed around 25 youngsters a year.

Floor dressing consists of a sand and lime mixture which is changed every few months. The birds have an open loft, but even so, are kept under control. All birds are raced on the natural system, always trying to get to know each pigeon as an individual, this way Gerry thinks you discover each bird's best racing condition.

When it comes to training, the birds



'Garth'.



'Thornlea Fatso'.

WJ mott
racing pigeon

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pictorial

TWO TOP BELGIAN LOFTS LLOYD SON & GRIFFITHS OF YNYSYBWL
FOODS & FEEDING NED BUSH OF PILSLEY
GERRY FRANCIS—INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALLER AND PIGEON FANCIER
BILL JOHNSON OF THORNTON HEATH



International footballer and pigeon fancier Gerry Francis with some of his trophies, photograph by Keith Mott.