

My History with my Gordon Hughes Strain

Dave Bertenshaw

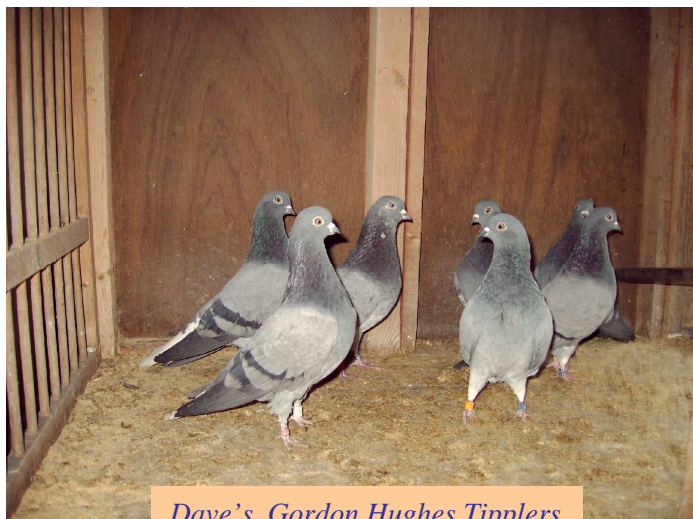


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When I first started in the hobby some 30 yrs ago or so ago I was gifted birds from my local tippler fanciers, mainly Boden type and then the Les Curry strain. Once I got the competition bug I discovered that these birds did not come up to expectations and I always had the feeling that something was missing.

I then turned my attention to the Gordon Hughes strain, I knew by doing some groundwork that this strain had that little bit extra in them, I wanted birds that could fly in competition as Y/B and O/B.s. I was friendly with a fancier by the name of Geoff Howarth (Manchester) who had blues and Greys from Gordon Hughes, Geoff was a personal friend of Gordon and was able to obtain the Greys/Blues from Gordon Hughes direct out of his loft..

Geoff flew these Greys in competition and had many a good time from these birds, I was lucky to have been able to obtain a few of these birds from Geoff and from that point forward decided that these were the birds for me.



Dave's Gordon Hughes Tipplers

After a couple of years of having these magnificent birds I received a call from Geoff who told me he had decided to retire from the sport and offered me

the chance to purchase his whole breeding and flying team, needless to say I jumped at that opportunity and the deal was struck and I brought the whole lot back to Tyneside.

In the meantime, by my initial groundwork I also made friends with George Mason (Derby) *George is a very well known Roller Fancier.*

George had some blue birds direct of his friend Gordon Hughes (living both in the same town) and when George was in the Tippler sport he flew these birds well. George interest was mainly into Rollers and eventually he packed the Tipplers in to concentrate on his Rollers.

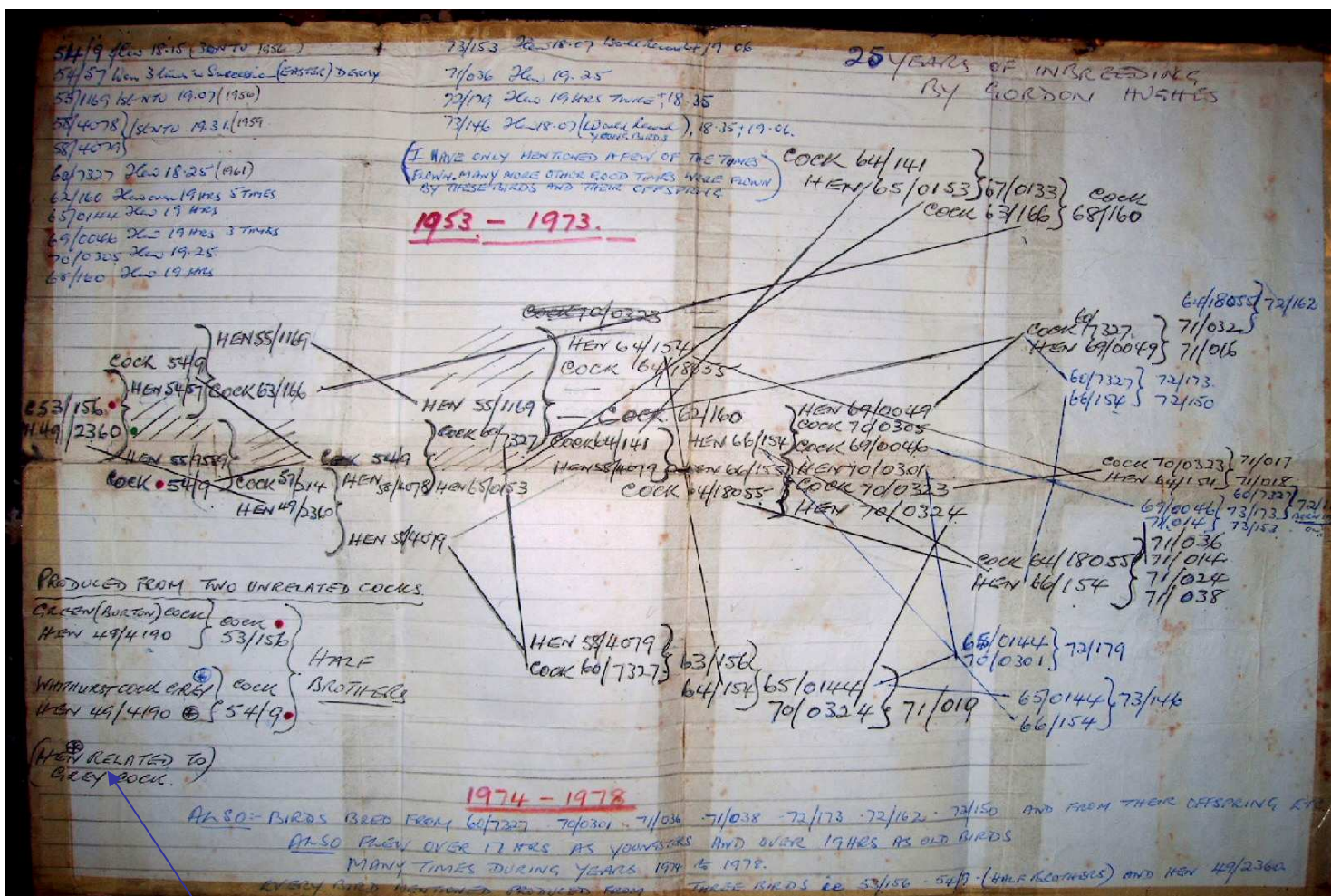
George gave his Gordon Hughes breeding stock to a good friend to persevere the strain, and it was through this link (Alan Wooley) that I was offered a few selected birds from this link.

One Blue Cock that I was loaned became a very important bird in my early breeding years. He wasn't a particular good looking bird but he had that something (which I couldn't put down in print to explain it). Everything this bird bred turned out to be top class, I tried for a couple of years to purchase this pigeon, and even offered George a blank cheque and asked him to name his price, but George wouldn't sell him to me.

Because of the friendship I struck with George, I was able to supply chosen birds from my stock to anyone that enquired about Tipplers through George. It was probably because of this that the bird I offered George a blank cheque for, he actually gifted him to me, which I was very grateful for. It was during this time that the final piece of the jigsaw fell into place. I asked George about the Badges that Gordon Hughes had in his breeding and George advised me to make contact with Brian White (Sheffield) who had obtained some good birds from Gordon Hughes.

So next on my radar where the Badges and I made contact with Brian White. I was particularly interested in the original badges that Brian obtained from Gordon Hughes. Brian shared his breeding birds with Martin Lewis and it's from Martin that I obtained some beautiful badges that supplemented my other Gordon Hughes lines. So the final piece of

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The Original 25 Year Gordon Hughes Breeding Chart

Note: his well known three breeding birds were 2 half brothers and one hen. If you look at the bottom left hand corner (as indicated by the arrow), it will tell you that the father of one of them cocks was a grey and the hen was related to the greys. Not too many people know that as everyone thought they where pure blues, hence the greys in my loft

the jigsaw was in place, I now had replicated in my loft the birds that are seen in some of the old pictures of Gordon Hughes stock loft i.e. the Greys, Blues and Badges.

My lines of birds can be traced back to Gordon Hughes 25 years of inbreeding record, and the early birds from Geoff/ George and Martin show that on the pedigrees. So for 25 years plus, I have concentrated on blending and preserving the lines from Geoff Howarth, George Mason and Brian White/Martin Lewis which where selected by me via the breeding records traceable to Gordon Hughes.

I will pen another line soon to carry on this story, and to inform about how I came about breeding down certain lines to create the standard I have today, and will inform about the black badge cock that Danny mentioned earlier.

Part 2

My first priority was to maintain each of the lines and to keep breeding back to the original birds as closely as I could. Fortunately I am blessed with having the room to do this, so I kept them pure within each section, I don't think it would have been possible to maintain the separate blood lines in their originality if this was not the case. Obviously all the lines where tested against each other, I didn't want to spend the time persevering with each separate line if any showed any weakness against another. This was beneficial when flying them as I didn't have to fly all colours separately; it also helped in dark flying mixed colours. With not being blessed with a good dark flying position I found that some nights If I was flying blues I struggled to see them, but having a grey or a badge in the kit helped me spot them easier.

During the breeding of each of the lines, I was particularly interested in experimenting with the

colours. For example the blue white tails would on occasions throw a white flighted bird or one with a little white on the head or under the beak. I used to just stock these birds and breed around them to enhance the whiteness. One of my all time favourite birds was a blue white tail hen; she had a little white chuck under her beak. She had two nights on the tiles when I was settling her, but I managed to get her back in training and she never did anything wrong after this, she flew 17.55 as a young bird, couple of 19 plus as old bird, 20.00 hours as old bird and she had the looks of a show pigeon.

So I decided to stock her and bred around this hen, it has taken years to achieve but I have somewhere in the region of 12+ stock pigeons which are all related to her and many are showing more and more white markings, it has been a worthwhile project and proves what can be achieved through selective breeding, it is in essence a separate family within a family.

The Grey line has pretty much been the same, through selective breeding I have managed to breed prints and dark greys, also showing a lot more white flecks in the upper body and white flights again this has been a time consuming passion. The badge line has followed the tradition in that I am aiming to take the bull eye and the odd side colours out of them, and looking to breed more uniformed markings, this is something I

have only just started to concentrate on and will take me a good few years to get an idea on how it will go. I have paired Blue/Grey and Blue/Badge

together and flown the offspring, again selecting birds from these pairings for future stock, I do plan to try a very closely inbred badge to a closely inbred grey as a pairing as another option for the future, something on a back burner but will try that mating.

I am a great believer in breeding birds solely for stock, all of my best flying birds are from birds I have selected for breeding purposes only, I have in the past retained a lot of my best flying birds for stock

but in my experience with this family, breeding for stock has stood me in good stead and I am continually breeding for the future.



Here are some great examples of the different lines Dave was able to establish, Prints and Greys – all from the Hughes family



These two nest mates are off a son of my old favourite blue and white hen, paired to a J Heaton Black hen. They are going on loan this season and I will eventually pair them back to some of my Blue white beards from the old hen shown later in the article

I had the misfortune of having birds stolen out of one on my stock lofts in June 2005. I did have some old favourites amongst the ones stolen (including my favourite old blue white hen as above), but in many ways this event actually did me a favour as I had some really old favourites that I was holding onto probably for nostalgic purposes.

I had some chosen birds returned to me from fanciers who had them from me on loan, and with the birds I had bred for

future stock; this was my start with the next generation of younger stock birds.

The youngsters I bred from these young stock were probably some of the best yb's I had bred for years, and I have now continued to concentrate on young stock for my future generations. So having my birds

stolen has given me, by default, the kick I needed to stop holding onto too many old breeders.

I have often wondered how Gordon would react to seeing how his lines have developed, I have the blue and grey lines relatively true to form, but I would have loved for him to see how I have developed some off the white tails etc.

I was lucky enough to be able to secure memorabilia from Gordon's widow via his good friend Alan Wooley, and when I roll out the original 25 years of inbreeding chart it does give you a sense of satisfaction that I have been able to move the strain on and have done so without opening this family to any other influences.

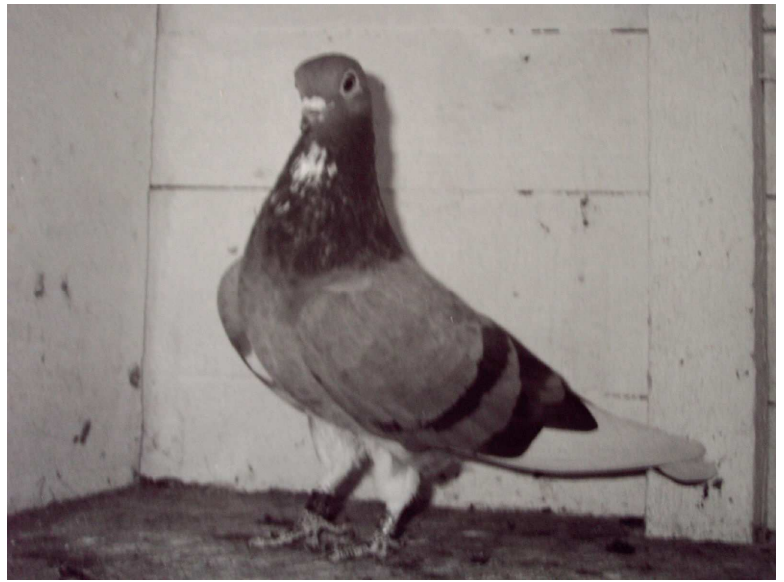
It has been a family that has continually been in demand and in the present time I have 11 pairs that are waiting to be delivered to new lofts, I see no reasons why the blood cannot be maintained for a long time to come.

Prior to and after having my birds stolen I did receive some crossed Hughes off local fanciers, one crossed hen I had was one of the ones stolen and the others I had failed to see the breeding as I just didn't want to go down that route. I also had a family of black Heaton pigeons which I inherited, but again I couldn't give these birds justice so these were moved on as a family, however, I did breed of one black hen which was paired to one of my sons of my favourite blue hen and that produced three black badges one of which was the one that I mentioned in the first part of these writings. These three black badges are going out on loan for the next breeding season.

I do have to mention Paul Unsworth who was and had been a big help to me during and after the period I had my birds stolen.

In conclusion, I think I was fortunate to be able to have obtained some of Gordon Hughes original birds, and thanks to Geoff Howarth, George Mason and Martin Lewis who trusted me and provided me with the blood lines that are still as strong now as they were all these years ago.

And a very special thank you to the man himself **Mr Gordon Hughes** for giving me years, 25 plus years of satisfaction.



Top photo: My favourite old white tail hen mentioned earlier in the article.

Bottom two photos:

These are all her daughters, granddaughters and great granddaughters. I am aiming to breed for the more prominent white beard for the future.....my project.