

# W&S Aitchison

## Eyemouth

---

The Berwickshire town of Eyemouth is situated on the South East coast of Scotland where the river Eye flows into the North Sea. The natural harbour formed by the river mouth has been in use from as far back as the 1200s, and even today the fishing industry still plays a large part in the town's economy, the town has a unique charm and is fast becoming a popular destination with tourists and day trippers.

These days the Eye Valley club is quite a hot bed of pigeon racing with many of its members putting up some fabulous performances in Club, Combine and National racing none more so than the subject of this report Steven Aitchison.

The Eye Valley club races in the mighty Up North Combine.

The original partnership of W& S Aitchison consisted of Willie and son Steven they raced very successfully firstly from the small village of Ayton where the family lived for many years.

The village of Ayton is situated a few miles inland from the present loft location in Coldingham Road in Eyemouth.

Willie was a Painter & Decorator to trade and also worked in the family business, at that time the family ran the local chip shop and café, although leisure time was obviously limited he still managed to keep 12 pairs of birds with great success, some of his early wins included 3<sup>rd</sup> Open Usher Vaux Beauvais and 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Open Rennes with a Great Grand Daughter of the great Johnny Kilpatrick's fabulous pigeon Gallabank Prince. As all Kirpatrick enthusiasts will know that the Prince was 1<sup>st</sup> Open Nantes and 40<sup>th</sup> Open Rennes in 1952 and won the 2 race average.

Willie was a shrewd pigeon man and certainly knew a good one when he saw it and son Steven has without doubt inherited his father's good stock sense.

The only break Willie had from keeping pigeons was during the war years and when he was demobbed he brought 6 ex R.A.F. service pigeons home with him. He was also instrumental in starting one of the first pigeon clubs in the area in 1950.

Sadly Old Willie suffered a stroke in 1994 from which he never fully recovered and died some 3 years later, a great loss to the family and to the Scottish Pigeon fancy, Willie was a great character and is remembered fondly by all who had the good fortune to have known him.

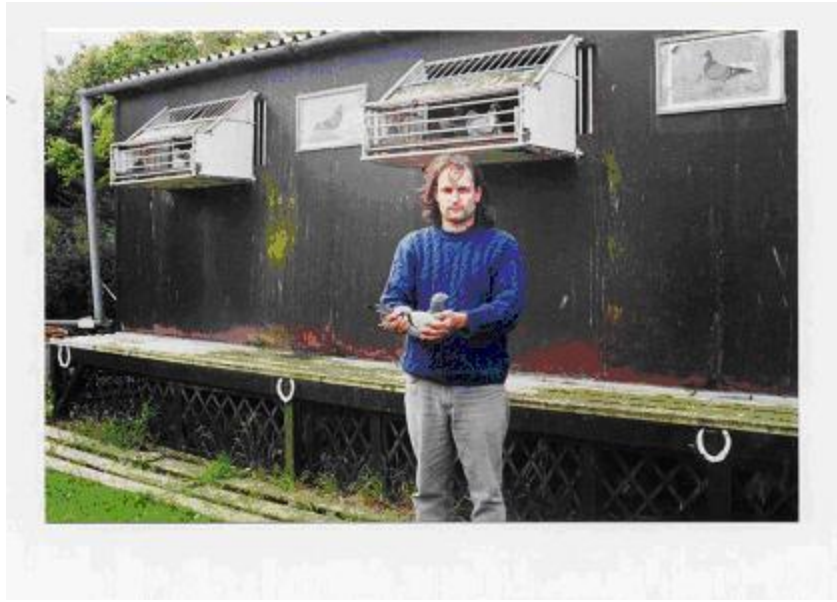
Steven moved to his present location in 1985



Willie Aitchison

The lofts of W&S Aitchison are without doubt one of the most consistent distance lofts in Scotland today and have been for several decades. The partnership are Double National winners with the S.N.F.C, from Nantes in 2000 and Appledore in 1985 the lofts have also been 2<sup>nd</sup> Open twice and 4 times 1<sup>st</sup> East Section, Any serious pigeon fancier who has competed in Scottish distance racing will substantiate this fact as the name of W&S Aitchison has featured prominently in many results over the years.

Looking back to his first involvement in the sport when there were no luxuries like cars for training, as a young lad Steven used to take the young birds on the service bus to Berwick-Upon-Tweed some 10 miles to train them and still remembers the thrill of winning the first young bird race. I just wonder how many of us would show the same dedication without all the convenient modes of transport we have at our fingertips today.



Steven Aitchison

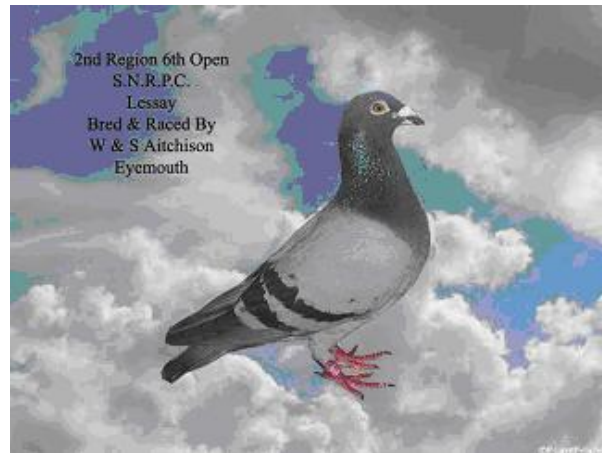
### The Pigeons

The base of the Aitchison family originates from six pigeons purchased in 1975 from Louella Lofts these were from the old Pol Bostyn strain; two more were purchased from Cliff Dobson of Bradford. Most of their best positions can be attributed to these birds, pure and crossed the best cross has been an Andre Berte violet eyed cock bred by Stevens friend Keith Holloway of Warrington he is the sire of their 1<sup>st</sup> Section 2<sup>nd</sup> Open SNFC Rennes and Grandsire of 1<sup>st</sup> Open Nantes 595mls this cock is still in the loft today and is now 17 years old.

It just goes to show what a good strain the Bostyn's have been over the years they have certainly left their mark in the British Isles with many strains up and down the country benefiting from the qualities installed in them by their creator one of the greats of the pigeon game.

Concerned that the Bostyn's were becoming too inbred Steven introduced the Kirkpatrick's, one of these introductions bred a pigeon to win 10<sup>th</sup> Open Nantes for club mate Andrew Lees. The most recent introductions have been Bricoux and Sion from John Owen of Crewe although these latest ones have still to be fully tested but the signs are promising though as one crossed with his own family has scored twice from the channel and one pure Bricoux has been twice 8<sup>th</sup> Open SNFC in their Gold Cup race, again for Andrew Lees.

Another outstanding pigeon in the loft is a Blue Cock of Bricoux/Delbar breeding he has won up to now 7<sup>th</sup> Open Falaise and 6<sup>th</sup> Open Lessay with the Scottish National Racing Pigeon Club this pigeon was bred by Steven from birds gifted from Clive Jarvis Ruabon North Wales, this pair was bred in the Natural Breeding Station.



The Old Pol Bostyn Stock Cock



1st Open Nantes 596mls



2<sup>nd</sup>, 38<sup>th</sup> & 40<sup>th</sup> Open Rennes 536mls

### Methods

Birds are flown on the natural system Steven preferring them around 12 days on eggs for the channel events, youngsters are flown to the perch only with no darkness practiced, in fact the 1986 Young Bird National 1<sup>st</sup> East Section winner was on it's 10<sup>th</sup> flight. Most youngsters in the Aitchison lofts go to the young bird national, yearlings to the coast and 2 year olds if flown to the coast, as yearlings must go to the channel.

Steven has a liking for a late bred if it's out of good stock, The 1<sup>st</sup> Open Nantes winner was a late bred bred out of two late bred parents. While accepting the fact that there is a high percentage of these later bred pigeons lost he is also quick to point out that this is the case also with the early bred ones, such is pigeon racing nowadays.

Channel candidates are given 3 or 4 inland races then stopped 3 weeks before basketing and then trained 6 or 7 times from around 40 to 60 miles, resting 3 days before basketing.

The feeding methods adopted at the Aitchison lofts are a mixture of the following beans, maples, white peas, maize & wheat, linseed and layers pellets all bought separately and percentages varied according to the birds needs.

Steven is a great believer in observing his birds and believes they will tell you what and when they need i.e. when they are being worked hard for channel preparation they require more carbohydrates, maize and wheat. Steven's opinion is that good wheat is a very underestimated food he also occasionally uses barley but it must be the best quality, fresh grit and black minerals are always available and Johnston's pigeon tonic is used one a week.

A firm believer in a strong natural immunity although should a problem arise he will quickly seek the appropriate treatment he also worms his birds twice a year.

He also believes that nowadays people treat for ailments far too much when not required and that the old school were more severe and used the bin more often and they did not seem to have the many problems that we are faced with today.

You only need to be in Stevens company for a short while to gauge what a very knowledgeable fancier he is, here is a guy who lives and breathes pigeons and his love for this great sport of ours is apparently obvious.

You just know that there is much more to come in the future from this great loft, who knows this double national winner might make the treble before long, if this were to materialise it would come as no surprise to fanciers in these parts.

Duncan Knox for the Scottish National Racing Pigeon Club