

GOING DUTCH

Jan & Kees Bleeker, Sint Pancras

by Brian Newson

Sint Pancras is a small village near the city of Alkaar in Northern Holland, it is also the home of the Bleeker family one of the top lofts in Holland over the last few years in the short to middle distance category. Indeed during the last five years father Jan and son Kees have finished among the top ten lofts (short distance) in all Holland on four occasions viz: In 1995 they were 9th overall; 1996 they were 3rd overall; 1997 they were 2nd overall and in 1999 they were 10th overall. Just for the record they were 3rd in 1989 and all this with a maximum of 60 old pigeons (20 Widowhood and eight stock pairs) and 40 youngsters.

Jan started with pigeons at an early age with his first birds coming from one or two friends/local fanciers. He married in 1965 and like many more before him he disposed of all his birds however, a house move to Heerhugowaard in 1972 saw a come back for Jan with his first pigeons being obtained from his brother Klass. Those birds were of the early Janssen line (Bange van '59) and around that time Klass was one of the top fanciers in the Combine.



Above: Jan & Kees Bleeker

Left: The Bleeker lofts, as can be seen this is not a large set-up

Right from the outset Jan was among the top results in the local club of 35 members and one cock, 72-1458117 won eight 1sts going on to become a super breeder. In 1976 they obtained a pure Van Loon hen, again a winner of three 1sts but more importantly the good stock bird 'De Goede 86' was grandson of this hen. In 1986 Kees obtained a young Van Loon cock and which, one year later became the father of the absolute number one stock cock 'De Romario'.

In 1988 the Bleekers moved to Sint Pancras and once again Klaas provided the pigeons with which to restart, some ten pairs and a few late breds. In 1989 and in the first race from Roosendaal (80 miles) 'De Romario' won first prize and followed this by taking three more firsts in the next four races, performances which contributed to it being selected as the 8th best bird short distance in Holland. That same year his son won Pont St Max (255 miles) against 2,513 birds, it was also 2nd Provincial from some 16,000 birds. In just under two seasons 'De Romario' won seven 1sts and for the record, his dam was a Janssen hen and a grand daughter of 72.1458117. Among his best performances were 1st Arras (9,406 birds), 1st Duffel (3,604 birds), 2nd Aalst (3,271 birds) and 2nd Doornik (3,062 birds). 'De Romario' also proved to be a prolific breeder of winning pigeons and was sire and g/sire to more than thirty different prize winners.

One daughter of 'Romario', 'The Etampes Duivin' 90.2288118 won twice from Etampes and then went on to become an outstanding

"De Super 15" 8e Asdoffer Vredesduif '96

o.a:	1e Peronne	8.798 d.
	1e Chantilly	849 d.
	2e Kapellen	2.007 d.
	5e Roye	7.369 d.
	7e Minderhout	2.423 d.



NL.95-5562315

Comb. Bleeker
St. Pancras (NL)
072-5642869

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breeder. At the present time the best pairing in the loft, the golden pair, is 'Goede 86' x 'The Etampes Duivin', the former a winner of three 1sts, also sixteen times in the first six in the club over a three season period. In 1989 he was crowned as the 14th Best Pigeon Short Distance in the Netherlands. In 1996 the three best Ace pigeons in the Combine of 500 members were, three sons from this pairing. Rated as the best son is 'The Rappe' 94-1206959 and who as a yearling won 1st Roye (8,802 birds) and 1st Chantilly (4,696 birds), also the best pigeon in the Provincial. In 1996 he was selected as the best Ace Pigeon of the Netherlands, his performances including 1st Kapellen (2,007 birds) and 1st Strombeek (1,704 birds). In

the same year he was adjudged as the sixth best pigeon, short distance for Holland. He also followed his racing performances by becoming a highly successful breeder. His brother, 'The Super 15' 95-5562315 was, in 1996 elected 8th Best Ace Pigeon of Holland as well as winning 1st Medium Distance and 2nd Ace Pigeon of the Combine, his best results in only two seasons being 1st Peronne (8,798 birds), 1st Chantilly (849 birds), 2nd Kapellen (2,207 birds), 2nd Chantilly (1,019 birds) and 3rd Roye (1,533 birds). Another brother, 'The Rakker', 93-2472181 was the best yearling in the club and then in 1996 it was the best short distance pigeon, also the best Ace Pigeon of the Combine - 500 members. It also won 1st St Ghislain (1,750 birds).

'Mustang', 93-2472159 is one of the best breeders and this brother of 'Rappe' also won four 1sts and for good measure was also the best short distance pigeon in the club for seasons '94 and '95. One son was first four times from race entries of 6,364, 2,849 and 1,676 birds. A grandson of 'Romario' 'The Prins', 93-2472153 was the second best pigeon in Holland for Long Distance in 1995. He won the club three times within a month and other good performances included 3rd Bourges (928), 3rd Le Ferte Bernard (1,156) and 8th Etampes (1,778). In 1997 another son of 'Romario' 95-5562317 was the best short distance pigeon in the CC (180 members) and also in the Combine (500 members).

Probably the best pigeon at the moment is 'Super 22', 97-1325022, his sire a Janssen from a local fancier while the dam is a sister to

"De Romario" 8e Vitesseduif W.H.Z.B.

1e Arras	9.406 d.
1e Duffel	3.604 d.
2e Doornik	3.062 d.
2e Aalst	3.271 d.
winnaar van 7 eerste prijzen	



NL.87-1836982

Comb. Bleeker
St. Pancras (NL)

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'Etampes Hen' and 95-5562317. In 1998 and 1999 he scored five 1sts and ended the season by winning 2nd best pigeon, medium distance in the CC with 180 members. His best results were 1st Kapellen (3,236), 1st Strombeek (2,504), 1st Houdeng (1,490) 1st Chantilly (880) and 1st Peronne (841 birds).

Jan and Kees agree that each year they aim (and are satisfied) to find at least just one pigeon with that little extra adding that young bird racing in itself is not really important to them, the young cocks only having three or four races for experience. They are certainly not averse to bringing the odd bird in particularly if they have the opinion that it will have a beneficial effect, their judgement is usually correct. One recent introduction was a very good hen from Co van de Gulik, this one coming from his Janssen family, the line 'Geeloger V67', also the Marien Pieterse 'Koppel 17'. This hen 'Coco' was a winner from Kapellen (1,491), it is also the dam of winners.

We now move on and one recent visitor to the Bleeker lofts has been Mick McMurchie and the following are his observations: He first visited the Bleeker lofts in 1997 and was very surprised to find that the loft has been virtually free of approaches from the various studs, only one in Holland having shown interest though to be fair, they wanted to buy all the birds. That was a no-go area for this partnership enjoy their pigeons and to sell them all at this stage would destroy everything they have worked for. The secret of the loft's success says Mick is that the lofts

"De Prins"

3e Bourges	928 d.
3e La Ferte	1.156 d.
8e Etampes	1.779 d.
8e Kapellen	2.085 d.
11e La Ferte	7.863 d.
13e Roye	1.528 d.



NL.93-2472153

**Comb. Bleeker
St.Pancras (NL)**

© Foto: Peter van Raamsdonk.

are not palatial and therefore there is just no room for doubtful pigeons to be kept, add to that the partners wish to keep their birds and which in turn, makes it doubtful if they would ever sell any of their Ace birds and certainly to date, they have not. In the past Mick has visited most of the top lofts in Holland including Van Loon, Karel Meulemans, William Geerts, Jan Loots, Jan Kuijzer, Pete Rietvink and Bert Braspenning to name but a few, and places the Bleekers in that company, their results say so. If pushed, Mick would say that the race results he has seen compare very favourably with those of Jan Kuijzer at his peak.

Over the years Mick has developed

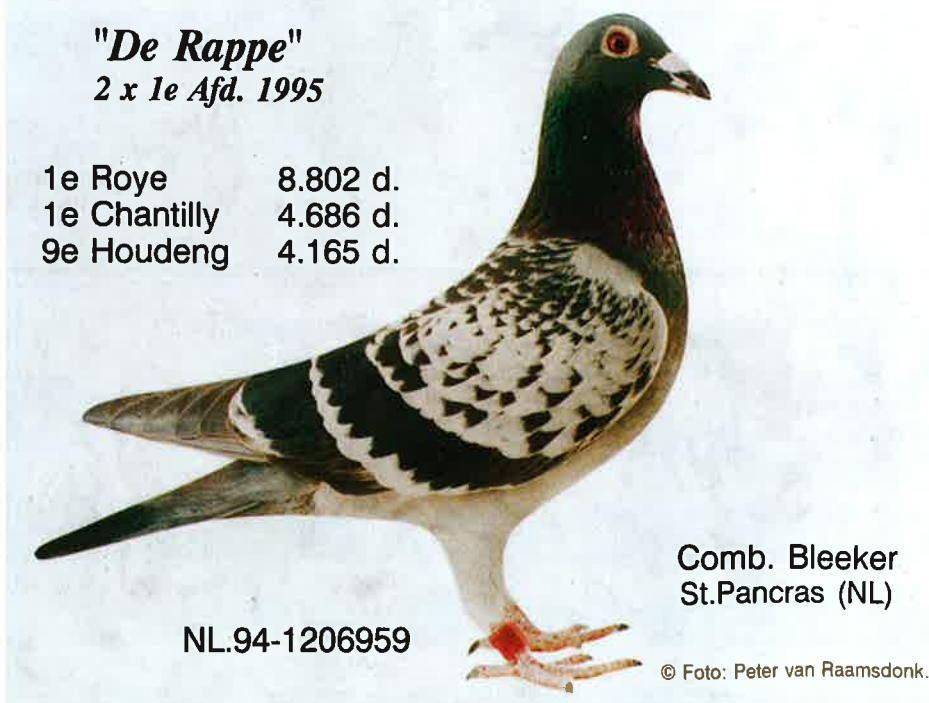
a warm friendship with Jan Loots and his helper Gert Blauber and it was Gert who arranged the various loft visits. Gert suffered from cancer and shortly before his death he asked Mick to visit him, the purpose to visit just two lofts (both Janssen based) and very worthy of a call. The day after Mick arrived Gert Bijenhof, a reporter from the Dutch Union paper also called and after looking at Gert's birds, they went to another local fancier and whose birds were based on the Piet Rietvink 'Van Moorsel' lines. On the journey back to Jan's house both he and Gert conversed in Dutch though occasionally the name Van Loon came into the conversation the outcome being they asked Mick if he would like to see the best Van Loons in Europe. Initially Mick thought they had Koopman & son in mind but no, the name of Bleeker & son came into the frame, a name new to Mick.

Early the next morning they set off for Sint Pancras where they were met by Jan & Kees Bleeker. Before looking at the birds Mick had access to all the results and these turned out to be some of the most startling he had ever seen particularly at Combine level, for such a small loft they were remarkable. The photograph confirms the loft size and can only be described as small when compared to other European lofts, indeed the stock loft itself measures only 8ft x 5ft and housed just five stock pairs, but what pairs added Mick, details of these birds having been given earlier in this report.

In the top left hand box was the most fabulous Janssen x Van Loon

"De Rappe"
2 x 1e Afd. 1995

1e Roye	8.802 d.
1e Chantilly	4.686 d.
9e Houdeng	4.165 d.



NL.94-1206959

**Comb. Bleeker
St.Pancras (NL)**

© Foto: Peter van Raamsdonk.

cock one could ever wish to see said Mick, not showy like some of the Janssen birds but typical of the very old original Van Loons. It was a smokey blue cock of ideal length and a head on him that typified a real racing cock, this was the famous 'Romario' a racing machine and the absolute Stamvater of the loft. In the other top box was another fabulous old cock from the same year as 'Romario' (1987) and this was 'De Goede 86' another Van Loon cock. His mate was 'De Etampes Duivin' and Mick made the point that this was probably one of the best hens he has ever handled. Incidentally, the world famous Dutch pigeon photographer Peter van Ramsdonk passed the same comment. This hen was a daughter from 'Romario'.

The other three boxes were occupied by suitably qualified Ace pigeons the titles having been won at Combine level in which the Bleeker's compete. One of the three has also won Ace Bird All Holland this being 'De Rappe' and who joins a select band of winners of that award including '05' of Camphius, that is the standard. 'Mustang' occupied another box with the last one going to 'De Prins'. Five wonderful pigeons said Mick and all in one stock loft of just 8ft x 5ft.

On handling the birds Mick was struck by the length of them to which Kees responded by saying that despite winning many sprint and middle distance championships at Combine and National level, the birds also love the longer races of 400-450 miles. In addition, the type of bird Mick handled was typical of the breeding generally. It should also be remembered that these birds are the old original Van Loons brought in many years ago when Van Loon was at the peak indeed, the Bleekers introduced the birds in the 70s and long before anyone was really aware of Van Loon. Add to those birds a judicious cross of the purest Janssen and the result, birds that still retain the physique, looks



and handling qualities of the original type from Poppel.

On the journey back to Jan Loot's house Mick asked Jan just what he thought of the Bleekers birds, he replied 'Mick, results do not lie, they are wonderful pigeons and in the hands of normal fanciers certainly if I was younger and healthier and not such a Janssen enthusiast, I would try some'. That reply was indeed a compliment to the Bleeker loft for Jan Loots is a perfectionist and while he gets many birds offered to him, he invariably refuses such is his love of the Janssens.

Late in 1999 Mick paid another visit to the home of Jan Loots and in response to a question from Mick regarding the Bleeker's racing performances in 1999 Jan replied to the effect that the pigeon papers confirmed the Bleekers had maintained their winning consistency. Mick did not visit the Bleekers on this occasion but he did pay a return visit to Jan Kuijzer's to collect a son off 'Vos Schallie 39' and which Mick had lent to Jan for a couple of years breeding. He did phone the Bleekers on his return

and it appears that 'De Super 22' has all the making of a super star.

In coming to a close and the Bleeker loft remains virtually undiscovered though following this introduction things may change a little. It should be noted however that the Bleekers love to win with their birds and therefore the urge to sell is not as strong as in other lofts on the Continent. Mick McMurchie was the Bleekers first visitor from the UK and as this report says, this was a chance meeting brought about by Mick's love of the Van Loons.

The selection of photographs show all the Bleeker's top birds, that of the loft is also most interesting. For the record. Championships Combine (500 fanciers) 1st Short Distance 1995, 1st Short Distance 1996, 1st Short Distance 1997, 3rd Medium Distance 1996 (Afd A 1200 fanciers). After 1997 the Combine was split up. Distances: Peronne 206 miles, Roye 224 miles, Strombeek 124 miles, Houdeng 153 miles, Le Ferte Bernard 362 miles, Chantilly 262 miles, Arras 186 miles, Kapellen 92 miles, Etampes 316 miles, Bourges 400 miles.

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