

Stalwart Jimmy thanked for loyal club service

Contributed by John Walsh
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One of the stalwarts of the Workington Victoria Flying Club has been forced to quit the sport because of the dreaded pigeon lung.

Jimmy Fulton, who is 80, has had pigeons for 64 years and admits he's missing them tremendously after they all had to go.

He recalls: "When I was in hospital for tests and was in for a few days I just couldn't wait to get home and get down the loft. Then when I was told to pack them in I felt really low. They've gone now and I really do miss them."

This week the chairman and secretary of the Victoria club, Jimmy Hadfield and Les Blacklock, have been along to Jimmy's Northside home to make a special presentation on behalf of the members.

It was presented to him to mark his long membership and service to the Workington Victoria club.

As a youth Jimmy had an allotment at Annie Pit where he and his mother kept a variety of livestock.

"I remember going to Carlisle and coming back with all sorts of chickens and ducks. I had fantails and tipplers, which was the start of my interest in pigeons. I think the first ones came from an auction and there were a number of fanciers on the gardens.

"People like Wif Pearson, John Hodgson, Tutsy Neen and the Baggley Brothers were all flying there and I suppose I just caught the racing bug and joined the Victoria club.

"Wif was a very good fancier and on race days up to a dozen people would come and just sit there to watch his pigeons come back.

"I remember he always had terriers around the place and they would go into the loft and look into the nest boxes with none of the birds moving at all off their nests.

"One of my jobs was to rush on the bike to the Imperial Hotel (still the HQ as the Union Jack) to see what time the birds were off- no mobile phones or liblines in those days. Then when they put the time in the window I would dash back on my bike to the gardens.

"One day I went racing back and Dougie Baggley suddenly appeared in front of me carrying two buckets of water. I couldn't stop, collided and there was water all over the place," reminisces Jimmy.

When he married Anne and moved to Northside he bought Ray Hoskins loft, which was conveniently situated behind his house. He's flown from the estate ever since after joining the Victoria club in the mid-60's.

Jimmy broke his novice status in Victoria with a young bird win when it had been particularly hard going. When he got to the club with his clock there was only one other fancier in and on a very similar time but Jimmy took the honours.

His biggest win in the sport was in 1972 when he topped the Cumbria Combine from the Beauvais Vaux Usher race, which given the number of birds taking part was quite a performance.

His second Derwent Valley Federation topper was in 2011, again from over the water.

It was a blue hen from David Challenger which popped-up from a hard race to give him his proudest moment in the sport.

In 2013 Jimmy won back-to-back young bird races from Flookburgh and Garstang.

He has always taken a keen interest in the club shows during the winter and back in 2010 had the honour of being asked to judge at the prestigious Blackpool Show.

Club secretary Les Blacklock said: "Jimmy has always been a tremendous help to the club. On marking night he would regularly ring all the pigeons, except his own before sorting out and sealing the baskets. He was an ever-present at club meetings and shows, and really was a proper pigeon fancier."

Jimmy hasn't been a prolific points winner in his time in the sport but is the type of fancier who made the sport what it was at its most popular - honest, committed, reliable and dedicated to his birds.

It's been a pleasure to have you in the same club Jimmy, of which you have been a valued member for so long.

Jimmy and wife Anne are pictured at the top with the framed certificate which was presented to him from Workington Victoria FC. That's the actual certificate while alongside is the proud moment when Jimmy topped the Derwent Valley Federation from over the channel.