

# THE BRAHMA CLUB OF AUSTRALIA

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# **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Happy New Year to Everyone,  
I hope all members had a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

As I am writing this report, NSW is experiencing an unusual number of horrific bushfires. Our sympathies and best wishes go out to all those affected and recovering from the devastation caused by these fires. Conditions in most areas of NSW are extremely dry and the strong winds have been constant and relentless going from mid morning until dusk. At home it has been an effort to keep the water up to the garden, trees and animals as the dry weather persists.

I've only heard a couple of reports from members on their breeding season results, which has varied. At the moment I'm running out of pens as each brooder batch is vaccinated and moved outdoors - entirely my fault as the season has been so long. (Hatching to many eggs)

My large Light chickens are showing some promise with a few cockerels and pullets looking better than their parent stock. My large darks, although retaining a good type, still persist with presenting me with a large proportion of Black chicks. Leg colour and eye colour are still being influenced by their Croad Langshan infusion a few years ago.

Eye colour varies from orange -red through to very dark brown. Leg colour ranges from bright yellow to greenish yellow to willow to slate through to black, even though the parents have yellow legs. The Black are very dark legged chickens although most have yellow soles.

I've read as much information as I can get hold of about yellow-legged black fowls but still remain confused, as most articles use vague and colloquial terminology. The golden rule that repeats itself however is that yellow legged black fowls should be double mated to breed good coloured cockerels and pullets. Has anyone got an easy solution?

The Show season is fast approaching, with the Sydney royal the first one on my list. I've been anxiously looking at the pens of youngsters for any promising candidates that might be ready in time. Most of my breeding stock will need a few months at least to recover from the ordeal of the season (broken feathers mostly on the back), but a good moult should rectify that and be ready for our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Show.

I do plead with members again, to correspond with Carol on any news items they may have or ideas for the club show or in fact any support that you can give to make our club active and progressive.

Regards,  
Andrew

# **PRESIDENT OF VICE**

(Vice President)

Hi Everyone,

I hope your Christmas and New Year was a happy and Prosperous one and that 2002 brings to fruition all of last years breeding plans and aspirations and all of those cockerels and pullets are doing likewise.

After four years of recreating Brahma's, I was looking for a marked improvement with my birds this year and I am pleased after producing 240 chickens, that I have produced birds that are an improvement on last years, but only in colour and size.

I am still finding type and good leg feathering hard to come by as I am still trying not to encourage vulture hocks at the moment. The chickens range from 6 - 14 weeks. They may look a lot more like Brahma's in 6 months time. So now it's patience, good food, a little garlic in the water with Amprolium and Dyno-mutlin every 14 days, to help prevent all those nasty little bugs getting at them.

The colour and size have improved in the Darks and Partridge, in particular the penciling in the females. I am having difficulty in achieving Dark cock birds, as mine look they will be pullet breeders and they also need to achieve the white wingbows. On both the Dark and Partridge cockerels there is sparse leg and toe feathering, owing to going back to the Wyandotte to get colour. This is really going to take time and patience, the latter not being one of my virtues.

The Blacks, well those yellow coloured legs are another story. They're slowly taking shape and with the help of two of Andrew Rathbones Black pullets and the pullets I have bred out of the Croad Langshan crossed with the Cochin, the size and type have improved, but those yellow legs are still hard to come by. They are 2/3 black and the rest are slate to slate/yellow. That Black gene is going to take some time to eliminate, if ever. Even a White Brahma that has two yellow legs, managed four slate toes, and as all my White Brahma came from White Wyandotte's, which were then crossed with other various birds. So this is really a long-term project, and I have still not really given a lot of time and thought to the correct comb or eye colour yet. Megg Miller is definitely correct when she said this Brahma project is going to take 10 plus years. **BUGGER!!!!!!!!!!**

I have found a little information on Brahma's and their origin in a letter sent in the 1800's. It is copied elsewhere in this Newsletter.

It would be very handy if all the experienced breeders were able to put a few constructive ideas together, and send them to Carol so they can be put into the Newsletter. We could have a page where members could write in for help and the questions answered by experienced breeders. It would be interesting for all of us to read, and may just be the missing link that the new breeder needs to set them on their way.

Further on, on page 6, there is an extract of a letter written in the 1850's with reference to Brahmas.

All the best time next issue,  
Bryan

# SECRETARY'S REPORT

Hi everyone,

I hope everyone had a lovely Christmas and New years break.

Welcome to all the New Members. I hope you will all be able to make it to this years Annual Show and AGM at Wyong on the last Sunday in June (30th)

It has been very hard on NSW with the large number of fires burning out of control. We do hope that all the members have been spared the heartache of the fires. Our thoughts have been with everyone in NSW regarding this disastrous time.

For those members who did not know of our correspondence with the German Brahma Club, I'm sorry to say that we lost our dear friend Hans Dietrich Other. Hans passed away peacefully in his chair on the 5<sup>th</sup> October. Ardjan Warnshuis will now take over from Dieter and will gladly keep in touch. It is very important to keep up with the correspondence so that it is possible to compare notes on the differences with the birds in different countries and how to overcome problems in the breed.

My breeding season has been a very mixed bag. It was generally a very poor season for us, and some of the early hatchings, which appeared to be very good for type died. That was heartbreaking. I got a lot of rubbish out as well. (pet value only) We are still trying to get birds on the ground, of course they won't be ready for the show season, but at least I will have some on the ground.

I lost my best Light Brahma Cock unfortunately. The door was not securely locked and he managed to get out, it's always the best ones that disappear. No doubt the fox got him. Feed for foxes around here is very, very scarce since the Calici virus came through here.

Once on my feet again I will be starting to get organized for the Annual Show and AGM. Please, everyone, I need ideas for raffle prizes. Also we need some sponsorship. Was everyone happy with the way the cards were done last year? If not, PLEASE let me know ASAP so that we can lot at doing them another way. Has anyone any ideas to help the show run smoother? Any ideas greatly appreciated.

Now, onto the Newsletter. We need more information for the continuation of the Newsletter. Hardly anyone has sent in items. There are approximately 35 members of this club, surely you could write down how things are going breeding wise, showing. What has happened to the Hints and Tips. Apart from the original ones that Ron Smith was good enough to put in there has been none. Those members who have been breeding poultry all their lives, surely you must have some tips that you have learnt over the years.

Don't forget if you have birds for sale or require livestock, you can advertise it in the newsletter. For those definitely going to the Annual Show and who will have birds available, let us know so that we can advertise them for other members to organize their finances.

That's it for now. Hope you are having a great breeding season.

Regards  
Carol

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Opening Balance:		\$598.99
Income:	Membership	30.00
	Membership	10.00
	Membership	10.00
	Membership & Refund	45.00
	Membership	10.00
	Membership	30.00
		135.00
Expenditure:	Belgian Bantam Club	50.00
	Petty cash	50.00
	Colour Cartridge	64.55
	EPA (6 months)	66.50
		231.05
Balance:		\$502.95

## PATRON'S REPORT

Hi All,

The festive season is over for another year.

The situation in NSW is another matter. Whilst we down here, in Victoria, can only imagine the worry and fear that those in Sydney lived with for a solid fortnight, it can only be imagined. It's now the end of January and the fires are still going, although in areas that are not threatening people's properties.

One of our members, Bruce Pattinson had the fires to his back fence. Fortunately, I understand that he did not lose any stock. There may be other members in the same position I do not know. For those of us who were not threatened with the fires just bear a thought for those who were, and for those who lost everything. Should you find someone who needs to replace their stock that was lost in the fires, give a helping hand. You just never know, it may be you one day.

As Carol has said, our season was less than satisfactory. Only now are we getting birds on the ground. It's been a combination of low fertility and incubator problems. Next season we will try a different feed program. Instead of feeding Full Feed Breeders Rations we will go to making a mix, which hopefully I'll publish, in the next issue. It's a mixture that Stephen Cann, a member from South Australia sent to me. Stephen has had good success with this ration and we will give it a burl.

If any members out there feed a particular feeding regime and wish to share it please send it in for publication. It needs to be remembered that what works for one doesn't always work for another, but after this season I'm willing to try anything.

It's obvious from reading the reports that the issue of yellow legs is a real problem, particularly in the Blacks, although one that can be achieved, as has been shown in the Wyandotte.

**Sorry about the front cover. We will be getting a new cartridge.**

## **EXTRACTS FROM THE POULTRY YARD BY MISS E WATTS 1878**

The Brahma.

Virgil Cornish, Esq., of Connecticut, in a letter dated March 2nd, 1852, observes,

No doubt you are acquainted with the relative position of the state in India called Chittagong, and the river called Brahma Pootra. Chittagong is a small state upon the eastern borders, and bounding west upon the Bay of Bengal. The river Brahma Pootra discharges its waters into that bay, forty or fifty miles from the western boundary of Chittagong.

If the large light coloured fowls came from that region—the Brahma Pootra—of which I think there no doubt, for we have seen nothing which in the least resembles them from any other country, still I am unable to say by which name they should be called, with certainty.

Chittagong, if I understand it, is mountainous, and little inhabited; while the country, through which the Brahma Pootra River runs, is a flat country, exceedingly rich, though perhaps a damp soil. It is much chequered with rivers. The richer the country the larger the production, is our rule to go by.'

In these views I have no doubt Mr. Cornish is perfectly correct. Between the large light coloured fowls from the Brahma Pootra and the large gray fowls from Chittagong there is a marked difference; and the person who cannot see it, can see no difference between a zephyr and a tornado."

Mr. Cornish, in the same letter alluded to above, in speaking of the importation of the Brahma Pootra fowls, remarks: "In regard to the history of these fowls very little is known. A mechanic, by the name of Chamberlain, in this city, first brought them here.

Mr. Chamberlain was acquainted with a sailor, who informed him that there were three pairs of large imported fowls in New York; and he dwelt so much upon the enormous size of these fowls that Mr. Chamberlain furnished him with money, and directed him to go to New York, and purchase a pair of them for him; which he did at a great expense. The sailor reported, that he found one pair of light gray ones, which he purchased; the second pair was dark coloured; and the third pair was red.

The man in New York, whose name I have not got, gave no account of their origin, except that they had been brought there by some sailors in the India ships. The parties through whose hands the fowls came, as far back as I have been able to trace them, are all obscure men. I obtained my stock from the original pair brought here by Mr. Chamberlain, and have never crossed them in the least. These fowls were named Chittagong by Mr. Chamberlain, on account of their resemblance, in some degree, to the fowls then in the country called by that name; but it is certain they never bred until they reached this town."

The description of these fowls exactly corresponds with that given by travellers and sea captains, with whom I have conversed, of the large light coloured fowls found in the valley of the Brahma Pootra, and materially differing from the large gray fowls found in the state of Chittagong.

The Rev. R. W. Fuller, of Massachusetts says in a letter to W. N. Andrews, Esq., of New Hampshire " I have a pair of Brahma Pootra fowls, of the same breed as those sold by Dr. J. C. Bennett, and I consider them decidedly the most splendid and beautiful fowls ever imported. Their colour is white, inclining on the back to a rich cream-colour; the hackles on the neck slightly streaked with black. The legs are yellow, heavily feathered with white, and shorter than the Chittagong or Shanghai, giving the fowls a more beautiful proportion. They are very gentle and peaceable in their disposition, and have a stately and graceful gait. Take them altogether, they are just the fowls for an amateur to fall in love with, and such as an owner, with one spark of vanity, would desire to keep in his front yard, that all passers by might behold and admire them."

# **BRAHMA AND COCHIN**

This article is reprinted with the kind permission of Country Garden Magazine. (UK)

It was written by Fred Ham, and appeared in the Jan 1995 issue.

As nearly all native fowl of Europe were small with a lightweight bone structure, it is not surprising that when early naturalists looked at some of the fowl of the Far East, they concluded that they must have had different jungle fowl as an ancestor.

Not only were they heavier boned than the European breeds, but they also had a totally different bone structure. They were taller, far more upright with very small wings held high on their bodies> These populations extended from the game types from India and Malaya, that were hard feathered and were almost devoid of under fluff, to the very soft feathered breeds of Northern China.

These breeds from Northern China were, with selection, capable of producing profusely feathered descendants> For as long as Britain had had trading links with India, the hard feathered game fowl of that country have been known to the cock fighting fraternity. If centuries of trading with the Indian sub continent and beyond had made very little impact on poultry stock or poultry breeding, the opening of the Northern Chinese ports in 1843 was to unleash a chain of events that was to revolutionise poultry breeding almost overnight.

It is difficult, nearly a century and a half later, to grasp the full impact of the events during the decade after 1843, that were to influence poultry breeding and keeping. This influence can be traced right through to the hybrid fowl of today.

## **Cochins**

The ancestors of the breed that the world came to know as Cochins probably came not from Cochin China, but from the Shanghai region. Some of the new bred, known at that time as Cochin China fowl, were given to Queen Victoria.

As early as 1843, the London illustrated news published a glowing account of the young Queen's fowls. They were presented to her Majesty by Sir Edward Belcher on his return from a round the world voyage. His ships log records landing below Gold Mountain on the northern tip of Sumatra where he '*took on board fowl etc, for sale*'

This first account of the Queens Cochins was so glowing that every ship returning from the far East was expected to land Cochins> Many claims were made as to the source of the later Cochins: it seems likely that there were several importations from Shanghai and the other treaty ports. They were completely different to anything seen in Europe before.

This poultry craze was taken up and reported on by both the serious and not so serious press, with reports on the hen fever that seemed to affect the whole nation. Not least was the interest in the sums of money that changed hands for birds. One trio was said to have paid for a small farm in Ireland!

*Punch* drew and wrote about the birds and ,in 1853, recorded '**A sum not less than 2587 pounds was given for a Cochin China last week. This is the largest sum given yet, the prices fluctuate more than railway shares.**'

Much of this interest in Cochins was fostered by poultry shows. Poultry shows were practically unheard of until the importation of the Asiatic fowl. They helped to further publicise poultry keeping in general and Cochins in particular. Writing about Cochins at the first Birmingham show in his illustrated poultry book, Lewis Wright recalled, **'Every visitor went home to tell of these new wonderful fowl, which were as big as ostriches and roared like lions, while as gentle as lambs, which could be kept anywhere, even in a garret and took to petting like tame cats.'**

During this same decade of hen fever, similar events were taking place in the United States of America. There, big shows were held and, if anything, the fowl were greeted with even greater hype. Following the reports of Queen Victoria's Cochins, birds were imported from Britain and directly from China. In America these were generally referred to, more correctly, as Shanghais.

### **Brahmas**

Brahmas arrived in Britain from the USA at the height of the Cochin boom, when an astute American breeder, George P Burnham, sent nine birds to Queen Victoria. Not wishing the gift to go unnoticed in Britain or the USA, he had the case painted in purple and gold and addressed to HMG Majesty Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. This had the desired effect, and the *London Illustrated News* reported their arrival: **'The consignment embraced nine beautiful birds, bred from stock imported by Mr Burnham direct from China.'** These birds, although described as Grey Shanghais, were the variety that became known as Light Brahmas.

During the next few years, many origins were suggested for these fowl, including Burma, Chittergong, and the Brahmaputra River. Charles Darwin suggested that the Dark variety was a cross between Chittergongs and Cochins.

The American Poulterer's companion of 1856, stated flatly, **'The first appearance of the Brahma fowl was in New York in the possession of a sailor who sold them to a mechanic of that city, who sold them or their progeny.'** Another American journal, the *Northern Farmer*, was of the opinion that, **'No Brahmas have ever been imported into the United States or any other country since the alleged importation of these three pairs to the city of New York in 1850.'** It is likely that the exact origin of Brahma fowl will always remain a mystery.

Just as has happened this century with other livestock booms centered on imported livestock, the crazy high prices could not last. There were soon Brahmas and Cochins in plenty and only the best were wanted. What did survive was the acceptance that poultry shows were the best way of deciding what was best. *Best* for many meant *Biggest*. One way of producing apparent size was to select for feather and fluff, in direct conflict to utility properties. Over the next 40-50 years, Cochins, and to a lesser extent, Brahmas changed radically. Among the multitude of genes these Asiatics brought to the West, must have been a profuse feather gene. Above all, it was selecting for this feature that was to reduce the Cochin to a purely show creature.

The Brahma certainly played a role in increasing the size of our Sussex. The genetic makeup of all later dual-purpose breeds relies to some extent on Cochin type fowl. Birds, usually black, continued to be imported directly from Northern China. In many cases, it was these Shanghais or Langshans that produced the later commercial breeds. Early on there was an attempt by some to name the breeds Shanghais, but it was as Cochins and Brahmas that they had become famous, so as such they remained. It was a later importation of fowl that were to be standardized as Langshan that were to best retain, as pure bred fowl, utility properties which in turn they passed on to most of the dark brown, egg laying breeds. These Langshans are far too important to be treated as a postscript to Cochins and must have their own place in some future *Country Garden*.



The first Cochins, described as Grouse or Cinnamon coloured, gave us in time, the first really Buff fowl and a Partridge coloured fowl, with females of a distinctive pattern that had not been previously seen in the west. Brahas gave us the all important Columbian feather pattern that, in a modified form, is retained by many breeds like the Light Sussex. Cochins were soon standardized as Partridge, Buffs, Blacks and Whites, with Blues and Cuckoos coming a little later. This colour range has satisfied breeders in at least the United Kingdom for over a century. Light and Dark (Silver Partridge) had satisfied Brahma breeders, until the introduction of several new colours.

Brahma bantams were created nearly a century ago, with Lights and Darks having nearly perfect large fowl type. A recent proliferation in colours has done nothing to enhance the type of many of the miniatures seen at recent shows. Here there is probably a lesson for breeders of large fowl Brahma.

The arrival of the Cochin and Brahma type fowl into Europe revolutionised all aspects of poultry keeping. Fowl were bigger than ever before, eggs were browner and were still laid in winter, something that was practically unknown before the arrival of the Asiatic fowl. The whole status of poultry keeping changed; for the first time fowl were properly housed and fed, and some regard was paid to how they were bred. Today, both Cochins and Brahas are purely ornamental fowl, but at least they are honest to goodness ornamental. Few who take them up expect much by way of utility properties. Blessed are those who expect little, for they may be surprised by how many good quality eggs they get, often in the winter when few other pure bred birds are laying.

Today there are still good Cochins to be seen, but even at our largest shows, one is unlikely to find good examples of all the colours. Lack of size in many of the exhibits must be of some concern to the breed club. That many of the best Brahas seen recently have been examples of the newer colours will be of concern to those whose concept of conservation is based on the nostalgia for things as they used to be.

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This is the last of a stock of articles that we had. Unless someone puts pen to paper the next Newsletter will only have Presidents Report, Vice Presidents Report, Secretary's Report Patrons Report and the entry form for the Show as well as the Mud Maps on how to get there.

**That will be a boring Newsletter.**



The birds on this page are from a new member, Mark Collins in Dalby, Queensland.  
Note the rich leg colour of the hen on top left. I think all will agree that he is well on the way with his birds.

