

## The First Piles

The Club was contacted in 2011 by Roy Crosland who's great grandfather was a prominent breeder of Modern Game in their transition period of which we as a club knew just a little.

Roy's grandfather was a John Crosland born in 1830 and from the article he provided it can be seen he was still a prominent breeder when still in his 80's in 1910.

He also painted his birds and Roy provided us with a copy of an oil on canvas dated 1866.

The article makes fascinating reading and relates to a time long gone with many peoples names. It must be now preserved as an important document.

Roy also tells me his father continued breeding and showing and he remembers being taken to the Bradford Club at Bingley Hall as a child. Roy himself is now 81. His father and Fred Entwistle were great friends, that would be the grandson of WF Entwistle.



The painting has had to be restored a little but it is still in excellent condition for an art work now nearly 150 years old.

It is the oldest art work we possess of our Breed.

Following is the 1910 article, I have replaced the poor black and white photo with the real thing.

## Eighty Years of the Fancy.

Some interesting reminiscences of the Fancy gleaned in an interview with Mr. J. Crosland, of Thornes, Wakefield, the oldest Bantam breeder in the Kingdom.

A few weeks since, in my article on "Bantams and how to keep them," I mentioned the name of that good old fancier, Mr. J. Crosland, and shortly after I received a letter thanking me for mentioning his doings, and inviting me to give him a call when next I was in Yorkshire. This invitation I accepted, and a week or two ago I was found at Thornes. My host was expecting me, and a right royal time we had going over the olden-times when we oft met at the Yorkshire shows. Some years ago Mr. Crosland met with an accident, breaking two of his toes, and since then he has not visited a show until the one recently held at Ossett; in fact, for about six years he has not even journeyed from Thornes into Wakefield. He has now, however, quite recovered from the results of his accident, and when I saw him, although within a few days of his eightieth birthday, he was as lively as one of his own Bantam cocks, and to show me that he has plenty of life left in him yet, he swung his leg over the table at which we were sitting.

It was on June 26th, 1830, that this veteran of the Fancy was born, and born in the Fancy, for his father was a well-known breeder of poultry, even in those far off days, especially of Gold and Silver Pheasants. Reared amongst poultry from the cradle, Mr. Crosland took to the Fancy like a duck takes to water, and before he had entered his teens had made his debut as an exhibitor, and fifty years ago was looked upon as England's leading authority. About that time "Wiltshire Rector," a pseudonym well known to fanciers of the long ago, writing in reference to a controversy on Game Bantams, said, in reference to an opinion put forth by Mr. Crosland; "Mr. Crosland breeds every year a large number of the best birds, and it is not wise for anyone to speak in opposition to Mr. Crosland, for he breeds the best birds in the kingdom, for the simple reason he knows how to do it."

"He knows how to do it!" What higher encomium could be given to a breeder's knowledge? What greater praise and appreciation of a man's standing and ability? That what "Wiltshire Rector" said was true is shown by the fact that in those far off days Mr. Crosland sold as much as £300 worth of Game Bantams in one season. He did not show a great deal, but used to have a flutter just now and then. One of his particular shows which he ever liked to win at was Thorne, and at this fixture he won the cup for the best pen of Bantams no fewer than eleven times in succession, and so convinced were some of the fanciers that one man could not fairly win such a sequence of successes that they openly said friend John must get at the judges. His reply was that at the next year he would not show, and told one gentleman who had expressed surprise and doubt at his continually winning the Thorne cup, that he could select a trio of birds (in those days the birds were always shown in trios) from his yard, and he (John) would not compete. This gentleman a Mr. Jas. Oldroyd, of Wakenick, selected his birds from John's stock, sent them to Thorne, and won the cup. Two years later Mr. Jos. Hudson, of Wakefield, repeated Mr. Oldroyd's experiment, with the same result, and later Mr. W. F. Entwistle had the same experience. One year he sold his best pen to Mr. Maples, of Wavertree, and they ought to have won, but did not, and Mr. Crosland won with a pen not as good. On another occasion, at the same show, he sold the winning pen, and ran 2nd and 3rd with two other pens himself. Thus Thorne has many pleasant recollections for him. One year, when in the zenith of his fame, he sold £180 worth of his birds and yet won four cups at Darlington, Birmingham, and Thorne, and 1sts at several other shows, including such important fixtures as Liverpool and Plymouth. This was in 1864.

As we settled ourselves down with the Mountain Dew at our elbows, and a smoke in our hands, I said: "When did you start, John?"

"Start; why I was born in the Fancy. I cannot remember ever being without feathers. My father kept Golden and Silver Pheasants (now known as Spangled Hamburghs), and that well-known utility fowl, the Yorkshire Hornet. He also had some Old English Game. You will thus see that I have been a fancier from the time I could toddle."

"What led you to think of producing Game Bantams?"

"Well, it was in 1842, I was only twelve years old at the time, and was breeding Old English Game, when the thought occurred to me that Game Bantams would be pretty birds. I set to work. My first try was with a small Old English Game, a clipped cock—that is, a bird got ready for fighting, you know. He was a small one, and I paired him to a Black-

I did. He sent them to the Crystal Palace and they won 1st prize."

"Having got the breed established, I suppose you sold to others as well?"

"I should just think I did, and at the end of the fifties classes began to be given for Game Bantams, and with so many people breeding them they improved. Amongst the breeders whom I sold birds to was Mr. Richard Hawksley, who won 1st, 2nd, and 3rd at Birmingham with three trios that he had from me. Mr. Inson, Liverpool; Mr. Newsome, Batley; Mr. Geo. Noble, Heckmondwike; Mr. Forrest, Greenhithe, Kent; Messrs. Harvey and Bayley, Biggleswade; Harry Adams had a lot of all kinds; and I sent some to Canada to Mr. John Hurst, of Toronto, and to Mr. Allen and Mr. Woodcombe, of America; these gentlemen I supplied at one time and another with all kinds of Bantams, and big Game, too.

"Did not Sir George Gore buy a big lot from you?"

"Yes; I sold Sir George Gore over £500 worth of Bantams, including all my stock of Rosecombs, and the Duckwing Game cock, known as the Leeds cock, for which he gave £35. Mr. John Douglas also bought largely from me for the Duchess of Newcastle. One



THE FIRST PILE GAME BANTAMS.

Winners of First and Cup, Kendal, etc. Bred by Mr. J. Crosland. Our illustration is from a painting by Mr. Crosland.

red hen. I worked on quietly for several years, gradually improving my birds, until 1848, when Dr. Swan, a noted breeder of Modern Game, became interested in my efforts, and he let me have a small late-bred Black-red cock. This bird I mated to twenty of my own hens, and the results were most satisfactory. I began showing them and won in 1850 the medal for best pair of Bantams at Briton, also at Newmillerdam, at a show held in Sir Thomas Pilkington's Park."

"In those days you had no Game Bantam classes?"

"No. No one had ever seen Game Bantams till I brought them out, and we had to show in the Any Variety Bantam classes against Sebrights—Sir John Sebrights we called them in those days, because Sir John introduced them—Blacks, and Whites, now known as Rosecombs."

"Can you tell me when you first won with Game Bantams at the Crystal Palace?"

"Yes, it was in 1858 that I first sent a pen of birds to the Crystal Palace, and they won 1st, but my birds had won there before then. One Sunday, the year previous, Mr. Isaac Thornton, of Heckmondwike, came over to Thornes and begged me to let him have a pen-

bird he bought was my Newark cup-winning Black-red and some Wheaten hens, and these were reproduced in Lewis Wright's book when he brought it out. George Helliwell—you will remember 'Yorkshire George?'—he had many a lot from me. Sam Fielding Menzies (of Glasgow), Revd. Rayner, Revd. Miller (of Carleton), Geo. Maples (of Wavertree), Richard Teahy (of Preston), Mr. Charlton and Mr. Pease (both of Darlington), Dr. Morris (of Rochdale), Fred Wragg (manager for Lady Gwydyr), Brownlow (of Scotland), Smith (of Wilmslow), James Holland (of Manchester), W. F. Entwistle (father of the present Mr. J. F. Entwistle), I sold him many a lot when he was at Otley, and after he went to Bawtry too; John How (of Denton), Wood (of Sheffield), Sugden (of Cleckheaton), Barnes (of Stockport), Jas. Fletcher (of Stoneclough), Mr. Jeffries (of Ipswich), Geo. Hall (of Sunderland)—he showed my birds with much success, and did well with them. Mr. Joseph Senior gave me £21 for the Thorne cup winner, and £50 for some others which he afterwards sold to Mr. W. F. Entwistle; and many others that I cannot remember." C. A. H.

(To be continued.)