

Exhibition ALABAMA STYLE

It does not matter where you travel in the world, our hobby of keeping poultry is the same.

My day began at 6.30am, which is a reasonable time and we hit the road on a crisp Alabama morning. I think we all ask ourselves the same question and that is, why do we do this?

The journey began with breakfast, which was eaten on the move. This is quite a normal way to eat in America. I find it amazing that there is this vast choice of food, which is always available at any time during the day or night.

I am traveling along with my good friend Channing Grisham and his wife Tara, I must add that this lady is very patient and supportive for someone who is not really a poultry person and not an exhibitor, but she comes in very handy when it comes to penning the birds.

We arrived at the show which was being held at State Fair Ground close to Muscle Shoals, Alabama. The venue was excellent and it was a pleasure to see the birds being transported in some wonderfully decorated carry boxes, some of these were decorated with pictures of birds being carried.

The hall itself was well lit and presented, the show was very well organised with a good layout. There were about 1200 birds being exhibited which for a relatively small show seemed to be a good turn out. Most of the birds on exhibition were true bantams. These were combined with a large amount of American Old English Game which are completely a different standard to the Old English Game in the UK. The birds appeared to be very narrow in body compared to the breed here in the UK.

The Dutch and Rosecombs were well represented with good large classes and I was surprised to see a very large display of Sebrights of which the silver variety was the most common.

One of the breeds which really impressed me was the Cornish Game. These were exceptionally wide in body and the judges had problems when it came to removing them from the cages as the doors on the cages were quite narrow.

I made a comment on the fact that there was a very small representation for large fowl or as the Americans say 'Standard' which seems to be the way that poultry keeping is moving. The most popular breeds were large Wyandottes and some excellent Australorps.

There was a very good representation of Polands and it was really pleasing to see this amount of birds on exhibition. The fact that this was only a local show, there were more of the breed than we have in the UK at our main shows, the colour range of the Poland's included White Crested Blue, White Crested Cuckoo, White Crested Black and a good variety of Laced Buff, Gold and Silver. There was sadly a lack of self colours which is the same as here in the UK. My favourite birds were a pair of Bantam Buff Laced Frizzles, both the cock and the hen were both well prepared and to standard.

Frizzle Polands are becoming more scarce all over the world, therefore it was a pleasure to see such good quality birds on display. The breeder is one of the few I have met who still breeds for the correct formation of wide frizzle feathers the only disappointment was that the birds were marked down for being slightly over sized. I did ask what they classed as the correct size of the bird but could not get a satisfactory answer to my question. This is a shame as the birds were perfect in all other aspects apart from the size.

Judging in the US is the same as anywhere else in the world, and as we say in the poultry fancy, the results from any show are only the opinion of one person on the show day. Judges have their specialty breeds and this will never alter so you accept the results and enjoy the hobby.

The show carried on the same as they do in any country, and there were several trophies presented but they do not have a Championship Row. Instead they stood the trophies on top of the appropriate cages. The one thing that I found strange, was that there was no indication as to what the trophies were for. The people who had won the trophies were delighted and that is all that matters as it helps keep the fancy alive.

I was very surprised when it came to lunch time with the arrival of a huge Chuck Wagon which came onto the site and cooked excellent dinners for everyone. The menu consisted of Fish Fillets (Catfish) with fries and all the trimmings. Chicken Strips in a lovely coated batter with slaw and hush puppies. (these are corn bread mixed with onions, seasoning and deep fried) 'Yum Yum' then once everyone had been fed the wagon packed up and went on its way, the show then was coming to a close and the birds were safely boxed and we made our way home after a very enjoyable day. I met old and made new friends and I really hope its not too long before I can attend another meet in the US.

Clare Beebe

