

DAVE THOMAS



Today, we meet Dave Thomas who stands as one of the most respected figures in the Gloster world - a breeder, exhibitor, judge, teacher, and ambassador whose contribution to the Fancy has left a lasting legacy for future generations.

Dave's introduction to Glosters came over 60 years ago when his father took him and his twin brother, John, to a bird show at the Pier Pavilion in their hometown of Colwyn Bay, North Wales. While they were already familiar with Border, Yorkshire, and Norwich Canaries, it was the Any Other Variety class that captured their imagination. There, they saw two clear-bodied dark-crested Coronas for the first time. Their distinctive appearance prompted comparisons to the Beatles, and a fascination with the breed was born.

At around 18 years of age, Dave and John moved to a house with a shed in the backyard, giving them the opportunity to begin breeding Glosters in earnest. Early success came as novice exhibitors at Cage Bird Society shows, although Gloster classifications were limited and specialist judges were rarely engaged due to cost considerations.

Keen to improve their knowledge, the brothers travelled more than 300 miles round-trip to attend the GFCC Show in Cheltenham. The

experience proved invaluable, offering a glimpse of the highest standards in the Fancy and providing opportunities to learn directly from established breeders and exhibitors.

After five years, Dave progressed to the Champion section. By this time, his brother had married and stepped away from the hobby, leaving Dave to continue his Gloster journey alone. As a Champion exhibitor, Dave became actively involved in judging at many Cage Bird Society shows. At the time, non-patronage shows were not required to engage panel judges, creating opportunities for aspiring judges to gain valuable experience.

Dave also ventured into the major two-day CBS shows, including Derby and York, where Gloster entries often exceeded 600 birds. It was at Derby that he first encountered a type of Consort he had never seen before—birds with noticeably flat heads. An experienced fancier soon explained that Norwich blood was being introduced into some breeding lines. Despite changing trends, leading breeders such as Ivor Allberry continued to demonstrate the qualities of the correct Gloster type through their success on the show bench.

In 1978, Dave judged his first All Gloster Show, the East Anglian Gloster Christmas Show

in Ipswich, alongside the late Colin Penn of Arundel. Under the judging regulations of the day, one judge had to be a panel judge while the other did not. Colin, who had worked as a "Bevin Boy" coal miner in South Wales during the Second World War, had a particular affection for Wales, making the partnership especially memorable.

The following year marked another milestone when Dave became the first Welshman to be appointed to the IGBA judging panel. Over the years, he has judged at most of the major All Gloster Shows and officiated at prestigious events including the National, Scottish National, and Welsh National. His judging appointments have taken him across the United Kingdom and internationally to Northern Ireland, Belgium, Italy, and Malta. He has also attended the Canadian and American Nationals, as well as shows in Israel, giving him a truly global perspective on the Fancy.

Despite professional commitments that sometimes limited his ability to exhibit as frequently as he would have liked, Dave achieved considerable success, winning five All Gloster Shows during his career. Beyond the show bench, he has devoted significant time to the organisation and administration of exhibitions. Beginning as a Show Manager at just 20 years of age, he later served as both Secretary and Treasurer, helping to ensure the smooth running of events and the continued promotion of the Fancy.

Reflecting on the years gone by, Dave notes with sadness the number of Gloster clubs in the UK that have disappeared, perhaps reflecting the changing realities facing the Fancy today. Nevertheless, his commitment and enthusiasm remain undiminished.

Dave is quick to acknowledge that none of his achievements would have been possible without the support of others. Work commitments often required him to spend time away from home, and during those periods he relied heavily on his mother and lifelong friends to care for his birds. Their kindness and dedication, he says, played a vital role in everything he accomplished.



Steve's Corner

Colours in Glosters

Education is the key...

What is buff feathering?

Buff feathering is a structural feather type characterised by greater width, length and texture than the tighter, harder yellow feather. The texture of buff feather can vary considerably, ranging from soft and silky to medium or even coarse. For this reason, it is essential that the breeder carefully evaluates feather quality and texture before pairing, aiming to balance feather type while preserving the desired Gloster characteristics.

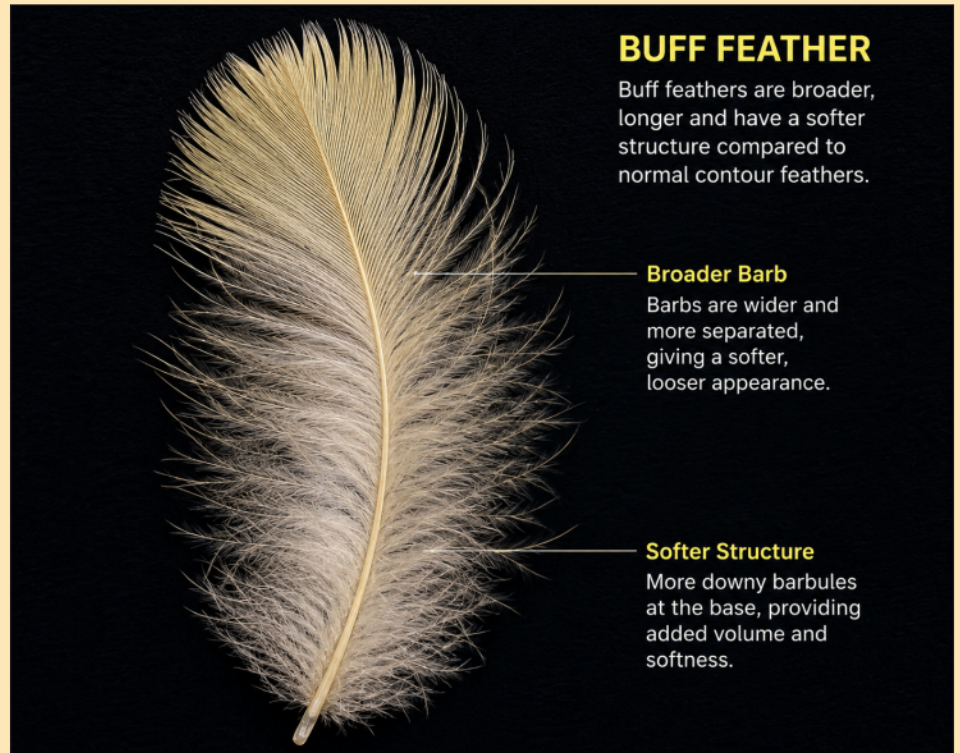
In Glosters, buff feathering plays an important role in producing body, substance and overall feather abundance. A well-balanced buff-feathered bird contributes depth through the body, smooth contouring and the soft, rounded appearance so admired in the breed. Without sufficient buff influence, Glosters can quickly become too narrow, tight feathered and lacking in overall substance.

As with many Gloster breeders, double buff pairing has long been a common practice when attempting to increase body mass, improve feather density and maintain the broad, cobby outline associated with quality exhibition birds. In particular, certain Corona lines have benefited from controlled double buffing to enhance head properties and maintain fullness around the cap.

However, whilst double buffing can produce impressive advantages, it also carries several risks which must be carefully managed. Excessive feather length is one of the most common consequences, often accompanied by overly broad tail feathers and a general loss of neatness around the thighs and vent area, where feathers may protrude outward and disturb the clean outline expected in a quality Gloster.

Additional faults may include overblown flanks, which disrupt the symmetry beneath the tail and upset the bird's overall balance. Flight feathers may also extend well beyond the base of the tail, giving the bird a coarse or untidy appearance. In severe cases, the feather can lose definition altogether, resulting in a bird that appears woolly rather than smooth and compact.

Experienced breeders will often recognise when a line has been excessively double buffed over successive generations. One indication is the appearance of white pencilling or pale tips at the end of darker feathers, suggesting a weakening or dilution of pigmentation caused by



BUFF FEATHER

Buff feathers are broader, longer and have a softer structure compared to normal contour feathers.

Broader Barb

Barbs are wider and more separated, giving a softer, looser appearance.

Softer Structure

More downy barbules at the base, providing added volume and softness.

prolonged concentration of buff feathering. To counteract this, many breeders periodically introduce yellows or self-greens into the breeding programme in order to restore feather balance, maintain colour depth and tighten feather quality.

It must also be remembered that feather quality is inherited progressively over generations. The effects of poor feather management are rarely corrected in a single season, and careless pairing decisions can take years to reverse. Successful Gloster breeding therefore relies not only on producing feather abundance, but on maintaining refinement, balance and control of texture throughout the breeding line.

No discussion on double buffing would be complete without mentioning feather lumps, a fault that has become increasingly prevalent since the 1980s. Although opinions differ regarding the precise causes, many breeders believe that excessive feather density and prolonged concentration of buff feathering may contribute to the problem. Feather lumps remain one of the most frustrating faults encountered in the breed and deserve detailed consideration in their own right. For this reason, I intend to

publish a separate in-depth article examining feather faults within the Gloster Fancy in the future.



A feather lump is a hardened mass that develops beneath the skin, causing feathers to grow around it irregularly. It is considered a major fault in canaries.

visit www.gfcci.com
for News, Articles
& Upadtes