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The LCA Founder's Trophy

In the first of an occasional series, inspired by a trophy treasure discovered by Dagenham CBS earlier this year (News, March 11), *C&AB* asked the Lizard Canary Association to unearth the story behind its famous premier cup which 'takes precedence over any other'. We thank **HUW EVANS** and **IAN ADCOCK** for their help in compiling this article

IT SEEMS STRANGE that, for a breed with such a long history, the Lizard canary was governed for half a century by a regional society: the Lancashire and Lizard Canary Fancier's Association (L&LCFA). Formed about 1900, it showed little inclination to support the breed beyond the county borders of Lancashire, and the weakness of such an insular policy was exposed during the Second World War when the L&LCFA became defunct and most of its records disappeared.

It was to fill this void that, in 1944, two canary fanciers discussed the possibility of forming a national society to revive the dwindling fortunes of the Lizard canary. One was A.W. Smith, the renowned canary expert. The other was a man whose experience of canaries, according to John Scott, seems to have been limited to a few birds in a garden aviary. He was Robert H. Yates, and it was he who became the founder of the LCA.

What Mr Yates lacked in knowledge, he more than made up with dedication and organisational skill. He was a dentist by profession, and following an advertisement in *Cage Birds*, an inaugural meeting was held on May 13, 1945 at his home in Wolverhampton. There were only four attendees, but under



The 1945 LCA Founder's Trophy

his leadership they drew up a framework for a new association, the Lizard Canary Association of Great Britain.

Mr. Yates was elected chairman, and for the first two years, also secretary and treasurer. He retained the chairmanship up to 1952, when his strong religious convictions compelled him to resign over a decision to award patronage to shows held on Sundays. By that time, the Lizard canary was well on its way to recovery.

Numbers were very low at the end of the war, but those fanciers who still had Lizards responded well to the LCA's call for support. Within the first year, membership had grown to 25, and a total of 45 Lizards were exhibited at the 1945 National (Red Cross) Exhibition in London. Eight years later, membership stood at 75, the average entry at LCA patronage shows was more than 60 birds, and the first "century" had been achieved at the Club Show in Downham with an entry of 111 birds.

No wonder A.W. Smith, the president of the LCA, was able to declare: "In its short history, the members have worked wonders and the Lizard Fancy is stronger

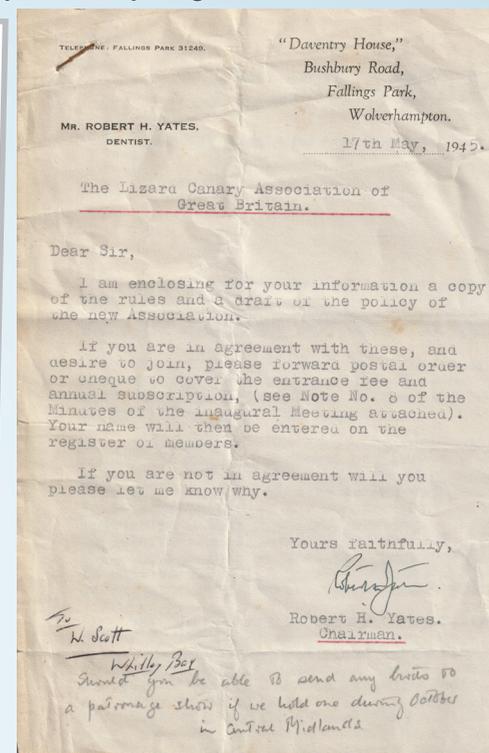


LCA founder: Mr Robert H. Yates

"The Founder's Trophy is engraved 1945 but this was almost certainly a retrospective date to mark the foundation of the LCA

than it has ever been."

Robert H. Yates's outstanding contribution to the survival of the Lizard canary is commemorated by the Founder's Trophy. It is engraved "1945" but this was almost certainly a retrospective date to mark the foundation of the LCA. It was first awarded in 1950, the winner being Len Wood, later chairman of the LCA. Its status is confirmed by the following description in the 1961 Year Book: "Presented by the Founder of the LCA Mr Robert H. Yates. This is the Association's premiere trophy and takes precedence over any other. It is awarded for the Best Lizard canary in Show exhibited by a member – usually at

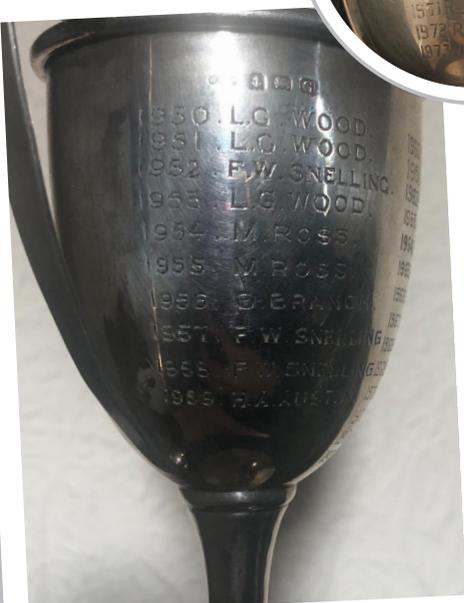


This letter was written four days after the LCA's inaugural meeting from Robert Yates to William Scott (John Scott's father) inviting him to join the association. John Scott, along with his father, was one of the founding members. John held various posts with the LCA and was chairman for more than 10 years and then from 1988, president until his death in 2012

the Club Show."

Paradoxically, it is by far the smallest of the LCA's trophies, yet, rather like cricket's Ashes trophy (which is even smaller), this is the one that people most want to win. It is befitting that at the LCA's golden anniversary show held in 1995, the Founder's Trophy was presented by his son, Bob Yates.

● *The historical information in this article is drawn from the Scott Archive held by Huw Evans.*



The trophy shows the winners in the 1950s and 1960s: a list of who's who in the Lizard world, many of whom held office in the association



Robert Yates's son, Bob Yates (centre) and his wife at the LCA's golden anniversary show in 1995. At this show, Mr Yates nominated John Scott (right) as the first recipient of the Robert H. Yates Shield. Mr Yates also presented the Founder's Trophy for Best Lizard to Mr Bob Bullock