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OPEN LETTER

TO THE GLOSTER FANCIERS WORLDWIDE



Stephen Silk
GFCCI Councillor - New Zealand

A family visit to Nick and Annalain Barrett left a lasting impression on me. As GFCCI Councillor for New Zealand, I write this open letter to ask fellow fanciers to respect one another and to help preserve the Gloster standard

Dear fellow Gloster fanciers,

Mario Zahra's recent article on division within the Gloster Fancy prompted me to write. I offer these personal views as a breeder, exhibitor and judge in New Zealand, and as someone who has experienced first-hand the kindness of Nick and Annalain Barrett.

It was Nick's book that first sparked my interest in breeding and exhibiting Gloster canaries. His knowledge opened the door to a Fancy I have now loved for more than twenty-five years.

When I travelled to the United Kingdom on a family holiday, I contacted Nick for the first time. He and Annalain invited me and my two teenage daughters to their home. I had hoped for a quick visit to meet Nick and see the birds. We ended up spending the day with them, and it remains a treasured family memory.

Nick and Annalain showed us their birdroom, served us lunch and drove us through the countryside to see their livestock and some of the places they thought we would enjoy. We had come from the other side of the world, and they treated us like friends. We signed the guestbook, as so many visitors had done before us. I had gone there to see the Glosters. What stayed with me most was how freely Nick shared what he knew and how welcome they both made my daughters feel.

Seeing Nick's livestock also gave me an appreciation of the experience behind his views on the Gloster. As a breeder of pedigree livestock, he understands how many generations of careful selection it takes to establish the qualities of a breed. The type and balance we recognise in the Gloster today owe a great deal to the breeders who came before us.

That is why I take concerns about cross-breeding seriously. A cross may produce a striking individual bird, yet the qualities that distinguish the Gloster can be difficult, perhaps impossible, to recover once lost. I do not support introducing new colours into the standard. As I understand it, this is not a direction being discussed or pursued here in New Zealand. I want the fanciers who come after us to have the same opportunity I had to breed and exhibit Glosters true to the standard.

It is disheartening to hear of personal attacks and attempts to exclude people from our Fancy. When someone puts forward an idea, I hope we can give it a fair hearing, whoever proposed it. Whatever club we belong to, we share a wish for healthy birds, strong breed standards, fair competition and a thriving future for the Gloster Canary.

We can disagree with Nick on individual points and still recognise what he has given to the Fancy. I know what his encouragement meant to one breeder from New Zealand. I believe his advocacy comes from a genuine desire to see future generations inherit a Gloster they can recognise, and an understanding of the work it took to produce it. That is a legacy I support, and I hope you will too.

Kind regards,

Stephen Silk
GFCCI Councillor - New Zealand



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