



▲ Not all doocots are on public ground. Many are barely visible in back gardens, or on window ledges, balconies or roof tops.

Not all are out in the 'schemes' either. For example these two well established lofts are in the East End, close to Duke Street (*above*) and Glamis Road (*right*).

Each is square in plan and is around 4m tall, with a robust

timber frame clad in an assortment of re-used galvanised or corrugated metal sheeting.

Matte black or green seem to be the favoured colours, and although no doocot is specifically marked, the identity of its owner will be more than likely known to most people in the locality.

On the Duke Street example, to prevent unwarranted entry either



by vermin or by rivals (this being a highly competitive world in which disputes, thefts and even arson have been known), the single entry point (for humans at least) is located at mid-level, allowing access only by ladder. A further opening just below roof level is there to let in light for when the doo man calls by, as he must on a regular basis, to feed his charges

and clean out the 'roof crate', the space where the pens for the 'working' birds are housed.

Usually the highest and darkest nest box in the loft is occupied by one of the cocks.

But cock or hen, the only way out for the birds to fly is via the letterbox-sized opening in the roof, and it is up there where the main action takes place.



◀ The key components of a doocot are its 'landing board' and 'hood'. Essentially what happens, or is supposed to happen, is this.

A cock and hen will be paired up, allowed to bond and breed, and generally 'homed' in the doocot.

The pair is then separated for a period, to build up what doo men call their 'guts' (or sex drive), before one of them is allowed to fly off in search of a new mate.

Having consummated his or her desire, a good doo will then fly straight back to its doocot and call for its new acquaintance to follow.

This might not work at all. Or the other doo might go only as far the rooftop, in which case the 'working' bird has to work that bit harder to entice it onto the landing board.

If successful, the doo man then pulls on a wire to swing the hood up and over the landing board, and as seen here at Craigmend, the capture is complete.

A doo man's delight!

The trapped bird will then either be swapped for another doo from outside 'the square', or sold, perhaps at one of the impromptu Sunday night 'doo shops' held at a pigeon supplies store on Westmuir Street in the Parkhead area.

A cock may fetch £5-10, a hen maybe £15-25. But no-one is in this for the money, and the proceeds more often than not go towards the next bag of seed.

Far more important is the process; the rearing and nurture of the birds, the assessment of each one's character and worth, the maintenance of the loft, the watching, the waiting.

This is a long game, a game of patience. But it is also one that offers the doo man that precious commodity; a quiet, intimate and lofty haven from the follies of mankind on the ground below.

