



**A Canadian airman, wireless operator of a Lancaster bomber plane based in the UK is shown here carrying two pigeon boxes. Amazingly, pigeons were a vital part of communications equipment in World War 2! This photo was taken in October 1942.**

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Pigeons have served as message carriers for thousands of years. When the Olympic Games were held every four years in Athens, over 2,000 years ago, homing pigeons were sent back to the villages to announce the winners.

- So how do pigeons find their way home?
- How can they accelerate from 0-50 kms per hour in a few seconds?
- Or fly for hundreds of kilometres without stopping?

This National Geographic video (46mins) explains how. It also shows pigeon chicks hatching and feeding shortly afterwards (19.35 minutes).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtBloRAXFK8>



### Brilliant Beasts Pigeon Genius (National

If you want a very short video (under 3 minutes) with interesting footage, this explains the mysteries of the 'bird brain'.

<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=vmn&p=homing+pigeons+%2B+vimeo#id=4&vid=b652663cdc75>

Here is a documentary called 'Fancy That' about pigeon racing. It was commissioned by the Royal Pigeon Racing Society in the UK and includes interviews and shots of children who love pigeons, like little Jack below.

<https://vimeo.com/58751175>



How did pigeons serve in war?

Here's a mobile pigeon carrier that was used in World War 1. Made out of a converted bus, it transported pigeons from one section of the 'front' (battle line) to another.



Here is rare colour footage of US troops on DD embarking in Weymouth, on Britain's southern port, and arriving in Normandy,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQXo-yKxbWs>

This link below black and white footage of US and British soldiers advancing through Northern France (9mins). The second link is a 1.30 minute Discovery documentary on DDay. It retells the story of the landing on Omaha beach. It is excellent and contains a section about messenger pigeons, but contains distressing scenes (58 minutes). The first 2 minutes 30 seconds are a good synopsis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wg5x5WaZPo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71bflWCtZFY>

Finally, a little story about an American artist with a sense of humour. For eight months he trained a flock of pigeons to fly from Havana in Cuba back to the United States. Each pigeon carried either a mini camera to record the journey, or a fat Cuban cigar.

[New York Times story](#)



**English:** A B-type bus from London converted into a pigeon loft for use in Northern France and Belgium during the Great War.

**Русский:** Голубиный автобус голубиной военной почты на Первой мировой войне.

**Date** circa 1916

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bus\\_pigeon\\_loft.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bus_pigeon_loft.jpg)