



THE IRISH WOLFHOUND



Illustration courtesy of the Irish Kennel Club

*I will give thee a dog which I got in Ireland.
He is huge of limb and for a follower equal to an able man.
Moreover, he hath a man's wit and will bark at thine enemies but never thy friends.
He will see by each man's face whether he be ill or well disposed towards thee.*

From the Saga of Nial, 970-1014

THE STANDARD, ILLUSTRATED

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of

**THE FEDERATION OF
IRISH WOLFHOUND CLUBS**

<https://www.fiwc.club/>

The Irish Wolfhound

*Behold this creature's form and state!
Ofim nature surely did create,
That to the world might be exprest
What mien there can be in a beast;
More nobleness of form and mind
Than in a lion we can find:
Yea, this heroic beast doth seem
In majesty to rival him.
Yet he vouchsafes to man to show
His service, and submission too –
And here we a distinction have;
That brute is fierce – the dog is brave.
He hath himself so well subdued,
That hunger cannot make him rude;
And all his manners do confess
That courage dwells with gentleness.*

Catherine Phillips (1660)
Taken from "Anecdotes of Dogs",
by Edward Jesse (1858)

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FIWC – Federation of the Irish Wolfhound Clubs

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BREEDING HOUNDS, PRESERVING THE BREED

Dogs have been bred over decades and centuries following concepts and practices that do not envisage evolution but preservation. In fact, their characteristics must conform to the breed standard, which is drafted when a canine population shows recognisable breed characteristics in a uniform fashion and demonstrates that it can consistently transmit such features through breeding. The years pass, breeders change, but the phenotype of purebreds must always conform to the standard. In breeding therefore, the concept of improvement only concerns the possibility of bringing a breed back to conforming as much as possible to the standard when, for any reason, it starts to move away from its unique characteristics. In my opinion therefore, concepts such as hyper-type are unnecessary exaggerations, not evolutions. The standard must be every breeder's Bible and, likewise, the experts that have the task of assessing the breeders' work must know it perfectly.

As regards our beloved breed, luckily, over the years we have preserved the type described in the breed standard drafted by Capt. Graham. That standard has never changed and even the small changes in wording required by the FCI, as part of the formal standardisation of different breeds, will not alter it. In some cases the standard is rather concise and, for some people, certain points may not be sufficiently clear. For this reason it is useful to have an explanation of the standard, which details the description of the anatomy, movement and typical character of the breed. Pictures obviously also help to make the explanations more effective.

The booklet you are holding was strongly desired by the FIWC Management Committee. We are extremely grateful to Elizabeth Murphy, Jim Behan, Jocelyne Gagnè and Outi Piisi-Putta for the great work they have done to produce it. As you can see the result is excellent. Now breeders, breed lovers and judges all have a wonderful tool to understand the essence of the breed, down to the smallest detail.

I hope you enjoy reading it, and once again a heartfelt thank you to all those who have worked to produce this booklet.

Marcello Poli
Chairman



THE STANDARD OF THE IRISH WOLFHOUND

At the time of publication of this booklet the FCI breed Standard in force is the one published 02/04/2001. We understand some revisions are being considered but as the planned changes are just in wording, and do not substantially alter the standard, the commentary in this document is pertinent to both the existing and proposed revised versions of the Standard.

We would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the Standard adopted by The Irish Wolfhound Club in 1885 includes the List of Points in Order of Merit. While this list is no longer included in the FCI Standard, its intent is integrated into the body of the work. However, this List should be seriously kept in mind as it is a well-defined reference tool. This is especially true for judges of our breed as this list of points provides a clear outline of the comparative importance of select virtues and faults of any single specimen.



02.04.2001/EN
FCI-Standard N° 160

IRISH WOLFHOUND

FCI-St. N° 160 / 02.04.2001

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Ireland.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THE ORIGINAL VALID STANDARD: 13.03.2001.

UTILIZATION: Up to the end of the 17th century, Irish Wolfhounds were used for hunting wolves and deer in Ireland. They were also used for hunting the wolves that infested large areas of Europe before the forests were cleared.

CLASSIFICATIONS FCI: Group 10 Sighthounds.
Section 2 Rough-haired Sighthounds.
Without working trial.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY: We know the continental Celts kept a greyhound probably descended from the greyhound first depicted in Egyptian paintings. Like their continental cousins, the Irish Celts were interested in breeding large hounds. These large Irish hounds could have had smooth or rough coats, but in later times, the rough coat predominated possibly because of the Irish climate. The first written account of these dogs was by a Roman Consul 391 A.D. but they were already established in Ireland in the first century A.D. when Setanta changed his name to Cu-Chulainn (the hound of Culann). Mention is made of the Uisneach (1st century) taking 150 hounds with them in their flight to Scotland. Irish hounds undoubtedly formed the basis of the Scottish Deerhound. Pairs of Irish hounds were prized as gifts by the Royal houses of Europe, Scandinavia and elsewhere from the Middle Ages to the 17th century. They were sent to England, Spain, France, Sweden, Denmark, Persia, India and Poland. In the 15th century each county in Ireland was required to keep 24 wolfdogs to protect farmers' flocks from the ravages of wolves. The Cromwellian prohibition (1652) on the export of Wolfhounds helped preserve their number for a time but the gradual disappearance of the wolf and continued demand abroad reduced their numbers almost to the point of extinction by the end of the 17th century.

The revival of interest in the breed accompanied the growth of Irish nationalism in the late 19th century. The Irish Wolfhound became a living symbol of Irish culture and of the Celtic past. At this time, one determined enthusiast, Capt. G A Graham, set about obtaining some of the few remaining hounds of the Wolfhound type that could still be found in Ireland, and with the use of Deerhound blood and the occasional outcross of Borzoi and Great Dane, he eventually achieved a type of dog that bred true in every generation. The results were ultimately accepted as a legitimate revival of the breed. The Irish Kennel Club scheduled a class for Irish Wolfhounds at their show in April 1879, and a club was formed in 1885. The Irish Wolfhound now enjoys once again something of the reputation that it had in the Middle Ages. Wolfhounds are now owned and bred in fairly large numbers outside of Ireland.

GENERAL APPEARANCE: The Irish Wolfhound should not be quite so heavy or massive as the Great Dane, but more so than the Deerhound, which in general type he should otherwise resemble.

Of great size and commanding appearance, very muscular, strongly though gracefully built, movements easy and active; head and neck carried high; the tail carried with an upward sweep with a slight curve towards the extremity. Great size, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body, is the desideratum to be aimed at, and it is desired to firmly establish a race that shall average 32 inches (81cm) to 34 inches (86cm) in dogs, showing the requisite power, activity, courage and symmetry.

BEHAVIOUR AND TEMPERAMENT: "Lambs at home, lions in the chase".

HEAD: Long and level, carried high; the frontal bones of the forehead very slightly raised and very little indentation between the eyes.

CRANIAL REGION:

Skull: Not too broad

FACIAL REGION

Muzzle: Long and moderately pointed.

Teeth: Scissor bite ideal, level acceptable.

Eyes: Dark.

Ears: Small, rose ears (Greyhound like in carriage).

NECK: Rather long, very strong and muscular, well arched, without dewlap or loose skin about the throat.

BODY: Long, well ribbed up.

Back: Rather long than short.

Loins: Slightly arched

Croup: Great breadth across hips

Chest: Very deep, moderately broad, breast wide.

Ribs: Well sprung

Belly: Well drawn up.

TAIL: Long and slightly curved, of moderate thickness, and well covered with hair.

LIMBS

FOREQUARTERS:

Shoulders: Muscular, giving breadth of chest, set sloping.

Elbows: Well under, neither turned inwards nor outwards.

Forearm: Muscular, heavily boned, quite straight

HINDQUARTERS:

Thighs: Long and muscular.

Stifle: Nicely bent.

Second thigh: Well muscled, long and strong.

Hocks: Well let down and turning neither in nor out.

FEET: Moderately large and round, neither turned inward nor outwards. Toes, well arched and closed. Nails, very strong and curved.

GAIT / MOVEMENT: Movements easy and active.

COAT

HAIR: Rough and hard on body, legs and head; especially wiry. Hair over eyes and beard especially wiry.

COLOUR AND MARKINGS: The recognised colours are grey, brindle, red, black, pure white, fawn or any colour that appears in the Deerhound

SIZE AND WEIGHT:

Desired height: averaging 32 inches (81cm) to 34 inches (86cm) in dogs.

Minimum height: Dogs 31 inches (79 cm).

Minimum weight: Dogs 120 pounds (54.5kg).

Minimum height: Bitches 28 inches (71 cm).

Minimum weight: Bitches 90 pounds (40.5 kg).

FAULTS: Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

- Too light or too heavy a head.
- Too highly arched frontal bone.
- Crooked forelegs; weak pasterns.
- Weak hindquarters and a general want of muscle.
- Too short in body.
- Back sunken or hollow or quite straight.
- Large ears and hanging flat to the face.
- Twisted feet.
- Spreading toes.
- Short neck; full dewlap.
- Chest too narrow or too broad.
- Tail excessively curled.
- Nose of any colour other than black.
- Lips of any colour other than black.
- Very light eyes. Pink or liver coloured eyelids.

DISQUALIFYING FAULTS:

- Aggressive or overly shy dogs.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified.

N.B.:

- Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.
- Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.



Standard of Points adopted by The Irish Wolfhound Club in 1885 by which Irish Wolfhounds are to be judged

1. General appearance: The Irish Wolfhound should not be quite so heavy or massive as the Great Dane, but more so than the Deerhound, which in general type he should otherwise resemble. Of great size and commanding appearance, very muscular, strongly though gracefully built, movements easy and active; head and neck carried high; the tail carried with an upward sweep with a slight curve towards the extremity.

The minimum height and weight of dogs should be 31 inches and 120 pounds; of bitches, 28 inches and 90 pounds. Anything below this should be debarred from competition. Great size, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body, is the desideratum to be aimed at, and it is desired to firmly establish a race that shall average from 32 inches to 34 inches in dogs, showing the requisite power, activity, courage and symmetry.

2. Head: Long, the frontal bones of the forehead very slightly raised and very little indentation between the eyes. Skull, not too broad. Muzzle, long and moderately pointed. Ears, small and Greyhound like in carriage.

3. Neck: Rather long, very strong and muscular, well arched, without dewlap or loose skin about the throat.

4. Chest: Very deep. Breast wide.

5. Back: Rather long than short. Loins arched.

6. Tail: Long and slightly curved, of moderate thickness, and well covered with hair.

7. Belly: Well drawn up.

8. Forequarters: Shoulders muscular, giving breadth of chest, set sloping. Elbows well under, neither turned inwards nor outwards. Leg: Forearm muscular, and the whole leg strong and quite straight.

9. Hindquarters: Muscular thighs and second thigh long and strong as in the Greyhound, and hocks well let down and turning neither in nor out.

10. Feet: Moderately large and round, neither turned inwards nor outwards. Toes, well arched and closed. Nails, very strong and curved.

11. Hair: Rough and hard on body, legs and head; especially wiry and long over eyes and under jaw.

12. Colour and markings: The recognized colours are grey, brindle, red, black, pure white, fawn, or any colour that appears in the Deerhound.

13. Faults: Too light or too heavy a head, too highly arched frontal bone; large ears and hanging flat to the face; short neck; full dewlap; too narrow or too broad chest; sunken or hollow or quite straight back; bent forelegs; overbent fetlocks; twisted feet; spreading toes; too curly a tail; weak hindquarters and a general want of muscle; too short in body; pink or liver-coloured eyelids; lips and nose any colour other than black; very light eyes.

List of Points in Order of Merit

1. *Typical:* The Irish Wolfhound should not be quite so heavy or massive as the Great Dane, but more so than the Deerhound, which in general type he should otherwise resemble.

2. *Great size* and commanding appearance.

3. Movements easy and active.

4. Head, long and level, carried high.

5. Forelegs, heavily boned, quite straight; elbows well-set under.

6. Thighs long and muscular; second thighs, well muscled, stifles nicely bent.

7. Coat, rough and hard, specially wiry and long over eyes and under jaw.

8. Body, long, well ribbed up, with ribs well sprung, and great breadth across hips.

9. Loins arched, belly well drawn up.

10. Ears, small, with greyhound-like carriage.

11. Feet, moderately large and round; toes close, well arched.

12. Neck, long, well arched and very strong.

13. Chest, very deep, moderately broad.

14. Shoulders, muscular, set sloping.

15. Tail, long and slightly curved.

16. Eyes, dark.

Note: The above in no way alters the 'Standard of Excellence' which must in all cases be rigidly adhered to; they simply give the various points in order of merit. If in any case they appear at variance with Standard of Excellence it is the latter which is correct.



THE IRISH WOLFHOUND

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The largest and tallest of the sight-hounds, he is a rough-coated greyhound-like breed. Of great size and commanding appearance, very muscular, strongly though gracefully built, movements easy and active; head and neck proudly carried; the tail carried with an upward sweep with a slight curve towards the extremity. The tail should be carried lower than the level of the back.

Great size, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body, is the desideratum to be aimed at, and it is desired to firmly establish a race that shall have a minimum of 84 cm (33 inches) in dogs, showing the requisite power, activity, courage and symmetry.



An early description of Type

*"Eyes of sloe, with ears not low,
A horse's breast, with depth of chest,
A breadth of loin, with curve of groin,
And nape set far behind the head:
Such were the dogs that Fingal bred."*

Oisín, son of Finn. 5th Century

BEHAVIOUR AND TEMPERAMENT

The flower of all his race.

«So true, so brave – a lamb at home, a lion in the chase».

The Irish Hound of Llewelyn 1210 AD



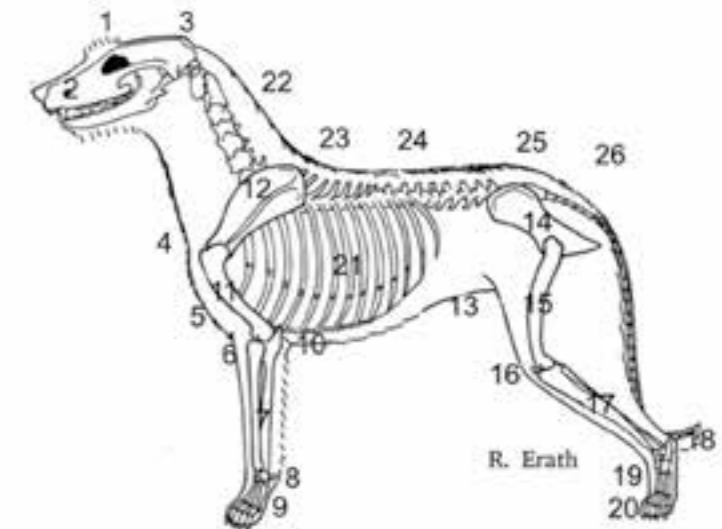
TYPE AND CONFORMATION

Type is something which evolved from breeding best to best for countless generations. Captain Graham and his colleagues formulated this ideal type in the Standard (1885). Now that few hounds are used for hunting and are seldom tested to prove their worth, we use the Standard as the yardstick by which to breed.

The ideal Irish Wolfhound is typical and sound.

The Standard deals with each point, one by one, for the purpose of explanation but the good judge will assess the hound as a whole. Good conformation not only requires correct construction but also the ability of each part of the body to work efficiently with all the other parts, and as a whole. One does not measure the length of neck, body, etc., with a tape measure; each section is judged in relation to the whole body. Some traits, though not of physical disadvantage to the dog, may be faults against type. The very light-eyed hound can see perfectly and so is sound, but his light eyes are a fault against the ideal type laid down in the Standard. Large, flat and/or badly placed ears, short body, straight stifles or wide movement are other examples of faults against type; likewise are short legs, over-angulated hindquarters and/or steep croups. These conditions may be acceptable in other breeds which have a different job of work to do.

Traits such as crooked forearms, cow-hocks, sway back, faulty movement, are faults against soundness.



- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Stop | 10 Elbow Joint | 19 Metatarsal Bones |
| 2 Muzzle | 11 Humerus or Upper Arm | 20 Phalanges forming Toes |
| 3 Occiput | 12 Scapula or Shoulder Blade | 21 Ribs |
| 4 Point of Shoulder | 13 Belly | 22 Cervical Vertebrae (7) or Neck |
| 5 Chest | 14 Pelvis or Hips | 23 Withers |
| 6 Brisket | 15 Upper Thigh | 24 Thoracic Vertebrae (13) or Back |
| 7 Radius & Ulnar or Forearm | 16 Stifle or Knee Joint | 25 Lumbar Vertebrae (7) or Loins |
| 8 Carpus or Wrist Joint | 17 Tibia & Fibula or Lower Thigh | 26 Sacral Vertebrae (3) or Croup |
| 9 Metacarpus or Pastern | 18 Tarsus or Heck Joint | |



Strong and powerful sighthounds displaying good type



Balance. A natural requirement in every breed, is also a relative concept. There are long dogs with short legs, short dogs with long legs; light and heavy bodies, narrow and broad builds and so on. Balance is judged in relation to the Breed Standard which describes the ideal conformation suited to the work or purpose for which each breed was intended. Correct balance is important. An Irish Wolfhound with a very strong, well angulated rear and a weak straight front, or vice versa, will not stay the course as well as a hound with moderate, but balanced angulation at both ends. Adequate angulation is required to give optimum transmission of propulsion and maximum dispersion of concussion. Bearing this in mind let us compare the efficiency of:

- (a) a hound with the very strong, well angulated hindquarters accompanied by a straight front
- (b) a hound with moderate angulation of both forequarters and hindquarters.

The efficiency of hound (a) will be limited to what his straight front can produce because the straight front will not be capable of following through with the propulsion delivered by the strong rear. The straight front, itself inefficient in reducing shock and jarring of the joints, will receive additional stress from the powerful rear. The moderate angulation of hound (b) will be more efficient in transmitting propulsion and the dispersion of shock than the straight and limiting front of hound (a).

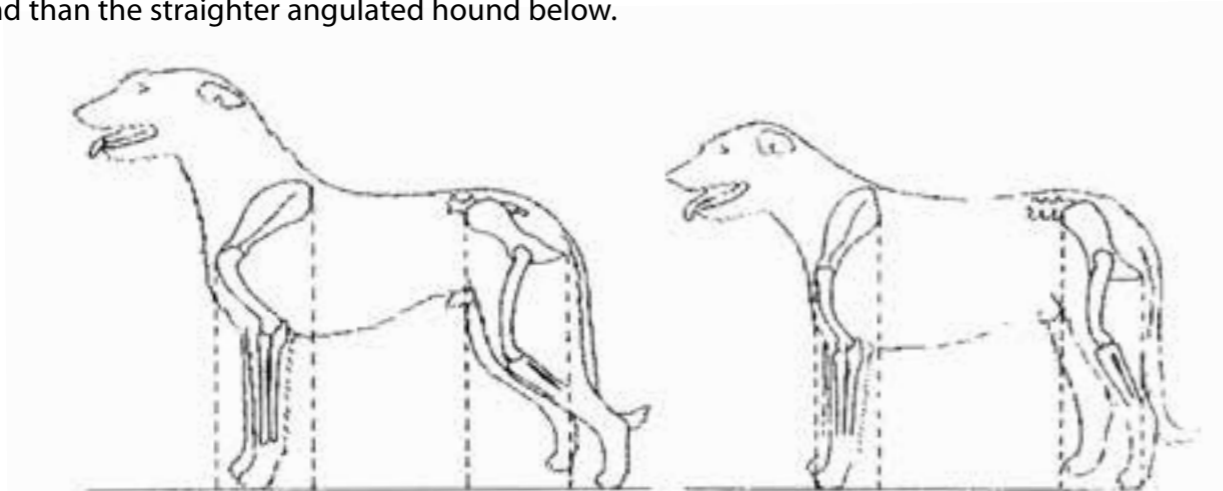
Hounds displaying good balance



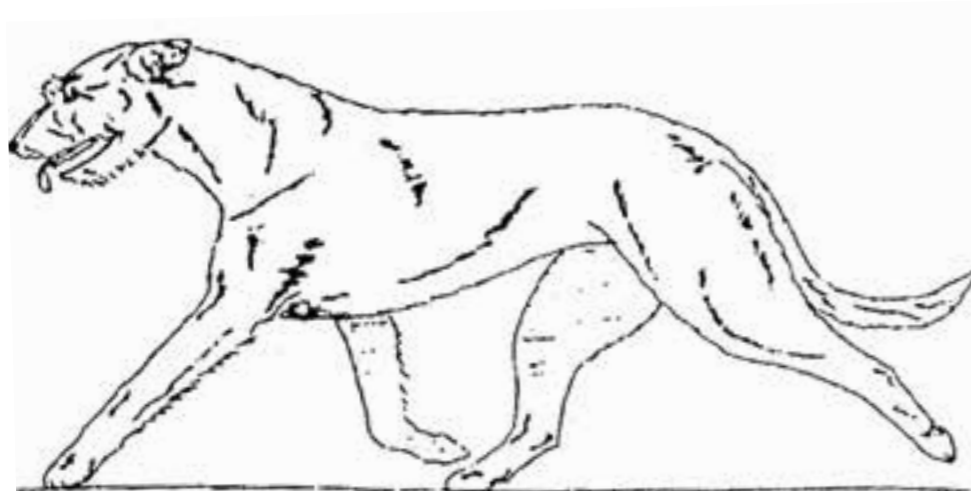
Angulation. Angulation refers to the angles formed by the working bones of the dog in relation to each other and to the horizontal. The term is commonly used when referring to the forequarters and the hindquarters of the dog. The length of the relevant bones in relation to each other and to the overall size of the dog influences angulation and conformation. In a given space long bones will have to lie at a greater angle than short bones. Angulation in turn governs the dog's ability to cover ground.

Compare the stance, balance and bone placement of the well-angulated hound on the left with that of the «straight» or under-angulated hound on the right.

No measuring stick is needed to see that the well angulated hound above is standing over more ground than the straighter angulated hound below.



Propulsion and concussion. In addition to generating movement, muscles are employed to transmit propulsion and act as absorbers and dispensers of concussion, or shock, as the hound gallops. Consider the jolt received as the front feet hit the ground during a fast gallop, particularly with the weight of an Irish Wolfhound behind it. Propulsion and concussion travel part of the way together. Propulsion travels as a continuous force backwards and forwards through the body. It is generated by the forequarters and hindquarters alternately as the hound gallops. Concussion, which is maximum at point of impact when the feet hit the ground, is dispersed as it travels up through the forequarters and hindquarters. The effect of concussion is minimal but additive. The more efficiently it is transmitted and dispersed, the less wearing it will be on the joints. The greater spread of muscle which accompanies good conformation will allow better transmission of propulsion and dispersion of shock. Poor conformation, for example, lack of angulation, straight front, straight pasterns, straight hocks etc, will in time cause jarring of the joints and spine and stress of the tendons, ligaments and muscles all of which combine to cause fatigue and excess wear and tear on the body.



The long, ground covering trot of the Irish Wolfhound

Movement. The dog uses a different gait for each speed. When speaking of movement, one usually means the trot used in the show ring. Different breeds trot in different ways. There is the high stepping hackney gait of the Miniature Pinscher; the merry trot of the Beagle; the long ground-covering trot of the Irish Wolfhound; the very long, extended trot of the German Shepherd. The Irish Wolfhound, like all sighthounds, uses the double suspension gallop at his fastest speed.



When galloping most dogs have just one period of suspension: the collected. Compare with that of the sighthound on the right.

Note how the sight-hound uses his forequarters, hindquarters and spine.



SUMMARY

In order to breed the ideal, one must have everything correct: bone length and placement; muscles, ligaments, etc., plus all the external characteristics, such as, eyes, coat, ears, tail, together with type, quality and, of course, temperament. Is it any wonder that the perfect specimen is a near impossibility? It is this desire to achieve the ultimate which motivates breeders, planning and hoping that each breeding will take them a step nearer to the ideal. Most of us are very happy if we succeed in breeding a hound which others rate as excellent.

The Irish Wolfhound is a strong and powerful sighthound with balanced angulation for and aft, and good length of leg.

Graham on topline (see Body)... this all adds to the lines of a nice set of curves beginning with the crest of the neck and finishing with the bend of the tail.

Note: the height at withers approximately equals the height at loins. A dropping topline as in a German Shepherd is untypical. The Irish Wolfhound as a sighthound is, or should be, built to perform the double suspension gallop.

Essential to achieve this are:

- a well laid shoulder-blade of sufficient length giving breadth of chest;
- a long, well inclined upper arm, longer than found in many other breeds.

The extra length of both allows the Wolfhound to have a wider angle than 'normal' and still have the elbows well set under the body.

The chest needs to be very deep and moderately broad for adequate capacity, allowing the heart and lungs to expand in the gallop.

A straight front, with short straight upper arm, often creating a hollow between the front legs, would be a fault and is a serious problem for a Wolfhound. A straight front may also be accompanied by an upright pastern, a disadvantage to a galloping hound.

It is worth drawing attention to Graham's 1885 Standard with the accompanying List of Points in Order of Merit. The FCI refused to allow us to continue to publish the list separately and so the information has been incorporated into the main Standard. The original is published in this publication.

When a Wolfhound has correctly balanced and angulated forequarters and hindquarters, the front foot moves off the ground as the back foot approaches showing free and unhindered movement.

When a Wolfhound has over-angulated hindquarters which produce a long rear stride, and a correct front, the hound will have to adjust his movement so that the back legs do not interfere with his forelegs. An imbalanced stride creates an imbalance in timing and the hound will adjust his movement to compensate.

The most common ways such a hound may compensate, all of which are untypical and thus a fault in an Irish Wolfhound, are:

- over-reaching - rear legs overreach the front legs;
- time wasting hackney or paddling action in front;
- throwing his front leg high to delay the moment of landing;
- move forward at an angle (crabbing).

Last but not least, because it behoves us all to preserve the reputation of our breed. Good temperament is an essential feature of our breed, neither nervousness nor aggression are acceptable.



The Irish Wolfdog
by Reinagle, 1800

Captain Graham said of this painting: «*It is what the Irish Wolfhound was and should be.*» Elsewhere he says: «*A remarkably spirited drawing which, though faulty in some minor parts, gives us an admirable idea of what this grand dog was.*»

Note the strength and power of this hound. He may appear little short in body, have a gay tail, lack facial furnishings etc., but he looks as though he could hunt all day.



Graham's Model

This picture is not dated but it represents a scale model that was constructed for Graham, with him standing beside it. On the back of the photos is written, "Type of the Old Irish Wolfhound". Exact height of model 35 inches (89 cm) to shoulder blade: probable girth 42 inches (107 cm) or over; weight about 140 pounds (63.5 kg) and the signature «G. A. Graham».

Lord Massereene has remarked on the similarity of this model to a drawing of one of the Massereene Wolfhounds, date about 1810, that was burnt when Antrim Castle was destroyed by fire. (Text and photograph taken from Irish Wolfhound Pedigrees 1859-1906 by G. A. Graham¹)

THE STANDARD

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The largest and tallest of the sighthounds, he is a rough-coated greyhound-like breed. Of great size and commanding appearance, very muscular, strongly though gracefully built, movements easy and active; head and neck proudly carried; the tail carried with an upward sweep with a slight curve towards the extremity. The tail should be carried lower than the level of the back.

Great size, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body, is the desideratum to be aimed at, and it is desired to firmly establish a race that shall have a minimum of 84 cm (33 inches) in dogs, showing the requisite power, activity, courage and symmetry.

Graham²: «The Wolfhound's form, or appearance, should be that of a very tall, heavy, Scottish Deerhound, though much more massive and very majestic looking; active and fast, perhaps somewhat less so than the Deerhound of his day; body and frame lengthy; as the Deerhound is to the ordinary Greyhound, so the giant Irish Wolfhound is to the Deerhound.»

Baily³: «To do his work, it is essential that the hound should possess two predominant characteristics: great speed to get on terms with his quarry and enormous power to finish the job. To possess this speed, his form must be that of a greyhound. Indeed he was generally alluded to as the Irish Greyhound. To possess the necessary power his size must have been gigantic; we have documentary evidence that he was more than a match for a Mastiff.»

It takes time for one's eye to become attuned to type. The most common pitfall is that subconsciously one's eye becomes accustomed to one's own hound and that becomes the acceptable norm. This is why it is preferable to learn as much as possible before owning a hound of one's own. Remember that the hounds that win consistently under breed specialist judges are usually the best examples of type and quality currently being shown.

All conscientious breeders plan and aim for the ideal, but one is very lucky if one takes a step nearer excellence with each breeding. Sometimes one inadvertently takes a step backwards on one point while progressing on another.

Mrs. N. B. Smith⁴ summed it up beautifully: "The ideal hound which we all carry in mind comes pretty close to being identical. What makes us seem to disagree on type is the fact that we are taking different routes to arrive at the same goal. Given time we will all approach nearer and nearer the coveted ideal. Some routes are shorter than others, since at best, the way is long and rough, we are eager to find the shortest road. If there is to be no retracing, we must build from the bottom up. See that our foundation is as it should be. With that firmly established we can concentrate on length of whiskers and colour of coat».



Strong and powerful sighthounds displaying good type



One type or many different types? It would appear that controversy on this point is apparent rather than real. It is mainly due to a different interpretation of the word type. When Graham and his colleagues drew up the Standard of the Irish Wolfhound, they did not mention various types found in different regions of Ireland. Some breeders use the word «type» loosely – using it where «look» or «appearance» might be more appropriate. Most lines develop a «look» of their own. From time to time, a breeder will introduce a different strain, either to strengthen some characteristic in his line or to bring in new blood. Conscientious breeders are continuously trying to improve their line and the «look» may change a little from time to time as breeders strive for the ideal.

Quality. Again, it was Mrs. N. B. Smith⁴ who gave us the most apt description of quality: «The untrained eye can recognise and appreciate bigness, a beautiful colour and a fine coat just as all register pleasure in hearing a simple musical air. To catch all the nuances in a great masterpiece the ear must have received technical training. This recognition of quality, and the lack of ability to define quality, is the reason that so often those along the side lines cannot follow the judging. We must guard against catering to the applause of the gallery and being content if we merely produce a huge spectacular hound. [...] He is more than just the largest breed of dog, he is the greatest.»

Soundness. An intrinsic element of type. Miss Kearns⁵ wrote: «Type and soundness are equally important in a show dog, and the combination of the two gives Quality. Soundness is an essential attribute of all breeds of dogs. It is a formation of body and a state of health in that body which enables the animal to live a happy life and do the work for which it is intended».

We do not apologise for the fact that this section is nearly all quotations. We can in no way improve on what has already been written by the experts. To quote the words of Mr. Everett: “[We] have not tried to put forward [our] type save in so far as [we] gather it is The Type as laid down by many who worked these hounds and noticed carefully how one hound excelled over another in different portions of the work they were doing».

Captain Graham considered 32-34 inches (81-85 cm) in dogs a great size and the «desideratum to be aimed at”. Great size, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body. Nowadays, 32 inches (81 cm) is considered rather small for a male. We have achieved the desired height. Let us concentrate on improving the other requirements. Great attention must be paid to the requirements which must accompany height: proportionate length of body, requisite power, activity, courage and symmetry.

One should be able to tell at a distance if one is looking at a dog or a bitch. While in some sighthound breeds, the sexes are hard to distinguish from a distance, the Wolfhound male ought to signal masculinity through his stronger, more substantial build; everything about him should be stronger throughout, in all aspects; his neck, his head, his bone, his rib cage. “Strength” must not be confused with coarseness. This does not necessarily require him to always be taller than the female – but he needs to display what is often aptly referred to as stallion quality. The Wolfhound female has a finer build, is usually smaller, and especially the head needs to be feminine.

Commanding appearance. A well-made, confident Wolfhound, head proudly carried as he moves around the ring with a long, low, effortless stride is a picture of commanding appearance. His whole bearing shows that he knows he is good. Such a hound is said to have «presence».

Colour. The recognised colours are grey, brindle, red, black, pure white, fawn, wheaten.



red



wheaten



grey



black

Marking. In the Wolfhound, white markings are acceptable on the chest, feet and tip of the tail. Some hounds have white markings up to the pasterns and although this is not considered a showing fault, it would be wise to breed away from the trait.

Breed away from excessive white markings. It is preferred to have minimal white on the Irish Wolfhound and while a dog with white feet or large white chest markings should not be discounted, efforts should be made to breed away from excessive white on any Irish Wolfhound. It is a well known fact that white marks easily become bigger in each generation, so we should take care.

Capt. G. A. Graham 1879 in THE IRISH WOLFDOG by Hogan & Graham, p 218.

“Colour. – Black, grey, brindle, red, and fawn, though white dogs were esteemed in former times, as is several times shown us – indeed they were often preferred – but for beauty the darker colours should be cultivated.”

In the Standard adopted by The Irish Wolfhound Club in 1885 the wording on colour includes “or any colour that appears in the Deerhound”. The original Deerhound Standard states: “white is condemned by all the old authorities, but a white chest and white toes are not greatly objected to, but the less the better”.

Colour changes. Wolfhounds come in varying shades of solid and brindle. In the life of a hound its colour also can change. The photos capture the hound at different ages in, and one can see that the bitch changes from a red brindle, to varying shades of grey brindle.



4 months old



12 months old



4 years old



5 years old



8 years old



10 years old

TEMPERAMENT

Temperament is one of the few points on which there is no argument among enthusiasts. All agree that shyness, nervousness, or worse still, aggressiveness, is undesirable and definite steps should be taken to breed out the problem.



Good temperament is an essential feature of our Irish Wolfhound. The late Dr May, President IWCI, life-time guardian of our breed, was adamant: *“anything other than good temperament is not acceptable at a show and certainly not for breeding”*.

He constantly reminded new owners of the importance of early socialisation.

Even in the early historical accounts of the breed, it was noted that the Irish Wolfhound loves to be with his owners and his friends.

A shy or nervous hound is a sad representation of our noble hound. A judge cannot be expected to examine a hound that is backing away or shrinking in the rear. Aggression is unacceptable in our breed. A hound exhibiting aggression should be requested to leave the ring.

HEAD

Long and level, carried high, the frontal bones of the forehead very slightly raised and very little indentation between the eyes. Skull, not too broad. Muzzle, long and moderately pointed. Faults: Too light or too heavy a head, too highly arched frontal bone; lips and nose any colour other than black.

The Irish Wolfhounds head is relatively level, no deep stop, no flat skull. The skull very slightly slopes back from a correct brow to the occiput. No parallel lines of muzzle and skull as required in some breeds. A beautifully constructed hound head with soft gracious lines.

Graham⁷: *“The head should be of good length in proportion to the hound, with a very small stop before the eyes and frontal bones little raised; the skull, though not coarse, should give one the impression of strength; the muzzle, distinctly not square”*. A pronounced stop is not typical.

One frequently hears the criticism that the heads of today’s hounds have changed from the narrow, finer heads illustrated in Graham’s time, but the records show that the heads of Graham’s time were finer than the original. Professor T. Studer, Bern, having studied ancient excavated skulls, wrote in *The Irish Naturalist* (September, 1924): *«By comparison with skulls of the modern breed, such as that of Captain Graham of Dursley, or H. Walker of St. Moritz, he found the modern (Graham’s) more slender and elongated than the prehistoric»*.

Graham himself stressed that the head should be strong. He wrote ⁷: «His head should show greater proportion of strength to the size of him than the Deerhound». A heavy, coarse, broad head is untypical in an Irish Wolfhound. The male head is naturally stronger than that of the female, but it must retain the greyhound shape.



The occipital point at the top of the skull starts a nice line to the neck. The Standard requires the muzzle to be long and moderately pointed. The distance from the tip of the nose to the stop should be at least equal to the distance between the stop and the occiput. A short muzzle makes the head look square instead of hound-shaped.

A deep stop is a fault – a fault sometimes mistakenly enhanced by people who have not read the Standard.



A correct head is said to be prepotent for type.
 Typical: "frontal bones of the forehead very slightly raised and very little indentation between the eyes"
 Untypical: Deep stop.
 Length of muzzle should at least be equal to or slightly longer than the length from occiput to stop.
 Typical: "Small, rose ear, greyhound – like in carriage"
 "An eye of sloe, an ear not low"
 Untypical: large, flat and/or low set ears.
 Fault: Narrow lower jaws with insufficient room for teeth, particularly lower canines.
 The neck "rather long, very strong and muscular, well arched" – note well arched, not strung upright.

Facial furnishings. Furnishings are an intrinsic feature of Wolfhound type. Graham ⁷ suggested that a reasonable amount of eyebrow, muzzle hair and beard is needed to finish off a nice typical head. Too often one hears comments like «his head is not his best point, but furnishings would improve that». Furnishings may improve the expression, but the shape of the head would still be wrong, though this would not be as apparent to the ring-sider as it is to the judge.

Furnishings. Baily ³; «The head should be lengthy, fairly well covered with hair, not so heavily coated as the rest of the body and have no resemblance to the shagginess of a Bob-tailed sheepdog or a Kerry Blue».

Good heads illustrating good coat and required furnishings



Coat & Grooming. Rough and hard on body, legs and head: especially wiry and long over eyes and under jaw.

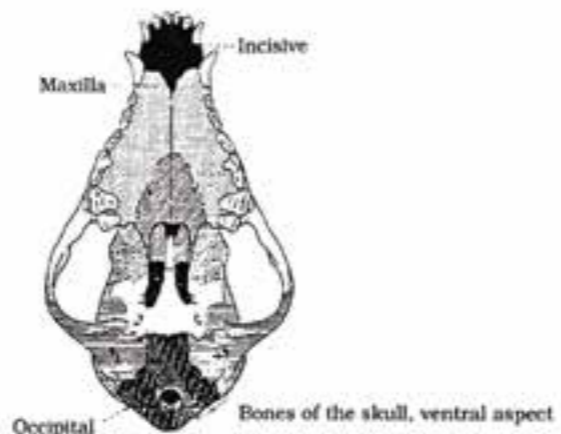


Graham ⁶: «The coat should be rough and somewhat shaggy in nature, thoroughly hard and long all over the body, head, legs and tail; the hair on the head should be long, and rather softer than on the body, standing out boldly over the eyes and that the beard should be very marked and wiry».

Graham ² advised against over-grooming which may remove the undercoat. He states that «the Wolfhound should have a double coat; dense next to the skin and longer and more wiry on the outside». The correct rough, hard coat always seems to look well.

An over-stripped Irish Wolfhound is untypical. Irish Wolfhounds should never be shaved.

«**Fill-in**». The muzzle should be moderately pointed. The head is said to lack «fill-in» when the rear of the muzzle is too narrow. It looks hollow beneath the eyes.



Note placement of molars which would be adversely affected if this part of the muzzle was too narrow. Also note the effect a missing P4 would have on the holding power of the jaws as its strength is diminished if the upper premolar does not have a counterpart. Illustration from Miller's Anatomy of the Dog⁸

Head carriage. A proudly carried head, on a loose lead, is an inherent feature of the typical Irish Wolfhound. The head and neck are not required to be set on as high as that of the Great Dane and should certainly not be pulled upright like that of a terrier. If the shoulder is too upright to allow him to carry his head proudly, don't advertise the fact to the judge and the ring-siders by stringing him up on a taut lead.

Bite. Scissors ideal, level acceptable. The scissors bite, where the upper front teeth fit snugly against the lower front, is the correct bite. In 1979, The Irish Wolfhound Club of Ireland added the words «Bite, scissors ideal, level acceptable» to the Standard. The inclusion of the words «level acceptable» has had the unfortunate effect that some breeders found it acceptable to breed «level» to «level» instead of breeding away from level, thereby producing more mouths tending towards undershot or ending up with worn down stumps instead of teeth. Undershot and overshot bites are hereditary faults.



Both under and overshot bites may adversely affect the shape of the muzzle, spoiling the desired hound shaped head. In Continental Europe, it is considered a fault if any of the adult premolars are missing. The most common of the premolars to be missing is the first or the fourth in the lower jaw and the first or the third in the upper jaw. The missing premolar condition should be kept in perspective. As with any condition that is less than ideal, one should breed away from the trait.

Eyes. Dark. Faults: very light eyes. The eyes should be round to almond (oval) in shape and with a soft expression. The large round eyes too often appearing these days are untypical.

Graham ⁷: «The eyes should at least harmonise with the general colour of the hound, a usual preference being given to dark rather than light eyes.»

Baily ³: «An eye of sloe, an ear not low».

Ears. Small rose ears, (greyhound-like in carriage). Faults: Large ears and/or hanging flat to the face.

Graham ²⁺⁷: «The ears should be small in proportion to the head. In repose they should be tucked in like those of a greyhound; and when looking at objects in the distance they should be semi erect; if the ears are darker in tone than the coat, this is to be preferred».

The high position of the ear, like its carriage, is an important feature of the typical hound shape of the head. Low-set ears give a rounded, maybe even a broad look to the skull. The long lighter coloured hair which grows on the outside of the ear may be stripped out to give them a tidy and small appearance. Large ears or ears that are hanging flat are untypical and unsightly.

NECK

Rather long, very strong and muscular, well arched, without dewlap or loose skin about the throat. Faults: short neck; full dewlap.

«The neck should be thick in comparison to the form or body, and very muscular». Graham ⁷: «it [the neck] should be of fair length, though too long a neck gives an impression of weakness rather than strength; the head should give the impression of being set high on a proudly arched neck and the throat should be clear of loose skin or dewlap».

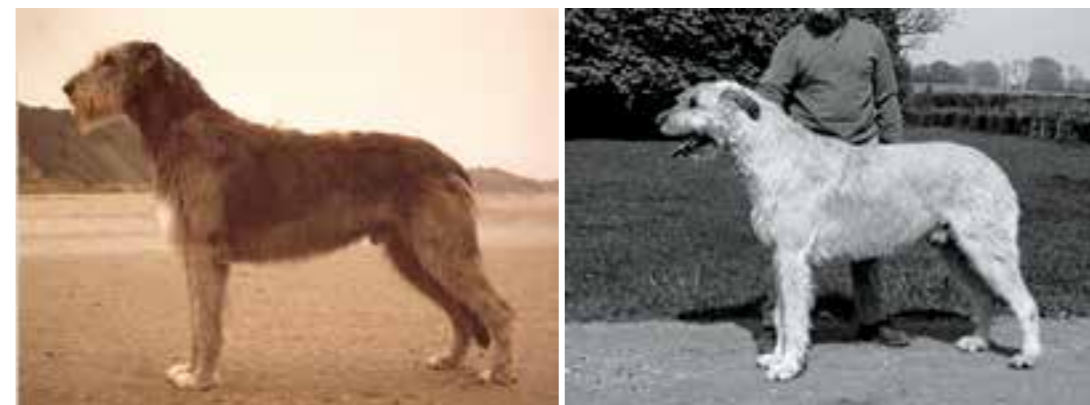
An over-stripped neck is an unforgivable sight. Over-stripping the neck gives the impression of a neck lacking strength and power.

The arch is an essential feature of a good neck. It is difficult to see the essential arch if the head is strung upright in a hangman's grip.

The neck "rather long, very strong and muscular, well arched" – note well arched, not strung upright.

Length, Strength, Arch and Carriage. It is the second of the cervical vertebrae of the neck, called the axis, modified to allow rotation of the head, which forms the arch of the neck.

Hounds displaying good neck and head carriage



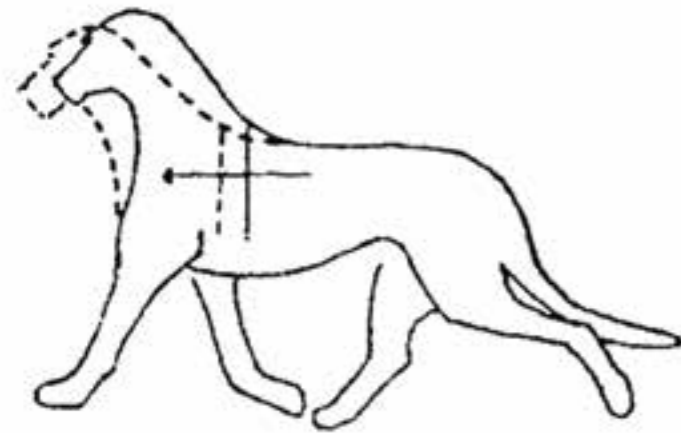
Proud and alert, looking into the future



The length and carriage of the neck both are influenced by the position of the shoulder-blades. The well laid shoulder-blades, lying backwards and inclined inwards towards the spine, shows the strong arched neck blending smoothly into the topline.

A short neck or low head carriage are often the result of straight shoulders. The shoulder-blades, instead of being well laid back, are upright and too far forward, shortening the neck. When one considers that the power of kill is almost entirely dependent upon the length and strength of the neck, it is understandable why the Standard asks for «A rather long, very strong, muscular and well arched neck».

Over-stripping may give the impression of a weak, narrow neck, contrary to the requirement of the Standard. Stripping should enhance the neck, not weaken it.



Carriage of head and neck affects centre of gravity. The Irish Wolfhound, like all sight-hounds, stands with head held high to see the object of his interest to best advantage. Watch how he lowers his head when he takes off at a gallop.

FOREQUARTERS

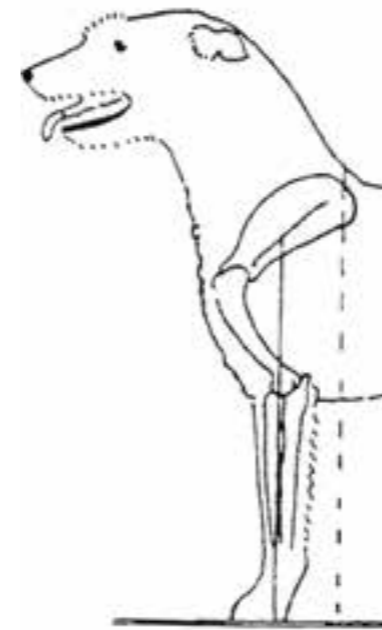
Graham ⁷; «The shoulder should be nicely laid back, not upright».

The Standard requires that the shoulders should be set sloping and the elbows set well under the body. This conformation is achieved by a long, and well inclined shoulder-blade (scapula) plus a long and well inclined upper arm (humerus).

The Irish Wolfhound, like all members of the sight-hound family is, or should be, built to perform the double suspension gallop. Two essential features needed to achieve this type of gallop, as already mentioned above, are:

- a well laid shoulder-blade of sufficient length;
- a long, well inclined upper-arm, longer than is found in «normal» breeds.

While the overall shape of the shoulder-blade and upper-arm is constant, both are capable of variation in size. Within the given space of the chest, the longer shoulder-blade and upper-arm will have to lie at a more acute angle, that is, be better angulated, than shorter bones.



Note the «spring» or slope of pasterns. In well-made fore-quarters, both shoulder-blade and upper-arm are well inclined.

In a well-constructed hound, the centre of gravity of the forequarters lies under the centre point of the shoulder-blade. The foreleg, specifically the heel pad, stands under the centre of gravity, giving maximum support to the whole forequarters. If the heel pad stands in front of this point, excess strain will be exerted on the pastern. When the heel pad stands behind the centre of gravity, excess strain will be placed on the toes. The usual way of assessing angulation is to check the position of the withers in relation to the elbow when the heel pad stands directly under the centre of gravity. On a correct front assembly, the highest point of the withers will lie behind the elbow. Note the correct 'spring' of pastern.

The longer upper-arm makes a wider angle of 125-130 degrees with the shoulder-blade. Thus sight-hounds show a less

angulated front than a gundog or a collie but, as already stated, the extra length of the hound's upper-arm places the elbows well under the chest.

The shoulder-blade, like the upper-arm, is required to slope in two ways, backwards and inwards, and both depend on muscles to keep them in place. The backward slope is often described as the slope of shoulder, and the inward slope as being well inclined. The well laid shoulder is correct in both respects, that is, has good slope and is well inclined.

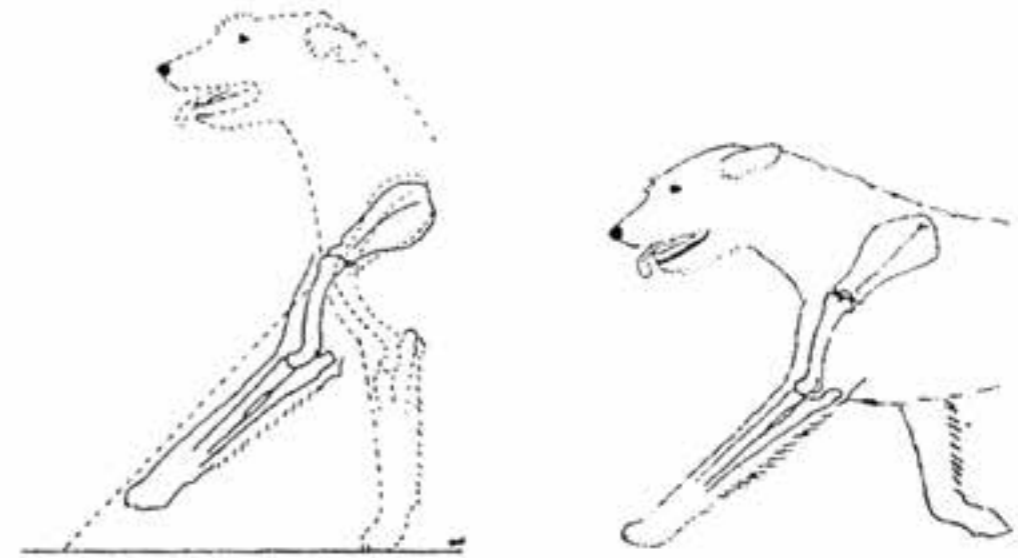
Straight front or Terrier front, a well laid shoulder-blade with a short straight upper arm, often accompanied by straight pastern, is a problem too often seen in our breed these days. Occasionally the hound is seen to 'knuckle over'. A serious problem in a sight-hound.

The straight front, both shoulder-blade and upper arm too upright, fortunately are not seen too often these days.

Hounds displaying good forequarters



Reach. Normally, the ball and socket type joint at the point of the shoulder prevents the forearm reaching further than a line drawn from the spine of the shoulder-blade. Thus, the slope of the shoulder-blade determines the forward reach of the forearm. The better the angulation the better the reach and there is less chance of interference from the rear leg. See illustration above. There is no bony joint between the shoulder-blade and chest. The muscular attachment allows the blade to pivot on its own centre, or axis, as the leg is lifted, and allows the upper arm to slide backwards and forwards, as the hound moves. The longer blade allows a greater range of movement and provides a better anchor and base for the muscles.



Summary. Straight forequarters are widely acknowledged as incorrect and conscientious breeders try to breed away from the problem. The straight front is a worry because the fault is now so common there is a danger that people are beginning to accept it as normal. The length and angulation of the upper-arm plays an important part in length of stride and, of course, in executing the double suspension gallop, particularly in a hound as heavy as the Irish Wolfhound.

Elbows. Well under, neither turned inwards nor outwards. The position of the elbow is mainly dependent upon the length and the slope of the upper-arm. The longer, well inclined upper-arm of the sight-hound places the elbows «well under» the body as required in the Standard. A straight front places the elbows, and the legs, too far forward. This means that the main support is in front of the centre of gravity instead of under it.

Out at elbows. If the hound is out at the elbows it is usually because the muscles are too loose, though the condition could be due to faulty shoulder construction. The elbows tend to move out to compensate for faulty conformation. The condition may only appear when the hound moves. The elbows are normally held close to the body by the pectoral muscles. When these muscles are slack they allow the hound to stand out at elbow. In addition to supporting the limb and drawing it inward, the pectoral muscles draw the limb forward or backward according to its position.

Forearm. Muscular, heavily boned, quite straight with slight spring of pastern. Faults: Crooked forearms, weak pasterns twisted feet, spreading toes.

The front view should show the forelegs strong, straight and muscular. Viewed from the side they are a little out of perpendicular below the pastern joint to allow for a slight «spring» of pastern in keeping with the greyhound shape. Adequate length of leg is required to produce optimum propulsion.

Short legs reduce propulsion, shorten stride and give the hound a thick-set, untypical appearance. A hound with a very deep chest reaching below the elbow may appear, but not be, short in the leg.

Pastern. Weak muscles and ligaments will cause the hound to go down on his pasterns, even if the joint is sound initially. Weakness may be due to a badly constructed pastern, excess strain placed on the pastern by a very straight front or by environmental factors, such as lack of exercise. It is surprising how quickly the pasterns flatten when rest is necessary following an injury.

Straight pasterns, usually accompanied by a straight front is a serious fault in a Wolfhound and may even lead to «knuckling over» at the pastern joint.

Knuckling-over and quivering. A hound is said to knuckle-over if the leg leans, or bends, forward, even slightly, at the pastern joint. The condition may be accompanied by quivering of the limb and is most frequently seen in hounds with straight front assemblies. The tendons and muscles at the back of the leg need to be strong enough to bear weight, withstand concussion and transmit propulsion. These are counter-balanced with weaker tendons and muscles on the front of the leg. When the pastern is too straight, that is, there is no «spring» of pastern, the forearm muscles and tendons may not be equal to the task of keeping the strong back muscles in balance and knuckling-over or quivering may result. Another suggestion is that the condition is caused by muscles which are a little too short and taut. Sadly, this weakness is becoming too familiar in our breed.



Knuckling over

Knuckling over and straight pasterns

Correct

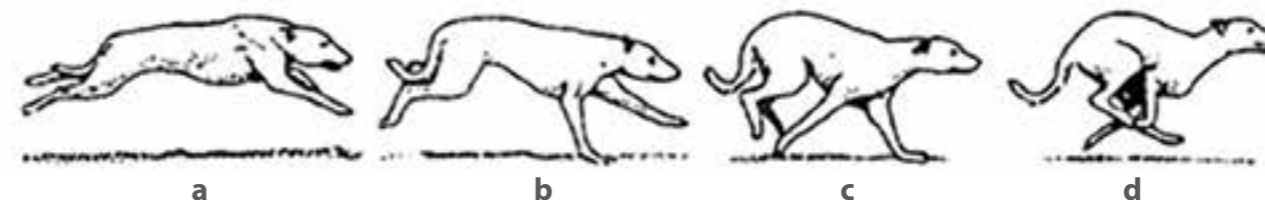
Any structural fault creates additional stress for the dog. A hound that knuckles over will not last in the field as they cannot function properly and so will tire more easily, or be injured and in pain. It likely means that long-term, this could lead to other health issues e.g. arthritis. Over time, the conditions do impact on the dog's health, all dependent on the severity of the fault.

Wm. Clarke⁹ explains the importance of a well-constructed pastern in the following illustrations:



Tendons at full stretch

«During the full gallop the pasterns will lie almost flat on the ground (c) with the tendons at maximum stretch. This bending action causes the long tendons at the back of the pastern joint to stretch. When these tendons recoil they impart lift to the body in addition to that produced by the muscular contraction of their relative muscles. The strength of the elastic recoil of the pastern depends on the tightness of the tendons and this also determines the slope of the pastern in the standing dog. If the pasterns have too much slope as a result of slack tendons, the dog will not have sufficient lift when pushing off its forearms. When the tendons behind the pastern are too tight, the pasterns will be too upright and the dog may "knuckle-over.»



FEET

Moderately large and round, neither turned inwards nor outwards. Toes: well arched and closed.

Everett¹⁰: «His feet should give the impression of strength, solidity, and gripping power, for their job is largely to grip the ground and push it behind them».

The pads must be well built with plenty of cushion underneath. The muscles, ligaments and tendons of the feet are required to be in peak condition. Considering the tiny bones of the foot and the impact as they hit the ground when the hound is galloping, it is easy to understand why the feet must be well padded and well-constructed to absorb shock and transmit propulsion. Well-built feet, together with the slight spring or bend of pastern, will allow optimum transmission of concussion and propulsion up through the legs.

Sighthounds displaying good feet



Nails. Very strong and curved, must be kept short. Over-long nails can cause the feet to spread and may even push the hound back on his pasterns. If nails have been allowed to grow too long, the quick may also have grown, making cutting more difficult. Keep an extra check on older hounds as long tough nails are more of a problem.

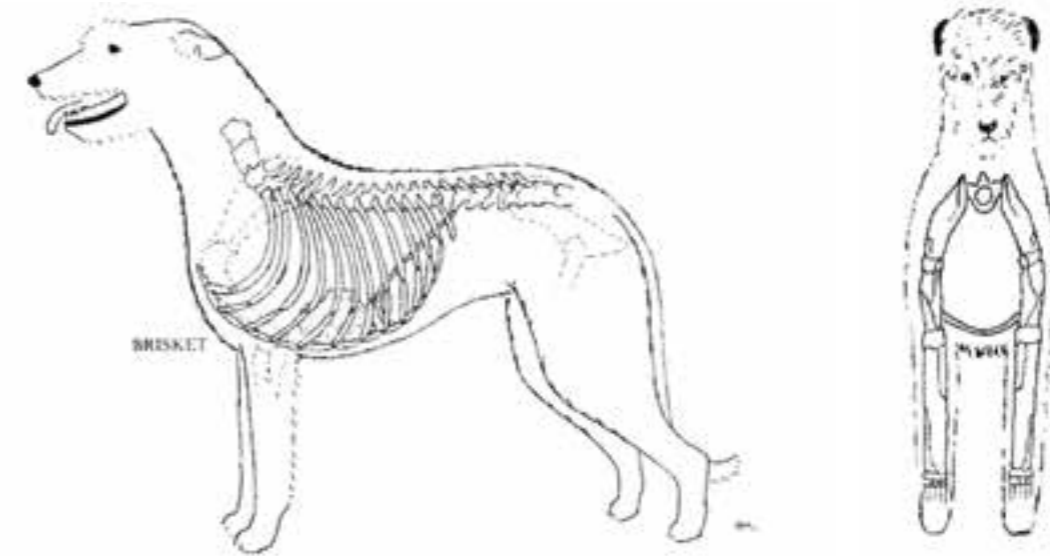
CHEST

Very deep, moderately broad, breast wide. Faults: too narrow or too broad a chest.

The chest has been described as the power house for the production of oxygen and for its distribution, by the heart, throughout the body. Chest capacity should be sufficient to house the organs it contains, and there must be enough space, plus adequate spring of rib, to allow the heart and lungs to expand during the gallop.

The spring of rib refers to the curve or spring which the rib makes out from the spinal column. The thirteen pairs of ribs are attached to the vertebrae in such a way as to allow them to rotate, rather than just expand, outwards. This outward rotation of the ribs is an important factor in facilitating the expansion of the lungs during the fast gallop.

An accurate measurement of the chest may be had by encircling it at approx two-thirds of its length. Assuming the chest has correct spring of rib and is neither flat-sided nor barrel shaped it will have an egg shaped appearance. The lower end is narrower to allow the upper-arm and elbow to move freely when galloping. The first four ribs do not have as much spring as those further back, thus allowing unrestricted movement of the shoulder-blade and upper-arm.



Chest: very deep, breast wide. Note position of legs and feet giving maximum support.

Chest showing diaphragm, a flat muscular partition which separates the chest from the abdomen and which also assists breathing.

«The brisket should be down to the elbows, and nicely wide at the bottom» (Graham⁷)

The brisket is the forepart of the chest, between the forelegs. The sternum or breastbone, to which the lower end of the ribs are attached, forms the base of the chest. It should lie flat for two-thirds the length of the chest. The breast muscles which help activate the forequarters, need the long strong sternum for good anchorage. If the brisket curves upwards too soon at the rear, the hound will lack chest capacity. Such a hound is said to be herring-gutted and is not «well-ribbed up». A hound is said to be well ribbed up when there is adequate length of thorax, and not too much length between the ribs and the pelvis. If the front ribs are too short, then the hound will lack depth of brisket, creating a hollow between the forelegs. The same hollow effect may be caused by straight forequarters - the «too far forward» effect. This hollow between the fore legs is often described as a cathedral front.

Tuck-up. Belly well drawn up.

The tuck-up is controlled by a powerful muscle extending from the base of the ribs to the pelvis. This muscle keeps a backward pull on the ribs, protects and secures the intestines and is especially important in initiating the contracted phase of the double suspension gallop. A nice tuck-up is an indication that the muscle is in good shape.

If the hound is too long-coupled, that is, if there is too much length between the ribs and the pelvis, then the abdomen and the muscle forming the tuck-up will also be too long and may sag from lack of strength.

BODY

Body, long, well ribbed up, with ribs well sprung, and great breadth across hips
Back. Rather long than short. Loins slightly arched.

Faults: Sunken or hollow or quite straight back. Too short in body.

We are very fortunate to have this comprehensive quotation from Graham. It is an excellent description of good conformation.

Everett ¹⁰, quoting Graham: «The body should give the impression of nice length rather than a short-coupled body; that the loin should be a little full, not so exaggerated as to give the hound the appearance of being dipped behind the shoulder, but just sufficient to give a nice gradual sweep right down to the set-on of the tail, which should connect fairly low down. This all adds to the lines of a nice set of curves beginning with the crest of the neck and finishing with the bend of the tail».



Good conformation governs a good topline. Adequate length of back is essential to allow well-constructed limbs to function to their full potential. A short back may cause the hound to crab or overreach to prevent the hind feet striking the forelimbs when he moves.

The Irish Wolfhound is a strong and powerful sighthound with balanced angulation for and aft, and good length of leg.

Note: the height at withers approximately equals the height at loins. A dropping topline as in a German Shepherd is untypical.

The Irish Wolfhound as a sighthound is, or should be, built to perform the double suspension gallop.

Essential to achieve this are

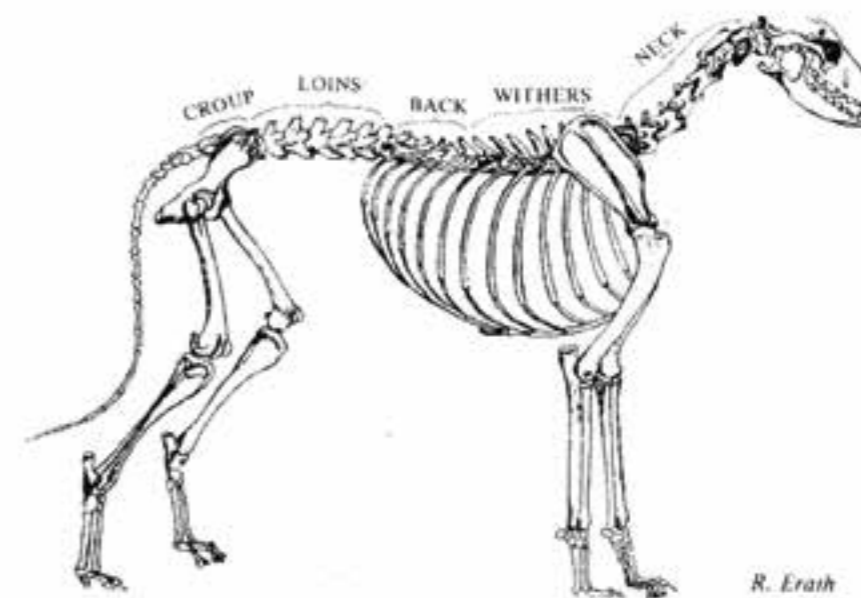
- a well laid shoulder-blade of sufficient length giving breadth of chest;
- a long, well inclined upper arm, longer than found in many other breeds.

The extra length of both allows the Wolfhound to have a wider angle than 'normal' and still have the elbows well set under the body.

The chest needs to be very deep and moderately broad for adequate capacity, allowing the heart and lungs to expand in the gallop.

A straight front, with short straight upper arm, often creating a hollow between the front legs, would be a fault and is a serious problem for a Wolfhound. A straight front may also be accompanied by an upright pastern, a disadvantage to a galloping hound.

The spine is made up of vertebrae interspaced with cartilaginous discs which help to reduce concussion. The size of the vertebrae determines the length of body as the number within the body is constant. The spine houses and protects the spinal cord which runs from the brain to the end of the lumbar region. The spinal cord supplies nerves to the rest of the body. The spine also furnishes attachment for muscles governing body movement and for ligaments and muscles which ensure stability as the hound moves.



Irish Wolfhound Vertebrae. Note how the spines, (upright projections) of the front vertebrae incline backwards and the rear vertebrae incline forward giving maximum anchorage and pull to their respective muscles. This set of vertebrae is not correctly mounted, so they only approximate the shape of the topline.



Movement between any two vertebrae is limited but the whole column possesses considerable flexibility. This allows the spine to act as a flexible, and slightly compressible, bony column through which the propelling force generated by the hindquarters is transmitted to the rest of the body. The long, strong and flexible spine with a well developed loin is a characteristic feature of a galloping hound. To get a picture in your mind of strength and flexibility watch Greyhounds galloping. Note how the back bends and straightens.

Most conformation defects of the spine will adversely affect the shape of the topline.

Sway back. A dog is said to have a dipped, or sway back, if there is too much of a dip or hollow in the centre of the back. This is usually a structural fault of the spine. A dip in the topline immediately behind the withers is usually caused by straight shoulders.

Flat. The term «a flat topline» is often used when there is no rise over the loin. Many young hounds do not develop their true topline until they are mature at two and a half or three years of age.

Loins arched. Great breadth across hips.

Everett¹⁰: «A hound must have a loin with a little spring or arch. It is this part of the hound, in conjunction with the first and second thighs and the hock placement and formation, that is the most important combination in its make-up from a movement point of view.»

The loin, or lumbar region, lies between the last ribs and the hindquarters. The coupling is another term used to describe the lumbar region. A hound is said to be too long-coupled if there is excess length in the lumbar region, causing weakness in this mainly unsupported section of the spine. He is described as short-coupled if there is too little distance between the end of the ribs and the pelvis, in relation to the overall length of the body.

A «well-bodied» hound has good width and strength of loin. The lateral, well-muscled, projections which reach out from the sides of the lumbar vertebrae form a wide strong ridge over the stomach. The lumbar vertebrae, specially constructed to give strength in this unsupported part of the spine, are longer and more massive than the thoracic vertebrae. Each individual vertebra has three bony projections (processes), one upright and two lateral. In the mid-lumbar region the upright processes are highest and most massive - thus forming the rise over the loins. In the withers the upright projections, or spines, are highly developed, whereas in the lumbar region it is the lateral projections which are longest and strongest. The main purpose of these projections is to provide good anchorage and support for muscles and ligaments.

A well-constructed loin, together with first and second thigh of adequate length and strength, and correct hock placement and formation, are an essential element of good movement.

Croup. The three fused vertebrae of the sacrum, to which the pelvis is firmly attached, form the croup. The term croup is commonly used to describe the section of topline between the front of the pelvis and the root of the tail. A good broad pelvis, set at about 35 degrees, plays a vital part in the double suspension gallop, allowing the most efficient transmission of power and unrestricted forward and rearward reach of the hind legs when galloping. The power generated is in direct ratio to the difference between the extended and contracted length of the legs. If the forward or rearward reach was curtailed in any way, the power would be diminished.

TAIL

Long and slightly curved, of moderate thickness, and well covered with hair. Fault: too curly a tail. Graham to Miss Kearns⁵: «A long, heavy, well-carried tail was necessary to the dog as it helped him to guide himself and turn quickly when galloping. A curly, badly carried tail is not only unsightly but a real handicap to the dog.» Graham⁷: «The tail should be of good length but certainly not too thick and fleshy.»

The well set tail will be carried low when the hound is trotting around the show-ring. The wording of the Standard: «the tail carried with an upward sweep with a slight curve towards the extremity» sometimes causes comment. In Shaw's Book Of The Dog (1881)¹¹ the meaning is perhaps more readily understood: «The tail should be carried with an upward curve only, and not be curled, as is the case with many Greyhounds.» Most owners will notice the extent to which their hound uses his tail as a balance as he turns and twists at full gallop and as a brake when pulling up suddenly.

HINDQUARTERS

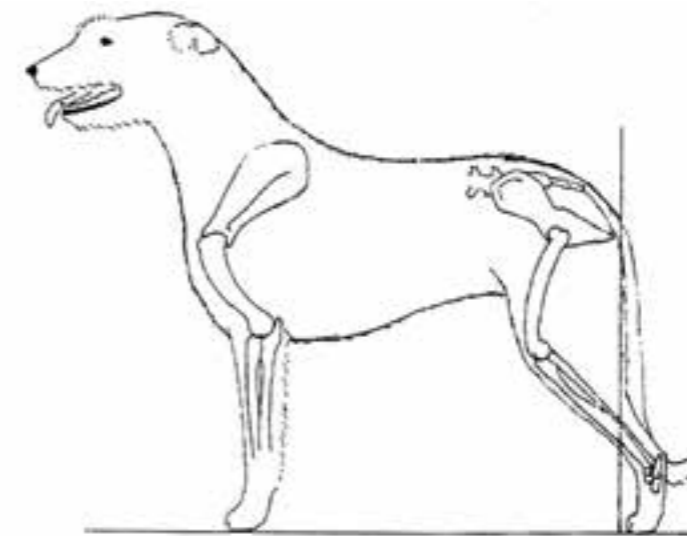
Muscular thighs and second thigh long and strong as in the Greyhound. Thighs long and muscular; second thighs, well-muscled, stifles nicely bent. Faults: Weak hindquarters and a general want of muscle.

Graham⁷: «The hindquarters are responsible for about two-thirds of his movement, continued movement that is, given that the hound is fit internally. He needs good strong hindquarters, well-muscled up, as distinct from a super abundance of fat; his hocks nicely low to the ground, nicely bent stifles and second thighs, and in action his hind-legs should come just past the forelegs, outside of course.»

The hindquarters supply most of the propulsion and drive. A group of very powerful muscles known as the rearing muscles, which have their base in the pelvis, croup and spine, activate the stifle joint during propulsion. Strong muscles are necessary to give optimum opening and closing of the joints. The strength and condition of the muscles play a vital part in producing drive and propulsion. Endurance will be maximised by good construction and strong muscles, allowing easy transmission of power, and optimum absorption and dispersion of concussion as the hound gallops. While the forelegs may be used for a variety of purposes, for example, digging, holding bones, etc., the hindlegs are adapted almost exclusively for propulsion.

Stifle joint. It is the longer lower thigh, an integral part of good rear angulation in a galloping hound, that places the hocks back behind the tail set. A short upper or lower thigh would place the hock under the buttock instead of behind it. Full flexion of the hocks in action is dependent upon well-muscled second thighs of adequate length.

Over angulation, as seen in the German Shepherd, is not required and would be untypical in a sight-hound. When the dog is free standing, the femur, the major weight bearing bone in the rear and, incidentally the heaviest bone in the body, is almost in a perpendicular position giving maximum support.



When a Wolfhound stands with his hocks at right angles to the ground, the toes should stand behind the buttocks

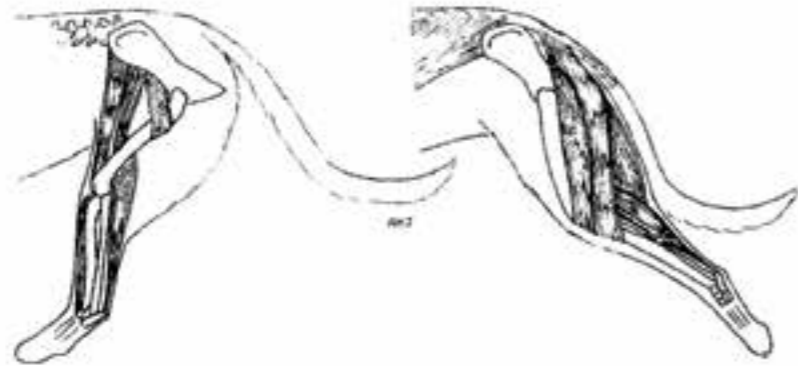
Propulsion generated by the leg is in direct ratio to the difference between its extended and contracted length. Hence the need for good length of upper and lower thigh giving adequate angulation.

The force applied to the foot as the hound drives off is greatly dependent upon the muscle which runs along the back of the lower thigh and joins the hock bone as the Achilles tendon. It is the opening of the hock joint which gives this muscle most of its leverage action. Lack of angulation at the stifle and hock joint will greatly reduce propulsion.



One rear leg pushing the body forward with the other almost fully extended. Propulsion is in direct ratio to the difference between the contracted and extended length of the leg.

There are two phases of motion: the power stroke, when the foot is in contact with the ground pushing the body forward, and the recovery stroke, when the foot is lifted and stretched out for the next step.

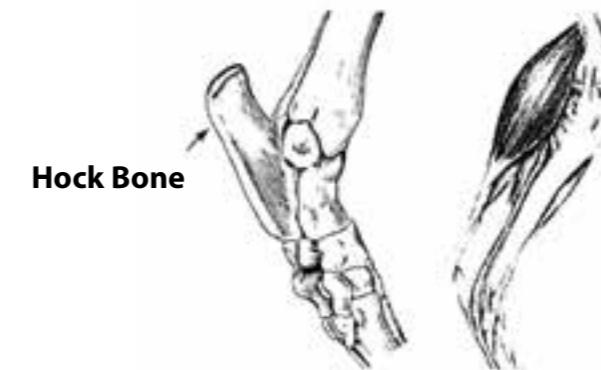


At full extension during the gallop, the hock is almost parallel with the pelvis.



Hocks. Well let down and turning neither in nor out.

The hocks should be able to stand parallel to each other, with feet pointing straight forward and hock joints bending neither in nor out. The hock joint is made up of seven bones. The best known of these is the hock bone (os calcis) to which the Achilles tendon is attached and on which the fibula (lower thigh) rests. The hock bone plays a major part in pushing the body forward. A well-constructed hock accompanied by strong muscles, indicated by good width through the hock when seen in profile, allows the joint to be used to maximum advantage.



Hock joint permits greatest degree of movement
Illustrations from Miller's Anatomy of the Dog⁸

Hocks well let down. This term means that the hock bones (metatarsus) should be relatively short and strong, giving plenty of power. A hound with hocks that are too long may lift his hindlegs in an exaggeratedly high, hackney-type action at the end of a shortened rearward stride.

Hounds displaying good hindquarters with hocks well let down



MOVEMENT

Movements easy and active. Good movement, a fundamental requirement in a hound, is mainly determined by inheritance but may be influenced by environmental factors such as nutrition, rearing, exercising, and health.

The show-ring trot should exhibit a long, low, ground-covering stride, very definitely not a springy or a high-stepping hackney type action which produces short strides and a lot of wasted effort. «Very busy going nowhere» is how one colleague describes it. Perhaps as much as ninety per cent of the hound's conformation can be assessed as he moves around the ring; general conformation and balance; the shape and carriage of the head and neck; the set and behaviour of the shoulders; the shape and flexibility of the spine; the strength and arch of the loin; the length of coupling; the angulation and strength of the hindquarters; the set-on and carriage of the tail.



Best way to appreciate good movement is to watch your Wolfhound moving freely.
Note: Long low ground covering stride. Front and rear extension equal.

The stride is the distance from one mark to the next, made by the same foot. It is not the actual length of stride that counts but the length relative to the size of body. In the Irish Wolfhound's stride the rear foot usually covers the mark vacated by the front foot. The front foot moves slightly ahead of the approaching back foot, leaving the way clear for the back foot to travel forward without interference. The show-ring trot should display long easy strides covering a lot of ground with a noticeable drive from well angulated stifles and flexible hocks showing effortless power, smoothness and grace.

Sound movement. When a hound is moving correctly or «true» only two legs will be visible when standing directly behind or in front of him. The other two legs, moving in the same plane, will be hidden from view.

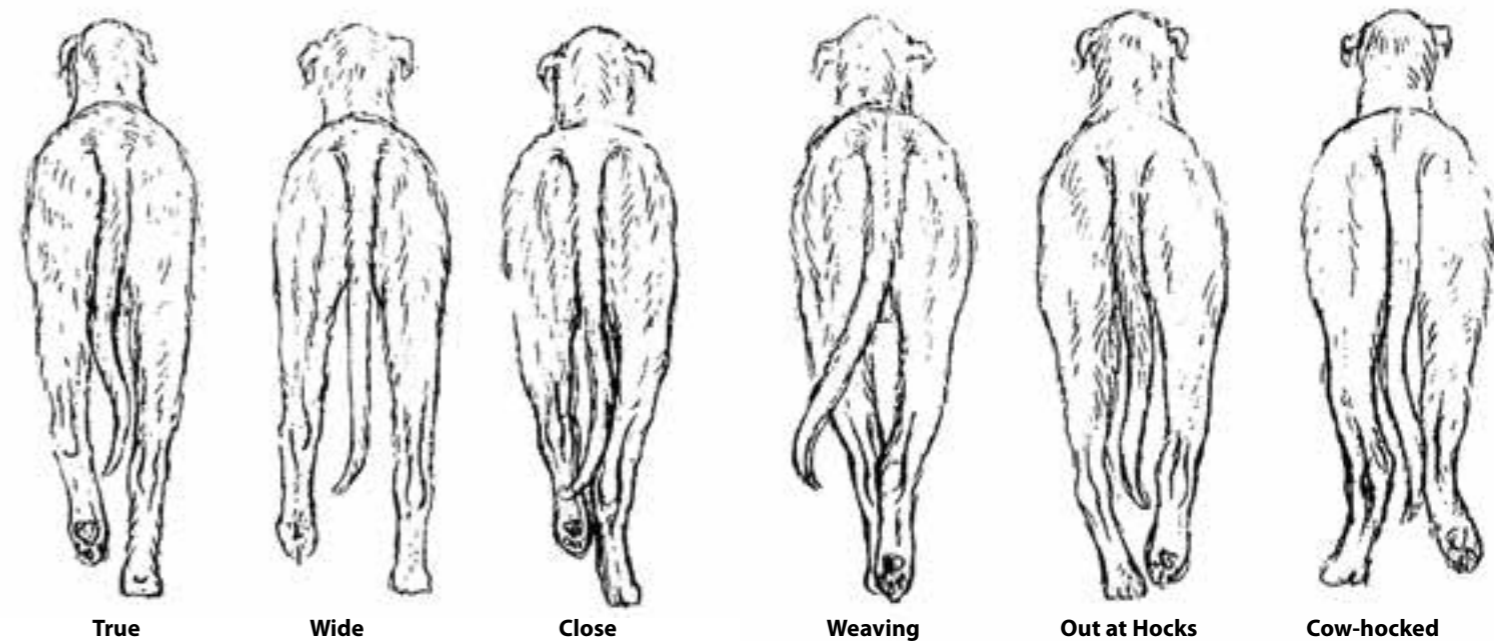
When a Wolfhound has correctly balanced and angulated forequarters and hindquarters, the front foot moves off the ground as the back foot approaches showing free and unhindered movement.

When a Wolfhound has over-angulated hindquarters which produce a long rear stride, and a correct front, the hound will have to adjust his movement so that the back legs do not interfere with his forelegs. An imbalanced stride creates an imbalance in timing and the hound will adjust his movement to compensate.

The most common ways such a hound may compensate, all of which are untypical and thus a fault in an Irish Wolfhound, are:

- over-reaching - rear legs overreach the front legs;
- time wasting hackney or paddling action in front;
- throwing his front leg high to delay the moment of landing;
- move forward at an angle (crabbing).

If the front feet can be seen as the hound moves away then he is probably dishing, winging or paddling. A straight column of bones gives optimum support, thus increasing endurance. When the hound is standing, his legs should stand parallel to each other, giving his body full support. When he moves, he no longer has four points of support so the centre of gravity changes. To adjust to this the legs converge to a greater or lesser degree to keep in balance. The degree of convergence will depend on the speed of travel and will be governed by the conformation of the hound.

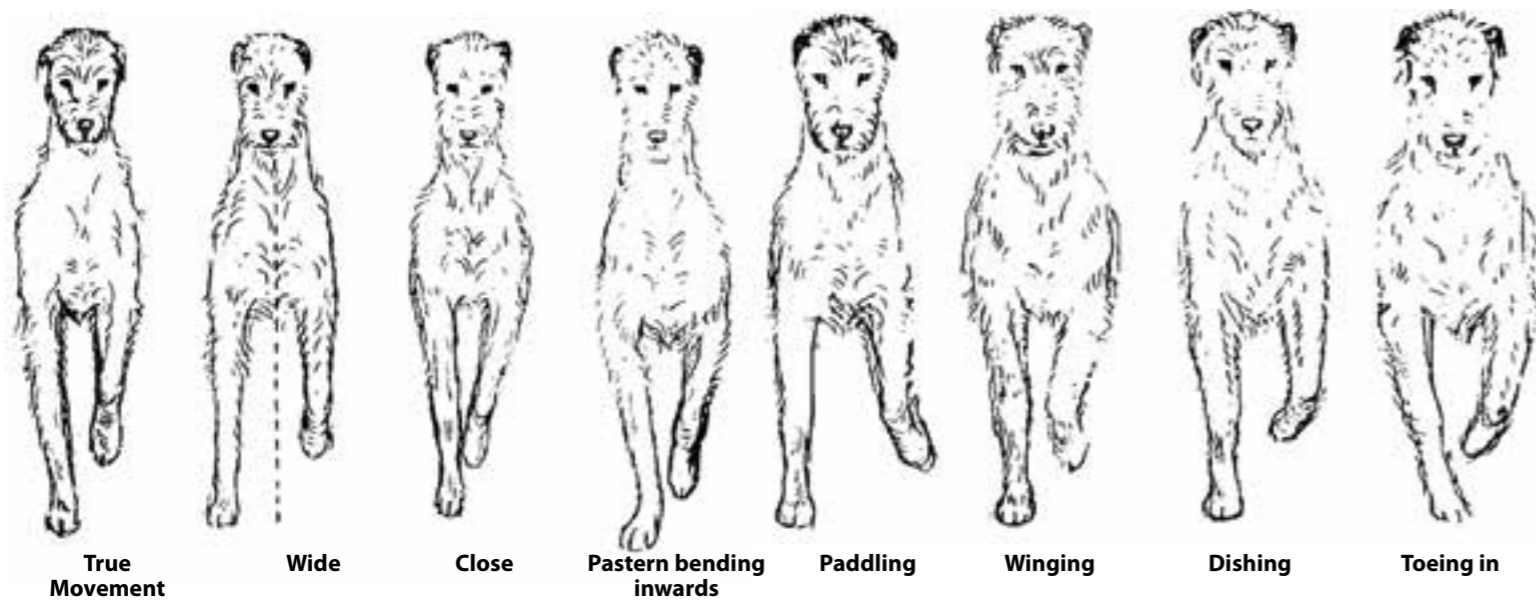


Pacing. In the normal gait, one left and one right leg travel forward simultaneously. The pacer moves his two right legs forward together and his two left legs together. Pacing is considered a fatigue gait and may be noticed in unexercised hounds or those in poor condition.

The gallop. Do not be alarmed if, having read that the ability to perform the double suspension gallop is an essential test of good conformation, you find that your hound uses a bouncing type of gallop. The dog uses a different gait for each speed. Your hound is probably cantering, that is, moving at an easy gallop. The double suspension gallop is a high-speed gait. (See depiction of double suspension gallop in this publication).

The importance of good movement in the Irish Wolfhound cannot be emphasised too strongly. Not only is the sound movement of the hound, as he is seen coming and going, very important but even more so is the long low stride of the well-made hound. Sadly, with the small rings we often have at shows, the square hound may move to best advantage.

Graham himself refers to this point and to soundness in general and it is fitting that the last words on the subject come from him: *"The writer (Graham) knows by experience how hard it is to judge freedom of action in the show-ring. He has seen hounds which he knows, from having watched them gallop over a country, to be perfect in this respect, taken direct from their cramped benches, where perhaps they have been for sixteen hours and this possibly after a long railway journey, and brought into a show-ring some twenty feet square and their necessarily stiff action adversely commented upon. The longer-bodied the hound, the more he is affected, but it is not difficult to detect crooked legs, weak hindquarters, want of coat, bad feet and legs and unsoundness generally, and the writer is glad to think that in the present day a hound showing these defects stands but little chance of becoming a "Champion". It therefore behooves all judges of this breed to see that the unsound hound never receives a place in any class, it being much better to make no award than to give a prize to a hound that may be largely used for perpetuating cripples."*



Sighthounds showing the typical easy and active movement



When judging, some points to remember.

Look for:

- Strong greyhound – like head, proudly carried. Scissors bite ideal. Level acceptable.
- Dark eyes, soft gentle ‘Irish’ expression. Small rose ears set on high.
- Body long, loins slightly arched. Belly well drawn up.
- Topline – nice set of gentle curves from the crest of the neck to the bend of the tail. Height at loin equals height at withers.
- Sufficient length of legs as required in a sighthound.
- Front & rear angulation balanced. Strong rear, broad and muscular thighs, stifles nicely bent.
- Rough, harsh coat.
- Movement easy and active with long stride.
- The legs should converge slightly towards the centre line as the hound moves forward.



Avoid:

- Lightly built hound;
- Overweight or lacking muscle;
- Low on legs;
- Too short or too long in loin;
- Dropping top-line;
- Over-angulated hindquarters;
- Excessive white markings;
- Atypical movement.

Mrs. J. V. Rank’s team of Irish Wolfhounds – 1939. Ouborough bred true to Graham’s Standard; a strongly built Sighthound, moderate angulation forequarters and hindquarters, good length of leg. Coat: rough and hard on body.

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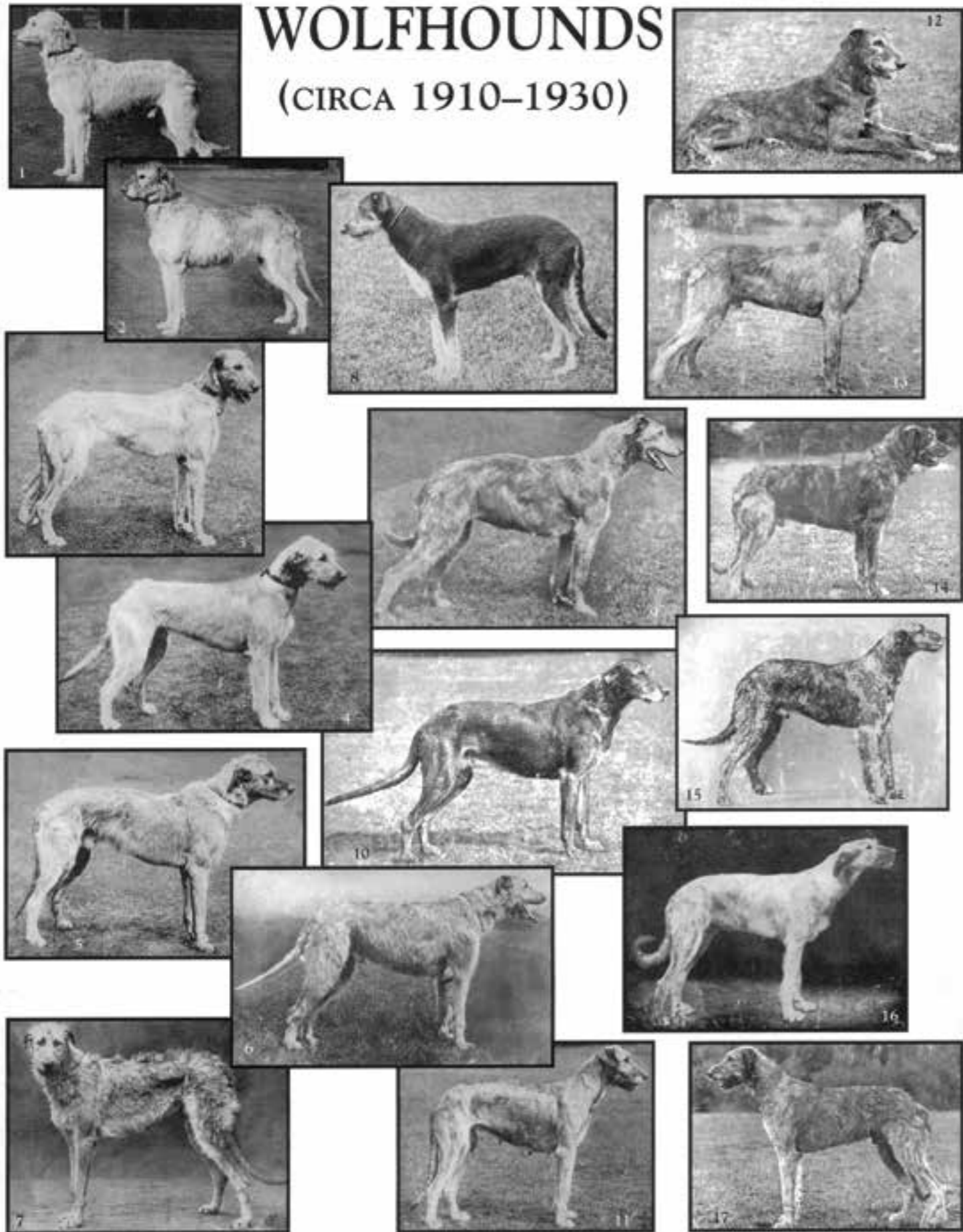
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EARLY ENGLISH BRED IRISH

1 of 3

WOLFHOUNDS

(CIRCA 1910-1930)



1•CH. COTSWOLD 2•COTSWOLD PATRICIA 3•COTSWOLD BLOOM 4•COTSWOLD WATCH 5•COTSWOLD DERMOT
6•CH. FELIXSTOWE KILCULLEN 7•FELIXSTOWE KILRONAN 8•FELIXSTOWE YIRRA 9•FELIXSTOWE GARRYELLEN
10•FELIXSTOWE FOTA 11•BRIDGET 12•FELIXSTOWE ROSCREA 13•CH. FELIXSTOWE KILGERRAN
14•FELIXSTOWE KILLONE 15•FELIXSTOWE REGAN 16•Name not known 17•FELIXSTOWE MULDOONEY

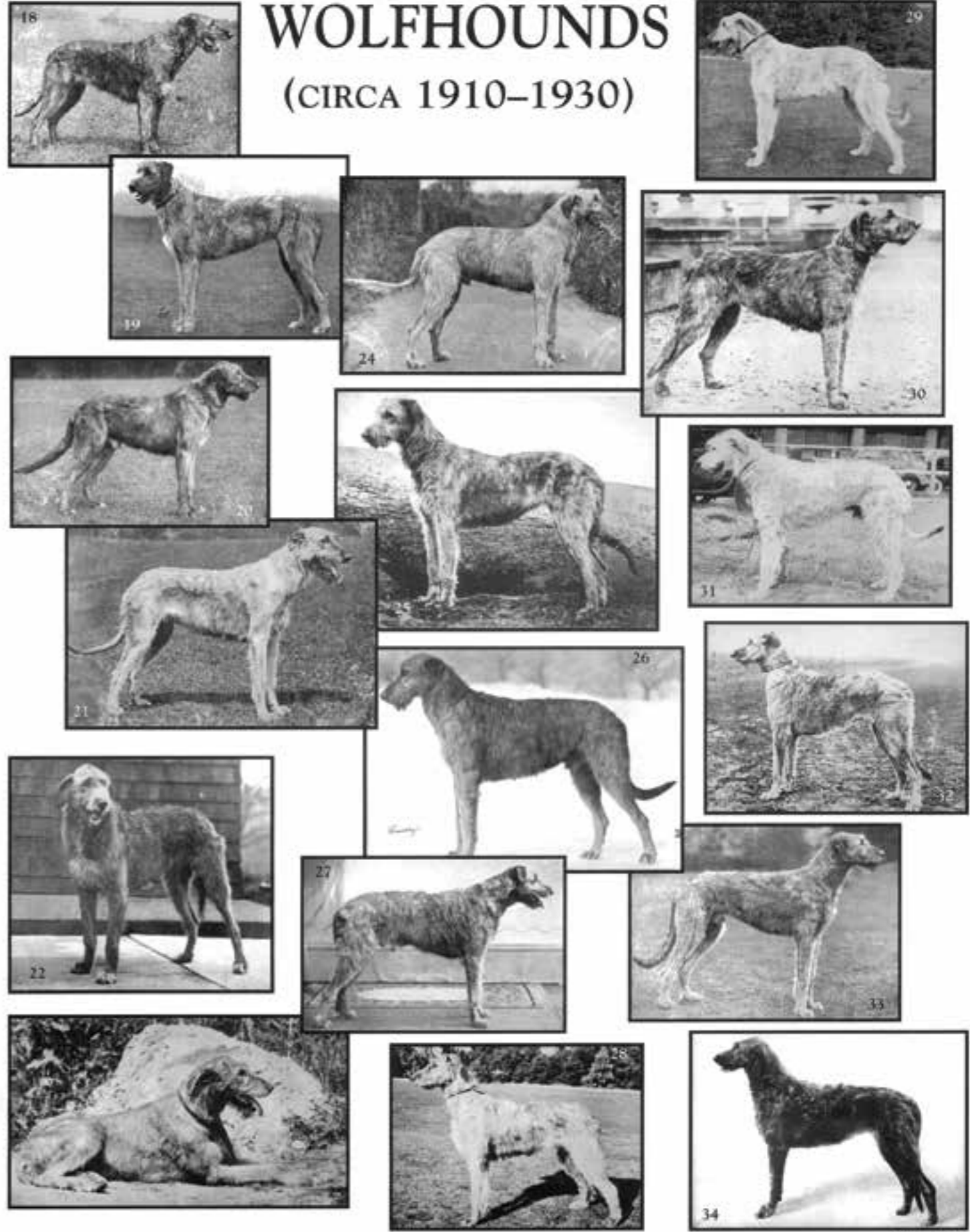
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EARLY ENGLISH BRED IRISH

2 of 3

WOLFHOUNDS

(CIRCA 1910-1930)



18•CH. FELIXTOWE KILCOO 19•CH. FELIXSTOWE KILBAGIE 20•CH. FELIXTOWE KILSHANE 21•FELIXTOWE KILBERNIE
22•AM. CH. FELIXSTOWE KILFREE HALCYON 23•FELIXSTOWE KILLENAN 24•CH. FELIXSTOWE KILCULLY 25•FELIXSTOWE KILGARA
26•CH. FELIXSTOWE KILMORAG HALCYON 27•SULHAMSTEAD BUSTA 28•CH. SULHAMSTEAD DIANA 29•CH. SULHAMSTEAD KIRMA
30•CH. SULHAMSTEAD KESTA 31•AM.CH. SULHAMSTEAD GALA 32•CH. SULHAMSTEAD THELMA
33•CH. CHULAINN CONNACHT 34•CH. CLODAGH OF OUBOROUGH

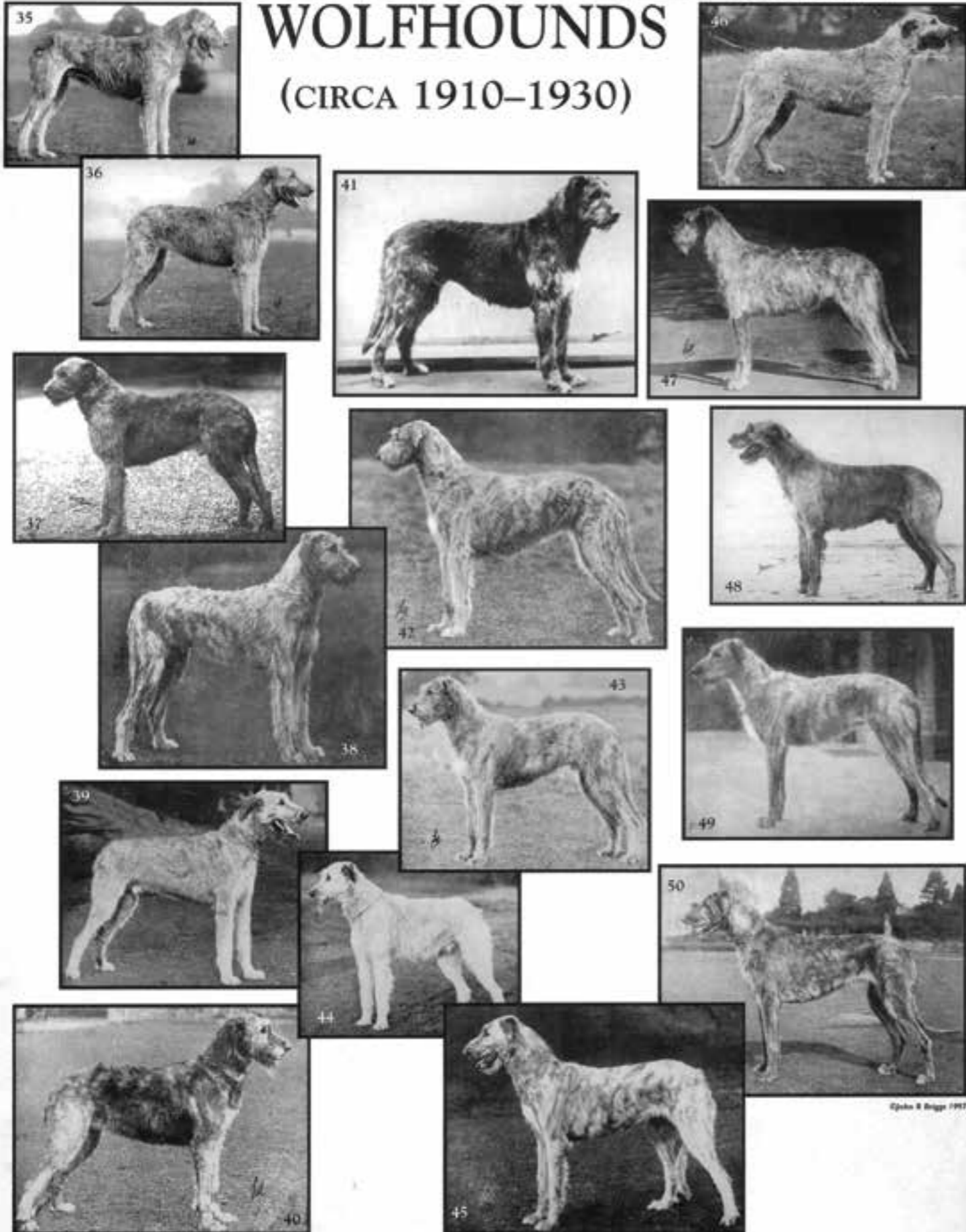
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EARLY ENGLISH BRED IRISH WOLFHOUNDS

3 of 3

WOLFHOUNDS

(CIRCA 1910-1930)



35•CH. GALLEON OF OUBOROUGH 36•CH ERIN OF OUBOROUGH 37•CLONBOY OF OUBOROUGH 38•CH. FARNOGE OF OUBOROUGH
 39•CH. SLANE OF OUBOROUGH 40•CH. IDUNA OF HINDHEAD 41•CH. MORAN OF OUBOROUGH 42•CH. KILKEA OF OUBOROUGH
 43•CH. KILLARNY OF OUBOROUGH 44•CH. CLOHRAN OF OUBOROUGH 45•CH. ALAYNE OF OUBOROUGH 46•TIP OF OUBOROUGH
 47•CH. FETHARD OF OUBOROUGH 48•AM. CH. CROUGHIL OF OUBOROUGH 49•CH. HARBURY BRINDA
 50•CH. ACUSHLA OF OUBOROUGH



FEDERATION OF IRISH WOLFHOUND CLUBS (FIWC)

The purpose of the FIWC is to bring together, within a single framework, the Irish Wolfhound clubs or associations from as many countries as possible, to make joint efforts to protect, promote and improve the breed, and to foster friendship among Irish Wolfhound enthusiasts throughout the world.

The Federation of European Irish Wolfhound Clubs was founded in 1994 in the Netherlands (EIWC). In 2018 the name was changed to Federation of Irish Wolfhound Clubs (FIWC) to better represent the inclusion of non-FCI countries as associate members in the organisation.

FIWC achieves its purpose by actively fostering communication that revolves around Irish Wolfhounds between members and judges encouraging the regular exchange of opinions and information relevant to our breed. The Federation promotes the recognition of the Standard of the Country of Origin but recognizes the official Standards of non-FCI countries that are recognized by FCI and where the differences in the Standards are words only and not in the intent of describing the ideal Irish Wolfhound. In an effort to educate and share information, the FIWC sponsors a twice yearly magazine, IW World, and publications such as this document. The Federation is committed to keeping a watchful eye on the Type, Quality and Health of our breed.

Another objective of the Federation is to support members in the organisation of Irish Wolfhound shows in Europe. To this end, every other year in Europe a member club hosts the FIWC Congress that includes a specialty show for Irish Wolfhounds, an educational component of seminars and a meeting of the membership. This Congress facilitates a face to face exchange of information and the opportunity to discuss those major issues pertinent to the Irish Wolfhound. It involves the membership in preparing guidelines and recommendations designed to improve and harmonise the breed throughout the world, specifically promoting the Standard of our breed. The show element provides a venue to showcase some of the best in our breed in the ring.

The following pictorial gallery provides a historical reference of the Best of Breed and the Best of Opposite Sex winners at each of the EIWC/FIWC Shows since 1994. As you can see, these hounds are great examples of the breed, demonstrating some of the best qualities as defined in the Standard.



1994



**NEDERLANDSE VERENIGING VOOR DE IERSE WOLFSHOND,
HOENSBROEK, THE NETHERLANDS**

BOB Quincy of Kilmara

BOS Madonna Brona van de Ruempol



1998



**WANDHOND FRENN LETZEBUERG, MONDORF
LES BAINS ,GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG**

BOB X-Files Fionnmae

BOS Shaellagh of First Avenue



1996



**DEUTSCHER WINDHUNDZUCHT- UND RENNVERBAND,
CASTROP RAUXEL, GERMANY**

BOB Pitlochry's Big Ben

BOS Tirliffin Roxanne



2000



**IRSK ULVEHUNDKLUBB NORGE,
LILLEHAMMER, NORWAY**

BOB Ulvsholm's Zelica

BOS Cormac's Phoenix



2002



**KONINKLIJKE BELGISCHE WINDHONDENCLUB CLUB ROYAL
BELGE DU LÉVRIER, AALST, BELGIUM**

BOB **Stoneybrook Kiowa at Bassa Pavese**

BOS **Wolfhouse Knock Out**



2006



**RASSEMBLEMENT DES AMATEURS DE LÉVRIERS
D'IRLANDE ET D'ECOSSE, LE TOUQUET, FRANCE**

BOB **Conchobar Evil Enchanter**

BOS **Mascotts My Oonagh**



2004



**NEDERLANDSE VERENIGING VOOR DE IERSE WOLFSHOND,
AMERSFOORT, THE NETHERLANDS**

BOB **Anthony of Treacka's Garden**

BOS **Celtic Myst Brolly**



2008



**SLOVENSKI KLUB ZA HRTE,
KRANJSKA GORA, SLOVENIA**

BOB **Pitlochry's Catweazle**

BOS **Araberara Legressa**



2010

**DANISH SIGHTHOUND CLUB,
VINGSTED, DENMARK**



BOB Ada dei Mangialupi

BOS Pitlochry's O'Brian Orak



2014

**THE IRISH WOLFHOUND CLUB IN FINLAND,
TAMMELA, FINLAND**



BOB Doscatha Afrodite

BOS Always My Brian Roan Inish



2012

**CLUB DEL LEVRIERO,
PADENGHE S/G , ITALY**



BOB Skibberdeen's Rudolph

BOS Maciarot Oliver St John Gogarty



2016

**DEUTSCHER WINDHUNDZUCHT- UND RENNVERBAND,
NÖRTEN HARDENBERG, GERMANY**



BOB Karla dei Mangialupi

BOS Kingarra della Bassa Pavese



2018

**RASSEMBLEMENT DES AMATEURS DE LÉVRIERS
D'IRLANDE ET D'ECOSSE, LE TOUQUET, FRANCE**



BOB Ooolio of First Avenue

BOS Karishma della Bassa Pavese



