



History

The Wolfhound's long history goes back to antiquity and over the centuries has acquired a patina of myth and legend. It can be reliably stated, however, that they were created by breeding the indigenous large dogs of Britain to the Middle Eastern coursing hounds that were bartered around the known world in the earliest days of international trade.

By the time the Roman Empire had gained a toehold in the British Isles, the giant hounds of Ireland were already long established. In the year 391 the Roman consul received a gift of seven of these hounds that "all Rome viewed with wonder." These majestic hunters, whose motto was "Gentle when stroked, fierce when provoked," were used on such quarry as the now-extinct Irish elk, a massive, ferocious beast said to stand six feet at the shoulder.

In 15th-century Ireland, wolves were overrunning the countryside. The Irish hounds, already renowned big-game hunters, began to specialize on wolves. By the late 1700s, when wolves and other big-game animals of Ireland were hunted to extinction, IWs lost their job and nearly went extinct themselves. This was a case of a breed doing its job too well for its own good.

In 1862, British army captain George Augustus Graham began scouring the country for remaining specimens of Ireland's national hound. Graham made it his life's work to protect, standardize, and

promote the breed, and today his name is still spoken with reverence wherever IW fanciers gather.

Among the many Irish legends inspired by the breed is the melancholy tale of loyalty and remorse "Gelert, the Faithful Hound."

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Did You Know?

Irish Wolfhounds are called, interchangeably, "Irish dogs," "Big Dogs of Ireland," "Greyhounds (or Grehounds) of Ireland," "Wolfdogs of Ireland" and "Great Hounds of Ireland." Irish Wolfhound is the more modern name.

By the year 391 AD, the Irish Wolfhound was known in Rome, when the first authentic mention of it was written by the Roman Consul Quintus Aurelius, who had received seven of them as a gift which "all Rome viewed with wonder."

Despite his intimidating nature and temperament of the Wolfhound make him totally unsuitable as guard dog, watch dog, or patrol dog. Though alert he is not suspicious; though courageous he is not aggressive.

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The Breed Standard

