

FOXHUNTING LIFE

with Horse and Hound

ERIC BOWLES PHOTO



Belle Meade Hunt (GA)

FHL WEEK, February 28, 2018

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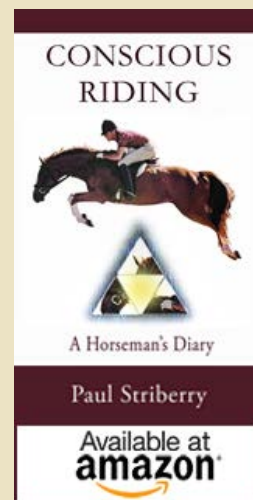
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Legacy of William Almy

By Norman Fine

Photo of the Week



Nina McKee and daughter Lily McKee at the Warrenton Hunt Junior Meet in December, 2017. Lily is the great-great-granddaughter of William Almy. / Douglas Lees photo

Ninety-nine years ago, William Almy, twenty-two, was Master of the Quansett Hounds in South Westport, Massachusetts. Almy and his hounds hunted the fox from Quansett Farm, in the possession of the Almy family since 1700. The farm was situated on the northern shore of Buzzards Bay where the bay meets Rhode Island Sound. At the time of his death in 1979, he'd been a member of the Masters of Foxhounds Association for nearly fifty-six years.

In his time, Almy was recognized as the leading amateur huntsman in North America. He hunted English, American, and Crossbred hounds through his career as Master and huntsman of Quansett and Groton Hunts in Massachusetts, and Culpeper and Warrenton Hunts in Virginia. Almy was constantly in demand as a judge at horse shows and hound shows.

Almy believed that hounds must be bred for the country in which they hunt, and he continued that practice wherever he went. He took his Quansett pack of Welsh-American Crossbreds to Virginia, adding a draft of English hounds brought over by his Culpeper Joint-Master, but gradually changed over to a mostly American pack, finding that breed best-suited for sport in the Virginia country.

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Lexington, Kentucky

He returned to Quansett in 1934, and crossed his Welsh-Fell bloodlines with American Walker, Trigg, and Virginia strains, producing a pack that showed superb sport for another twenty years.

When in 1926 the MFHA (located in Boston) incorporated, Almy was one of the seven incorporators. He was elected a member of the Executive Committee in 1940, secretary of the Association in 1949, and served as president of the MFHA from 1960 to 1970.

During Almy's term as president, a youthful group of upstarts, led by the late MFHs Sherman Haight, Alexander Mackay-Smith, and others, petitioned to limit the terms of MFHA leadership with the purpose of stimulating the association to be more responsive to the needs of the members. The MFHA's biggest shakeup resulted in the current practice of fixed three-year terms for officers.

William Almy is a 1999 inductee into the Huntsmen's Room at the Museum of Hounds and Hunting in Leesburg, Virginia.

Posted February 26, 2018

Memoirs of a Foxhunting Photographer

Our Hunting World

Book Review by Norman Fine

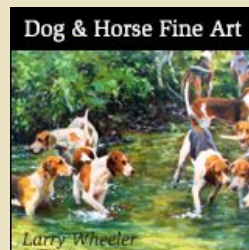
Inside this colorful book, *Memoirs of a Foxhunting Photographer*, is a collection of the best of Catherine Power's foxhunting photographs. Accompanying the images are historical and descriptive pieces written by her husband and fellow hunting correspondent, Dickie Power. This large format volume showcases the mad-keen Irish hunting people, the hounds, the Irish hunters, the fox, and the glorious Irish landscape that makes foxhunting in Ireland so adventurous.

Having hung up her boots after forty-seven seasons hunting with the Scarteen, County Limerick, and the "Gallant" Tipps, Catherine Power decided to follow her other passion for photography. Many of the photos have been previously published *The Irish Field*, *Foxhunting Life*, *Horse and Hound*, *The Field*, *Hounds Magazine*, and other sporting journals. Her work takes center stage in *The Irish Field* where she is hunting correspondent, a role she shares with Dickie. The pair makes a complete package for any sporting publisher: exciting images and compelling text.

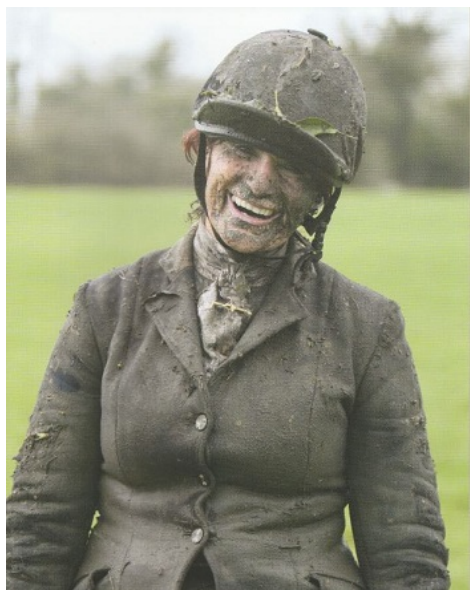
Covering more than twenty packs throughout Ireland, Powers takes readers on a pictorial hunting tour that includes the Scarteen, Duhallow, County Galway, and the Ward Union Stag Hounds in Meath. In addition to foxhunting, there are puppy shows, hunt balls and a visit to Punchestown for the National Hunt Festival.



Memoirs of a Foxhunting Photographer by Catherine Power, hardbound, large format (8-1/2 x 11 inches), color, 202 pages, 55.00 euros shipped outside Ireland, order direct from the **photographer** or on the **website**.



Forewords to the book have been contributed by David Lalor, Master of the Laois and chairman of the Irish Masters of Foxhounds Association, and John Ferguson, formerly a Joint-Master of the Scarteen for many seasons.



Maireade English, out with the Scarteen, smiles through it all at Garryspillane. / Catherine Power photo

The photographs selected for the book were shot over multiple days and seasons of foxhunting. Using her long experience in the hunting field to good effect, Power manages to be in the right place at the right time to capture special moments. Many full days of hunting are covered, from the meet until the huntsman blows for home. The photos encompass hound work, the fox in his natural environment, stunning landscapes, and formidable obstacles. The glorious winter scenery, the gregarious Irish characters, and of course the thrills and spills of the chase are chronicled.

Power's Memoirs of a Foxhunting Photographer will provide an enjoyable way of reliving good days of sport and catching up with old friends in the Irish fields in the comfort and safety of your armchair during

the off-season. Order direct from the [photographer](#) or on the [website](#).

Posted February 23, 2018



Chris Ryan, MFH, Scarteen / Catherine Power photo



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A Red Letter Day at Live Oak

By Daphne Wood, MFH

Hunt Reports



Huntsman Spencer Allen with the Live Oak foxhounds, accompanied by whipper-in Alexandra Taber and kennel huntsman Sam Andrews. / Leslie Ballenger photo

Marty's Weather Channel said no way but my Weather Bug gave me hope, and hope springs eternal! It looked highly likely that we might have to cancel due to heavy rain and possible thunderstorms, but, never wanting to cancel unless totally necessary, the call was made at 5:30 a.m. to go for it.

We were in the saddle at 8:30 and headed for the Dip Vat. What a shame, as it turned out, that so many were put off by the weather prediction of three inches of rain, to have only two in the field—Cameron and David Reid. "Small field, good hunt" could not have been more true!

Twenty-four-and-a-half couple of Live Oak's finest opened in the Dip Vat at eight-forty-eight on a coyote that was viewed multiple times throughout the morning, beginning what was arguably the longest hunt on the same quarry, without changing, that I have ever had the privilege of enjoying in my fifty-two years of hunting multiple times a week in the United States, Canada, and England!

The hounds were totally relentless, and you could have covered them with a blanket for the first two-and-a-half hours. The run lasted a remarkable two hours and fifty minutes, and there was not one check that lasted even ten seconds.

The coyote tried all of his tricks—running foiled ground, 180-degree turns, long points to Green Snake Covert, Garr Fish Lake and towards the end, Seminole Main House, but the hounds were glued to him. The lead hounds changed many times during the run, which is what you want to see in a good pack of hounds, a plethora of talent all vying for the front end.

At just under the three-hour mark of non-stop running, when three couple of old hounds had gotten understandably strung out behind, the race seriously faltered. Strong rain was imminent, and despite the disappointment of second season Huntsman Spencer Allen that this strong coyote had not been caught, we counted them on and called it what it truly was, a red-letter day.

Posted February 21, 2018



Mark Atwater photo

Farmington Accepts the Inevitable, Adds New Quarry

By Elizabeth H. Sutton

Hunt Reports



Professional huntsman Matthew Cook and hounds of the Farmington Hunt (VA). / Cathy Summers photo

On a hot midsummer afternoon, huntsman Matthew Cook rode up to meet me on a green John Deere lawn mower. Cutting grass is just part of the work it takes to maintain the grounds and kennels at the Farmington Hunt Club (VA), home to sixty noisy, rambunctious foxhounds.

Coming to Farmington in the summer of 2013 from the Los Altos Hunt in northern California, Cook faced a new set of challenges, both in topography and local culture. He was learning his new job in the shadow of the forty-year reign of the revered Jill Summers, MFH, whose practice and policy of hunting only foxes laid the foundation for Farmington's hounds. The pack was bred and trained to ignore anything non-vulpine.

Coyotes were a growing threat to the ecosystem in Virginia, and Farmington remained one of the last recognized hunt clubs in America that had not yet loosened its rules as to acceptable quarry and submitted to the pressure of coyotes moving into the area.

Cook arrived with the right experience. He had hunted coyotes almost exclusively while working in California and Nebraska. Coyotes were moving into Virginia and the fox population was adapting.

"It was frustrating for the hounds and for the staff to have to continually stop them when they'd get on [the scent of] a coyote. It just seemed like time to make a change," Cook recalled.

Cook and his family are British by birth and Virginians by choice. Trained in England, Cook started his professional career after high school as a gamekeeper, later moving into hunt service as kennel man and whipper-in and ultimately moving to America after an intermediate assignment with a private hunt club outside Rome, Italy. When the position of huntsman opened at Farmington, the Cook Family had young children and enough youthful energy to move cross-country with their own dogs and horses in tow. Cook took over the job left behind by fellow countryman Daron Beeney, who had served as huntsman for Farmington for more than a decade and left big boots to fill.

Nearby in the stable, three horses and a gang of house dogs and cats milled about as Cook's wife Julie and eight-year-old daughter Pippa fed the staff horses before turning them out in nearby paddocks. Chores are a family affair, carried out all year long in all weather, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, through heat of the summer and frozen days of winter. As summer winds down, the professional huntsman's work to prepare the pack for the coming season is about to begin.



Joy Crompton, MFH displays trophies won by Farmington's American foxhound at the Virginia Foxhound Show. Huntsman Matthew Cook shows his winning hound.

It is quite a challenge to get a group of hounds to work well together, especially those not expected to, in fact trained *not* to hunt coyote. Over the last four seasons, Cook has culled the older hounds that were no longer able to keep up, trading them to neighboring hunts, and taking on younger hounds that showed potential. By participating in foxhound performance trials, such as the event Farmington attended at the Belle Mead Hunt in Georgia last January, and entering regional hound shows, such as the Virginia Hound show held each year in Leesburg in May, he has strengthened relationships with other huntsmen with whom a fair bit of trading and breeding takes place.

According to guidelines set by the Masters of Foxhounds Association, foxhounds are not sold. Ownership is transferred by drafting and cross-breeding between clubs under the direction of Masters in cooperation with the professional huntsman.

Cook consults with other hunt Masters to breed Farmington hounds for desirable traits such as good voice (the term used to describe a hound's cry following a scent). Much of Farmington's territory has smaller parcels of farmland interspersed with woodlands and streams with steep and rugged banks that can play havoc with sight and sound. "When they are hunting along the river or behind a ridge, I can't always see them, but I need to be able to hear them!" Cook said.

He is pleased with the pack's progress under the new expectations. "I think the pack is starting to come together," he said. "It takes three years to make a good hound. It's a real investment. Ideally, in order to compensate for natural attrition due to age, infirmity, and changes in circumstances that account for an annual turnover of about twenty percent, I would like to have up to forty couple of hounds in our pack, and that takes time."

Farmington hunts over land in southern and northwestern Albemarle and Greene counties, the hunting borders of which are recorded by the Masters of Foxhounds Association, an international association that governs all hunts in North America and Canada. The Association was established in 1907, initially to prevent territorial conflicts between hunt clubs and to maintain a stud book of foxhound pedigrees.

Permission to hunt is granted by private landowners willing to allow access to their farms. Joy Crompton, Joint-Master of the Farmington Hunt Club, said, "Permission to allow foxhunting is not so much a service for the farmer but a field sport for the enjoyment of the landowners who ride and the people who support the conservation of the land required to fox-hunt. Killing the fox or the coyote is not the goal so much as the challenge and fun of the chase. It's a privilege and pleasure getting out in the beautiful countryside that we have, and appreciating the natural environment, with the desire to preserve and protect the wildlife that live there."

Cook echoed Crompton's words. "Enjoyment," he said. "I just want to see people out here enjoying the sport."

This year, Cook will start the informal hunting season, designed to train young hounds to hunt, in early September with a pack of approximately twenty-eight couple of mostly American hounds. As the weather turns cooler and the farmland is cleared of harvested crops, the formal hunting season will begin. The season will continue throughout the winter until mid-March, just before the next generation of fox kits and coyote pups are born and the cycle of life begins anew.

Posted February 19, 2018

A similar article appeared in The Virginia Sportsman, Winter, 2017 Edition.



Farmington huntsman Matthew Cook walks out hounds on a non-hunting day. / Chris Middleton photo

Duhallow Foxhounds at Kilbrin: The Oldest Foxhound Pack in Ireland

By Dickie Power

Hunt Reports



Duahallow huntsman Ger Withers / Catherine Power photo

Founded by the Wrixon-Becher family, the Duahallow foxhounds have been hunting North Cork from the Kerry border to Doneraile continuously since 1745 making it the oldest foxhound pack in Ireland. (For those who question how to reconcile that with the Scarteen, the recorded history of which goes back to the early 1700s, the keyword is "foxhounds." The Scarteen Black and Tans are technically known as Kerry Beagles, though they dwarf any beagles we know today.)

The Duahallow pack existed before 1745, but there is no recorded history. That year, Henry Wrixon of Ballygiblin rented a fox covert, Regan's Break, for thirteen guineas. Henry passed the

pack on to his son, Colonel William Wrixon, who in turn passed it on to his own son. In 1800, Sir William Wrixon Becher, MFH met with several other gentlemen to form a club to be called the Duahallow Hunt Club. Sir William had taken on his wife's maiden name, Becher, she from the same family for which the infamous obstacle on the Grand National Steeplechase course at Aintree, England, Becher's Brook, is named.

In the first official Grand National in 1839, Captain Martin Becher fell from his mount, Conrad, and took shelter in the brook to avoid being jumped on by the rest of the field. The original jump consisted of an eight-foot-wide brook with a fence set back by one yard in front of the water, the ground on the landing side being three feet lower than the take-off side. The Duahallow hosted the birth of National Hunt Racing in Ireland and produced some of the most remarkable horsemen from Captain Becher to Vincent O'Brien and John Joe O'Neill.

In 1822, Sir William Wrixon Becher resigned his Mastership and gave the hounds to the hunt, after which it became a subscription pack hunting the same country today.

What follows is Dickie Power's account of a recent Opening Meet of the Duahallow at Kilbrin.

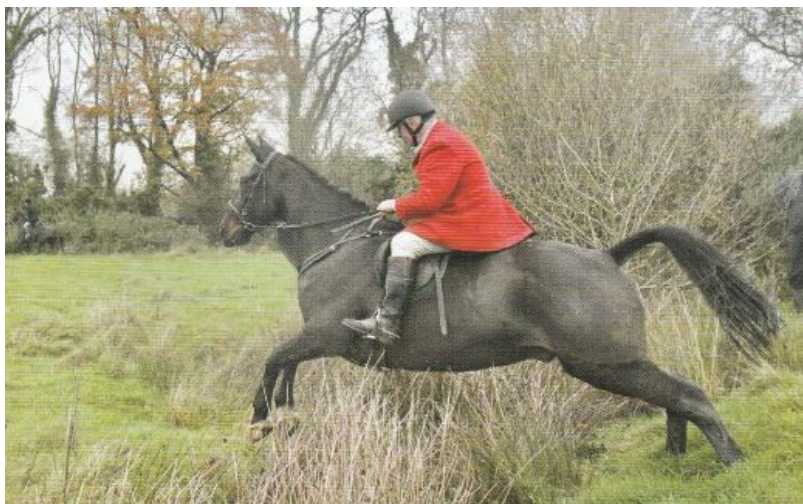
Kilbrin is in the heart of Duhallow near Liscarrol and roughly half way between Buttevant and Kanturk. Fame came early to Kilbrin as it was the birthplace of Archbishop Croke. This pious patriot, after whom Croke Park is named saw his early days in Kilbrin.

Hounds were enlarged on a green just behind the village and it made a smashing sight with a dash of scarlet from the beautifully turned out hunt staff and masters. Senior Master Kate Jarvey was the exception to the colour scheme as she was turned out in a very smart blue hunt coat. Kate Horgan made a welcome return visit having been Master for over ten seasons and chairman of the Master's of Foxhounds Association for a similar term.



Senior Master Kate Jarvey / Catherine Power photo

Preliminaries over, it was time for action. With a field of almost seventy foxhunters, huntsman Ger Withers and sixteen-and-a-half couple of Old English hounds moved off to the first draw on Dan Reilly's farm at Ballyhest. While hounds were drawing I had the chance to renew many Duhallow acquaintance's. Kilmoganny Master James Phelan with whom I hunted recently was out on his new horse that had been prepared for him by Roger Kiely whose horses are always foot perfect. He is Kate Jarvey's right-hand man and the performance of her horses speaks for itself.



Field Master Maurice Coleman, MFH / Catherine Powers photo

Roger was acting as assistant Field Maser with Maurice Coleman filling the number one spot. Maurice has been Field Master since the reign of Harry Freeman-Jackson who was the only Irishman ever to win Badminton, in addition to winning the Galway Plate. Maurice still crosses the country with a steely determination and enthusiasm of a Gold Cup-winning jockey. Farrier Alan Palmer gave an exhibition of vaulting on and off his grey. Catherine O'Flynn who runs Philip's bookshop in Mallow was out and collecting caps, an essential function in any hunt. She had to make an early departure as she was hosting a book signing in the afternoon.

Conversation was cut short as hounds spoke, and after all too brief woodland hunting our pilot was viewed away by amateur whipper-in Paul Buckley, who, when is not hunting runs a garage in Kanturk.

To hear our huntsman sound the gone-away as hounds broke covert and hunting full steam across the old turf of Castlecree was the best tonic anyone could ask for. With horses mad fresh, a terrific dash ensued up the hill and towards the old Duhallow kennels beside Tim O'Connell's farmyard. Tim who is the sixth generation of his family to farm Castlecree is an auctioneer and owns Castlecree estate. He was represented in the field by his daughter Rachel who was flying on a real quality type. Hounds had been kenneled here during the Mastership of the Wrixen-Bechers around 1800 when the hounds had moved from nearby Ballygiblin. Barely pausing by the old kennels, we galloped past the past, making for the Buttevant road. I was passed as if I was standing still by two very small boys on equally small ponies riding a finish. They certainly would not have been pulled in before the stewards as non triers! They turned out to be eleven-year-old Michael O'Meara whose dad Kevin was out and Tommy Ahern who farms extensively at Ballyclough. These young sportsmen had missed the meet as they were playing an early game of Rugby before hunting!

The O'Meara family hold a special place in the history and lore of Duhallow. The famed O'Meara twins, Dermot and Paddy, one a doctor and one a solicitor were the heart and soul of Duhallow for fifty years and produced all the current generations of O'Mearas. It was great to see the surviving patriarch, Paddy, age ninety-six, looking very sprightly at the meet and no doubt feeling justifiable pride to see his son Peter as Master. Peter is an auctioneer and was out with his son Charlie. The other Master out was Pat Hayes from Two Pot House who runs a country store in Mallow. Missing was solicitor Matt Nagle who was preparing for a particularly challenging case.

At far end of Castlecree our pilot was marked to ground and we pressed on and drew towards the water treatment plant. Kilbrin and its environs was awash with foxes on the day but sadly scent was in short supply and foxes sensing their impunity played ducks and drakes with hounds. We marked at least a brace to ground, which were left to enjoy a late lunch underground.

But our morning enjoyable could only be looked on as an appetizer for what was to follow. Hounds went on to draw Neenan's conifer plantation. Third season dog Paddler by Duhallow Parson having shown interest in in a particularly briary thicket, shot in one side and like the old penny in the slot machines, a fox shot out the other side. Woodland hunting resulted but not for long as our pilot was viewed slipping away by young Adam Burke-Ott aged twelve but with the hunting experience of a veteran. He is son of Alex Ott whom readers will remember suffered horrific injuries from a fall on the road off a young horse. Happily he continues to improve and he was out following in his jeep. As for young Adam , If ever I saw a future huntsman of Duhallow it is he.

The way hounds settled on the line suggested it was one of those days when you would need to ram your hat well down and have the peak constantly pointed towards Buttevant. If what follows sounds confused it is because one farm morphed into another and I lost count of the number of roads I crossed.

In the meantime my photographer had been taken under the wing of Tim O'Connell and his son John, a student at Pallaskenry Ag college. The first check gave us time to gather breath and to see who was still up with the action.

Candidate for father-of-the-year must go to Michael Williamson who runs a supermarket in Doneraile. He was out with his two young daughters, Lucy and Kate, with all three immaculately turned out. Riding at jockey weight on a confidential cob he carried a long lead rein to get the juniors over any particularly horrific Duhallow bank. He is brother to former champion jockey and Master of the Meath, Norman Williamson, who completed the Gold cup and Champion Hurdle double in 1995.

Jumping from an outside farm of O'Connell's into forestry we met a nasty single, well guarded by trenches and as narrow on top as a drover's stick. After some woodland hunting our pilot decided to return and we were faced with the self-same bank which if anything had become narrower. In addition, a root as thick as a wrist had emerged ready to entrap a horse's leg. At this stage I was tracking Roger Kiely bringing on a future champion. The lead I had hoped for was a slow deliberate jump with sufficient time on top for the horse to re-adjust its feet. Sadly I was to be disappointed as he went over it like a scalded cat and of course my fellow decided to follow suit with no regard for the nasty root not to mention the jockey!

Behind us, time-out was called and it was decided the bank was un-jumpable. That made us the "twelve apostles," roughly the number of us that got away and were lucky enough to be there when our huntsman blew his quarry to ground well over an hour after we found!

In the failing light we hacked back to Kilbrin, but sadly the village's only pub has succumbed to modern times and was permanently shut. For all that it was a smashing day and confirms my view that if you want hunting, Duhallow are premier league!

Posted February 18, 2018

This article previously appeared in The Irish Field and is republished with permission.

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