

Section 5

Hunting Airedales in Print

Many students of Airedale history would argue that the breed's early exploits as a hunter of all kinds of furred game made its reputation. From water rats in the River Aire in the breed's native England; to all sorts of rodents and varmints in the New World; and large game such as bear, hogs, and mountain lions — the Airedale was considered a do-it-all hunter.

The Airedale's versatility extended to hunting both upland birds and waterfowl, and this was often given brief notice in hunting treatises. However, when the ATCA Hunting/Working Committee began to refocus more interest on bird hunting with Airedales, writers and editors of dog publications responded with a willingness to cover the field experiences.

The articles on Airedales which reached the widest readership among sportsmen were no doubt those which appeared in hunting dog magazines, such as *Gun Dog* and *Petersen's Hunting Magazine*. It was fortuitous that two of the experts who judged the ATCA Hunt Tests were also regular contributors to hunting magazines.

David Michael Duffey participated in one of first Hunting/Working Weekends, then wrote his observations in his column in the December, 1987 issue of *Petersen's Hunting Magazine*. In this previously cited article (page 20) titled "The Airedale Comeback," Duffey, who owned and hunted with all types of sporting dogs, pointed out that he himself owned an Airedale that was his house dog and fill-in gun dog. While noting he felt that hunting Airedales "cannot be expected to outshine the specialists," Duffey went on to report:

Individual Airedales can be taught to do a passable job of questing for, finding, flushing, and retrieving upland game and waterfowl. With considerable effort, they can be taught to point, as can all breeds. The versatility potential, when extended to include tracking, baying, and battling furred game, exists as a breed potential." (Complete article Appendix D2)

Twelve years after Duffey wrote "The Airedale Comeback," Chris Dorsey, another "Gun Dog" columnist for *Petersen's Hunting Magazine*, was impressed with Airedales he observed hunting in Iowa and Montana. Though apparently unaware of the ongoing work of the ATCA H/W Committee, Dorsey researched the breed further and wrote a column he titled "The Return of the Airedale" for the April, 1999 issue of *Petersen's Hunting*. Dorsey emphasized the same Airedale virtues that other sporting-dog writers had noticed:

Just as we favor one gauge of shotgun for quail and yet another for pheasants, we sometimes employ one dog to point game and still a different breed to fetch it. That trend, though, is changing, for few hunters can afford the overhead and time to devote to training multiple dogs. What's needed by many gunners is a generalist — a low-maintenance dog that's as handy in the field as it is pleasant to be around the home. Enter the Airedale... (Complete article, Appendix D7)



A full-length feature titled “The Airedale, A Unique Hunting Breed” by Mary Nelson appeared in the April/May, 1996 issue of *Gun Dog*. Nelson, in addition to being a master-level judge at AKC hunt events for spaniels, pointers, and retrievers, had served as a judge at the ATCA Nationals. As such, she had the opportunity to measure the abilities and potential of Airedales against some of the finest hunting dogs in the country. She wrote:

A generalist in a field dominated by specialists, the Airedale can, to quote Teddy Roosevelt, ‘Do anything any other dog can do and lick the other dog, if he has to.’ On virtually every continent, the Airedale has hunted almost every species of animal or game bird. No other hunting breed can make that claim. (Appendix D8)

This article also included several color photos of Airedales flushing or retrieving birds, each photo of a different Airedale. This may have been the first time many hunters ever “saw” an Airedale doing this work. As the circulation of *Gun Dog* reaches thousands of readers, this was an article with impact.

Airedales also began to appear in hunting dog magazines in photos used to illustrate non-breed specific articles. For instance, in *Gun Dog*’s October/November, 1997 feature on “Pure Fun Gun Dogs,” author David Duffey lauds several kinds of “jack-of-all-trades” hunting dogs, in which he includes Airedales. One photo illustrating the article has four breeds learning water acclimation. The caption reads, “Introduction to water will ensure that the two ‘non-waterdog’ breeds shown, an English Setter and an Airedale, will double as duck retrievers in the manner of the two ‘natural’ water dogs sharing the pond, a Golden and Labrador Retriever.” (Appendix D9)

In that same magazine, Mary Nelson has an article on “Sending Your Dog to a Professional Trainer.” One of the dogs prominently pictured as an example of a well-trained, willing hunting dog is a Airedale who’s obviously pleased with the bird he’s bringing in. (Excerpt, Appendix D10)

An earlier article by Mary Nelson, this one in the April, 1988 *AKC Gazette*, on “An All-Breeds Afield Club” features the Rice Creek Hunt Club in Minnesota. The article mentions the club’s non-breed specific policy:

All breeds of hunting dogs, including those developed for hunting which may have drifted away from their original purpose, are welcome at Rice Creek and club policy requires that all breeds be considered equals. This means that Airedale- or Poodle-owning members are treated the same as those with Labs or Shorthairs....

In an illustration for that article, Rice Creek member Bob Fore proudly poses with his Airedale Roxie, along with other

members with Brittanys and Springers. (Appendix D11)

Later Bob Fore wrote the H/W Committee a personal note on his Airedale's role at the Rice Creek:

At the beginning of the Rice Creek Hunting Dog Club, the AKC required that the club conduct sanctioned Retrieving Tests. As a chartered member of the club, our Airedale, Roxie Supergal of Arelsh, Am/Can. UD, participated fully in club training sessions and activities.

Roxie, after retirement from obedience competition, showed her owners and other interested observers that she had quite obvious bird hunting abilities, in fact, obsessive desire.

In two weeks, she transferred hand signals to whistle signals.

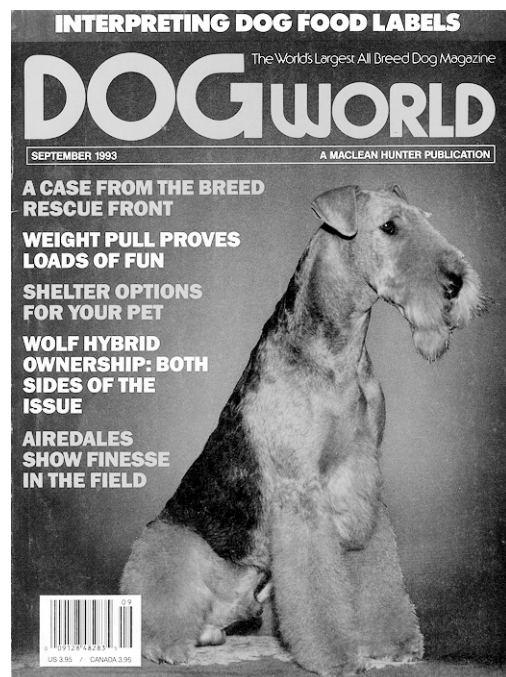
The above-mentioned sanctioned retriever tests would not let Roxie enter the test because the AKC did not list her breed as a "retriever breed." Her considerable abilities were recognized by club members, and she was therefore permitted to participate in the sanctioned test as a pick-up dog for all tests conducted, Junior, Senior, and Master. Needless to say, she performed exceptionally.

Understanding that a pick-up dog has an even tougher job than the participant — not seeing the bird flush, fly, shot, or dropped, she had to rely on her handler and her natural instincts. Even the retriever owners participating were amazed that Roxie had such "bird" abilities and instincts.

There is not a question in her owner's mind that if she had been given the opportunity to participate in AKC tests, she would have earned progressive titles as rapidly as any retriever breed.

An even wider general readership was reached by Airedale features in two popular all-breed magazines.

Dog World's September, 1993 issue featured the ATCA Hunting/Working Nationals in a cover story by Chris Halvorson titled "Airedales Prove They Have the Right Stuff." With Int. & Am. Ch. MJ's Stone Ridge Chosen One handsomely groomed and the cover line "Airedales Show Finesse in the Field, the article attracted much attention.



Though written in the earlier days of the ATCA hunt test program, the feature focused on several key points. The lead paragraphs described the retrieving ability of a four-month old Airedale puppy in his first test situation. H/W Chairman Steve Gilbert was already looking forward to a long-range goal:

Now all we need for AKC-approved field championships for Airedales is more entries. We need to demonstrate to the AKC that there is sufficient interest in our program to warrant

adding it to the list of existing performance events. The more entries we get at the National Hunting/Working tests here in Ohio, and the sooner the regional Airedale clubs offer these tests, the sooner an AKC field championship for Airedales will be a reality.

Judge David Michael Duffey again endorsed the Airedale as the ideal dog for some hunters: “The Airedale is an excellent dog for the casual hunter who likes to go out a few weekends every year and hunt both feather and fur.”

But Henry Johnson, Jr, an Airedale breeder who has participated in the H/W Weekends since their beginning, told *Dog World* readers exactly why field work is so important in this breed:

I like a classy-looking dog as well as anyone, and I give full credit to show breeders for making the Airedale as good-looking as the better ones are today. But I strongly feel that conformation showing is only one leg of a three-leg stool. Temperament and working ability, the other two legs, must be of equal rank. The Airedale should be a companion and utility dog, not just another pretty face ...Someone has to recognize and maintain the requisite qualities of working dogs, or those qualities will simply fade away. (Complete article, Appendix D12)

In *Dog Fancy's* June, 1996 breed profile on Airedales, the focus was on the multi-faceted nature of the breed. The breed's history as a hunting dog and the present day hunting opportunities through the ATCA Hunting/Working events were highlighted. In addition, the profile made the

important point that the Airedale is made as it is because of what it is — a hunting dog:

The utilitarian purpose of the breed makes for a classic case of form following function...A medium size enables the breed to maintain stamina and agility. Outdoor trekkers note that the Airedale is small enough to hop in a canoe or even be carried on horseback, should the need arise....Both males and females should be well-muscled and athletic.”

(Complete article, Appendix D13)

Readers of Airedale articles in magazines may well be motivated to further research in books

on the breed. A trip to the AKC's library or a bookseller's database would show that there have been four books on Airedales published in recent decades. Each book devotes numerous pages of text and photos to the Airedale's gun dog abilities.

The New Complete Airedale Terrier, written by Gladys Brown Edwards and published in its third edition by Howell Book House in 1978, was long considered the “Bible” for serious Airedale owners. Edwards begins her book with a dedication to Lou “Lionheart” Holliday, “dean of West Coast Airedalers, whose life-long experience and interest in the breed contributed more to Airedales and Airedale breeders than can ever be realized.” Under those words is a photo, probably taken in the 1940s, of Holliday in hunting attire, with shotgun in hand. At his side, holding a duck in his mouth, is an Airedale identified as Rip of Lionheart.

In a later chapter, Edwards wrote of Rip, who as a young dog “was so fond of retrieving that he would catch the neighbors' pullets and bring them into the house....This

dog later became proficient on retrieving wild geese, and he would watch them on the way down after they were shot, so that his goose was immediately brought to Mr. Holliday, saving the day on a couple of occasions when other, close-by hunters, thought they could collect a free bird.”

Although Edwards devotes the bulk of her accounts of influential Airedale bloodlines to that of imports and show dogs, she is ever cognizant of the dual purpose of the breed. For instance, in a paragraph describing a dog such as Ch. Hilltop’s Rocky Top Notch, she writes, “Rocky’s exploits as a gun dog are worthy of note in themselves, but it is his career as a show dog, and as a sire that gave him a place in Airedale history.”

In a later chapter, Edwards details more of the bird hunting exploits of various early Airedale lines.

A second Airedale volume, *The New Airedale Terrier*, by breeders June Dutcher and Janet Johnson Framke was published by Howell Book House in 1990. These writers expanded on the earlier work by Gladys Brown Edwards. This book includes a chapter contributed by Steve Gilbert on the ATCA early National Hunting/Working events.

The Working Airedale by Bryan Cummins was published in 1994 by OTR Publications. The author’s intent was to fill the gap in recent literature on the breed with a volume concentrating on the Airedale’s working abilities. With more detail than the earlier books, Cummins traces the history of hunting Airedales.

It’s significant that Cummins titles his chapter on Airedales in the 1980s and 1990s “The Rebirth of the Working Airedale.”

He starts that chapter with a discussion of the importance of the goals of the ATCA

Hunting/Working Committee, most specifically to maintain and showcase the abilities with which the breed is blessed.

The newest breed book on Airedales is a soft-covered manual written by Dorothy Miner, titled *Airedale Terriers: Everything About Purchase, Care, Nutrition, Breeding, Behavior, and Training*. This book, published in 1998 by Barrons Educational Publishing as part of their series for pet owners, includes photos of Airedales doing land and water retrieves.

Miner starts her discussion of hunting Airedales by pointing out, “Hunting is the original job of the Airedale Terrier, and there is a resurgence in the popularity for the Airedale as a versatile hunting dog today.”

As did the other Airedale authors, Miner credits the ATCA Hunting/Working Nationals for playing an important role in maintaining and promoting the multi-purpose Airedale. In light of her further discussions on the many activities owners can enjoy with Airedales, it’s evident that *multi-purpose* is a hallmark of the breed.

The serious Airedale researcher visiting the AKC Library should also stop at the shelves containing past issues of *Terrier Type*, considered *the* magazine for terrier fanciers since its start in 1977. This magazine includes coverage of important terrier conformation specialty shows. It normally gives minimal coverage to AKC performance events for terriers.

However, *Terrier Type* has printed reports on the past three ATCA H/W Nationals. Photos of Airedales doing land and water retrieves, as well as those working raccoon, have opened the eyes of terrier fanciers to the idea that Airedales are hunters of a very different sort from the

breeds that run the earth dog trials. Appendix D14 is a complete reprint of the latest *Terrier Type* report.

Regular features and columns in the ATCA newsletter, *The American Airedale*, have also served to educate the fancy. As has been previously mentioned, the Parent Club offers strong support to the H/W Committee's efforts because the hunting nature of the Airedale is intrinsic to the breed's identity. The history of the ATCA Hunt Test Program can be traced through the club's newsletters. For the record, Appendices B1 through B13 contain reprints on the H/W events from years of club newsletters.

The H/W Committee has also worked hard to publicize its activities through advertising and informational brochures, pamphlets, and finally, on the World Wide Web.

The Committee places classified ads such as the one shown here in selected gun dog magazines in order to interest hunters in what may be a "new" breed to them.



To reach an altogether different audience, the H/W Committee places ads for the H/W Nationals in show catalogs of every Airedale Specialty show throughout the year. These ads are two-page spreads featuring photos of Airedales hunting and inviting Airedalers to attend the next H/W

Nationals. Samples of recent ads can be found in Appendix C4.

These advertisements have been effective not only in showing Airedale owners the potential their dogs have for new performance events, but also in educating the rest of the show dog world to Airedale versatility. Feedback to these ads, such as the comment "You mean your Airedale actually puts those birds in his mouth? Doesn't he hurt them?" shows how much education was needed. Ads with hunting Airedales in keepsake catalogs such as that of Montgomery County Kennel Club have caught the attention of thousands of serious dog fanciers throughout the world.

When the H/W Committee receives requests for more information, as happens from response to advertisements, the Committee is ready. Every year, prior to the upcoming Nationals, a brochure outlines the events scheduled and gives an idea of what each workshop or hunt test involves. The brochure includes a response coupon that can be returned by those who want to be on the mailing list to receive entry forms for the Nationals.

This brochure is also sent to every ATCA member so that the club's entire membership is aware of the activities and possibilities. (1999 brochure, Appendix C5)

In addition, the H/W Committee publishes "Airedales Afield," a four-page pamphlet that includes a brief history of hunting Airedales, a description of ATCA Hunt Tests, and a reprint of a recent magazine article on hunting Airedales. A copy of this pamphlet is sent in response to all requests for information. (Complete pamphlet, Appendix C6)

The ATCA H/W Committee also maintains its own website that was on-line

even before the Parent Club's site was developed. Now that the Airedale Terrier Club of America has its own site at www.airedale.org, which is linked to the AKC website, the H/W Committee's site is available as a link or independently at www.airedale.org/hwc

The H/W Committee website, devoted only to the hunting aspect of Airedales, is a popular spot for browsers and those seeking specific information. By the end of early March, 1999, the site had received 14,900 "hits," which indicates substantial interest to a worldwide audience.

The AKC's official publication, *The AKC Gazette*, has on four occasions provided coverage of ATCA H/W activities.

The first feature, "Willing Workers," (previously mentioned page 18) was written by Airedale breeder Anne Reese and appeared in the January, 1987 *Gazette*. This article was a report on the first annual H/W Weekend. (Appendix D1).

A follow-up report on the 1995 H/W Nationals was written by the *Gazette* staff for the April, 1995 *Gazette*. The brief report included two color photos of Airedales participating in the tests and workshops. (Appendix D15)

The *AKC Gazette's* August, 1997 Airedale breed column contained a history of hunting Airedales and the Parent Club's Hunt Tests. In its final sentence, that column made perfectly clear the ongoing goal of the Parent Club's involvement:

"...We hope," the columnist concluded, "the AKC will reconsider its decision to exclude our breed from AKC hunt tests. Airedales deserve to regain their

reputation as the most versatile of hunters." (Complete column, Appendix D16)

Most recently, the January, 1999 *AKC Gazette* included a feature on "A Field of Champions," an AKC "special exposition" for AKC champions who also held AKC or Parent Club performance titles. As has been previously noted, seven Airedales with ATCA Hunt Test titles were entered, one of whom was pictured in this article. Just as breeds participating in AKC conformation shows from the Miscellaneous Class anticipate eventually participating with AKC Group status, so the Airedales gathered at this event hoped to come back next year with official AKC Junior Hunter titles added to their names. (Appendix D6)

As the appendices which follow this proposal show, thousands — or more precisely — tens of thousands of words on Airedales as gun dogs have been published in recent decades, along with hundreds of photos of flushing and retrieving Airedales.

The ATCA H/W Committee believes we have a strong case. Is there anyone reading this proposal who still cannot accept that Airedales should be recognized for their abilities as gun dogs?

In that event, the final section of this proposal brings together the first-person accounts of "witnesses," those who have not just seen or heard about hunting Airedales, but those who personally use an Airedale for hunting upland game or waterfowl. Their experiences deserve consideration.

It has often been said that anyone can say they have a great hunting dog, but only objective test standards and judges can "prove" it. The writers of our "Testimonials" join all the H/W Committee members in asking for a chance to *prove*

their Airedales through participation in AKC
Hunt Tests.



