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In the Golden Age of Illustration when the Irish wolfhound was still an obscure breed, one became famous in England and America for a talent many wolfhound companions know quite well. Micky the wolfhound was known for sleeping.

And for the struggles of his friend Cracker, a bull terrier, in finding a place to snooze on the same couch with the massive sighthound.

They were portrayed in a book by renowned British illustrator Cecil Aldin called “Sleeping Partners,” which remains one of Aldin’s most popular works. A series of pastel drawings shows

Cracker sleeping scrunched up at the end of the couch, cuddling with Mickey, pressed head to head with the wolfhound and finally, sprawled atop his easy-going friend.

Aldin sketched the pair on a couch in his studio, a 60-foot former army barracks. Some days, the illustrator would watch them for hours until they settled into the perfect pose.

Born in 1870, Aldin's father was an amateur artist who encouraged his son to draw at a young age. He sold his first drawing in 1890 and rapidly caught the public's eye with his animal and rural life sketches in magazines and newspapers of the day, which relied heavily on illustrations.

Aldin was also an enthusiastic sportsman and dog lover. His sketches from early dog shows led to a long-time association with the Illustrated London News. Later, the birth of his son and daughter inspired the illustrator to produce a series of well-received nursery pictures. His enthusiasm for horses, hounds and hunting led him to live in the village of Sulhamstead, where he became master of the local hunt and was active with several area packs.

Coincidentally, Sulhamstead was also the home of Florence Nagle, whose Sulhamstead Kennel helped firmly establish the breed in England and later America. Aldin did a pastel sketch of Nagle's first wolfhound, Sir Michael of Sheppey, in 1917.

In the late 1920's he bought Micky from Sulhamstead Kennel as a gift for his wife, but quickly became close to the hound himself. His work branched out into book illustrations and horse and dog portraits for the rich and famous, but his depictions of Micky and his friend, Cracker, are what many today remember.

He called the pair his “professionals.” They were free to ramble through his huge studio and often inspired him to his best work. The two were so popular that they received their own fan mail.

Aldin and his wife retired to the Mediterranean island of Mallorca in 1930, where he hoped the warmer climate would help ease his arthritis. Micky never fully adjusted to the new surrounding and heat and he died of heart failure a year later.

In 1935 while traveling by ship to business back in England, the illustrator suffered a heart attack. Aldin’s wife, Rita, said that Crackers began to howl remorsefully back in Mallorca, and just hours later she received word that her husband had died. She said she was certain that somehow the terrier knew that his master and friend was gone.

Rita remained on Mallorca for another two years despite being anxious to return home to England. Cracker was 10 years old then and she feared the required quarantine in England would be too hard on him. Cracker died in 1937 and the London Times wrote in his obituary, “*Cracker, the bull terrier, for many years the beloved companion and favourite model of the late Cecil Aldin, died July 31st, Mallorca. Deeply mourned.*”