



≈ CARRIAGE ≈

JOHN GREENALL, WHIP

The carriage driving master's career proves there is no contradiction in being both a traditionalist and an innovator.

By Stacey Stearns

If carriage driving is about tradition, there are few who understand those traditions better than John Greenall. His name is synonymous with carriage driving and Morgan horses. Over the course of his remarkable career, John has driven and shown it all: singles, pairs, tandems, unicorns, and four-in-hands. Many horses he used were Morgans he bred and trained himself at his Thorny Hills Farm in West Windsor, Vermont.

Yet John's influence extends far beyond the show ring.

For more than forty-five years, he has been a clinician, judge, mentor, historian, collector, and craftsman. His knowledge of the art and etiquette of driving is unparalleled, and his kindness and enthusiasm have shaped generations of equestrians. Whether helping a newcomer fit a harness, mentoring a young judge, or offering a word of encouragement at the rail, John's easy smile and generosity of spirit have left their mark on the Morgan world.

ABOVE: John and Sue Greenall picnicking on Mt. Ascutney in Vermont. **OPPOSITE:** John driving his famous tandem hitch with WCM Beaumark Morgan, leader.



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Another view of John's tandem hitch led by WCM Beaumark Morgan; "Beau" with Sue Greenall on an endurance ride (photo © Carien); a four-in-hand of Morgans, including Hoosier Macdonald and Hoosier Mactruck, wheelers, and Jade Meadow Charmain and WCM Beaumark Morgan, leaders, hooked to a Roof Seat Break, at The Breakers, Newport, Rhode Island; and a remarkable five-in-hand of Morgan crosses belonging to Gloria Austin hooked to a reproduction Cocking Cart that she built as a replica of the Greenall's Cocking Cart.

A LIFETIME OF CRAFT AND CARRIAGE

At his Thorny Hills Farm, first in Pennsylvania, and then at the West Windsor location, Greenall Carriage House became known for pairing drivers with the right combination of horse, harness, and vehicle. John's expertise spans both custom-built and antique carriages, and his appraisal work has been highly sought after by collectors and museums alike. At its height, his private collection held more than eighty vehicles, along with harnesses and carriage-related items. His eye for authenticity and detail has made him the authority on proper turnout and his influence continues to define carriage presentation today.

When the Grand National & World Championship Morgan Horse Show® introduced carriage competition, John was its very first judge, and he returned to that ring many times before retiring from judging there in 2023. His judging résumé reads like a history of American driving itself, including the Devon Horse Show, Walnut Hill Farm, and every major carriage competition in the United States.

Karen Homer Brown of Kentucky, who often officiated and

taught alongside John, adds, "He is the consummate professional and horseman, always with a kind word for exhibitors and helping everyone improve in the sport. We worked well together and always had a good time."

John also served the sport through leadership. He was president of the American Driving Society, president of the Carriage Museum of America, and a member or chair of countless committees. His travels for clinics, judging, and competition took him to forty-five American states and nine countries, always with the same purpose: to improve, preserve, and celebrate the art of driving. John and Karen taught clinics together to help competitors prepare when the United States Equestrian Federation and American Driving Society were conducting their rulebook revisions. In 2023, the American Morgan Horse Association honored him with the Golden Reins Award for a lifetime of dedication to carriage driving, the Morgan horse, and equestrian culture.

Alongside his work in the ring, John devoted years of service to endurance and competitive trail riding, supporting the passion



ABOVE: John Greenall wears many hats as judge, technical delegate, and educator.

of Sue, his wife of 38 years. He volunteered tirelessly at the Vermont 100-Mile Endurance Ride, managing volunteers, marking trails, securing veterinary officials, and obtaining landowner permissions. John also competed in endurance, competitive trail, and competitive driving with his Morgan horses and Sue's Arabians.

A HORSEMAN'S BEGINNING

John was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania. His father, a U.S. Army cavalryman and World War II tank driver, married John's mother after the war and established their Thorny Hills Farm, where the family kept saddle horses. Although John didn't ride as a child, he found his passion for horses while attending prep school, where he was introduced to Saddlebreds.

That introduction led him to Morgans, and to the stallion who started it all. John purchased Sirocco (Waseeka's Nocturne x Green Mt Birdie) as a weanling, and the 1971 bay stallion became foundational to his career and lifelong devotion to the breed. Though John learned to drive almost by accident, carriage driving soon became his calling. Karen and John grew up near each other in Pennsylvania and became acquainted through the show horse world. Karen's mother, Lore Homer, introduced John to carriage, and his interest

took off from there.

"In the beginning, I drove whatever I had," John recalls with a laugh. "I was lucky Sirocco and Windy Hill Liebschen (Windcrest Music Man x Caramel) were a good pair." Many of Sirocco's offspring also went on to drive in pairs and four-in-hands. Liebschen was later sold, in foal to Supreme Beam, to Fletcher Farms in Arizona. The resulting foal, Fletcher Music Lee, was the 1986 World Champion Mare and went on to produce other outstanding individuals. She was inducted into AMHA's Broodmare Hall of Fame, as was her daughter, GLB Bell Of The Ball, and her granddaughter, GLB Pretty Woman.

John looked for correctness, disposition, athletic ability, and type in every horse. "Morgans are great carriage horses," he says. "It's one of their fortes. A good Morgan is hard to beat. They've got a go button most horses don't have."

Two other pivotal horses in John's life were Hoosier Mactruck (Medomak Vigilare x Hoosier Heather) and Hoosier Macdonald (Medomak Vigilare x Hoosier Ms Foxy), both acquired in 1985. John drove them successfully as a pair before selling them, proud to see Mactruck go on to win at Devon with his new owner. "Pairs are the hardest to get right because of the personalities and the way of going," John often reminded students. "The horses have to like each other."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: John stylishly attired for sleigh driving; at the lines in his unique fishing tackle carriage; meticulously turned out in a High Tandem Gig; and a Surrey on display at the Greenall Carriage House.

THE HORSE OF A LIFETIME

Of all the horses John has known, none meant more to him than WCM Beaumark Morgan (Waseeka Thunderbolt x WCM Betsy Morgan), known simply as “Beau.” The 1982 bay gelding embodied everything John valued: versatility, heart, and brilliance. Beau participated in carriage, competitive trail, fox hunting, and endurance. John purchased him as a scrawny two-year-old at the Mid-A Morgan Consignment Sale, but within two years Beau was leading his four-in-hand.

“Beau was our most versatile horse ever, and he was tough,” Sue recalls. “Even during the night classes at Devon, he was stoked. He never hesitated.”

In the carriage ring, John drove Beau in every imaginable configuration: four-in-hand, tandem, unicorn, and single. At the same time, Beau completed more than 5,000 miles in competitive trail. Among his many accolades were AMHA Open Competition Reserve Champion Single Driving Horse in 1997 and Cham-

pion Pair/Tandem in 2003, as well as Eastern Competitive Trail Champion Driving Horse in both 1997 and 2001. He was the first Morgan to reach 3,000 miles of competitive trail and was AMHA’s High-Point Competitive Trail Horse for three years in a row. Both Sue and John rode him in competitive trail and endurance.

Beau’s brilliance shone brightest in tandem driving, John’s signature specialty. Beau led, with Champagne and Spinnaker, a mixed-breed mother-daughter duo bred by Sue, alternating as wheelers. Together they earned countless honors across the East Coast, from Devon to Walnut Hill and the Newport Coaching Weekend in Rhode Island.

Being invited to Newport with his Morgan four-in-hand remains one of John’s favorite memories. “Newport was probably the hardest event,” he recalls. “It’s a pleasure drive, but an unspoken competition, a three-day turnout class through gates and lawns, down roads, in company. It takes a phenomenal whip.”

When Beau passed in 2009, John reflected, “He was our most



TOP TO BOTTOM: Portraits of John over the years include a young driver bundled for winter, working the infield at New England Morgan, and on his century drive with Spinnaker.

versatile horse, and as a tandem leader, he made his mark in driving. He knew he was spectacular and showed it off.”

In 2022, Beau’s longtime wheeler Spinnaker gave John one final moment to treasure when they earned the Centennial Award at the Pickpocket Combined Driving Event, with a combined age of 103. “She hadn’t been driven in three years,” Sue says, “but she performed a beautiful test, like she hadn’t missed a day.”

JUDGE, TEACHER, MENTOR, AND FRIEND

If there was one place John truly shone, it was in center ring as a judge. His sharp eye, fairness, and deep respect for tradition made him a beloved official. As a competitor, he often admitted he was less relaxed, perhaps because he knew exactly how many details could go wrong. But his meticulous preparation and commitment to excellence never wavered.

“When he was home, he really wanted to be out judging,” Sue says. “It’s where he excelled, and he always wanted to make the sport better.”

In 2007, the American Driving Society appointed him co-chair of a new Pleasure Driving Committee, where he helped modernize and reinvigorate the classes for all levels of competitors.

John’s influence extended beyond the show ring, and he introduced many to both the Morgan and driving. Sisters Tracey and Sharon Picus were among those who met the Morgan and learned to ride, drive, and handle livery work under his guidance when he was located in Pennsylvania. “Our family met John at a church picnic, he was giving surrey rides. He had a beautiful Morgan pulling an elegant carriage and we followed him around all day. He let my sister ride next to him while he gave rides to passengers in the back seat. Needless to say, we left with his business card, an appointment for lessons, and a lifelong history with Morgans in all their disciplines,” Tracey recalls.

Youth at John’s barn were treated like family, and John was always proud of their achievements, from walk-trot ribbons at local shows to wins at the Morgan Grand National. He taught them how to clean and prep everything from harness to horse and trusted them to work his horses and help get his teams ready for carriage and marathon competitions.

John hosted the Mid-A Morgan Youth Club and many of its activities at his farm. He helped the youth join 4-H and learn horse judging, horse bowl, and showmanship. John took them throughout Pennsylvania for Morgan versatility demonstrations. Busloads of horse people also came to the farm on weekends and toured the carriage museum, with youth members giving English, Western, and sidesaddle riding demonstrations.

“He was incredibly kind and shared all his knowledge with a bunch of kids who spent every day at his barn,” Tracey remembers. “We were riding livery for his four-in-hand when we were twelve or thirteen, and we were good. John always said there’s nothing you can’t do or learn to do, and he never said no when it came to the Morgans. If it was something we needed to learn and he didn’t have that particular knowledge, he sent us to people to learn.”

John’s lessons stayed with the youth. “When things start to go bad, you have two seconds or less to correct it,” he often said. Advice proven true when Tracey and Sharon jumped down mid-drive to put the bridle back on the lead horse of the pair behind them

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before disaster struck.

Cece Green Yelek of Greentree Ranch Morgans in Texas recalls meeting John when her family hosted a clinic at their original Colorado location. “He’s one of those people who learns about his students and never forgets,” she says. “He always asks about family, the horses, he’s totally involved. He meets people where they are and tells them the truth.” During one of John’s trips to the ranch, he took the lead and helped a driver get an eight-mule team hooked for the first time, turning a potentially stressful situation into a seamless experience.

Carriage driving and combined driving are different disciplines, and John actively promoted carriage driving, bringing back the tradition, and dedicating much of his time and energy to Morgan horses. “John has a lot of heart for the carriage driving world. He loves the people, horses, and sport, and is very well-respected,” Karen says. “We created the park division for carriage driving because when you look at the Devon logo or old photos, they were park horses, fancy with outstanding turnouts. We wanted to create that opportunity again.”

John also contributed articles to *Driving Digest* and *The Whip*, writing about turnout, tradition, and historical accuracy. He insisted that drivers understand the story behind their carriage, from the correct dress to the right pad or harness for the vehicle. His dedication to authenticity shaped countless competitors and instilled the sport’s dignity and time-honored traditions.

PRESERVING THE PAST, BUILDING THE FUTURE

John’s knowledge extended well beyond the arena. He became one of the country’s leading authorities on antique carriage preservation, collecting and restoring historic vehicles, including the “surrey with the fringe on top” from the Broadway play *Oklahoma!*, purchased by his father and still loaned out for productions today.

And while John revered history, he also embraced innovation. In the mid-1980s, when combined driving was still new, Sue’s small pony couldn’t safely navigate a marathon course in the two-wheeled Meadowbrooks then available. John let her take their walnut cut-under Runabout instead, and after that event, he and Sue enlisted Chris Stoltzfus to design a new version.

A year later, the first Bird-in-Hand Flyer was born. “It was a four-wheeled marathon vehicle when everyone else was still driving two-wheelers,” John recalls. Sue and her pony Cloudy Skies went on to win major championships, and before long, Flyers were being built for horses and sold worldwide. “Like the VW Beetle, the Flyer evolved every year but kept its spirit,” John says. “When people see us driving ours today and say it must be an early model, we tell them, ‘Early? This is the Flyer.’ It was the most-used vehicle we own, and someday it’ll be a museum piece.”

A LASTING LEGACY

A long list of people count themselves among the drivers, students, and friends influenced by John Greenall. His knowledge and generosity have reached from the magnificent turnouts at the Grand National & World Championship Morgan Horse Show® to the quiet country lanes where a recreational driver hitches a beloved Morgan for an afternoon drive. Although he is retired from driving, John is still out trail riding with Sue three or four times a week, riding the Morgan mare Kissn Morgan Farm’s Sugar (Kissn Tell Earl x Kissn Anastasia Steele).

“His love for the Carriage Pleasure Division was always in the forefront; he appreciated well-turned-out horses and loved the history. Carriage and the Morgan blended into his love for history,” Karen says.

Those he taught and influenced carry his legacy forward. “He taught us to do it right the first time and never rush, always be sure of your next moves,” Tracey shares. “John was patient with horses, and he understood that it takes consistency, repetition, practice, and patience. He taught us to never be surprised how much you can ask of a Morgan. He also promoted Morgans tirelessly in open all breed competitions, creating quite a few converts.”

John Greenall’s life is proof that tradition is not something to be preserved under glass, it is something to be lived, shared, and renewed. His passion for the Morgan horse, his devotion to teaching, and his unshakable respect for history have shaped the sport for decades. And just as his beloved Flyer continues to roll on, so too does his influence, in every well-turned carriage, every careful judge’s decision, and every Morgan who proudly steps into the traces. ■

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