

The Northern Echo

Hero rescues boy from savage dog

QUESTIONS were being asked last night about how a bull mastiff was left free to maul a ten-year-old boy, despite having attacked a teenager days before.

Joshua Paylor suffered deep wounds to his body and head during the attack on Darlington's Red Hall Estate.

Yesterday, he was undergoing skin grafts at the University Hospital of North Durham.

He was only saved from more serious injury by the actions of lorry driver Les Petch, who managed to restrain the dog and sit on it until police arrived.

Mr Petch also needed hospital treatment after he was injured in the incident, at 6.30pm on Sunday.

The previous Tuesday, an unnamed 16-year-old boy was savaged by the dog, but police were helpless to act because the victim did not wish to press charges.

The dog is believed to have been destroyed by vets yesterday, but last night a woman who reported the first attack said Joshua would be fit and well if the authorities had acted sooner.

Jacqui Theakston, of Avie-more Court, said: "I'm furious. I witnessed this dog savage a young lad and nobody did anything about it. If they had, that little boy wouldn't be in hospital now."

Mrs Theakston, who also saw the aftermath of the attack on Joshua, praised the bravery of the youngster.

She said: "He wasn't crying, he just kept saying, 'I'm all right, Mum'.

"Considering the amount of blood he lost, how he was still standing I'll never know."

Joshua's mother, Helen Reeks, said the animal was well-known around the estate.

"I was always wary of that dog," she said.

Joshua, of Kempton Court, was playing on grass behind Aviemore Court

when he was attacked by the dog.

Mr Petch, 59, who works for Whitkirk Waste Solutions, in Darlington, rushed to help him.

"I was watching the news when I heard all this commotion," he said.

"I managed to coax the dog off the kid by shouting at it.

"When it started to run at me I just thought, 'what am I doing?'. But it was either me or the dog - and it wasn't going to be me."

The animal clamped onto Mr Petch's stomach, causing injuries that would later require hospital attention.

He subdued the dog by restraining it, forcing its head into the ground and keeping hold of its collar until police arrived.

A police spokeswoman said: "When police were called, a man was sitting on the dog to keep it away from the public. He was bitten himself.

"He was able to subdue the dog and it was taken to police kennels."

Darlington Borough Council's dog warden was informed about the dog last Friday, but a spokeswoman said the authority had not been required to act further.

"Police informed us they had resolved a situation involving the animal and there was no need for us to take action," she added.

"We were asked to take the dog from Darlington police, after the attack on Sunday, which we did."

A 46-year-old man has been arrested and will be summonsed to court in connection with the incident under the Dangerous Dogs Act.

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By Jim Entwistle

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