

Mrs Tiggywinkle rescued in nick of time

What a scorcher as White Watch pluck hedgehog from a hot spot

by Rachel Leslie

WHICH female wouldn't want a white knight to come to her aid?

Luckily for Christiana the hedgehog, she had three to save her from a close shave when Wilmslow Fire Station White Watch rescued her from the flames of a burning bush.

After being called to extinguish a hedge fire near Wilmslow High School on the A34, the firefighters found Christiana curled up with her spines all burnt in the smouldering debrus.

White Watch manager Graham Thomas said: "On arrival there was quite a lot of smoke. We put out the grass fire with the hose reel and firefighter Cooper spotted the hedgehog.

"We put her in a canvas bucket and doused her with water to cool her down - it saved her life.

"It smelt horrible and the poor thing had wet itself as well."

With the fire under control they rushed the prickly creature to Broom Cottage Veterinary Surgery for treatment.

Vet Richard Kirton said he was stunned when the fire engine pulled up outside the veterinary practice.

He said: "I have never seen anything like it before: three grown men dropping off this little thing.

"It had burn marks across its back and had a bit of smoke inhalation.

"Fortunately the burns had only taken off the spines rather than penetrating deep down into the flesh.

"The firemen taking time out to drop it in was brilliant.

"They came back the next day to see how it was."

Richard and his team nursed the hedgehog for two days, giving it antibiotics, oxygen and applying a topical lotion before transferring her to Martin Turner's Nether Alderley animal sanctuary.

"Martin will rehabilitate it

and make sure its spines grow back and it's eating well to get it back to full health to be released," said Richard.

Despite her hair-raising ordeal Martin said Christiana - initially named Christian by the veterinary surgery, who were unaware she was female - was doing well and being cared for in a special incubator.

"She's still on antibiotics. I'm still putting cream on and injecting a salt solution subcutaneously to rehydrate her.

"It's quite a nasty burn. All the spines have been burned. Hopefully they will fall out and they should grow back.

"If she survives and they don't grow back, she will have to remain in an enclosed garden for the rest of her life."

But he said the tiny mammal was not out of the woods yet and had been off her food following her traumatic experience.

"The difficult part is to get her to feed.

"She won't eat the cat food, but she's eating the dried ferret biscuits. For some reason she likes those and they are full of protein.

"The vet's done a good job of getting her this far. It's just time now to see if she will pull through.

"We can smell singeing on the spines. They got her just in time. She's a very lucky hedgehog."

Firefighter Thomas said the fire was probably caused by a discarded cigarette and warned drivers about the danger of throwing cigarette butts out of the window along the A34.

He added: "Even though it's winter, the grass is reasonably dry and it's not been cut, so there's a lot of thatch in there."

Hedgehog facts

- Hedgehogs belong to the genus *Erinaceus*.
- They are named after their pig-like habit of rooting through the undergrowth for food.
- Hedgehogs weigh from 1.5-2kg and measure between 15cm and

30cm in length.

■ It is Britain's only spiny mammal.

■ An adult hedgehog can have up to 5000 yellow-tipped spines covering the upper parts of the head and body.

■ Hedgehogs have been known to die from many man-made influences. Recently McDonalds redesigned the lid of its McFlurry desserts after hedgehogs became trapped and died in the lids of discarded containers.



WHITE Watch to the rescue: Graham Thomas, William Cooper and Chris Storey with their prickly pal.

What a scorcher for Mrs Tiggywinkle

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