

IT'S A LONG WAY FROM TIPPERARY

A STORY OF RESCUE - 3 IN 1

My name is Lynda McCarthy. I am the rescue and re-homing officer for West of England and South Wales Airedale Terrier Club.

I have been involved in many rescues and re-homing of Airedales this year, but this is a remarkable story of one special case that I was involved in. I would like to share it with you.

It all began on Saturday 23rd August.

It was raining. Will Summer ever come? By noon the rain had cleared and the sky was blue. Paul and I decided to take our three bored Airedales for a romp in our fields. They waited eagerly for the entrance gate to be opened. Why is it always like the start of the Grand National? Wild life - watch out!!

Approaching our lake, mallards take off and head to the sky for safety. One day will they have the courage to nest on the island? I doubt it with our hooligan Airedales about.

On our return we had a nice mug of tea and a slice of hot buttered Aga toast: yum yum!!

It was 3 pm the phone rang.

A strong Irish voice asks – 'Are you the Airedale rescue person'?

'Yes,' I replied, 'Can I help you?'

She then told me about three breeding bitches that were at a greyhound racing kennel in County Tipperary, Southern Ireland.

They were no longer required and had to be out by the following Friday as a new consignment of greyhounds were due in and the space was required. If they weren't out by the 29th they would be shot.

I remember taking a deep breath and asking some questions:

'Are you sure they are Airedales?'

Reply - 'Of course. I can get their pedigrees plus Irish Kennel Club registrations to prove it. They are 3years, 4 years, and 5 years of age'.

Question – 'What condition are they all in?'

Answer – 'They have been in three breeding kennels before, never a home, they have no names and have lived all together on straw'.

Question – 'Yes, but what condition are they in?'

Answer – 'The 3 year old is in good condition. The 4 year old needs feeding up and gave birth to a litter of puppies four weeks ago. A large litter of ten. All lived for twenty four hours and then all died!. The 5 year old has just given birth. Likewise a large litter and all died within twenty four hours.

Question – 'How would we get them from Tipperary to Wales?'

Answer – 'I will give you a contact name and the telephone number of a registered greyhound transporter. It's best if you take it from here'.

After putting the phone down I started to wonder; can we do this rescue and how? Amongst many thoughts I felt concern about the bitch that had recently given birth and her travelling such a long distance, crossing the Irish Sea. Would she be up to it?

After a lot of thought and speaking to other WESWATC officers, Paul and I both agreed – let's do it for the sake of the Airedales.

We made contact with the livestock haulier and he said that he had got spare crates on his next trip. They were available to any rescue dogs. We agreed a price and the three Irish girls' passage was booked. He said he would ring and let me know the time of the sailing for the coming Friday. The day the girls had to be out of the kennel or else!

The route the transporter takes, on average every ten days, is:

1. Starting point is the West of Ireland collecting racing greyhounds for export and rescue dogs along the way.

Sailing from Rosslare into Fishguard and then along the M4 corridor dropping off and collecting dogs until he crosses the channel.

Then through France, and into other European countries e.g. Spain, Italy etc.

A very tight schedule has to be maintained and drop off points for dogs are slip roads at junctions along the motorways!! Our agreed point was junction 24 of the M4.

During the week before the girls were to arrive I began planning:

1. I phoned and talked to suitable people on my waiting list. It was all looking good for the girls to have new homes.

2. I made arrangements with my local boarding kennels to take the "girls" as they had an isolation block with just enough room for three dogs.

3. Finally our vet was put on notice to come and check the girls on arrival and start their course of injections.

All was falling into place and I was feeling a lot more relaxed – wrong, I should have expected a problem.

Friday was just one day away when the phone rang.

It was the Irish haulier telling me that the sailing for Friday had been cancelled. He would now be sailing the following Tuesday – four days later than planned. He would let me know once the dogs were on the transporter and the exact time we would have to be at the pick-up point to collect them.

He estimated with a good crossing he would be at junction 24 at 2.45 am .Yes, 2.45am.in the morning!!

Panic suddenly set in. What about the Friday dead line. I rang my contact and explained the problem. She agreed to collect the dogs on the Friday from the breeders and somehow keep them safe at her address. What a star!!

My mind then started to go into overdrive. What if when they arrived they were in a poor state of health, perhaps emaciated and beyond help, how would I cope?

A call to my vet reassured me, if I had any worries on meeting the transporter and seeing the dogs she would attend immediately and deal with the situation. All being well she would meet me at the boarding kennels on the afternoon of their arrival.

It was an anxious time for Paul and me until the Tuesday.

At 2 pm I received a phone call to say the “girls” had been loaded onto the lorry and were on their way. What a long journey for the poor creatures. I looked at the clock and thought it would be another 13 hours plus before we would be meeting up with them.

An early night was needed - that's if we could sleep.

At 1.45 am the call came. The Irish voice at the other end said- 'We've docked and been cleared by animal welfare and are heading for Pont Abraham, the start of the M4 motorway in West Wales. Please be on time and our agreed meeting point'.

Five minutes later we were on our way, arriving twenty minutes early. I placed a bowl of fresh water on the side of the road. We waited in silence. It was a dark damp night. We paced up and down waiting. 2.45 am came, and there heading towards us headlights. The transporter pulled along side.

A cheerie man jumped out of the cab, shook our hands firmly and said 'Top of the morning to you both. Shall we do the paper work first and have you got slip leads at the ready?'

I replied 'Yes, Yes'.

With that he zapped the roller door of the transporter. The whole side slowly opened up. We were dazzled by a bank of bright lights. In front of us were a row of the most marvellous looking racing greyhounds that you have ever seen, all laid on straw. We stood in amazement. As my eyes looked along the row of crates at the end I saw four black Labradors.

I shouted - 'Where are The Airedales?', 'On the top deck' - came the reply. We looked upwards and there another row of crates, more beautiful greyhounds, and at the end of the row in the last three crates I could see three Black and Tan dogs.

The driver quickly produced a pair of step ladders and said - 'Are you ready?' The first little girlie came out and was passed into Paul's arms. Straw falling all over him. He put her on the tarmac and I placed a slip lead over her neck.

As I looked up I saw Paul with straw in his hair. A slight smile came across my face; I didn't know I was married to a scare-crow (Wurzel Gummidge!)

I offered her water, she wasn't interested. I picked her up to place her into the back of our vehicle; she was as light as a feather. Every bone of her rib cage was sticking out. Her back bone was prominent. Placing her into the cage I gave her a little hug. On closing the door a voice shouted 'Hurry Up - I'm on a tight schedule'.

By the time I returned the second bitch was on the ground, trying to get her balance. I took her straight into the cage next to her little chum.

The third bitch was reluctant to leave her crate. She was shaking uncontrollably. Paul carried her and gently placed her into our car.

With that the Irishman closed the roller doors, gave me his business card and said – ‘I hope I can be of assistance again’. I replied – ‘Thank you for your help’ but at the same time thinking I hope this never happens again.

Then he was off to his next drop – Junction 13 M4 @ Newbury.

Paul and I were left standing in complete darkness. I started to cry. Paul gave me a hug and said - ‘It’s O.K. The girls are safe with us now. Let’s take them home’.

On arrival we transferred the dogs to the security of our garage block. They were fed and watered and I stayed a while observing them. They all had the saddest eyes I have ever seen. We left a light on, and tuned into Radio 2; I thought they might like that, and perhaps settle down.

The next day I took them on the short five minute journey down to the boarding kennels to their own private quarters in isolation. I stayed with them until the veterinary arrived and after a health check, only minor problems eye and ear infections were found. They were all inoculated and the vet advised good food and rest for the next few days.

I returned home and set about looking at their four generation pedigrees. What a fine array of Sires and Dams bred by top breeders. Many Champions on all three of the bitches’ pedigrees.

I stopped to wonder how on earth these girls had ended up in such a dire situation. Not what “The King of the Terriers” deserves.

From their I.K.C. Registrations I gave each one a name from their title – **Lillie, Bella and Echo.**

The next day I made a short visit to the kennels, buying each a toy on the way. On arrival I called their names, it sounded good. I gave each a toy but no response – none expected really but at least it was a start.

On returning home I phoned the three couples who had been anxiously waiting my call to tell them that the three girls had arrived safely. All three couples I had chosen were excited and despite being aware of the difficulties and hard work ahead couldn’t wait to come and meet the little girl I had chosen for them.

The following Monday two friends of mine Martin and David agreed to spend the day with me, shampooing, trimming and de-knotting jackets and legs.

We had an early start. Martin owns his own dog grooming business and took the lead. David and I assisted.

It was a long hard day.

The only light moment came when fleas started to jump out of Lillie’s jacket. We managed to crunch as many as we could but some escaped and landed in David’s and my direction.

It wasn’t long before we were all scratching our heads. We started to laugh. In a dry tone of voice Martin said he didn’t know Mondays could be such fun!!! We all fell about laughing again.

By 5.30 pm Lillie, Bella and Echo looked like Airedales. I'm sure they felt much better.

Lillie was wagging her tail for the first time.

Echo gave us a cheesy grin and wag.

Bella gave us all a kiss.

What a reward after a long day's work.

During the next few days their new owners started to arrive. One couple stayed overnight so as to get to know Lillie a little better. They decided she looked more like a Millie so Miss Millie it was.

They all left knowing that it would only be another week, after clearance from the veterinary, before they could return and take their girls to their new homes.

With mixed feelings the day arrived for the "**Girls**" to go.

When the time came to wave good-bye, knowing they were going to kind and loving Airedale people, hopefully for life, I felt a great satisfaction.

I have regular contact from all three couples.

Bella - is in Worcestershire and enjoys scrambled egg on toast for her breakfast.

Echo - is in Wiltshire and has perfected the art of holding down the settee.

Millie - is in West Sussex. She attends obedience classes and is going for her bronze medal.

WHAT A STORY - WHAT A RESCUE.

I would like to thank the officers and committee of WESWATC for all their support and encouragement. What a team to have with you.

Many, many thanks must go to The Airedale Terrier Club of Ireland for their most generous donation. This went a long way to help pay for the "Girls" passage, kennelling and veterinary fees.

Thank you Susan.

My greatest thanks must go to the three couples who took these girlies in. I know it wasn't easy at first. They are true **Airedalers** through and through, with a great love for our beloved breed.

Many thanks to you all.

I am so proud of my "**IRISH GIRLS** "

They have achieved so much in such a short space of time.

As the song says; **it's a long way to Tipperary.**

However in this case it was a long way from Tipperary!!!!

Lynda McCarthy.

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