

Family's pet terrier kills their eight-day-old boy: Mother's horror as Jack Russell cross bites child in 'jealousy' attack

- **Harry Harper, who was just eight days old, died after being rushed to hospital from his grandparents' home in Ketley, Shropshire**
- **Police are awaiting the results of a post-mortem examination into the boy's death**
- **The dog, a small family terrier, has now been destroyed, and police are treating the incident as a tragic accident**
- **Harry's mother Mikayla Tweeted that a dog owned by her had attacked one of her favourite soft toys last month**

By Andy Dolan AND Liz Hull

An eight-day-old baby has died after being attacked by his family's pet terrier. Harry Harper is understood to have suffered a crushed skull after being bitten just once by the Jack Russell-cross. The animal has since been destroyed. Yesterday it was unclear which family members were in the room at the time of the incident.



Eight day old Harry Harper died after being bitten by a Jack Russell dog while staying at his grandparents' house in Ketley, Shropshire



Grandad Gordon Bell with daughter Mikayla and grandson Harry who died after being bitten yesterday



A police car sits outside the house in Ketley, where Harry Harper was bitten by a dog yesterday morning. He later died in hospital

Neighbours said the child's mother, Mikayla Bell, ran out of the house screaming 'My baby, my baby!', following the tragedy on Tuesday morning.

The pet, named as PJ by residents, was one of two dogs kept at the three-bedroom semi where Miss Bell lived with her own parents and younger siblings.

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- Boy died because doctors ignored his mother: Instinct told her that her son was gravely ill - but she was dismissed as hysterical

Just over a fortnight before giving birth, Miss Bell, 19, had tweeted how the dog had ripped the eye off one of the family's soft toys.

Police yesterday said Harry's death appeared to be a 'tragic accident'. Officers are examining the possibility that the dog may have attacked the infant after becoming jealous at his introduction to what the animal considered to be its territory.



Police believe that Harry Harper, pictured, died as a result of the single dog bite, but are awaiting results of a formal post mortem





Mikayla posted these pictures of a Jack Russell-type dog on Twitter, though it is not clear whether this is the dog that attacked her baby

Jack Russell breeders and an animal behaviour expert agreed the dogs could be both possessive of their existing family unit and jealous of new additions to the family.

Harry's mother and father, Tom Harper, 19, were being comforted by their parents and police family liaison officers.

One neighbour said at least one of the two dogs kept by the family was 'very vicious'.

Nigel Pitchford yesterday said Miss Bell had brought her first child home from hospital only a few days before the tragedy.

Mr Pitchford, 71, said: 'It's very sad news – the whole street is shocked to hear what has happened.

'The dog is one of two kept at the house as family pets.

'I often saw Mikayla's younger twin sisters walking them in the evenings.

'I know one of the dogs is very vicious. I tried to post a Christmas card through the letter box last year and it went for my hand as I posted it through. It was only small but a vicious little thing.'



New mother Mikayla Sonya, pictured left, posted this picture of her feeding baby Harry, right, on her Twitter feed

Harry's mum, Mikayla, is a part time model

Miss Bell lives at the semi-detached property in Ketley, Shropshire, with parents Gordon, 42, and Teresa, 40, a shop worker, and three of her siblings. Her brother Jamie, a 24-year-old carpet fitter, lives around the corner.

It is unclear whether Mr Harper, a trainee electrician who lives in nearby Shifnal with his parents Andrea and Neville, was still in a relationship with Miss Bell, a part-time model who is one of six children.

She gave birth to 7lb Harry on November 12 and posted pictures of her new baby on Twitter, describing the infant as 'my life'.

Heartbreakingly, just one day before her son was killed, the teenager wrote: 'Not gonna lie this little boy gets far too many kisses.'

The teenager's profile on the social networking site also contained two pictures of a terrier-type dog captioned 'my doggy', posted within the last six months.

Mrs Bell was so delighted at becoming a grandmother that the day after Harry was born she told a friend she couldn't 'keep my hands off him'.

The family of Harry told yesterday how they had 'no words' to describe the pain they were experiencing after the loss of the tot.

In a statement issued through West Mercia Police, they said: 'We are absolutely devastated by Harry's death and have no words to describe the loss we have suffered.

'At the present time we have no wish to speak publicly about yesterday's events and would ask that we are left in peace to grieve and begin to deal with our loss.'

Mrs Harper, a nursery nurse, later described the family as being 'numb' with grief.



The baby died after being attacked by a Jack Russell at a family home in Ketley, Shropshire



The Princess Royal Hospital Telford, Shropshire, where the baby died



A Shropshire Ambulance Services ambulance at The Princess Royal Hospital, Telford, where a baby boy died yesterday morning after being bitten by a dog (file picture)

Angela McKenzie, a Jack Russell breeder from Carlisle, said the breed could become possessive of toys, family members or other pets in their environment.

'They may happily live with a cat, but go after other cats in the neighbourhood, the same with children,' she

said.

Police and ambulance crews were called to the scene of the tragedy just after 8am on Tuesday. Harry was taken to The Princess Royal Hospital in Telford, Shropshire, but was pronounced dead shortly after being admitted.

A post-mortem examination to establish the exact cause of death will take place today.

Detective Chief Inspector Neil Jamieson, of West Mercia Police, said: 'Our investigation is ongoing but it appears that the baby died as a result of a dog bite.'

THE JACK RUSSELL TERRIER: A BIG DOG IN A SMALL DOG'S BODY



Victim: In April, five-year-old Haley Turner was attacked by a Jack Russell terrier after reaching down to stroke the pet in a neighbour's garden in Otley, West Yorkshire

By **Liz Hull**

Although small, Jack Russell terriers are known for their feisty, tough nature.

Principally bred to hunt foxes, rabbits and rats, the breed is among the most popular in the UK and is known for being 'a big dog in a small dog's body'.

Dr Roger Mugford, an animal behaviourist and expert on dangerous dogs, said: 'If Jack Russells were scaled up to labrador size they would be on the dangerous dogs list. They are very tough dogs. They can be very sweet, very lively and very playful, but they are also strong and powerful for their size.

'They are bred to catch rabbits and rodents so they are reactive, terribly impulsive and incredibly fast. Like any dogs Jack Russells can form strong attachments, be quite possessive of their owners and jealous when a new baby is introduced.

'However, an incident like this is very rare. The attachment a dog has to the mother of the child usually extends to the baby and, generally, dogs are very good caretakers and are protective of babies. Something like this is very out of character.

'Most dog attacks on children also occur on toddlers because they interact with the dog. In this case an eight-day-old baby was obviously passive and, even if he was crying, should not have posed a threat to the dog. We don't know the circumstances of this tragedy, but if the parents were present there is a chance the dog lunged and moved so fast they could do nothing about it. No dog of any breed should be left around children unsupervised.'



Brutal: Three-month-old Jaden Mack was attacked by a Staffordshire bull terrier and a Jack Russell after his parents left him with his grandmother in South Wales

Currently, police can only prosecute owners of dogs who harm people in public places. They can only forcibly remove illegal dogs under the Dangerous Dog Act 1991. These include the pit bull terrier and the Japanese Tosa.

Some critics want the law to be extended so owners can be prosecuted when an attack occurs on their property.

But Dr Mugford said this is a step too far. 'You cannot legislate for an event like this, it's just an awful tragic accident,' he said.

In April, five-year-old Haley Turner was bitten by a Jack Russell after reaching down to stroke the pet in a neighbour's garden in Otley, West Yorkshire. The dog tore a gaping wound in the little girl's cheek. In 2008 four children were attacked by a Jack Russell puppy at a family pub in in Piltown, near Uckfield.