

# WATCHWORD<sup>©</sup>

NEWSLETTER OF THE THANET NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION

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## FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

I have been giving a great deal of thought lately to the current state of Neighbourhood Watch in Thanet, not only in regard to the inevitable demographic problem among coordinators but also to the possible need to re-examine ourselves and to restate the basic objectives of Neighbourhood Watch (or Home Watch as it is known in some parts of the country) and what we do to foster community spirit and to reduce crime and the fear of crime.

The demographic problem is quite simple – Neighbourhood Watch celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Kent last year and many of our coordinators in Thanet (and, of course, elsewhere) have been involved either from the very start or soon thereafter. Some may not have been exactly young even then, but the march of time is inexorable and many are now not only fully in retirement but reaching the stage where mobility and stamina, as well as health in general, become a major factor in life. Yes, I hear you say, the situation would improve if we could recruit more younger coordinators to take the place of those who can no longer continue, or when we establish new schemes; and we do try to do so. And we shall continue to try to recruit younger members, but we also need your help in identifying potential candidates either in your own scheme or among friends in your wider community. Please let us have details of any interest you manage to find.

As regards my other concerns, I make no apology for repeating in later pages of this newsletter some of the basic information about the aims and objectives of Neighbourhood Watch and what you can all continue to do to make your community safer for all.

## PHISHING – whatever you do, make sure you do not get hooked!!

*“We suspect an unauthorized transaction on your account. To ensure that your account is not compromised, please click the link below and confirm your identity.”*

*“During our regular verification of accounts, we couldn't verify your information. Please click here to update and verify your information.”*

Have you received email with a similar message? It's a scam called “phishing” — and it involves Internet fraudsters who send spam or pop-up messages to lure personal information (credit card numbers, bank account information, passwords, or other sensitive information) from unsuspecting victims. On two occasions recently I have received emails of this kind purporting to come from HSBC, my bank. There is often no rhyme or reason behind these messages – for example I have had similar approaches supposedly from other banks, building societies or other financial institutions.

So, watch out for “phishy” emails with messages similar to those above. They often direct users to enter details at a fake website whose look and feel are almost identical to the legitimate one, with genuine-looking logos and colour layout. Don't click on links within emails that ask for your personal information. Never enter your personal information in a pop-up screen. Protect your computer with spam filters, anti-virus and anti-spyware software, and a firewall, and keep them up to date. Only open email attachments if you're expecting them and know what they contain.

**And keep in mind that phishing of this kind often comes by phone.**

*Dennis Cooper*

**WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH?** Neighbourhood Watch is one of the biggest and most successful crime prevention initiatives ever. Behind it lies a simple idea, and a central value shared by millions of households around the country – getting together with your neighbours to take action can cut local crime.

Everyone knows that the Police are there to fight crime, but appreciate equally that they alone cannot do the whole job. Neighbourhood Watch is all about an active partnership with the Police and other relevant agencies to work together to:

- help cut crime and the opportunities for crime
  - help and reassure those who live in the area
  - encourage neighbourliness and close communities
  - create a better place to live, work and play in
- Neighbourhood Watch then is not just about reducing the number of burglaries – it is about creating communities who care. It brings local people together and can make a real contribution to improving their lives. This is particularly relevant in helping the many elderly, infirm or incapacitated members of the community who are most at risk and therefore the most vulnerable. The activity of NW members can foster a new community spirit and a belief in the community's ability to tackle problems. At the same time, you yourself will feel more secure in the knowledge that others are looking out for you as well. There are other benefits from belonging to a Neighbourhood Watch scheme – you should become familiar with crime prevention advice and ideas to help keep your home and belongings safe. And the extra security of belonging to such a scheme can even secure you a useful discount from your household insurance provider. In Thanet you are 90% less likely to be burgled as a member of a scheme.

**HOW DOES NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH WORK?** Neighbourhood Watch schemes can be large, covering most households street by street on an estate, or they might involve just half a dozen or so houses depending on the area and what its residents actually want. A scheme is led by a volunteer coordinator who will work to get people working together and make sure that things get done. In Thanet, Neighbourhood Watch is divided into 10 zones of which six have formed their own zone committees, which meet regularly and even produce their own newsletters for residents. Each zone has two

representatives who serve on the Thanet-wide Committee, which itself has a representative serving on the Board of Kent County Neighbourhood Watch Association. As a result of regular local, district and county meetings your representatives benefit from the latest ideas and initiatives and the chance to share experience and good practice.

**THE PARTNERSHIP** – Neighbourhood Watch is not run by the Police, but works closely in partnership with them. There is a close working relationship through the Watch Liaison Officer and the Liaison Office staffed by volunteers from the Neighbourhood Watch family, working at the Police station and operating the Kent County Messaging System (affectionately known as “Ringmaster”) to act as a point of information and advice and to communicate crime-related information targeted to coordinators in the affected areas. But it is also vital to establishing a close working relationship with your local policing team, and to share with them all information relating to crime and other problems in your area. Watch members are ideally placed to contribute valuable grassroots information. You can all help by identifying your local policing team – log on to the Kent Police website ([www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk)), enter your postcode and make a note of your neighbourhood PC and PCSO and their telephone numbers. Try to make contact with them and encourage further exchanges of local information.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE SUMMARY**

- **make contact with your neighbourhood policing team and work closely in partnership with them**
- **do not put yourself in danger**
- **avoid confrontational behaviour**
- **always stay within the law**
- **if you see something strange or suspicious call your local Watch representative or the Police if the situation needs immediate action**
- **encourage others to be observant and to report suspicious activity while going about their daily business**

**BETWEEN US .....LET'S GET THE CRIMINALS RUNNING**

**PROTECTIVE “COCOONS”** – when a property is burgled it is more likely to be burgled again than a home that hasn’t. If this happens it is likely to be within the next few weeks. After all, a burglar has been into the property, found the weak points in its security and had a good look at the layout and contents. Stepping up the security of the burgled home straightaway can prevent a further crime.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes can tackle the problem by forming protective “cocoons” around burgled homes. Immediate neighbours can be asked to keep an eye on the property concerned and to be particularly watchful for a few weeks, reporting any suspicions to the local police.

Some may regard all of this as being a bit patronising, but experience has shown without any doubt that such precautions can have a dramatic effect.

#### **THE BASIC COORDINATOR’S ROLE**

**The co-ordinator is the leader and manager of each scheme and can have a major influence on the scheme’s success.**

The coordinator, along with all fellow coordinators in the zone receives crime reports and other information via the Kent Community Messaging Service and will find it relevant to pass on some of these messages to members of the scheme.

The coordinator should encourage members of the scheme to report promptly to the Police all criminal incidents or suspicious activity.

The coordinator should try to attend coordinators’ meetings when they arise. Such meetings provide an opportunity to get to know the local zone committee and meet fellow coordinators in the zone and discuss local issues.

The coordinator should try to make best use of the resources available among members of the scheme. Their skills and specialized knowledge may prove invaluable.

The coordinator should try to maintain the interest of scheme members by getting them involved, e.g. in helping to distribute information and crime prevention leaflets, as well as any newsletters.

#### **DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS**

While the latest figures for drink and drug driving testing and convictions have shown some evidence that active roadside testing continues to have a deterrent effect, they highlight a huge difference in the numbers of tests carried out for drug driving as opposed to drink driving. Figures from the traditional Christmas campaigns show 223,423 breathalyser tests for alcohol (a 22% increase on the previous year) but only 489 field impairment tests were carried out for drugs (less than 2% increase). There may be little idea of the extent of driving under the influence of drugs since no significant studies have been carried out so far, but the prevalence of drug taking in the country as a whole must surely suggest that drugs are likely to be a major factor in driving impairment and therefore a danger to the general public. Part of the problem seems to be that the field impairment techniques used in the UK for drug driving testing are cumbersome when compared with the humble but accurate and effective roadside breathalyser. Widespread use of roadside drug testing could provide huge benefit - the introduction of roadside drug testing techniques in the State of Victoria, Australia has led to an almost 50% reduction in drug driving.

#### **USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Dial 999 when a crime is in progress and Police presence is needed, or in an emergency (but only if there is a real emergency)

Dial 01843 231055 to report non-urgent crime

Dial 0800 555111 (Crimestoppers) to report crime or suspicious activity in complete anonymity

Dial 0845 3450210 for Kent Trading Standards to report doorstep callers, rogue tradesmen etc.

Dial 08454 040506 for advice on consumer issues

Dial 01843 222214 for the NW Liaison Office to seek advice or help

Dial 0800 9237000 regarding fire safety

**We should be grateful if all coordinators report any change of address, telephone number or email address as soon as possible to the Liaison Office**

**SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS IN YOUR AREA? DON'T SHRUG IT OFF, REPORT IT!**



**TEL'S TALES  
TERRY MCCORMICK,  
WATCH LIAISON OFFICER  
REPORTS**

**Latest Distraction Burglary/Scams**

Police warn residents to be vigilant after two homes were targeted on 10 March by distraction burglars posing as plain clothed police officers.

In the first incident in Dudham Gardens, Cliftonville an elderly resident returned home at around 5.30 pm after shopping and as he was putting his car away two men claiming to be plain clothed police officers approached and asked to speak to him regarding an alleged theft. The men showed fake police badges and were let into the house. While one remained with the victim and went around the house pretending to check security of doors and windows, the second searched the house and stole the victim's pension money. Later the same evening, at Trinity Square in Margate a second elderly victim was at home when two men burst into her living room. When she challenged them they told her they were police officers and proceeded to make an untidy search of the flat. They did not show any identification and stole the victim's handbag containing cash and some CDs.

In each case the offenders were described as being white males, aged between 30-35 with local southern accents, around 6 feet tall with thin build. One was said to be scruffy, wearing a black flat cap and brown cardigan and the other as wearing a black waist length coat. The police are keen to hear from anyone who may have information regarding these incidents or may have seen anyone matching the descriptions. If you have any information please contact Detective Sergeant Clair Munday on 01843 222044 or telephone Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

The golden rules remain the same- never let anyone into your house you do not know or are not expecting. Genuine visitors will be more than happy to produce identification and remain outside while you verify their particulars with their company and the police. When answering your door use a door chain or door bars and always ask for and check identification. Keep the caller outside with the door shut while you do this. We also encourage you to make sure your back door is locked when answering the front door as thieves often work in pairs with one entering your home while you are distracted by the other. If you are unsure do not let anyone in. Ask them to come back another time when you have a friend or neighbour ..... (continued in next column) opposite)

(continuation)... present to help out. We have also been advised of a scam where a telephone caller purports to be from Sky TV and claims that your contract needs to be extended. In the particular case in Cliffsend, the intended victim still had 12 months to run on his contract and when challenged the caller hung up. We have checked with Sky that they would never approach customers in this way.

*Terry McCormick*

**NO CALL IS A WASTE OF TIME**

**Communities can defeat terrorism**

Terrorists live among us when they are planning attacks. So naturally they will try to conceal their activities. Sometimes, however, they inevitably leave tell-tale signs. Signs that we need your help in spotting. You can do this by remaining vigilant and reporting any suspicious activity to the police.

Suspicious activity could include:

- passports or other documents held in different names for no obvious reason
- buying or storing large amounts of chemicals, fertilisers or gas cylinders for no obvious reason
- someone who travels for long periods of time, but are vague about where they are going or where they have been
- some behaving noticeably differently for no obvious reason

No call is a waste of time - let specialist officers decide if the information you have is important.

**CALL THE CONFIDENTIAL ANTI-TERRORIST HOTLINE ON 0800 799 321**

If you are deaf or have hearing difficulties you can use a text phone – dial 0800 032 4539

**Useful Websites**

[www.kcnwa.org](http://www.kcnwa.org) (Kent NW Association)  
[www.mynhw.co.uk](http://www.mynhw.co.uk) (NW Network)  
[www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk)  
[www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/kent](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/kent)  
[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)