

W A T C H W O R D ©

NEWSLETTER OF THE THANET NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION

Secretary and Editor : Dennis Cooper : tel 01843 845933

Email : denniscooper@btinternet.com



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NEWS & VIEWS from the Editor's Desk

It seems reasonably clear from the crime reports passing over the Liaison Office desk that the level of domestic burglary remains relatively low in Thanet. On the other hand there seem to be increases in robbery or theft and shoplifting and criminal damage to windows or walls and motor vehicles give cause for concern.

Cases of theft on beaches or other public areas, and from motor vehicles, clearly demonstrate a worrying degree of carelessness or at least failure to take the most obvious precautions to protect personal property, e.g. iPods. Mobile Phones, Satnavs. There are plenty of opportunist thieves around – please do all you can to avoid becoming a victim.

The **Annual General Meeting** of Thanet Neighbourhood Watch will be held on Monday 21 November 2011 in the Lecture Theatre of the Broadstairs campus of Canterbury Christchurch University, Northwood Road, Broadstairs. Free parking is available on site. The lecture theatre has a seating capacity of 70.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Dial 01843 222236 - Sue Boorman Watch Liaison Officer; email susan.boorman@kent.pnn.police.uk

Dial 01843 222214 - Watch Liaison Office; email: thanet.nhw@kent.pnn.police.uk

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 01622 690690 to report non-urgent crime, incidents of anti-social behaviour, or general enquiries

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

Dial 01843 577000 (Thanet District Council) to report fly-tipping, noise nuisance, graffiti, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and parking problems

Dial 08454 040506 for Kent Trading Standards to report doorstep callers, rogue tradesmen etc.

Dial 08458 247247 - 24 hour helpline for Kent County Council

Dial 0300 123 2040 to report fraud or a scam

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.kcnwa.org (Kent NW Association)

www.ourwatch.org.uk (National NW Network) www.kent.police.uk

www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/kent

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

www.hoax-slayer.com (latest info on scams)

www.getsafeonline.org (safety on the internet)

www.actionfraud.org.uk for info/report fraud

www.thanet.gov.uk (Thanet district council)

www.consumerdirect.gov.uk - consumer advice

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

There have been significant challenges to all the statutory agencies in London and other metropolitan cities across the country this past summer. So far as Kent was concerned, there was evidence of increased tension in small pockets of Medway and North Kent early in August. The resulting incidents were relatively insignificant in terms of risk and the demands they made on available resources; all agencies responded in a robust and coordinated way to deal with the situation in a timely and highly effective manner.

In response to the national issues, the statutory agencies in Thanet, held regular joint partnership meetings throughout that difficult time to assess any likely impact on local communities, closely monitoring tensions, community concerns and existing or emerging risks. The local Police have given assurances that structured plans are in place to continue to monitor key sites of risk so that jointly they can continue to ensure that Thanet remains a safe place in which to live and work. They have also acknowledged the great active support provided by Neighbourhood Watch and the general public in tackling crime and disorder effectively and emphasise the importance of continuing to provide any information or intelligence, which may be of use to the police or community safety agencies. Information may be passed by email or telephone, as appropriate, to:-

mark.richardson@thanet.gov.uk (TDC Council Enforcement Services Manager – tel 01843 577606)
mark.pearson@kent.pnn.police.uk (Neighbourhood Policing, Thanet, tel 01843 222263)
stephen.fennell@kent.pnn.police.uk (Neighbourhood Policing, Thanet, tel 01843 222215)

Make sure you have the correct 'buildings sum insured' and contents value on your home insurance policy

To have one's house severely damaged and requiring rebuilding, or to become the victim of a burglary, is bad enough, but the extent of your home and contents insurance may make matters much worse if your are not properly covered. Take time to check your policy and to what degree you are covered.

It is, for example, easy to confuse the replacement cost of your property with the market value. The rebuilding cost is not the same as how much you could sell your home for as this price takes into consideration the land and location. Your buildings insurance policy should cover the full cost of rebuilding your home if it were totally destroyed. This includes any outbuildings plus any additional charges which could be incurred in rebuilding, such as demolition costs, architects and surveyors fees and complying with the requirements of local authorities. The value of the land under your home isn't factor in replacement. Make sure that the full value of your contents are fully covered.

Part of the objective, of course, is also to check that you are not paying too much for your insurance

SCAMS and FRAUD

First of all a cautionary tale.....

A middle-aged man, describing himself (would you believe?!) as an Accountant, received an email advising that he had won more than a million euros in some so-called Euro Lottery. To claim his winnings, he was told, he had to pre-pay the taxes due on the sum involved. What did he do, even though lottery winnings are normally tax-free, yes he dutifully anted up some £67,000 and has successfully almost bankrupted himself and his businesses! The mind does boggle, does it not?!

However, before chuckling over the victim's self-inflicted fate, one might pause to ask oneself how one might have reacted had one received that fateful email. Given the number of people who fall victim in this or other ways, it seems that many of us are somehow predisposed to trust what people say or claim and in the face of innumerable warnings. The above victim apparently claimed to be completely unaware of scams!!

The nature and type of scams or frauds change so fast that it is difficult, almost impossible, to keep specific information up to date. The following more recent varieties serve to illustrate just how inventive they can be:-

(a) Door to door callers offering £50 of credit for your pre-payment meter for £25 – sounds too good to be true? Yes, it is since these are illegal top-ups, which ends up with you paying twice for your electricity. Consumers have to date lost more than £7 million.

(b) An automated telephone call claiming to be from Kent County council and to have an urgent and personal message for a Mr. Peter Barnsley (or other name). You are then asked to choose from three options – press 1 if you are the person named; press 2 if you are not the person but know who it is or press 3 if you are not the person and do not know who it is. Be very wary of automated calls which ask you to select an option since these can often result in your being connected at a high premium rate.

(c) A male caller claims to be acting on a “government initiative”; this is often supposedly carrying out a survey and if you fall into the trap of getting involved you may suffer financially in one way or another

(d) There have been many reports of Kent residents falling for loan scams, often on the internet. These are particularly common where an unsecured loan is required, and enquirers are quickly told that they qualify (which is in itself suspicious) but must pay a one-off fee to secure the loan. They are asked to deposit this fee into a bank account or send it via a money transfer service. The destination is often outside the UK. Accredited UK credit brokers will charge a fee (known as a “broker's fee), which is normally covered under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 which will be refunded minus £5 if the loan is not taken out. Victims of the scam, will not however be so covered and are highly unlikely to recover the fee. The fact that a UK postal address is given does not mean that the originator is actually in the UK.

(e) An email headed HM Revenue and Customs advises that the last annual calculation of your fiscal activity have been carried out and it has been determined that you are eligible to receive a tax refund of £988.50. Please submit the tax refund request and allow us 2-3 days in order to process it. You are invited to click thereunder to submit your tax refund request. Do not do so, since this would result in your providing personal financial details which could cost you dear in the end.

(f) If you receive a call suggesting that your computer needs attention, do not take any action. Should you do, the chances are strong that you will end up with real computer problems .

HANDYVAN

Handyvan Services have been well known throughout Thanet Neighbourhood Watch for many, many years. Through initiatives undertaken by our former WLO, Terry McCormick, Jack White, the original handyvan operator, became something of a household name and hundreds if not thousands have benefitted over the years from his dedication and the provision and installation of a wide range security related equipment in their homes. While Handyvan has been extended to cover the whole of Kent and has been increasingly rolled out countrywide, Jack White remains our main contact through Age UK, the organisation formed from various mergers of operations such as Age Concern.

It is certainly worth detailing again the range of services which can be secured through this service, which is delivered by fully qualified and police-vetted fitters :-

Free home security - installing door and window locks and fitting door chains and door viewers, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, fixing loose carpet, replacing light bulbs.

Small repairs, such as :- putting up curtain rails, shelves and pictures; moving small items of furniture, tiling small areas, re-hanging doors; always subject to an initial assessment. Note that a small charge may be made for cost of materials.

To qualify for the above you must be over 60 years of age and generally have less than £20,000 in saving (excluding the value of your property).

Contact details - Tel :- 0845 026 1055

Email :- handyvan@ageuk.co.uk

Email Jack White :- Jack.White@ageuk.co.uk

Internet website : www.ageuk.org.uk

KENT KEYLINK (in partnership with Kent Police) - a way by which the value of home or business burglar alarms may be enhanced.

Many of us have burglar alarms, which fall basically into two categories :-

1. the basic and most prevalent installation where there is no monitoring by a central station or by Kent Police, and
2. the better installations, which are connected to a central station provider. With these, when the alarm is activated your nominated security company will contact your preferred nominated keyholder to deactivate the alarm

If your alarm is not monitored or connected to a specialist monitoring agency you are dependent on someone else to call either the police or local authority to find a solution to the problem.

Kent Keylink offers a unique and valuable business and home security solution in partnership with Kent Police at a reasonable price, providing 24-hour year round property management service which ensures that help is at hand when necessary. As soon as the emergency services are notified of an incident at your property or premises the call centre will not only contact your nearest available key-holder but also your preferred service providers to ensure that any necessary repairs are carried out with minimum delay. All information which you have recorded on Keylink is maintained on a police data command system and fully protected by them. For further information visit the Keylink website at www.kentkeylink.co.uk or telephone their voicemail service on 01622 652064

Round NW Window Stickers

These have been in very short supply since the Home Office, as part of economy measures, withdrew support for NW publicity material. However, National Neighbourhood & Home Watch (NNHW) have secured a deal with their primary sponsor Towergate Insurance under which these will be available from Towergate offices. When finalised, details on how to order will be published on the NNHW website – www.ourwatch.org.uk.

PLEASE NOTE THE CORRECTED TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR REPORTING A FRAUD OR SCAM AND WEBSITE FOR "HOAX SLAYER" LISTED ON THE FRONT PAGE