



Watching Brief

The Canterbury & District Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter

Registered Charity No 1078269

2017 - Issue 3 (Jul – Oct)

Chairman's Message – David Hayward

Firstly, as usual, I should like to commend this latest edition of "Watching Brief" to you for its varied and valuable content. If you are a coordinator then hopefully you will also find things you will want to share with your members. I am also pleased that we have been able to include a report (below) on the latest of our District Police Volunteers to be recognised and honoured by Kent Police for their dedication in supporting police work in general and NHW in particular. Many of you will also know that Kathy is a long-standing member of our District Association Committee. Our Committee is a vital part of keeping the Association running – generally supporting some 170 schemes and 18,000 households across the Canterbury City Council District as well as organising particular events like the Annual Conference / AGM. As was stated at this year's AGM we still have a vacancy for someone to join our Committee to share the load and ideally also to bring some new ideas. If this person could be you then please do consider making contact with me at: canterbury.nhw.association@gmail.com – I shall be delighted to hear from you.

An important part of our Association's activity is establishment of new NHW schemes, especially in areas that don't have the benefit of other types of local community group, like a Parish Council or Residents' Association, to help promote safer, stronger communities. Our Community Safety Partners, especially PCSOs and KCC Wardens, have assisted in creation of many schemes across the district and are now helping us to forge contacts with new families on the former Howe Barracks housing estate in Canterbury, now known as "Howe Green". These families all came from the London Borough of Redbridge but did not necessarily previously know each other, so we are hoping that NHW can begin to make a very positive difference for them by helping to create that greater sense of community.

And finally, in our last edition, following continued debate about the safety of contactless card technology, we ran an article offering Owl Card Minder Sleeves for just £1 each and were delighted that so many of you decided to invest in this simple little protection aid. It was so successful that our stock is almost gone, but there are still just a few left. Please drop our Vice Chair, Neal Fowler a line at nealf@talktalk.net if you want to purchase one.

C&DNHWA Growth Since Last Newsletter

The Committee offers thanks to the following for support of NHW in their communities:

New Schemes:

The Ridings, Chestfield, Whitstable - John Hillier
Barham Village, Jane Graham

New Coordinators:

Hoades Wood Rd Area, Sturry - Tony Smith
Invicta Road, Whitstable - Madie Bayford
Richmond Road, Whitstable - Cathy Anscombe

Nice One Kathy

One of our staunch volunteers at Herne Bay police station, Kathy Wilson (right) has recently received a commendation from Kent Police Divisional Commander – Chief Superintendent Andrea Bishop, for her NHW work. Without volunteers like Kathy NHW could not provide coordinators with the daily messages about crimes and suspicious events / scams etc that are sent out via the Kent Community Messaging Service (KCMS). So thank you Kathy, and indeed thank you to all of the other volunteers across the County that do such a fine job for us all. Kent Police are always seeking new volunteers to help them with various aspects of their work. If you have even just a couple of hours a week to offer then please do not hesitate to contact our local Volunteer & Watch Liaison Officer Geordie Laidlow by phone on 07816291343 or by email at michael.laidlow2@kent.pnn.police.uk



Summertime And The Living Is Easy

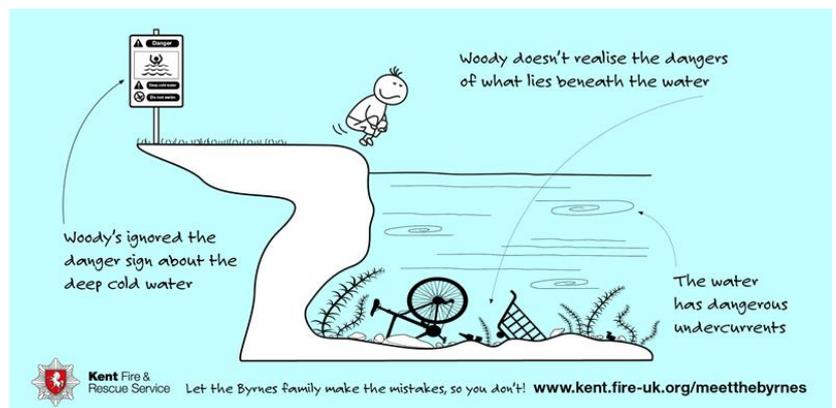
The summer has been pretty good so far, warm and very dry for us in the South East. Good for holiday makers and those of us with time to enjoy the sunshine and fresh air but not so good for firefighters who have to battle exhausting conditions tackling grass, woodland and heath fires – which tend to increase significantly during a prolonged dry spell of weather – and especially so with the school holidays looming! During the summer months, it's natural to want to get outside with friends and family but throughout the season Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) is called to high numbers of incidents sparked by the hot weather – particularly outdoor fires that have either been started deliberately or through carelessness. In dry conditions, outdoor fires can spread very quickly, potentially putting lives at risk and destroying large areas of county side and wildlife habitats. They also tie up firefighting resources for extended periods of time, resources that could be needed to save lives elsewhere.

Whether you are going camping, having a barbecue or just enjoying the great outdoors please be mindful of how quickly a fire can start. Smouldering cigarette butts thrown from car windows or dropped onto grass verges are a common cause of summertime fires. Children and teenagers are often fascinated by fire and this becomes a particular danger during the dry summer months, when many outdoor fires are the result of experimenting with fire. Fire crews are asking parents to talk to their children to make sure they understand that they could be putting lives at risk, including their own, by playing with fire. If you think your child may be lighting fires deliberately, contact KFRS' firesetters team on **01622 692 121**, or email firesetters@kent.fire-uk.org for advice on how to deal with the problem. You can also report any information about illegal fire setting activities, and those responsible, (anonymously) to Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** or Kent police on **101**.

Kent Fire & Rescue is urging us all to keep safe this summer and stay alert to the risks of fire by following some simple fire safety rules:

- Adults need to set a good example by behaving safely and responsibly themselves around fire
- Never use accelerants such as petrol on barbecues
- Never leave a barbecue unattended
- Ensure barbecue coals and disposable barbecues are disposed of safely
- Never cook or smoke inside tents
- Always make sure cigarettes are properly extinguished and disposed of responsibly
- Never leave lighters or matches around – they can be a temptation to children.

But it's not only fires that cause death and injury at this time of the year. In warmer weather it's also natural to want to cool down with a swim, but people are often unaware of the dangers posed by lake and river swimming. Deep water, unseen debris and hidden currents mean that things can quickly go wrong. And camping too can pose dangers from Carbon monoxide poisoning if cooking and generating equipment is not used wisely. The KFRS website contains valuable information on a whole range of safety issues. It can be checked out at <http://www.kent.fire-uk.org/your-safety/>



A Bargain Awaits Some Bright Spark

The C&DNHWA will shortly be disposing of a Honda GX200 petrol powered generator which has an output of 3.5KW 110/230 V. On the open market these cost about £480 new and even second-hand units fetch anything between £250 and £350. The generator was manufactured in 2003 and has a 6.5 horsepower motor, which has had very light usage during its lifetime. It is therefore in excellent condition. Sadly, though, it is now surplus to requirement so must be sold. If you are interested in purchase of this item please contact the Vice Chair at nealf@talktalk.net Offers over £150 will be considered. Buyer would have to collect from a location just outside of the City area.



Handbag Hackers Half Inch Hi-Enders

Police are warning owners of high-value cars to be very careful when storing their car 'keys' at home following a number of vehicle thefts that have seen the crooks use sophisticated amplifiers to steal expensive models that are protected by keyless-fob security systems, i.e. cars which do not require a physical key to either release door locks or permit starting of the engine. Confirmation of the technique was captured on CCTV during one theft where a handbag was used to hide the amplifier being held up against the front door to get the signal from the key-fob on

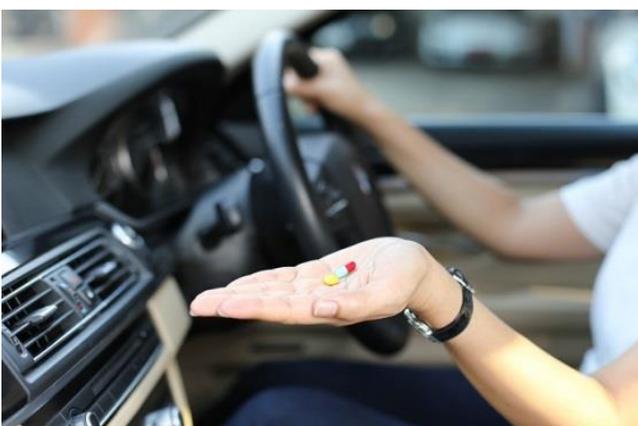


the other side – see left. Under normal conditions the fob has to be in close proximity to the car before doors can be opened and the ignition system operated but with the aid of hi-tech electronics the villains have worked out that they can amplify and relay the signal from the fob, to 'fool' the car into thinking that it is safe for

the security system to allow access and permit the engine to be started. This 'trick' however only works if the fob is left in a position where thieves can detect it from outside of the property, so police are advising that fobs should not be stored close to windows or doors where they could be located by the criminal's equipment.

Hay Fever Might Have A Sting In The Tail For Drivers

This year's spring weather was much drier than the norm in our part of the world and, as a consequence tree pollen levels were consistently above average for much of the time, which was a nightmare for many suffering from allergies. The summer months look set to continue plaguing hay fever sufferers with high levels of grass and flower pollen. The debilitating effects of hay fever can be relieved, to some extent, with medication – either prescribed by a doctor or bought over-the-counter / on line, but users are being urged to check the ingredients of their chosen remedy carefully before getting behind the wheel of a car. Changes to the law, which came into effect in March last year, permit the police to use road-side drug screening devices. New drug-driving limits for a wider variety of drugs, both illegal and prescribed, were also introduced. The number of motorists charged with drug-driving offences increased dramatically over the last 12 months, with prescription medication cases accounting for much of the rise, according to information obtained by Confused.com under the Freedom of Information Act. In 2015, a total of 1,686 drivers were caught driving whilst under the influence of drugs, compared with only 738 in 2014 – a rise of nearly 140%. The majority of the one in seven drivers who admitted to the offence were taking prescription medication rather than illegal drugs. Pollen-affliction is said to affect more than a third of drivers on our roads, which places many more motorists at risk



of prosecution if they are not wary of the new law. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society advise that some medication can have side-effects that could impair driving ability and it seems that a large percentage of drivers admit that they do not read the advice leaflet, provided with all medications, before they take their drugs. Worryingly, research also suggests that one in 15 motorists who suffer from hay fever admit that their ability to drive has been impaired while under the influence of medication – and 4% of these have had an accident as a result. Some of the more common side effects that these motorists have experienced include drowsiness, lethargy and blurred vision. So the advice is clear – if you want to keep a clear head and a clean licence,

carefully read the safety leaflet provided with your medication or ask advice from your pharmacist. If in any doubt then just don't drive whilst taking the remedy.

Country Eye App Is For Everyone

In the last edition of WB we included an article about our recent conference and Peter Rolington's presentation on the Country Eye App, which he has pioneered for use in the County. In case you missed it, or haven't yet downloaded the App to your Mac / Android phone here is the information that's needed to do so. Simply visit <https://countryeye.co.uk/> click the relevant download button and you're ready to report fly-tipping effortlessly, just by opening the App and taking a photo. Your phone does the rest, recording the location, time and date of the sighting, which is then passed to the correct authority every time. It can be used to report other types of country-side crime too, poaching, thefts, vandalism etc.



Summertime And The Pickings Are Easy – For Unscrupulous Doorknockers

As summer approaches and day light hours peak there is usually a surge in door to door sales activity. You might recall the article in WB (summer 2015) providing information to assist challenging those that are not acting legally. See our website <http://www.ucanpreventcrime.co.uk/NHW/Archive/WB/WBsummer2015.pdf> These salespersons can employ aggressive sales techniques or, as evidenced in a recent case in Herne Bay, even resort to actual violence – for which the offender is now thankfully serving nine years behind bars. Many will chance their arm by simply disregarding the law to get a sale. One such example, recounted by a vigilant coordinator, came to our attention recently. It serves to remind us all that, as consumers, we have legal rights when being sold goods worth more than £42 on the doorstep, and should report noncompliant companies that disregard the law or overstep the mark. The 'target' on this occasion was an elderly resident. The salesman, from **ESP Aftercare Warranties Limited**, sought out properties with solar panel installations in the hope that he could engage the occupiers and convince them that they needed to protect their investment by purchasing a 'warranty' to cover future breakdowns and repairs. The company, which is listed at Companies House and has a registered office in Rayleigh, Essex was set up in September 2016. It appears to be a legitimate business, but one which, it seems, is only too willing to push over-priced products at vulnerable people. The occupier was persuaded to buy the 'cover', a non-insurance based 'agreement' package for £4,900 (virtually the full cost of installing a new system at current prices!!). He provided the salesman with a cheque for £1000, there and then, to secure the purchase. No mention was made of his statutory right to a cooling off period during which he could change his mind – an omission which is in itself an offence under 'the Consumer Contracts Regulations' – see <https://www.gov.uk/doorstep-selling-regulations> for full details. Fortunately the 'victim' had a wise old owl at hand to offer advice – in the form of one of our own NHW coordinators. Subsequently the cheque was stopped and the contract cancelled. In any case such as this C&DNHW strongly urge that the matter be reported to Citizens Advice, who act on behalf of Trading Standards to collate information about companies that do not comply with their legal consumer obligations. Citizen's Advice can be contacted free on line or (for about £1) by phone on 03454 04 05 06. Full details are available by clicking on the 'Consumer/Report to Trading Standards' link at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

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Useful Contacts:

canterbury.nhw.association@gmail.com – C&DNHWA email
www.ucanpreventcrime.co.uk/NHW/ – C&DNHWA website
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www.actionfraud.police.uk/ – Report Fraud

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