



Watching Brief

The Canterbury & District Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter

Registered Charity No 1078269

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Chairman's Message – David Hayward

Welcome to this latest edition of our quarterly Association newsletter. As always it is full of valuable content and advice so please do share it widely with NHW members, friends and family.

There is no doubt that, for various reasons, today's society is evermore dependant on **Volunteers**. As supporters of NHW you already fit well into that category and many of you, I know, will also be involved in a range of other activities to improve the communities in which you live. The diversity of the volunteering fraternity is immense and still growing. In this issue another local voluntary group, **Connecting Canterbury Hub**, explain the important work that they do to battle poverty and debt in the community.

Kent Police too increasingly seek volunteers to assist in various roles, one of course being despatch of daily crime reports to NHW members, which Brenda Hunter and Kathy Wilson so kindly continue to do for us from the Herne Bay office. But a comparative shortage of volunteers, across both Canterbury and Thanet NHW Districts, has required a new working regime to be adopted – with District-wide messages being sent out from whichever office is crewed on the day. Although this approach may have been borne out of necessity, we feel that it actually provides for a better understanding of crime across the area, which can only be helpful in taking steps to prevent further crime. Very recently a new role '**Community Policing Volunteer**' has been created – effectively a volunteer version of the PCSO role. This is much more about community engagement than purely law enforcement, although they will have powers to direct traffic at accidents and to reinforce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). The new role, together with that of existing 'Special Constables', comes under the wing of the "Citizens in Policing" (CIP) section – seemingly the fastest growing part of Kent Police. If you are interested in finding out more about either of these roles please do contact us via our website, and we will pass on your contact details for you.

You may recall that our April newsletter featured an article on **Modern Day Slavery** and the work of the action group 'Stop The Traffik' in tackling this disgusting, horrendous crime. As we reported back then, their work relies heavily upon society's understanding of the problem, its willingness to openly condemn the practice and report suspected abuse to the authorities. In an effort to further raise public awareness, 'Stop the Traffik' have organised a Silent Walk in Canterbury on Saturday October 13th. The walk starts in the Precincts at Canterbury Cathedral at 11.15am with a short address from the Bishop of Dover, Lady Kate Davson (a direct descendant of William Wilberforce). The 1 mile route within the city centre will take less than 45 mins to complete at a slow pace. **For further details and to register to take part in the walk please visit:** www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/anti-slavery-walk-canterbury-tickets-47029371115

And finally, Doug Robertson, our most recent Volunteer Watch Liaison Officer (VWLO), has left us for another post within Kent Police. Doug made some helpful changes, which have benefited NHW, during his short tenure with us. We wish him well for the future and welcome his replacement, Adam Sackett, who takes up post in early October.

Friends Against Scams

When the phone rings it is usually a call from friends or family, but sometimes it is one of those 'nuisance' calls with someone trying to sell something, or worse still trying to dupe us into parting with personal information that they hope will allow them to commit fraud / steal from us. In this day and age most of us are wise to their evil tactics and know what to do to avoid being tricked but for those living with dementia an unwanted phone call of that type could be disastrous – and once caught by the scammers they there is an increased risk of being targeted again. That's why the National Trading Standards Scam Team (NTSST) has secured Government funding to provide free call blocking technology to help keep the most vulnerable safer from this sort of attack. They are providing free call-blockers to any person living with dementia if they are receiving nuisance calls. If you think that there is someone close to you that would qualify for installation of such a device please contact the NTSST on their webpage at www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/product.php?xProd=3 Supplies are limited and will be offered on a first-come first-served basis.



Connecting Canterbury Hub – By Laura Hackett

Connecting Canterbury began two and a half years ago as a response to what we could see happening in our immediate community – a growing number of people and families struggling with poverty. Too many people living in Canterbury aren't managing with their costs of living and escalating debts. Some are resorting to exploitative payday and doorstep lenders, suffering with the associated anxiety and stress that goes with trying and failing to make ends meet month after month. Our volunteers offer a listening ear over tea and biscuits for those times when financial worry, stress, anxiety, loneliness or isolation gets too much. We operate out of two community hubs alongside the Food Bank, Citizens Advice Bureau, CAP (Christians Against Poverty) and can signpost to other organisations outside the hub who we think could help, including free counselling, free legal advice, housing and debt services and many others. We also run a branch of Kent Savers Credit Union at our hubs, which offers safe saving and fair loans as an alternative to payday loans. Sometimes we've been able to provide practical help out of



our own resources too. We are funded by generous local churches, and with this money have been able to help pay for emergency gas and electricity for local residents during the 'Beast from the East' back in March, provide clothing and basic essentials for the homeless, and buy new school uniform and shoes for a number of parents, teenagers and children. With this in mind, we are looking to replicate the Sittingbourne and Whitstable 'Community Wardrobes' in the near future – a recycling initiative in which second-hand school uniform is donated, washed and redistributed to local families in need, helping to reduce costs to families (and the environment too!). To learn more, please find us on Facebook: 'Canterbury Community Wardrobe' – watch this space! If any of the issues raised affect you or somebody you know, why not get in touch?

Everybody is welcome to pop in for a chat and to see if we can help – every Tuesday from 9:30-11am at All Saints Church, Military Road, and every Friday 12noon – 1:30pm at St Dunstons Church, London Road. Alternatively contact Laura via email: connectingcanterbury@gmail.com or visit our website at: www.connectingcanterbury.org

How Good Are You At Recognising Cuckoos?

Although spring sprang months ago, it seems that cuckoos remain much in evidence across the South East of England all year round. Not the feathered kind of course – they have already retreated back to Africa for the winter – but a human form, a criminal low life who use the abode of others for their dirty work. These are an altogether more vulgar breed that flourish at our latitude whatever the season. Over the past few years **cuckooing** (the term used to describe the activity of drug dealing gangs who take over the homes of vulnerable people to ply their trade) has rapidly increased across the region. The 'invaded' residents, some of whom are drug users themselves, are either lured to accept the criminals into their homes in exchange for 'goods' to support their habit, or intimidation is used to gain access. Once the 'cuckoo' becomes established the occupier has no control over their activities or uses to which their home is put. Violence often follows. Even murders have been attributed to the cuckooing gangsters. Evidence of 'cuckooing' is already apparent in Kent, and the problem is growing as London gangs escape competition in the capital for the easier pickings in the Shires, and especially the Home Counties. This has prompted Canterbury Community Safety Partnership (CCSP) to set up a 'task & finish' group to quantify the scale of the problem locally and produce a protocol to ensure that CCC has procedures available to address issues arising from incidents of cuckooing when they occur – which often includes the need to rehouse victims. Reducing violent crime, much of which is drug related, is also a target for Kent's Police & Crime Commissioner in his recently announced **Violence Reduction Challenge** – details of which can be found at <https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/who-we-are/working-with-our-partners/violence-reduction-challenge/> Tackling the actual incidence of 'cuckooing' is a matter for the police but the public can greatly assist by being aware of this issue and keeping their eyes open for signs that could indicate premises being used by 'cuckoos'. Suspicious activity should be reported to the police by phone on 101 (999 for crimes in progress), or via Crimestoppers on Freephone 0800 555 111.



Vehicle Crime Growing Again

Following a spate of thefts from vehicles in the Canterbury and Thanet areas we thought that it might be time to revisit vehicle security issues. The crime wave during the summer months began by targeting Land Rovers (Discovery tow bars especially), but now vans and vehicles that have items left on view are also being regularly 'attacked'. Entry is often occasioned simply by breaking a window – and there isn't a lot that one can do about that, other than making sure that nothing of value is left on display to tempt the opportunist crook. Some of the thefts are, however, thought through more carefully, and it is these that could be more easily prevented by following the guidance below:-

- *Some burglars break in to properties looking specifically for vehicle keys, so always store keys away from doors and windows. Keeping them with you, even in the bedroom at night could help prevent theft;*
- *Locking and alarming a vehicle is a simple precaution that will simply deter many thieves;*
- *Park in a secure car park or well-lit location whenever possible;*
- *Remove valuable items from view before parking in public areas or on driveways;*
- *Park in a garage if you have one, but make sure that the doors are secured properly;*
- *If the vehicle is particularly valuable fit a tracker device;*
- *Fit tamper-proof number plate screws to deter theft of number plates – Plates are often stolen for use on vehicles used for other serious criminal activity;*
- *Consider installing a driveway alarm – or even a Smart System, which will contact you on a mobile device (and can be linked to security lighting and an alarm sounder) if someone tampers with your vehicle.*
- *Always wipe away sat-nav suction marks left on your windscreen. Sometimes these are all it takes to entice a thief to break in hoping the sat-nav is still in the vehicle.*

Much has been in the news over past months about vehicle theft occasioned by thieves taking advantage of the rise in keyless entry/ignition systems. This is occasioned through use of electronic gadgets capable of relaying signals from keys that are secured indoors, thus fooling the car into believing that the key is present and ready for use outside. Signal blocker pouches are now widely available to help prevent such crime – but always read the reviews before purchasing, as some customers haven't found every product to be as reliable as the makers might claim! It is still, perhaps, a novel and useful Christmas present idea though for someone in the family.



And lastly, as the colder weather approaches don't be tempted to leave the car engine running in order to defrost or demist the windscreen while you go back in doors.

Quad9 – Another Weapon In The Arsenal

Action Fraud, the National agency dedicated to reducing cyber-crime, has recently posted information about Quad9, a Domain Name Systems (DNS) server that could help prevent internet users from getting scammed and defrauded. DNS are used whenever an internet site is accessed – they are like public phone books for the web. They're the reason you only need to remember a website's name and not its numerical IP address. For example when you type "www.youtube.com" into a browser, a DNS service translates that for you into the associated IP address (199.223.232.0). Most DNS provide just that service with no regard to the legitimacy of the site, which is fine if the website is safe and secure but if it's not you could, inadvertently, be led into trouble! Quad9 is like a phone book for the web that automatically filters and removes phone numbers known to be used for fraud. It provides an automated way to protect users by blocking access to known malicious websites, like phishing sites designed to steal personal or banking details. Quad9 is provided by a consortium of highly respected global security players. It uses the IBM X-Force threat intelligence database which analyses more than 40 billion websites and tracks an estimated 17 million spam and phishing attacks daily. Unlike many other DNS services Quad9 does not store browsing histories, geographic or ID data, which companies can use for marketing and other purposes. And no personally identifiable information (PII) is stored by the service either. Quad9 covers desktops, portable / mobile devices, and can also be used with 'Internet of Things' (IoT) technologies, e.g. smart thermostats and connected home appliances. The service is free and easy to set up – full information is provided at www.quad9.net. Additionally, whilst Quad9 admit that they haven't tested their product with every other security program on the market, they have told C&DNHWA that they are unaware of it causing any conflict if it is used alongside existing firewalls, anti-malware or anti-virus solutions / programs.



Christmas Is Coming - But Don't Make The Crooks Fat

The hectic Christmas shopping season will shortly be upon us once again, so we can very soon expect to be bombarded with tempting offers over our electronic devices. But hasty decisions can be just what the fraudsters



are looking for. Research released by Financial Fraud Action UK (FFA UK) last year shows that 31% of online shoppers admit that they are more likely to take a risk if an online retailer offers them a bargain. This means there are potentially 15 million online shoppers who could be putting themselves at risk of financial fraud. Those aged 16-34 are most at risk it seems, with almost half of that age group (46%) admitting they are more likely to take a chance, compared to just 18% of people aged 55 or over. Although many of the major stores offer huge bargains all year round,

the Christmas period (and indeed the sale season which follows in the New Year) offers huge opportunity to fraudsters trying to entice people in to giving away their debit and credit card details on fake websites. **So how do fraudsters commonly catch their victims out?** Criminals use scam emails, fake ads on social media, or internet searches promising heavy discounts for desirable goods, to trick people into visiting fake sites and entering their credit / debit card details. Once the fraudsters have collected the information they need, they use them to commit fraud. The survey of more than 1,900 online shoppers, carried out as part of a campaign called "Take Five" (which was designed to make us all stop and think carefully when shopping online), also found that:

- Almost one in five (19%) online shoppers admits that they would click on an unsolicited email if it promised them a good deal.
- More than a third (36%) of consumers admit their shopping habits change when faced with an opportunity to bag a bargain
- And almost a quarter (24%) admit their 'fear of missing out' on a great deal leads them to let their guard down when it comes to online shopping.

So, sound advice to avoid fraud is **Take Five** before you buy. If you're using a retailer for the first time, always take time to research them before you give them any of your details. Be prepared to ask questions before buying. Trust your instincts – if an offer looks too good to believe then there is usually a catch. Be suspicious of prices that are too good to be true. Be sure you know who you are dealing with. Always access the website you are planning to buy from by typing the address into your web browser, and be wary of clicking on links in unsolicited emails. Look for the padlock symbol in the address bar, it's a good indication that they're reputable. Only use retailers you trust – ones that you know or have been recommended to you. To report a fraud / cybercrime and receive a police crime reference number if you become a victim, call Financial Fraud Action UK on 0300 123 2040.

The Festival Season Is Upon Us

Although it seems incredible, it really is only a few short weeks until this year's Halloween celebrations begin. So it must be time again to fish-out and dust off the notices that can be used to, politely, deter revellers from the doorsteps of the elderly, or not so elderly, who would prefer not to be involved in Trick or Treating activities. And if you can't immediately put your finger on last year's flyer, then head over to our webpage <http://www.ucanpreventcrime.co.uk/NHW/minutes/Halloweenposter.pdf> to print another one off. And whilst on the topic of festivals, Guy Fawkes night follows close on the heels of Halloween, which may also be great for the children but not so good for the pets, so please consider them if you are planning a firework party in your garden.



Useful Contacts:

canterbury.nhw.association@gmail.com – C&DNHWA email
www.ucanpreventcrime.co.uk/NHW/ – C&DNHWA website
www.canterburycsp.org.uk/ – Community Safety Partnership
www.scambusters.org/ – Online Protection Advice
[environmentalhelpdesk@canterbury.serco.com/](mailto:environmentalhelpdesk@canterbury.serco.com) – CCC Fly-Tipping
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/ – Trading-standards

www.hoax-slayer.com/ – Online Protection
www.ourwatch.org.uk/ – National NHW
www.firekills.gov.uk/ – Fire Safety
www.kent.police.uk/ – Kent Police
www.ageuk.org.uk/ – Age Concern, as was
www.actionfraud.police.uk/ – Report Fraud