

GET IN, GET OUT, GET AWAY (Anytime)

“You can usually tell if an alarm is a real one said the convicted burglar to the policeman. “But if in doubt, you leave it alone. There’s always a house nearby without one”.

This comforting piece of information for all of us with a box on the wall came when a panel of eight men, all career burglars, faced an audience of house owners, policemen and press to answer questions about why they burgled and how they go about it. The venue was a police station (not in this area) and was organised by a security company.

The convicted burglars included an elderly household specialist, various others and two youngsters at the start of their careers who admitted frankly that as a way of life, burglary still held considerable potential.

It quickly became clear that professional burglary is a well organised, thoroughly researched profession. A market for stolen goods is fundamental and many panel members stole only to order.

One member of the audience represented a home for the elderly. Would CCTV deter a burglar from attempting entry to such premises? Only three of the panel felt it would although the group was unanimous in declaring this type of establishment out of bounds. Lest we believe that this reluctance was born out of sentiment, they stressed that the presence of care staff on duty and awake throughout the night would be the deterring factor.

The elderly domestic burglar operated late into the night, always on foot, tiptoeing softly about the houses, never touching anything upstairs if there were sleepers tucked up in bed for fear of giving them a heart attack! He sounded very kind, benevolent even. He offered a generous endorsement of neighbourhood Watch as a thorn in his side.

Of those burglars who had mended their ways, a conscious decision to reform, possibly for family or other strong personal reasons, was the one thing that would stop them offending. Asked what would stop them stealing, one of the younger members observed somewhat inauspiciously “they’d have to cut my hands off”.

With such attitudes we have to do all we can to stop these evil people ever getting into our homes. If you don’t have a burglar alarm, maybe now is the time to take action. Prevention can save a lot of heartache.