

LOOK OUT

Helping to protect over 10,000 homes

From the Chairman, Keith Roberts

January 2009

Now that the festive season is over and we have all welcomed in the New Year, it is perhaps an opportunity to have a brief review of the past year and give some thoughts for the development of our Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the coming months.

Firstly, I wish to record our sincere thanks to Ron Sneddon, our Chairman, who stepped down at the Annual General Meeting in October. Ron has impressively driven the expansion of schemes over several years and with the contribution of scheme members and Neighbourhood Policing Teams, residents have recognised the benefits through lower levels of crime. Statistics suggest that areas with Neighbourhood Watch schemes are less likely to suffer from crime than those without and 'hot spot' areas of burglaries and criminal acts are generally not covered by NHW schemes.

Under Ron's direction, the last year has seen the growth of schemes to over 850 and our vast geographical area of 505 square miles now embraces over 12,000 NHW households. Domestic burglaries continue to reduce substantially, helped no doubt by repeated messages urging the use of basic improved home security. We also welcomed the formation of dedicated Safer Neighbourhood Policing Teams (SNTs) and the contribution of the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). On the downside there has unfortunately been a growth in theft from sheds, garages and out-houses and too many incidents of bag and purse snatching from populated areas such as supermarkets and market places. NHW has been pleased to help our police colleagues in tackling identified problems and giving practical support to overcome them. The launch of the sale of the efficient coding system SmartWater has been a huge success and alarm sales continue but at a slower rate.

So, what about 2009?

Firstly, it was a pleasure to be nominated and elected as Chairman, succeeding Ron, and I hope that I and your committee can continue the good work in the coming years. We welcome Katy Piazza as our new Treasurer and with her experience in a similar role I am sure that she will be a great asset and keep our heads above water and help maintain our charitable status. Peter Thornes, one of our Co-ordinators, now administers the Ringmaster database for the benefit of NYP and NHW. We hope to add members to our committee in order to share the workload of setting up new schemes in

neglected areas or refreshing existing schemes where Co-ordinators have moved on or become less active. The Ringmaster system is better than it used to be but there is still scope for considerable improvement. Communication, communication, communication are the three highest priorities jointly for the police and NHW Co-ordinators and their neighbours. Perhaps, we should stress 'effective communication'. Many Co-ordinators complain of not being made aware of household burglaries in close proximity to their homes and even of similar occurrences on consecutive days. Others complain about too much irrelevant information, especially if they receive messages by phone. There is scope for improvement and getting the balance right; reporting on incidents by urban or rural areas or specific post codes for example, can be considered. The necessity of Co-ordinators to forward messages to their neighbours must be at their own discretion; they know their neighbourhoods and risks better than most. Similarly, reporting of suspicious incidents by residents to the police is to be encouraged. The police respect the quality of information flowing from our Co-ordinators and members. The quantity of information is also important as it can influence the priority of action and help in improving detection rates. Knaresborough Police have requested that some NHW Co-ordinators join their Environmental Visual Audits Initiative. This should not be an arduous task and is considered as 'observing and reporting' of incidents or potential 'hot spots' to the SNTs. Broken bottles and glasses and the accumulation of needles spring to mind as examples of undesirable incidents to which the police can respond. If half a dozen Co-ordinators would be prepared to join a discussion with Sgt. Jane Guymer, please give me a call on 01937 584998 and I shall arrange.

Partnership working does not only mean NHW and the police, where engagement with the community is part of neighbourhood policing, but there is scope to develop closer relationships with the likes of Fire and Rescue Service, Trading Standards (for No Cold Calling Zones), Age Concern, Councils etc. all in the interest of making our neighbourhoods a safer place to live and assisting the vulnerable to protect their property and possessions and reduce the fear of crime.

We can also learn from others and we have already initiated involvement with other NHW schemes in North Yorkshire and Humberside and envisage an area newsletter as a start point. We rely upon donations and a small profit on sales to finance our administration –



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other schemes are financed by their councils directly or through police funding. There is scope for a consistent national funding framework. So, there is still plenty to do!

On another subject, we have re-jigged what have previously been called our Training Evenings to an informal format now called Training Seminars with an opportunity for greater inter-activity between participants, both established and new Co-ordinators and we aim to follow that pattern in the future holding three or four in the year at St. George's Social Club in Harrogate. Identifying and addressing local issues is an important aspect of our role. For your diary the next Seminar is scheduled for Wednesday, 18th February, commencing at 7.30pm.

Finally, the threatened re-organisation of SNTs and their senior management took effect from the 1st December. In the 'soft shoe shuffle' only the Knaresborough-Boroughbridge teams and their Inspector remained unchanged. We need to review any changes to priorities with the new appointments asap. in the New Year. One consequence of the changes is that there will be less administration support from the police staff and therefore more NHW independence, although we have been promised the continued use of facilities on a DIY basis. To keep costs down we need to encourage greater use of e-mails for communication and we would suggest that those Co-ordinators, who have not registered or updated their address, do so. This can be done immediately by accessing www.nwatchharrogate.org.uk and clicking on Ringmaster at the top of the home page. Alternatively, if you wish, you can complete the tear off strip on page 3 and leave it at the front desk of your local police station. Should you wish to continue to receive Ringmaster messages by phone there is no problem but we would like you to consider asking a friend, relative or neighbour if they would be prepared to receive less urgent correspondence, such as LOOK OUT and notice of meetings by e-mail on your behalf. We must be conscious of the costs, especially post and telephone charges, and although two thirds of members are on e-mail already, there are more new members joining NHW exceeding the number of people transferring their names to the Ringmaster e-mail database. We urge members who change their email address to inform us of the change.

Ron's vision of 1000 active schemes should not be the limit but we do still have many things to do to meet our objectives. I hope that you all have a happy and prosperous 2009, enjoy your contribution to the community and help the police fight the inevitable higher level of crime during these difficult times.

News from Tina Oates

Since the last edition of LookOut some of our Co-ordinators have been busy; one Jennyfield Co-ordinator was pictured recently in the Harrogate Advertiser painting the access tunnel to The Hydro as part of a combined residents and police effort to improve the area. Another in the Yew Tree Lane area held a big garden party for his members one Sunday afternoon in

late summer. 24 members of a watch group in the St George's area enjoyed a Christmas dinner together in one of the town's restaurants and the Dalesides saw another Watch group having its 3rd annual meeting, with a demonstration of the recommended new security locks and the local Neighbourhood Policeman talking about recent developments in the Harrogate area.

Several people at the AGM expressed a difficulty in getting anyone from the police or safety services to come along and speak to their members at group meetings. Personally I have found that if you arrange the meeting around days, dates and times convenient to your Neighbourhood Policeman he/she is only too willing to attend. However do avoid Friday evenings when most of the force are required on duty in the town centre! Another service very keen to attend our meetings is the North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service. I have been personally assured by Andy Blades, Manager of Blue Watch at Harrogate Fire Station, that they are very keen to speak to groups – large or small – about community safety, fire safety in the home, specific fire safety i.e. Bonfires, Barbecues, Christmas safety, plus Road Safety presentations, Child Seat fitting etc. They also invite you to pre-arranged visits to the Fire Station on Skipton Road where there could be demonstrations with supporting information. Andy's contact details are: - Andy Blades, Blue Watch Manager, Harrogate Fire Station, Tel: 01423 504082 or email: andrew.blades@northyorksfire.gov.uk

In order to clear up a recent confusion I would like to assure members that there are **no costs** involved in setting up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme – apart from the £7:00 charge for each street sign, which is an **optional** expense. Also the Welcome Packs are completely free. Some group members make a voluntary nominal donation to their Co-ordinator to help cover his/her stationery costs and of course H&DNWA always welcome **voluntary** donations, but **the basic setting up of a scheme is absolutely FREE and there is no annual renewal fee or 'required' annual donation.** If any member feels that they have incurred extra costs which they are uncertain about please contact us at info@nwatchharrogate.org.uk

Remember, if you've had an annual get-together, outing or got a good idea then we want to hear about it and spread the news to others. Simply email the subject 'News' to the above "nwatch" email address and it will be passed on to me. And finally - Happy New Year to all!

From the Treasurer, Katy Piazza

As a charity we are always pleased to receive contributions which we spend very carefully on running costs, starting new schemes and development training. Since the last Look Out we have received donations from 8 schemes. If your NHW scheme has not made a donation recently, please consider making a contribution now - any amount is welcomed. Please send donations to Katy Piazza, 8 Woods Court, Harrogate, HG2 9QP. (Cheques made payable to "Harrogate & District Neighbourhood Watch Association")

NB For information on becoming a member of Neighbourhood Watch you can speak to the Police Community Safety Officer, in business hours, on 01423 539347 or you can approach any member of your local Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team.

TO PREVENT CRIME IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Reminder– KEY Telephone Numbers

- In a genuine emergency, witnessing an incident etc., without hesitation **CALL 999**
- To report suspicious incidents **CALL 0845 60 60 24 7** where the call centre will put you through to your nearest Police Station, Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) or Safer Neighbourhood Response Team as appropriate
- For reporting anonymously to Crimestoppers **CALL 0800 555 111**

We should be aware that the flow of information to the police is very important for reducing crime and the fear of crime and early communication can help improve detection rates. However, some people have been reluctant to report suspicious incidents because they do not want their neighbours to see a police car outside the door or do not wish to become involved in court cases or further action. Your information can be vital and could be the missing link in the jigsaw of crime. Hence the **Crimestoppers** approach or you can always request the police to visit, if necessary, in an unmarked car.

North Yorkshire Police Re-organisation

District Commander – Chief Inspector Nick Hunter
Western Area Community Safety – Insp. John Greveson
Harrogate Safer Neighbourhood Team – Insp. Jeff McKeown
Harrogate North SNT – Act/Sgt. Nick Widdowson
Harrogate Central SNT – Sgt. Rob Thorpe
Harrogate South SNT – Sgt. Geoff Crocker
Ripon/Pateley Bridge SNT – Insp. Steve Breen
Ripon SNT – Sgts Derek Day, John Dwyer, Chris Galley
P. Bridge – Sgts. Christine Turner, Jon Naughton
Knaresborough/Boroughbridge SNT – Insp. Andy Chapman
Knaresborough SNT – Sgt. Jane Guymer
Boroughbridge SNT – Sgt. Mick Ramshaw

You can contact any of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams by phoning 0845 60 60 24 7 or by e-mail:
[SaferHarrogate or SaferRipon or SaferBoroughbridge or SaferKnaresborough or SaferPateleyBridge@northyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](#)

Crime Reduction

There is much coverage of crime and associated statistics in the press, so we do not need to go into detail here other than to indicate a few trends or specific areas we should be conscious of. Overall the number of incidents trend is downwards, especially burglaries, and we do thankfully live in a low crime area, featuring in the top ranking nationally. However, in recent weeks, '2 in 1' type burglaries are almost half of those recorded. By 2 in 1 we mean that access to the property is gained to steal car keys left lying around, in order to drive away in the car left outside. The theft of bags/purses, cycles and tools/garden machinery from sheds and outbuildings feature highly in the number of incidents. Access to household property through UPVC doors, because of an inherent weakness in some lock cylinders, features heavily in burglary statistics in

surrounding areas and NYP wish H&D NHW members to be aware of the risk and the best solution to minimise the risk. If this applies to you, send us a message on our web address info@nwatchharrogate.org.uk with your name and telephone number and we'll call you back to discuss. This is a sensitive subject and we must avoid information getting into the hands of potential criminals.

Property Coding

The simplest coding system is the UV pen and a pen costing 50p will cover most items. However, its usefulness deteriorates with time and it can be removed.

Even cheaper is the registering and recording of your property with 'Immobilise'. This is the system devised and used by all police forces as the first call to check on ownership. It's free and can be used for all items that have a serial number. Each item has to be recorded individually on www.immobilise.com.

Finally, the use of SmartWater, the unique coding system promoted by NYP and H&D NHW, will identify a possession with your household. A 10ml phial will code 50 to 80 individual items as belonging to you and if stolen or lost can be traced back to you. Information and order forms are on the H&D NHW website, or from your local police station. The product can be purchased at half the usual price with no further annual registration costs from H&D NHW. SmartWater comes with window stickers and registration on a very secure database. Stolen or lost goods located by the police can be identified and returned to the rightful owner (NOT the thief!) by taking a swab and sending to SmartWater. We have available gatepost signs, which demonstrate that SmartWater is in use and can act as an effective deterrent to the potential thief/burglar.

H&D NHW Registration

Co-ordinators have to complete and submit a form with their signature and basic details for data protection reasons and this is done initially at the set up meeting. However, thereafter, additional or replacement Co-ordinators are eligible at any time and blank forms can be downloaded from the website or obtained from, and left with, your nearest police station. We prefer to use e-mail for Ringmaster messages and correspondence as costs are rising dramatically for postage and printing and telephone calls. It is also the most efficient method.

Please keep us informed of your e-mail address and should there be a change you can now make a direct link to Ringmaster@nwatchharrogate.org.uk to register the change or use the tear off strip below and leave at your nearest police station:

AMENDMENTS TO RINGMASTER/H&D NHW REGISTRATION

FULL NAME:
ADDRESS:
TELEPHONE NUMBER:
OLD E-MAIL ADDRESS (if available)
NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS:
NEIGHBOUR'S E-MAIL FOR NON PRIORITY MESSAGES:

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