

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Burglary and Marking Property

The chances are that, if all residents in Hampstead Garden Suburb marked their property with their postcode and house number and then prominently displayed 'marked property' stickers, Hampstead Garden Suburb would be virtually a burglar free area!

What are the grounds for such a startling contention?

- During the last quarter of 1988 a further 60 burglaries or attempted burglaries took place in the Suburb. In every case the victims had not marked their property and had not got 'Marked Property' stickers displayed.
- As far as is known, all the burglaries and attempted burglaries that have taken place in the Suburb over the last two years have been from houses without 'Marked Property' stickers displayed.

Regrettably there have been two exceptions to this over the last few weeks with, certainly in one case, the house having so few stickers that the burglar did not see them. But, in spite of these two exceptions, these really are very remarkable facts and lead to the conclusion that marking property must be the single most effective deterrent to burglary — statistically even more effective than a burglar alarm!

Furthermore, the procedure for marking property is very simple. It takes on average a couple of hours and now costs nothing because a marking set consisting of an electric engraver and invisible ink pens can be borrowed from your Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator. Almost all solid objects can be engraved — eg. silver, jewellery, television sets,

video recorders, picture frames, cameras, binoculars, spectacles — and objects such as porcelain, oriental rugs, fur coats and other clothing can be marked with an invisible ink pen which will show up under an ultra violet light.

And the yellow and black 'Marked Property' stickers give a clear message to the burglar saying 'don't come to this house, go somewhere else — because everything here that you might be tempted to steal is marked, which means that if you are caught with it in your possession it is immediate proof of your guilt and, if you try to dispose of it, no 'fence', market trader or other middleman will touch it'.

So, unless you really don't care if your house is broken into, do get in touch with your Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator without any further delay, borrow the marking equipment which is very easy to use and get on with it.

Unoccupied Houses

Burglars want to make sure that a house is unoccupied and, in many cases, it is not even necessary to ring the door bell to check. Many houses just look unoccupied with parcels on the front door step, with letters or free newspapers sticking out of the letter box, with milk left outside the front



door all day or with no lights on after dusk. Of course, you may be lucky enough to have a co-operative neighbour who will push letters through your letter box and take in parcels for you. And you can fit automatic time switches to make sure some lights come on in the evening or at random times during the day. But even then it is not easy for people out at work all day who have no option but to leave their homes unoccupied.

In order to try to overcome some of these problems, discussions were held recently with the Post Office and also with Express Dairies.

Letters and Parcels

The Managers of both the NW11 Sorting Office in St Georges Road, Golders Green and the N2 Sorting Office in Market Place, East Finchley have agreed to speak personally to all postmen at their regular monthly 'team briefing' meetings about the vital need always to put mail right through letter boxes and never to leave parcels outside houses at front doors. A difficulty has been that postmen are normally allowed to go straight home after completion

of the second delivery, and some can be tempted to leave parcels that they are unable to deliver rather than having to take them back to the sorting office. It is also not unknown for some residents to encourage postmen to leave parcels at the door in order to save them the trouble of themselves having to go to the Sorting Office to collect their parcels. But all postmen are now being instructed not to leave parcels on door steps under any circumstances, and all residents are urged to co-operate with these arrangements.

The Managers of the Sorting Offices have also stressed how difficult it can be for postmen when residents are away for several weeks on business or on holiday and the Sorting Office has not been informed. The problem for the postman can become acute if there is a retaining box or cage on the inside of the letter box so that, after several days, the postman cannot push more mail through into the box. He is then forced to return with the mail to the Sorting Office where it is retained for one week after which it is returned to the sender. Another problem is where the front door has a glass panel through which a great pile of mail can be seen accumulating on the mat in the hall thereby giving a clear indication that no-one is at home. The Sorting Office Managers urge residents, when going away, to instruct the Sorting Office to retain mail until called for when it will be kept until your return from business or holiday.

Milk

There are two problems with leaving milk on the doorstep all day. Firstly, if it can be seen

from the road, it is a perfect give away that the house is probably unoccupied and, secondly, in the warm weather the milk is not exactly going to be at its best when you eventually get home. Express Dairies are very concerned about this and has suggested that, if you have to leave the milk outside all day why not invest in one of their 'cool' containers, called 'Milkmates', each of which holds two milk bottles. Milkmates will be on sale, price £2.59 each, from your Express Dairy milkman from April. However, a Milkmate will be noticeable perhaps even more than milk bottles on their own, so it may need to be hidden from sight. One way to do this would be to purchase a container such as a terracotta pot from a garden centre and put the Milkmate inside it. Another way which would have the advantage of keeping the milk even cooler and fresher would be to make a hole in the ground (ideally lined with wood or some other material and with a lid) which will take the Milkmate. In any case, your milkman will be happy to co-operate with whatever arrangement you make provided you explain it to him!

Free Magazines, Newspapers and other mail

Discussions have not been held specifically with newsagents, newspaper publishers, publicity houses and so on, as there are so many of them and some seem to have little control over the contract labour employed on delivery. Some residents attempt to overcome the problems associated with this mail by placing notices outside their front doors saying 'No free magazines or newspapers'. But, if you don't want to do

this, and yet are troubled by this mail being left sticking out of your postbox or by newspapers being dumped on your doorstep outside, your only recourse is to contact the publishers or originators of the mail — or the delivery boy if you are quick enough to catch him — and get extremely angry. If enough residents were to do this, it would probably have the desired effect.

FRUIT AND VEG FIT TO EAT

Have you wondered where to go on a fine Saturday afternoon? Come to the top of Brookland Rise and find a patch of real countryside! No long traffic queues to get there, with the kiddies fighting in the back seat. For just a few pounds a year, you can have your own patch of England.

Think of the raspberries, strawberries and blackcurrants you could grow. New potatoes, peas and runner beans to name but a few of the 'chemical-free' vegetables you can produce. Perhaps you might even show some at the three Horticultural Society Shows.

In the Summer we all get a wonderful tan — the envy of our neighbours, much better than sitting in airport lounges waiting to go to Spain (rains when you get there!) or skiing in the Alps (no snow!). So dig British, and help keep our own patch of countryside green and growing!

Small and large allotments available on: Finchley Manor Allotment Site, next to Brookland School. Please apply to Mary Pope, telephone 455 2437. **MP**

The Suburb is unique — let's keep it that way

With a few exceptions, all our houses, flats and public buildings were architect designed to a plan and an ideal of garden suburb living envisaged by the creators of our Suburb.

Whether you live in the old Suburb, or in one of the later roads, your house is probably a fine example of its period.

Each road, crossroad, open space and view was carefully designed to look just right.

But this "most nearly perfect example of that English invention and speciality", as Pevsner put it, needs careful conservation.

The Suburb is, of course, a conservation area and as such is subject to planning controls.

The Suburb is different

What makes our Suburb different is that it is subject to what is known as a Scheme of Management granted by the High Court and administered by the Trust.

This means that any alteration to freehold buildings must be approved by the Trust as well as by Barnet. The same restrictions apply under a Management Agreement to leaseholds still owned by Ashdale and by the Trust.

What is so special?

Even apparently quite small changes to the outside of your house can spoil the effect so carefully designed in the original plan for a street or group of houses.

Trust consent is needed for:

- building an extension
- changing windows, doors or gates
- installing new windows with or without double-glazing
- repointing brickwork
- erecting a garden shed or greenhouse
- putting up a fence or wall
- building a garage or lean-to
- taking down a chimney
- repairing or renewing the roof tiles
- cutting down or lopping a tree
- removing or renewing a hedge
- paving the garden making a hard-standing
- changing a garage into a room
- installing an external gas meter
- installing or altering external pipes
- putting a room in the room with dormer windows or roof lights.

Here to help

The Trust manager Chris Kellerman and its architect Wilfred Court are here to help you.

Get in touch before making any plans for alterations and they can save you time and trouble and help us all to keep the Suburb a very special place to live.



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Example of unnecessary alterations

