

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

BURGLARY IN HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB

In 1989 there were 202 attempted burglaries or burglaries in the Suburb. In the first six months of 1990 there were 85 of these crimes compared with 97 in the first six months of 1989 with an especially encouraging drop in the spring. If this trend was to continue we could have every confidence that the total figure for 1990 would be down on 1989. But, in fact, during the hot summer, when windows and doors were left open, the figure went up again with 25 of these crimes being committed in July alone. So what conclusions can we draw from all this?

If burglaries occurred by pure chance as a sort of lottery there would probably be little that any of us could do to influence the situation. Whether the 1990 figures turned out to be better or worse than 1989 would be purely a matter of luck. But the situation simply isn't like that. THE VAST MAJORITY OF THESE BURGLARIES ARE PREVENTABLE AND OCCUR THROUGH THE NEGLIGENCE OR THOUGHTLESSNESS OF SUBURB RESIDENTS.

Of course some – a very few – of these crimes fall into a different category and are the work of professional villains or of addicts desperate for money to obtain drugs. Indeed, two "aggravated" burglaries in the spring were carried out by young men who probably come into the latter grouping. But the vast majority are carried out by opportunist burglars on the look-out for easy pickings. So what are the steps that have to be taken to stop them?

There are two basic principles which can then be supplemented by a number of other commonsense actions.

Basic Principle No. 1. – Make, and keep, your house secure.

Quite simply, this means making sure that every outside door and

window is securely lockable and cannot easily be forced open – ie, not without putting the burglar to considerable trouble and difficulty and not without causing him to make enough noise to alert neighbours. If you are not an expert on security locks (and few of us are), all you have to do is phone 200 2555 and leave a message asking for one of the Police Crime Prevention Officers to call to carry out a free survey and to give you free advice on what you need to do to make your house secure.

But it also means making sure your house is kept secured whenever you are out of the house – or even when you are in. Many burglaries occurred during this summer because windows or outside doors had been left open while the householder was in a different part of the house or in the garden. Many other burglaries take place when the householder goes out quickly, for five minutes only, to collect the children from school.

Basic Principle No. 2 – Mark your Property.

This is a very simple procedure which entails engraving or otherwise marking you: postcode and house number on all your valuable property. It was dealt



with at some length in the summer 1988 "Suburb News". But, in essence, all you have to do is get in touch with your Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator (see Suburb Directory 1990-1991) who will either lend you a marking kit so that you can mark your property or, if you are lucky, may do the marking for you.

Then, when you have marked your property, you will be given the special yellow and black Marked Property stickers for putting on the windows of your house which virtually say to the burglar "Don't come to this house, because all our valuables have been marked, which means that, if you are caught with any of them in your possession you will be immediately incriminated – and you will be unable to dispose of them as no 'fence' or middleman will touch marked property".

To date, over a quarter of all Suburb residents have marked their property (1,414 households March 1990) – and have these special stickers displayed. And this action has proved so successful that over the last two years only some half dozen

houses displaying Marked Property stickers have been burgled – at least two of which had stickers on the front of the house only and the burglar came in at the back!

Other Commonsense Actions.

There are a number of other commonsense actions which we mention from time to time either in this column or in Neighbourhood Watch newsletters. But two are particularly worth mentioning again now.

**Install a Burglar Alarm.*

Statistically more Suburb houses fitted with burglar alarms have been broken into than those with Marked Property stickers displayed! But this isn't an "either/or" situation. If you have valuables in your house – or, if you have the sort of house that looks as if it is likely to contain valuables! – it is sensible to have a burglar alarm installed by a reputable alarm company. Burglars don't like alarms, and fitting one can give you considerable peace of mind especially when you are away for any length of time on a holiday. But, for it to be effective, you must turn it on whenever you are out of the house even if only for five minutes!

**Make an empty house appear occupied.*

It is surprisingly easy to spot empty houses on the Suburb. By day, there are full milk bottles on the step or newspapers protruding out of letterboxes. After dark, no lights are on. So get the milkman to leave the

milk out of sight; ensure that whoever delivers your paper puts it right through your letterbox, and arrange for lights and the radio to come on automatically at random times and after dark.

In conclusion, MOST SUBURB BURGLARIES ARE AVOIDABLE. 1990, 1991 and future Suburb burglary figures could be well down on 1989. IT IS REALLY UP TO YOU.

SUBURB PROWLERS

The quick thinking and prompt action of a Suburb resident, recently prevented what could have been a serious crime.

Mr Russell White, of Addison Way, disturbed two prowlers who were lurking in his back garden late this August. They fled, but did not get very far, as Mr White called the police who arrived within minutes. The two young men were later arrested in Erskine

Hill, and taken to Temple Fortune police station, where one was discovered to be in possession of certain tools which could, in theory, be used in a burglary.

Addison Way has been vulnerable to petty crime in recent months particularly concerning car damage and theft, most likely due to the roads easy access to the North Circular, for many would be joy riders.

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For all your property requirements in Hampstead Garden Suburb, Finchley, Temple Fortune or Golders Green, contact the agents with over 150 years experience.

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Extracts from the Chairman's introduction to the Trust Report for 1989/90

As my term as an elected member of the Trust Council comes to an end in September and I am stepping down from the chair, it may be appropriate to take stock of developments over the past six years. When I joined the Trust in 1984 it was involved in a bitter dispute with the then Association of Freeholders over the level of the Management Charge. Fears were being expressed that there were no real checks on the Trust's financial performance and no limits to the increases in the Management Charge which it was able to demand of freeholders. The Association of Freeholders therefore quite properly lodged an appeal against the proposed increase. The appeal was heard by an independent surveyor, as laid down. He found for the Trust on the matter of the Management Charge and declared the Trust to be efficiently and economically run.

In the light of this dispute and of the concerns it had revealed the Trust Council then resolved not only to set up the most rigorous systems of budgetary controls, but also to reduce costs wherever possible. It stated its intention to ensure that future increases in the Management Charge should be kept within strict limits. That has been its policy ever since. In fact the Management Charge has remained at £26 for the last three years despite an increase of 23% in the RPI over the same period. With the current rate of increase of the RPI running at nearly 10%, however, an increase will be necessary this year. This has been fixed at £28, an increase of 7.7%.

This has been the first full year in which to assess the

financial impact of the purchase last year of the bulk of the Ashdale holdings on the Suburb. As the accounts show, the Trust's income from ground rents has increased substantially, and as ground landlords the Trust is also deriving an income from enfranchisements. Though it is no longer receiving a management income from Ashdale, the deal has produced an overall profit for the year under review.

Overall the accounts show the Trust's financial position to be healthy, and its longer-term prospects are reasonably good – a far cry from the position six years ago, when many doubted its ability to survive more than a few years.

In close and friendly cooperation with the Residents Association, the Trust played an active part in the campaign against the indiscriminate introduction of 'wheelie bins' to the Suburb, its specific concern being, the detrimental effect which the bins would have on the visual environment if left standing on the pavements or parked visibly in front gardens, as had happened elsewhere in the Borough. Though the bins were

introduced in the end, the campaign did achieve positive results, since the local authority finally agreed that a larger number of households should be exempted or otherwise assisted than for the whole of the rest of the borough of Barnet. Warm thanks are due to the vast majority of residents for the responsible and cooperative spirit they have shown in keeping their bins carefully out of sight.

The year under review has had its normal share of arguments – not to say occasionally, disputes – over what is or is not acceptable in the way of alterations and extensions to Suburb houses. Many of these arguments have been about work which has been undertaken without the proper consents, or over the detailed implementation of plans which have received consent but which are not being carried out in accordance with the agreed drawings. Some find it difficult to understand that in architecture – and particularly in a conservation area detailing is all important. The siting and proportions of a dormer window, the design of a canopy over a front door, the layout of external plumbing, the design of window frames – to name but a few, are all matters which require careful thought if the overall appearance of a house is not to be unacceptably affected. Remember that the Suburb was designed by some of the best architects of the time and that their work has to be treated with great care if its original character is to be preserved. Many outsiders admire the Suburb and the efforts we put in to preserve it. Many envy us for being able to live here. Let us not give them cause to change their minds.



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