

# NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

## Confidence Tricksters

Many Suburb residents will know only too well about our Suburb Con-man who was around a couple of years ago. Well dressed in a city suit, he called on various people in the Suburb, mostly new residents, and introduced himself as the representative of an organisation which he called the "Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association Trust". He then proceeded to obtain for the " upkeep of the Suburb " quite sizeable amounts of money in cash - because, in order to reduce administrative costs, he didn't take cheques! As far as is known he is still in prison\*. But there are a significant number of other confidence tricksters now working North London, and all Suburb residents should be warned of some of the tricks employed. Here are some examples.

## ★ "The Telephone Engineers"

This happened to a lady in Swiss Cottage recently:-

- at about 7.00 a.m. one morning the telephone rang and the following conversation took place "Is Bert there?" "No. No one called Bert lives here". "Oh, I'm so sorry. That is 570 5743 isn't it?" "No. This is 570 5753. You have a wrong number".
- a few minutes later the telephone rang again. "Is that 570 5743?" "No. This is 570 5753". "I'm really so sorry, but I know I definitely dialled 570 5743 - so there is clearly a fault on the line and I will phone and report it for you to the telephone engineers who will, no doubt, get in touch with you".
- later the telephone rang again. "This is the tele-

phone engineer speaking, madam. I understand that there is a fault on your telephone and you are receiving incorrect calls. I will send someone round to test your telephone as soon as possible". ‡[See Note]

- later still, two men arrived saying they were British Telecom engineers. They were admitted and started to examine the telephones. They carried out various "tests" and then left saying there should be no more trouble.
- after they had departed, the lady found that many valuable objects around the house had disappeared.
- subsequently contact with British Telecom confirmed that no telephone engineers had been contacted or sent out.

**NOTE: IF THIS HAPPENS TO YOU. IT IS AT THIS POINT ‡ THAT YOU SHOULD DIAL 999 SO THAT THE POLICE ARE IN YOUR HOME AND WAITING WHEN THE CONFIDENCE TRICKSTERS CALL**

★ "Loss of Handbag" When shopping at Selfridges in Oxford Street, a lady put her handbag down for a brief moment only to find to her great distress that it had vanished. When eventually she returned home, having collected a spare set of keys from her keyholder, she received a telephone call saying "This is Selfridges madam. You will be pleased to know we have found your handbag. It slipped down at the back of our counter and it appears that all the contents are safe.



We cannot keep it indefinitely for you, though. So would you please come in right away to collect it?"

Overjoyed, the lady returned to Selfridges only to find that they knew nothing about the telephone call and had NOT found the handbag. When she returned home again, she found the house in a complete mess having been burgled by the thieves who had taken the handbag. They waited for her to go out and had then let themselves into her house with the original set of keys.

## ★ "The Water Board Men"

Two men call at your house saying there has been a fall in water pressure in the area probably due to an undiscovered leak from one of the mains. They ask to come in to run the taps in your house to test the pressure. On entry, one goes to the taps upstairs, the other to the taps downstairs, knowing that you can't be in two places at once. After they have left, either jewellery from your bedroom or silver from downstairs (or both) is missing!

Variations on this theme can be two men from the Gas Board - "there is a gas escape down

the road", or two men from the Electricity Board; or just one man offering to repair the slipped tiles on your roof - "have you got any leaks in the roof?", and may he just come in and inspect for damp patches!

The conclusions to be drawn from all these stories are DO BE ON YOUR GUARD. NEVER LET ANY STRANGER INTO YOUR HOUSE UNLESS YOU ARE COMPLETELY SURE THAT HE IS ON GENUINE BUSINESS. Always use a door chain or limiter to prevent a stranger easing his way in. Always be suspicious of "identity cards" - they are very easily faked. And the way to check the gas or electricity meter readers is to have the number of each meter displayed on the back of your front door and to ask him to quote the number to you. If he is genuine, he will have your meter number written in his book. If he can't quote your number, don't let him in, close your front door and dial 999 immediately.

## All three emergency services at Church Mount.

In mid October, just before 6.00 p.m. the Police received a call to a house in Church Mount where the sole occupant had collapsed. On arrival they found an Ambulance crew attempting to gain entry but it appeared that all windows were screwed down and all doors double locked and bolted so that even the key holder who was on the scene couldn't get in. The Fire Brigade was called and managed to remove a pane of glass from a door without too much damage. One of the Ambulancemen then squeezed through and let the rest into the house where the door keys were found on a saucer in the kitchen.

The moral of this story is quite simple - by all means make your house secure, but don't turn it into a fortress!

## The Good Neighbours

And finally, to end this article on a high note, here is the perfect Suburb example of what Neighbourhood "WATCH" at its best is all about.

Also in mid October, just before 2.00 p.m., two female residents of Falldon Way who were gardening at the time, saw two suspicious characters emerge from a house across the road. After dialing 999, one of them followed on foot while the other got the car. Following the suspects, they saw them speak to a workman and continue walking. Having asked the workman what they said (directions to Tube station), they continued following. Coming to a public telephone box one of them again rang 999 and gave an update on their location and

the police then soon arrived. One of the men unfortunately escaped but the other was arrested and all stolen property was recovered.

When I told that story at a recent meeting of the Neighbourhood Watch Wardens of my own Watch, they spontaneously broke out clapping and cheering. I'm sure many other Suburb residents will feel like doing so too.

**\*STOP PRESS. We have just heard that the Suburb Con-man is due to be released from prison "early in the New Year in January or February". DO PLEASE BE ON YOUR GUARD AND READY FOR HIM. DO BE SUSPICIOUS. DON'T HESITATE TO DIAL 999.**

## Space Salesman?

The Suburb News needs some assistance in selling advertisement space to local advertisers.

Working on a modest

commission the person we are looking for will have some experience of selling space and be in a position to call on advertisers during working hours.

Please write to the Editor at 26 Hampstead Way, NW11.

## TWENTIETH DAME HENRIETTA BARNETT MEMORIAL LECTURE

### Preliminary Notice

### Date:

Thursday 24th May 1990 at 8.00 pm

### Memorial Lecturer:

Mr Gerald Isaaman  
Editor - Hampstead & Highgate Express

### Subject:

"Our Environment"

### Title:

"Fear not to Sow because of the Birds"

Further information to follow but please book the date

## 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

