

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Vehicle Crime

Vehicle crime is now big business and is steadily increasing throughout the country. The Home Secretary recently disclosed that car thefts and break-ins account for around a quarter of all recorded crime. Estimates vary, but, even conservatively, car crime is costing the country £100 million a year.

Locally, the problem is even more acute with vehicle crime now accounting for more than half of all locally recorded crime, and there is a great deal that Suburb residents could, and should, do to reverse this trend. Part of the problem seems to be that many people do not care about their cars - perhaps because it is only a company car and does not belong to them personally. But, even if a company car can be repaired or replaced at no cost to yourself, you will still be put to considerable inconvenience, quite apart from the fact that you will have been the means of contributing to and encouraging this spiral of criminal and anti-social behaviour. After all, if you were entrusted with a valuable picture worth anything between £10,000 and £50,000, you would probably surround it with alarms and other other security features. You certainly wouldn't dump it in the road and forget it!

So, here is a check list of what you can do to protect your car against the five main categories of vehicle crime.

The theft of cars

Cars are stolen either by professional gangs, probably to order, with the intention of altering the car's chassis number, registration number and general characteristics, probably for resale abroad; or for use as a getaway vehicle or other use in general criminal activity; or by so called 'joy-riders' who generally end up crashing the car and often killing themselves and others. High-performance versions of popular cars are particularly favoured by this last group. So:

- etch your car registration number on the windscreen and

- on all windows. This will deter the professional gang that want to change your car's identity. It is not cost effective to have to change all the windows as well. Etching will be done free for you in 10 to 15 minutes by Autoglass at 106 Brent Terrace, NW2, on production of your Neighbourhood Watch newsletter;

- never leave driving documents in your car, or any correspondence which may identify you as the owner. These will make the job of disposal much easier for the thief and provide a cover story if stopped by the police;

- fit a good quality ultrasonic alarm (see below) and set it every time you leave the car. According to offenders, two-thirds would turn away and leave a car they were breaking into if the alarm went off;

- lock your car and close the windows every time you leave it. Incredibly, one car in five is left unlocked;

- ask your dealer (or Selmar - see below) about fitting deadlocks to your existing car. Never buy a new car that isn't fitted with deadlocks. According to offenders, half said they wouldn't want their escape to be slowed down by having to climb out through the window.

- join 'Vehicle Watch', which was launched nationally in April and is now available to Suburb residents through Neighbourhood Watch. If you don't normally use your car at night between 12.30am and 5.00am, you put two 'Vehicle Watch' yellow stickers - on the windscreen and on the rear window - which will alert police to stop your car at night if being driven away by a



thief;

- immobilise your car with a built-in (a D.I.Y. type) steering lock.

The theft of radio/cassette systems

More than a third of all vehicle crime locally consists of the breaking-in and removal of radio/cassette systems. Pioneer and Blaupunkt are the most frequently stolen, but all car radio/cassette systems are at risk. So, in addition to the above:

- either make your car radio/cassette removable so that you can take it with you when you park and put it in a safe place (most car radio shops will be able to fit the necessary mounting for you);

- or engrave your vehicle registration number on your radio and then put 'Marked Property' stickers on your car windows and a mini 'Marked Property' sticker on the radio itself.

The theft of other items

Valuables, briefcases, coats and handbags should never be left on display. Recently, even a video camera was left on display in a car and stolen. So, in addition to all the above:

- lock all belongings in the boot out of sight (if you cannot take them with you). If you are visiting somewhere like Kenwood, transfer your belongings to the boot before you arrive because thieves often hang

around and watch you do so in the car park;

- if you shop at a large shopping complex like Brent Cross, don't lock your purchases even in the boot of a car and then return for further shopping. Thieves operating in the car parks note brand-new consumer durables and other desirable items being locked in cars, and then break-in when you go back for more.

The theft of wheels

This is easily preventable - buy a set of locking wheel nuts.

Car Vandalism

Much of the crime recorded as 'criminal damage-vehicle' is, in fact, not vandalism as such but attempted theft which, for one reason or another, does not result in the actual removal of the radio/cassette or other item. Mindless vandalism, although less common, is not easily prevented, but:

- retract your aerial whenever you are parked on the street, or invest in a self-retracting aerial which works when the ignition is off;

- use a garage or drive.

Otherwise try to park where you can keep an eye on your car or, failing that, where there are attendants or people about who would notice someone acting suspiciously.

All but two of the points in that check list cost little or no money to put into effect. The exceptions are:

- the fitting of deadlocks (approximately £45 per door); and

- the fitting of a good quality ultrasonic alarm.

In order to help Suburb residents with the latter, we have negotiated this special deal with Selmar, the nationwide vehicle security systems specialist, who will come to your home to carry out the work.

Selmar Ultrasonic Alarm System

Selmar believes that the minimum requirement of a car alarm system is:

- Switches - to all openings of

the vehicle, which activate the alarm via positive switching.

(Some alarms use a crude voltage-drop detector which is inherently unreliable - though cheap to install.)

- Ultrasonic detector - to monitor the interior space of a car, because otherwise the thief can simply smash a window to gain entry.

- Heavy-duty siren - because the car's own horn does not have the attention-grabbing deterrent capability.

- Engine immobiliser - because the most determined car thief will be prepared to drive a car away in spite of the siren being activated.

- Wiring and equipment - these must not follow a set pattern or have fixed installation positions. Additionally, no wiring diagram should exist for the system.

As far as we know, there is no UK factory-fitted alarm system on the market that meets this minimum specification, and so

we have arranged a special deal with Selmar to enable Suburb residents to fit a **Selmar Manual Ultrasonic Alarm System** at a special discount of 17½ per cent off the normal retail price.

The particular security features of this alarm system are described in the separate advertisement in this issue. On-site installation at your home can be arranged within three to five working days, Monday to Friday, between 9.00am and 5.00pm, or Saturday mornings, the total installation taking 2 or 3 hours.

The manual ultrasonic alarm is available to Suburb residents at the special inclusive price of £132 + VAT (Retail price £160 or the system with central locking is available at the special inclusive price of £169.13 + VAT (Retail price £205.00). For further details contact Selmar Burglar Alarm Co Ltd., The Causeway, Malden, Essex CM9 7LW. Tel: 0621 854488, quoting Golders Green 3 Beat.

PL

TRADITIONAL-LOOK ROOFLIGHTS

for conservation of traditional appearance



available from:

architeknic

CHARTERED ARCHITECTS
39/41 NORTH ROAD LONDON N7 9DP
TEL: 071 609 9676/7

TRUST MANAGERS REPORT FROM THE 1990/91 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Planning remains the main activity of the Trust, and last year 297 applications for alterations were processed, which compares with 323 in the previous year. It is important to remember that applications include not only new extensions and loft conversions, but also relatively minor items such as gates and external plumbing. To residents who argue that the Trust is too fussy when looking at these small changes, we would maintain that it is exactly these details which make the Suburb so special.

As a result of the economic downturn, work on the two largest developments on the Suburb has been delayed. At the old Mendels Garage site at the end of Corringway, Gable House, a subsidiary of Ladborke Plc, has received permission from the Trust and London Borough of Barnet to build 57 flats for sheltered housing with an underground car park for 40 cars. We hope that work will soon commence, since the residents of Corringway have lived long enough next to this derelict group of buildings. The other development is Spaniards Field at the end of Wildwood Rise. The present owners of this property, Olympia and York, have also received the necessary consents to build a new house. The existing one has been empty for over 10 years and is now in a poor state of repair.

It was originally intended that the Suburb should be served by two main shopping centres: Market Place and Temple Fortune. During the last 20 years there has been a steady decline in the fortunes of the former, and there are now few

remaining food shops. Instead there is a proliferation of estate agents, offices and fast food outlets. This trend is very much to be regretted. In contrast, Temple Fortune remains a thriving local shopping centre. During the year Marks and Spencer opened a new supermarket on the old Magnet site. This has resulted in some increase in traffic congestion but less than some local residents were predicting.

Last Christmas a new book on the history of the Suburb was published by the Trust and Residents Association. It was written by Kit Ikin who has lived on the Suburb all his life. So far, over 600 copies have been sold following excellent reviews in the local press. Next year Phillimore are publishing a new book on the architecture of the Suburb, written jointly by Mervyn Miller, a member of the Trust Council, and Stuart Gray, the eminent architectural historian who lives in Temple Fortune Hill.

In consultation with the Department of the Environment and English Heritage, Mervyn Miller completed a comprehensive review of

Listed Buildings on the Suburb, and he is recommending a substantial number of new additions to the existing list.

The problem of traffic, both in terms of volume and speed, remains the main environmental preoccupation of Suburb residents. During the year a major traffic survey was commissioned jointly by the Trust and Residents Association, and the findings were written up in the Summer issue of the Suburb News. In the Autumn there will be a public meeting at which the possibilities of introducing traffic calming measures on the Suburb will be discussed.

It is two years since the Trust acquired the long leases from Ashdale, and during that time a further 45 properties have become freehold, which leaves 944 still unenfranchised. The comparable figures for the short leases are 19 and 116 respectively. We have found that when leasehold properties are sold they are often enfranchised by the new owners.

In the coming year the main development is likely to be introduction of cable television throughout the Suburb. The cable franchise for Barnet was awarded to Videotron and we are pleased that the Suburb will be the first area within the Borough to be cabled. It will make satellite dish aerials, see copy. As far as the Trust is concerned the great advantage of cable is that visually it is unobtrusive. Once the cables have been laid, they can incorporate new channels as they become available, and eventually will also provide a telephone service in competition with BT.



The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Limited
862 Finchley Road, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London NW11 6AB
Telephone: 081-455 1066 & 458 8085