

Neighbourhood Watch

"Street army mobilised to fight crime wave"

"Home Secretary Michael Howard gave the go ahead yesterday for a neighbourhood watch 'street army' to help police combat the rising level of crime"

"More than five million neighbourhood watch volunteers are now being encouraged to start patrolling the streets"

"At the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators' Conference in London yesterday he said, 'One possibility which interests me greatly is that of neighbourhood watch schemes organising patrols in their neighbourhoods'"

So reported our national press on Sunday 5 December 1993!

However, if Michael Howard - followed by the national press - had not been quite so keen to rush away from the conference immediately after delivering his speech, but had stayed or come back for the session 'Vigilance versus Vigilantism', he - and they - would have heard this unrealistic suggestion condemned overwhelmingly, indeed almost totally, by the 700 people present.

It seems that the reason why the idea occurred to Michael Howard in the first place was that he, and the Home Office civil servants that advise him, were influenced by a poll carried out by Gallup of a "nationally representative sample of 1001 adults in face-to-face interviews between 10-16 November 1993" which found that

"46% said that neighbourhood watch schemes should be allowed to organise and run crime prevention patrols, with a smaller number - 34% - saying they shouldn't."

But wasting money on questioning 1000 members of the general public on matters like this is almost as daft as having a survey on which way up to eat a boiled egg. If only the Home Secretary and his advisers had sought the views of grass roots neighbourhood watch co-ordinators and their watch members in the first place, he wouldn't have been left with egg on his face in this way.

In fairness to the Home Secretary it must be said that regrettably there is no national neighbourhood watch organisation responsible for co-ordinating neighbourhood watch as a whole

or for gathering and expressing the views of active grass roots neighbourhood watch people. Perhaps it might not be a bad idea for the Home Office to channel some of its resource into setting up an effective organisation to do this.

Meanwhile all residents may be reassured that there is absolutely no question whatsoever of any of our 53 neighbourhood watches attempting to organise any of you into local squads to patrol our streets!

Instead, we shall continue to rely on our dedicated and excellent local police to patrol our Suburb as well as doing all possible to keep one step ahead of the criminals by developing initiatives such as CCTV for the Suburb as reported below.

Close Circuit TV Video Watch

The CCTV Project Group under the Chairmanship of Chief Inspector Simon Humphrey at Golders Green Police Station is now actively engaged in evaluating the feasibility of installing an extensive CCTV system on the Suburb and its surrounding roads.

An early difficulty has been the physical location of a control room. But it is hoped that this problem

will be overcome with the acquisition of a small building which, after repairs and conversion, will be capable of housing the control room as well as providing a main room and other space for community use by the Residents Association.

The Project Group is now consulting experts on the technology and investigating and determining with the equipment

suppliers the detailed costs involved. The total costs of the project are likely to be considerable and it will be necessary to seek funding from residents through an appeal as well as from commercial interests. However, this will not be done until all residents have been given detailed information on the scheme as a whole and the opportunity to see precisely what is proposed at an exhibition arranged for the purpose possibly in the Spring or early Summer.

Experience of CCTV elsewhere has shown that it can have a dramatic effect in reducing and, in some cases, virtually eliminating crime in the area, and the benefits of this initiative for Suburb residents could be equally dramatic.

PL

A Plea from the Chairman - "What's On"

One of the objectives of the "What's On" column in *Suburb News* is to prevent clashes of Suburb activities.

There are many residents who find themselves exasperated on occasion because two very important Suburb events are scheduled for the same time.

This is, of course, a healthy reflection on the enormous number of activities and societies which flourish on the Suburb and which make it such a fine community.

To ensure that these clashes are reduced to a minimum will all organisers of Suburb events please do two things:

- let the "What's On" Co-ordinator (Jackie Norman - see last page) know as soon as the date for an event is arranged - even if it is twelve months ahead;
- consult the "What's On" list before arranging any Suburb activity.

EW

HGS SCRABBLE CLUB Fixtures for 1994

Due to lack of support for Chess, the club is to concentrate its efforts in providing its regular Scrabble players with a set of dates for January until end of May.

The dates are: 29th Jan, 12 & 26 Feb, 12 & 26 Mar, 9 & 23 Apr, and 14 & 28 May - the venue, Fellowship House, Time 2pm-5pm, Entrance fee £1.50. Tea & Biscuits provided. Anyone is most welcome. CS



"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" Leviticus 19.18

In a lengthy article in *The Times* after the Bulger case, the Chief Rabbi wrote:-

"We have dissolved the bonds of community. The most piercing fact about James's death was the number of people who saw him being abducted and did not go to his rescue. We cannot blame them. The privatisation of morality

has taught us not to interfere. This cannot continue. We need the support of neighbours, friends and an active community."

At about the same time that this article appeared, I received a letter from a neighbour also commenting on the Bulger case in which he said:-

"It was apparent, at the early stages of the trial, that a comparatively large number of people saw the incident and some admitted to being influenced by the deep rooted feeling so prevalent in us all not to wish to become involved."

We have preached the lesson through Neighbourhood Watch that dialling 999 and alerting the police for any remotely suspected incident is not only welcomed by the police but acts

as a positive deterrent in crime prevention and detection. The next step must surely be the personal involvement of all of us in events around us. I am not advocating mindless 'have a go' against possible armed criminals, but simply that a positive campaign of personal awareness, and intervention if possible, should be the next step in our Neighbourhood Watch campaign. If we are as successful in this as we have been in our other campaigns, we will achieve much in creating the stable and peaceful society we all crave."

May we all learn the lessons of this terrible tragedy and be resolved in this coming year to play our part in helping to keep our Suburb the friendly, helpful and caring place it was always intended to be.

Green Walk for Trees Committee

The Residents Association Trees and Open Spaces Committee decided that it should not just sit around tables several times a year looking into complaints and trying to influence Barnet's Arboricultural Officer, but that it should do something really pleasurable. So it was decided that we should attempt part of the Dollis Valley Greenwalk.

On our first date the rain came down in buckets and we lesser mortals persuaded the stoics to cancel. On Saturday, 30 October, the skies were grey but it was dry and we agreed to meet at Woodside Park. The party consisted of Tim Neal and his wife Jean, Spencer Hudson, Eva Jacobs, Colin Gregory and myself. Michael Holton said he would be a bit late and we should go on - alas he and his wife never caught up with us though they walked the journey there and back!

We, arriving at Moat Mount, sat down to beer and jacket potatoes at a nearby inn and decided to return via bus and tube. The walk



Tim and Jean Neal, Spencer Hudson, Colin Gregory and Eva Jacobs take the air

is well worth doing. The views, especially at the Moat Mount end, are breathtaking and if you keep your eyes open you may see kingfisher, heron, kestrel and many other birds as well as some

wonderful trees. On this occasion the autumn foliage gleamed bright in the watery sunshine. Do try it sometime. You can get maps of the north and south walks from the library. LS

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