

# NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

## Suburb crime—the overview.

There are three categories of crime which stand out as being of major concern to Suburb residents: crimes of violence, burglary and vehicle crime.

### Crimes of Violence.

Probably the most horrendous of all are crimes of violence. These range from murder and rape to aggravated burglary and robbery, all of which can be traumatic and truly ghastly for the victims. But, thankfully, they are rare. Crimes such as murder and rape are extremely rare, there being only about one case a year at most; aggravated burglary—ie, burglary accompanied by violence—is also rare with perhaps two cases each year at most; and robbery—ie theft accompanied by violence—although on the increase in recent years, is also relatively infrequent with about 20 cases a year. All of these crimes are given absolute top priority by the police and maximum available resources are deployed to catch those responsible.

### Burglary.

The next category of concern is burglary, and this is the crime that residents can do so much to prevent by taking adequate measures to secure their homes. At the present time, it is the reduction in this category which is providing us with our greatest success story.

As reported in the last Suburb News, by the end of November 1996 the twelve-month burglary figure had come down to 163. By the end of December 1996 it had reduced to 150 and by the end of January 1997 to 138. Although by the end of February 1997 it had increased slightly to 148, this is for a total of some 6,000 homes on the Suburb and its adjacent areas and represents a percentage figure of less than 2% or 3% per annum which must be one of the lowest burglary rates in the whole of the country.

We can, indeed, congratulate

ourselves—and the police!—on these results. But we must continue to be vigilant and not start relaxing our guard, especially when the warmer weather arrives and we are tempted outside leaving doors and windows open and our homes unprotected.

### Vehicle Crime.

The last category is vehicle crime. At the end of February 1997 the twelve-month figure for this crime was 431 which, although now on a downward trend, is still far too high and causing untold cost and frustration for the car owners concerned. And so, Neighbourhood Watch is now concentrating on this area by launching a new spring initiative which we believe residents will find practical, helpful and effective.

### The new initiative—Vehicle Watch “25” scheme.

Almost all car crime is carried out by young men under the age of 25. Under this new scheme, two yellow stickers with the figure “25” over-printed in blue are put on the car—one on the windscreen and the other on the rear window. Then, if the police see the car being driven by someone who appears to be under 25 they will stop the car and question the driver.

This new scheme is not the same as the existing Vehicle Watch scheme which enables the police to stop the car if driven

between certain specified times. In the past, car owners taking part in this scheme also had to register for membership with the police. Now, anyone can have either the “25” stickers or the existing Vehicle Watch stickers without any registration.

Experience elsewhere has shown that, for some inexplicable and completely illogical

reason, young criminals tend to steer clear of cars which display these stickers. They tend not to steal the cars themselves but, in addition, they tend not to steal the radios or other items from them, or to vandalise them either.

Furthermore, because of the anticipated likely reduction in vehicle crime in Hampstead

Garden Suburb as a result of car owners partic-



icipating in the scheme, General Accident have said that “if motorists are prepared to display these stickers and are members of Neighbourhood Watch, we guarantee to reduce the premium that they are being asked to pay by their current insurance company by 10%”.

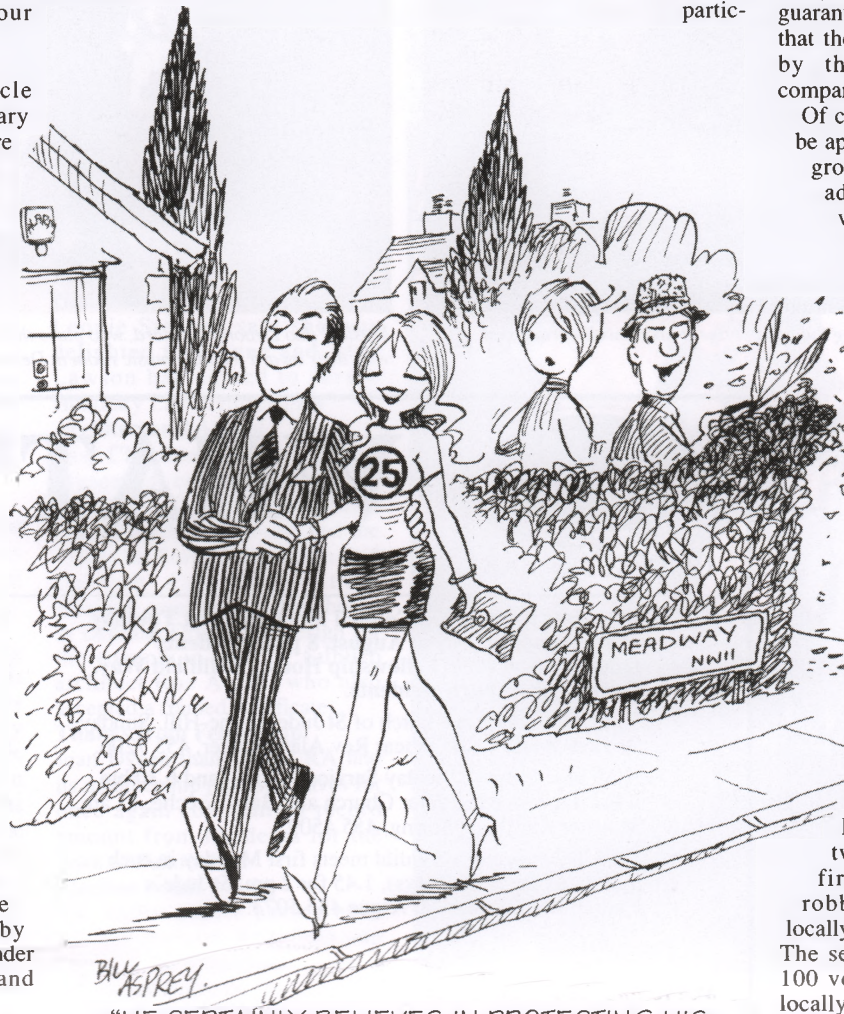
Of course, the scheme will not be appropriate for families with grown-up children or young adults under the age of 25 who regularly drive the family car. But it should be of considerable benefit to all other Suburb car owners.

An outline of the scheme was communicated to most Neighbourhood Watch members through Watch newsletters in March, and further details were contained in a special announcement which is being distributed to Neighbourhood Watch households in April. The scheme comes into operation officially on 1 May.

### Police Successes

Recently, the police made two separate arrests. The first man admitted the robbery of Rolex watches locally on 28 separate occasions. The second man admitted over 100 vehicle crimes committed locally, all of them thefts either of or from, cars.

Peter Loyd



“HE CERTAINLY BELIEVES IN PROTECTING HIS PROPERTY - BUT WILL HE GET A 10% CUT IN HIS INSURANCE PREMIUMS?”

## SIR COLIN DAVIS & THE HAYDN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA IN ISLINGTON 12 JULY 1997

Sir Cohn Davis will conduct a Gala Charity Concert in aid of the North London Hospice on July 12 1997 in the Union Chapel, Islington.

Soloists in Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* for violin and viola will be Polish violinist **Krzysztof Smetana** and violist, **Edward Vanderspar**.

As a soloist **Krzysztof Smetana** has performed around the world in his recording of Panufnik's *Violin Concerto*, recently acclaimed as CD of the month by CD Review magazine.

**Edward Vanderspar** is one of Britain's leading solo violists and is much in demand as a chamber musician. He is the Principal Viola of the London Symphony Orchestra and has appeared as a soloist in Europe, America and the Far East with various orchestras including the LSO and London Festival Orchestra.

The **Haydn Chamber Orchestra**, based in Islington, is one of the best amateur orchestras in Britain. They have been giving concerts in North London since 1983 and have appeared twice before under Sir Colin's baton in the Highbury Festival. HCO concerts in aid of the Hospice are becoming an annual event and they have previously appeared with Mark Elder, Lesley Garrett, Imogen Cooper and Steven Isserlis.

The programme will be Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante K 364*, Max Bruch's *Kol Nidrei* (arranged for viola) and Mozart's *Symphonia No. 36 K 425*, “The Linz”.

The concert begins in the Union Chapel, Upper Street, London N1 at 7.30 and tickets £15 reserved and £10 unreserved are available from the North London Hospice, 47 Woodside Avenue, N12 8TF. Telephone 0181-446 2288. (Nearest tube Highbury and Islington). Meet Sir Colin and the soloists at a post-concert reception; £10 to include wine and cheese. Transport £3 pp return subject to demand.

## To Repoint or not to Repoint, that is the question

This article begins with an official Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Health Warning:

**Repointing can seriously damage your house (and your pocket).**

Why does the Trust say this? Surveyors often recommend repointing when they survey a building for a prospective purchaser. The householder finds that he can poke out the mortar with a stick or even his finger and so he feels that the brickwork must be weak or cannot be watertight. Or perhaps he thinks that to repoint will make his house look smart and new. Or it may be that a jobbing builder knocked on the door and said ‘I see your house needs repointing, Guv.’

One of the great glories of the Suburb is the consistent high quality of the brickwork. For a start, fine handmade bricks were used almost always, and they were well laid by competent workmen. These bricks are full of subtle colour and this is not impaired by the original mortar in its rather narrow joints. The mortar used was basically lime and sand with perhaps a certain admixture of Portland cement or brickdust. The mortar in the joints was often simply cut off, or if it was smoothed with a trowel the passage of time has eroded the joint by a few millimetres to give the effect that we now see. The appearance is just right.

### The advantage of lime mortar

All buildings move to some degree because of the effect of heat and cold, wetness and dryness, and many houses here are on shallow foundations and this may give rise to movement too. Lime mortar is slightly flexible. Even if hair cracks do form, lime is self-healing and the action of rain will seal them up again. The lime also helps to give a good colour to the mortar. The surface will weather slightly and have an open texture. This helps the brickwork to dry out after rain. Because the mortar is weaker than the bricks it reduces the danger of frost

spalling off the faces of the brick. Finally the original lime mortar is homogeneous through the joint and therefore less likely to break away. The moral is **DO NOT REPOINT UNLESS IT IS ESSENTIAL AND SEEK IMPARTIAL ADVICE FIRST.**

### Why do people advise repointing?

The casual jobbing builder will advise repointing because he is looking for work and hopes to get it from you. He cannot be regarded as an impartial adviser. The Government's housing improvement schemes included repointing among the items which qualify for grants, but these “improvements” also included the ruination of terrace houses by the substitution of different window shapes and types and so cannot be regarded as architecturally sound and I would question whether the scheme was technically sound, however admirable in its intent. The surveyor advises repointing for a different and more subtle reason. When a prospective purchaser asks a surveyor for a report on a house he is thinking of buying it is vital that the surveyor lists everything that needs or may need doing to the house. If he fails to list something he is liable to be accused of professional negligence. He therefore tends to list a number of items (rod drains, test electrical installation, repoint) virtually as a matter of course. It is prudent for him to do so, indeed he cannot go wrong by so doing. If repointing is done and in fact does not improve the house he can always argue that it was not done properly. But if he does not list repointing and some mortar falls out after five years, some owners will seek financial redress from their professional adviser (even if the real problem was that they themselves had not cleaned the leaves out of the gutter so that it overflowed continually). You will note that although I believe that surveyors often advise repointing unnecessarily I am not blaming them for the situation.

### When is repointing necessary?

The answer to this is “very rarely.” There are very few houses in the Suburb where the mortar of general walling has eroded to such a degree that appearance, weathertightness or structural stability dictate repointing. However chimneys, because of their exposed position, and parapets or brick mullions may well require attention after about fifty years, and if rainwater pipes have been leaking for a number of years the pointing will probably be affected locally. But it is impossible to argue from the general to the particular case of your house, so seek advice from the Trust.

### Popular misconceptions

- ❖ The purpose of mortar is to hold the bricks together. **Wrong:** its purpose is to keep the bricks apart.
- ❖ Cement is better than lime. **Wrong:** lime resists cracking and is self-healing, while cement shrinks and is prone to cracking and will never heal.
- ❖ Strong mortar is better than weak mortar. **Wrong:** indeed the mortar should always be weaker than the bricks, and some of the red bricks used in the Suburb are quite weak. Soft mortar encourages the drying-out of a wall through the joints and makes the bricks less liable to frost damage.
- ❖ Impermeable bricks and mortar make a weathertight wall. **Wrong:** the soundest wall is one where the bricks absorb the rain and allow it to dry out freely after the rain. An impermeable wall causes sheets of water to flow down it, and the water will really penetrate where there is any crack or imperfection, and every building has them somewhere.
- ❖ No Consent is needed for repointing. **Wrong:** Trust Consent is needed because pointing done wrongly will materially alter the appearance of the building. The concern of the Trust is that the right decisions should be taken and this impartial advice is given without charge

**-HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST-**

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