

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

The Photo-imaging of Valuable Property—The New 'IDENTI-PIC' Service

The Problem

If valuable property is stolen from you, either because your house is burgled or because you are robbed in the street, what are your chances of ever seeing it again? Judging by the vast amount of stolen property recovered by the police, displayed in Bumblebee Road Shows but not reclaimed, the answer, at the present time, is probably not very great. Furthermore, where insurance companies are now offering 'new for old' policies, many people do not want to identify and claim back, for example, an old TV set when under insurance they get the money for a new set!

But this whole situation has become particularly frustrating for the police who, in many instances, have even had to hand back stolen property to the criminals through lack of evidence to convict them!

Previous Initiatives

In order to try to solve the problem of identifying the rightful owners of recovered stolen property, some years ago the police introduced the 'Property Marking' scheme whereby each of us was encouraged to mark our valuable property with our postcode and house number. And for those who took part, this scheme has proved a remarkably effective protection against being burgled.

However, experience has shown that it has had four main disadvantages: invisible ink marking with an ultra-violet pen soon wears off and needs regu-

lar renewing; engraving of small but valuable jewellery items such as rings can be extremely difficult and, at times, impossible; in spite of evidence to the contrary, many people believe that engraving will adversely affect the value of silver and other items; and large numbers of people allege that they are too busy (or, in practice, are too lazy) actually to carry out the marking of their property.

In order to overcome

some of these real or perceived problems, the police then suggested photographing valuable items. However, in practice, the photographs have generally not been of sufficiently high quality to be of much use in the positive identification of stolen items and their quality suffers even more adversely if an ordinary photograph is downloaded onto a computer.

The Solution

Over the last year, General Accident and New Scotland Yard have been working together to produce an entirely new sys-

tem to identify stolen or mislaid valuable property to be known as the 'IDENTI-PIC' Service. This is not just the photographing of valuable property by another name, but the taking of a digital image of a valuable item which is held coded on disc in a secret location and which, in the event of burglary or loss, can be downloaded by the police into the police computer imaging system. The whole system is completely secure and, unlike a photograph, the image is so accurate that it can be enlarged, or

'zoomed', without loss of clarity to reveal minute scratches or other details on, say, a valuable ring thereby identifying it positively from any similar ring.

How it Works

But how does this new scheme work in practice? As I am not prepared to recommend anything to others until I have tried it myself I decided in early May to put myself forward as the 'guinea pig' and telephoned General Accident's agent in this area for Neighbourhood Watch members, Brownhill Morris, and West asking to be 'identi-picked'! What happened was this.

Brownhill Morris and West sent me a special form entitled 'PHOTO-IMAGING LIST' and asked me to record on it all the various items which I wanted to have imaged. Completing this form was no easy task. I don't believe I have more valuable items than most other people in this area - in fact probably less. But I thought that, if I was going to do this at all, I might as well do it thoroughly and found no difficulty in recording over a hundred different items which I thought might as well be either photo-imaged, or the serial numbers recorded separately. And this took me the best part of an afternoon and an evening to complete.

Then, a couple of days later, Kevin Andrews from Brownhill Morris and West called with the photo-imaging camera and proceeded to take the photo-image of each item (or, in some cases, groups of items such as coffee



POLICE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

As part of the re-organisation of Golders Green Police Station, WPC Linda Bailey, our Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer, and PC Peter Davis, our Crime Prevention Officer, have new telephone numbers:- 0181-733 5562 (and answering machine) or 0181-733 5562

VEHICLE WATCH "25" SCHEME

This scheme was launched on 1 May and welcomed by large numbers of Neighbourhood Watch members on the Suburb. They are, however, reminded that the scheme can have little, if any, effect on reducing car crime unless the stickers issued to them are actually put on their cars!

THE ETCHING OF REGISTRATION NUMBERS ON CAR WINDOWS

Recently, various households have received a note headed 'Notice to Neighbourhood Watch Residents' from a Mr Matthew Marcus offering to carry out this etching for £16.00 instead of 'the normal £20.00 charge'. Whilst £20 may be Mr Marcus's normal charge, this note was distributed without the agreement of either the Police or Neighbourhood Watch.

Neighbourhood Watch members are reminded that, if they take their cars to AUTOGLASS at Unit A, Hyde Industrial Road, NW9 (Tel: 0181-450 2455) - opposite Hendon Magistrates' Court in Edgware Road - with proof (such as a Neighbourhood Watch newsletter) that they are members of a recognised Neighbourhood Watch scheme, Autoglass will carry out the whole very simple procedure for them without charge.



FEAR THERE MAY BE SOME ITEMS OF PERSONAL VALUE WHICH ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO IMAGE!"

Chairman's Introduction to the Annual Report, 1996-97

The accounts this year are the first set to reflect our charitable status and comply with both company and charity regulations. After this initial transition year, I hope that future accounts will be clearer. As anticipated, we have not repeated the two earlier years' exceptionally high levels of revenue (these related to large developments at Spaniard's Field and Corringway) but, with reducing overheads, the Trust continues to operate on a sound financial basis.

It was with great regret that we learned of the recent death of Jean Henderson; she was a driving force behind the formation of this Trust and one of the original trustees.

During the past year, we have undertaken the role of the former Charitable Trust and as anticipated this is handled through a Grants sub-committee. I am pleased to see the continuity provided by the sub-committee, made up mainly of former trustees and under the chairmanship of John Freeborn.

We have also primed a long term project to restore green spots in the area, starting with verges in Addison Way and Hogarth Hill. We have co-sponsored the Suburb's 90th Anniversary Festival and our financial support has continued for the popular Suburb Gallery. Jointly with the Residents Association, we have been studying ways of coping better with the traffic on our roads and we expect to open this topic to all residents for further discussion in the near future.

A year ago, I had hoped that the differences between the Institute and School in Central Square would be resolved quickly and amicably. Unfortunately, this is proving to be a longer and more difficult process. The policy of the Trust Council throughout this dispute has been that we wish to see harmony and co-operation restored through a viable, long-term settlement. With this in mind, we have proposed an alternative solution based on common grounds of the parties involved and we hope that this will lead to an amicable and permanent negotiated settlement benefiting both Institute and School.

Once again, I would like to thank my fellow Council members who voluntarily provide us all with the benefit of time, energy and, most importantly, patient and constructive input into the needs of the Suburb. Thanks are due, too, to the hard working staff at the Trust's offices, including David Pickles who has settled so well into his role as Trust Architect.

Edward Caplin
Chairman

HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST

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