



Merton Watch

ISSUE 2 2005

News in brief

Back on the beat..

Police Community Officers are making a difference in Figges Marsh, both visibly and by tackling issues.

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Alley Gates

If you live near an alleyway in a high crime area, an alleygate might reduce the threat of anti-social behaviour. Do you need help in getting one fitted?

Find out how on page 2

Graffiti Removal

Is your property a target for graffiti or tag artist? If so, help is at hand, Merton Council is offering a free graffiti removal service available to most residents in the Borough.

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Spreading the Word

Do you have a friend or a neighbour interested in joining a neighbourhood watch scheme? If so, contact your Association now - we need to expand in Merton.

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Make your home more secure? Find out how!

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Whistling for help

Villagers are being issued with whistles to scare off intruders and thieves after local criticism that emergency calls were going unheeded.

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...and in this issue,

The Borough Commander, Michael Wood updates the people of Merton on the results so far of his pledge to the community.

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Police to issue on the spot fines for ASBO's...

Children as young as 10 will be slapped with a £30 on-the-spot fine in a controversial extension to anti-social behaviour laws. As from June 2005, police will be given powers to take fingerprints and DNA from children who are caught causing criminal damage from graffiti and vandalism or intimidating their neighbours.

Under the new Home Office plans, police will be able to give out on-the-spot fines to 10 to 15-year-olds. They will be marched home, where the £30 penalty notices will be issued and handed out in front of their parents.

Trial areas

The new on-the-spot fines will be going on trial in seven areas of the UK, including areas like Nottinghamshire, Merseyside, West Midlands, Lancashire and London.

This new move is part of the Prime Minister's "respect agenda" and has been brought in to stamp out the rise in thuggish behaviour from teenagers in which claims that the under 16's are behind most of the Anti-Social Behaviour caused in our neighbourhoods. At present, the under 16's can be given ASBO's for crimes that they have committed, which in turn can cause unnecessary paperwork and court hearings for our police force.

Parents hit

The new system is designed to be faster and more of a deterrent, because the £30 on-the-spot fines will be aimed at the parents, and will most certainly hit them where it hurts and that's in their pockets.

A spokesperson for the Home Office said: "The Police can now deal firmly and quickly with minor transgressions, by issuing on-the-spot fines to parents, which avoids the young person going through the criminal justice system".

The Merton Neighbourhood Watch Association hopes that a trial period of on-the-spot fines for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders will be introduced in the borough of Merton. In the past few months, with the use of good intelligence received from the residents, the Metropolitan Police in Merton have had a few success stories on catching the culprits who have been causing misery to residents, vandalism and criminal damage, including spraying their graffiti tags on the walls of private and business properties all of which are unsightly and can be seen in full public view.

A plain man's guide to ASBO tangle..

Are you confused about the meaning of the word ASBO? Then you are not alone, because many residents in the borough of Merton think the same. Without going into too much detail, a short summary and explanation is listed below:

- An ASBO is a community-based court order that prohibits someone from committing named anti-social acts.
- Antisocial Behaviour orders (ASBOs) were first used in 1999.
- Applications for ASBOs can be made by the police, local authorities, and since 2002, the British Transport Police.
- ASBOs can be made against anyone who is at least 10-years old and they last for a minimum of two years.
- The orders are preventative and are intended to be used to combat serious and persistent antisocial behaviour including graffiti, abusive and intimidating language and vandalism.

Active ASBO's

At the time of this newsletter going to print, the number of ASBO's issued and active in the borough of Merton stands at 19, these have been issued for a variety of reasons which include graffiti, harassment, youth disorder and street drinking.

Also since 2004, 59 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's) have also been issued to date. This is a voluntary agreement between the individual and two other departments such as police and housing, where the individual has been causing problems as well as carrying out certain identified acts. This could be deemed as anti-social but not serious enough at this stage to merit an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO). These are used to tackle lower level anti-social behaviour and is an attempt to stop the behaviour before an ASBO is considered.

Back on the beat.

by Sgt Bob Weymss

Safer Neighbourhoods, Figges Marsh

Safer Neighbourhoods teams are having a big impact on crime in Merton, according to the latest crime figures from the Metropolitan Police. Crime fell by three times more in areas patrolled by Safer Neighbourhoods teams compared to areas without the teams.

The teams are also having an impact in other ways. Graffiti, vandalism, anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping are down - and the number of abandoned cars has also decreased.

In Figges Marsh, Mitcham, a Safer Neighbourhoods team has been in place since the start of 2004. The team has worked closely with a number of the distinct communities within their ward, listening and acting on the concerns raised by both resident and the business communities.

Living in misery

A recent example of this was when, over a period of time a number of complaints were received from residents who live on an estate within the Safer Neighbourhood ward. They complained that a group of youths were making their lives a misery through their total lack and disregard to residents on the estate. The youths' bout of anti-social behaviour went from early evening and quite often late into the night.

The Safer Neighbourhood's team identified the youths and duly warned them about their recent behaviour. Sadly the youths continued with their onslaught of anti-social behaviour and were consequently arrested. The end result was that the two ring leaders of this group of youths were not only taken to court and convicted of their criminal damage offences, but were also issued ASBO's which banned them from the estate.

The Safer Neighbourhood team have also been working in partnership with the local authorities to try and combat the sight of graffiti in the Mitcham town centre with some success. Mitcham town centre has become a lot cleaner and safer with regular patrols in the area.

More teams

Since April 2004, 256 Safer Neighbourhoods teams have been set up and deployed in London - on average eight per borough.

The Metropolitan Police plans to have around 624 teams across the London area by 2008, putting a team in every London neighbourhood. The hope is for as big an impact on community life as the Safer Neighbourhoods teams have had in Mitcham.

MERTON COMMUNITY SAFETY TRUST (MCST)

by Lee Roberts, Trust Administrator

Merton Community Safety Trust was re-launched on 9th June 2005 to celebrate a new phase in the development of the Trust, which has grown into the most successful crime prevention charity in Merton. The event celebrated the success of new schemes such as Merton and Sutton Mediation and recent development of existing schemes.

Merton & Sutton Mediation provides and promotes mediation across both boroughs and is MCST's first cross-borough project. Working in Partnership with local Housing Associations, Housing Departments, Police and Anti-Social Behaviour units, the scheme provides an independent service that allows those involved in a dispute to identify and agree on solutions. Mediation is voluntary and confidential but provides people with a chance to have a say in how they want things to be in the future. The Scheme works with trained and full time mediators.

MCST's most famous scheme is the Alleygate scheme and MCST is now in a position to offer residents a contribution of up to 30% towards the cost of erecting gates at the entrances to private alleyways, which can be a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

MCST was proud to welcome both Cllr Judy Saunders, Mayor of Merton and Chief Superintendent Michael Wood Police Borough Commander to the event. Both expressed their pride in the Trust and its achievements through partnership with local organisations. The trust's patron is Lord Imbert QPM, former commissioner of the Met Police.

For further information on the Trust and its activities contact **Lee Roberts** on **020-8649-3220** or visit **www.mertoncst.org** or e-mail **enquiries@mertoncst.org**

MERTON ELDERLY SECURE HOMES (MESH)

by PC Sandy Bayliss

This is a scheme that helps the vulnerable elderly residents of Merton.

During my time I have visited many victims of bogus callers and it is one of the most awful crimes that can happen and is nearly always an elderly victim. The victim often does not want to report the crime to the police or tell their family, as they believe that they were foolish to have let the caller into their home. Of course this is not so in most cases, as the bogus caller is a career criminal and is well practiced in the art of deceiving the elderly.

The elderly person is visited by a Merton Crime Prevention Officer who does a crime prevention survey on the property, gives advice and then refers any recommended work to be done to an approved locksmith or handyman depending on the type of work required.

We will fit security products to the homes of the elderly up to the value of £200.00.

I hope that we help to prevent this type of crime in Merton with advice on how to deal with the bogus caller and with security products fitted to prevent the elderly residents of Merton not becoming a victim of this despicable crime.

Alleygates

by David Ryan

Merton Community Safety Trust (MCST) is working with the residents of Merton to install alleygates in areas particularly affected by antisocial crimes. By helping to gate the entrances to the alleyways, we hope to:

- Reduce or stop fly-tipping in alleyways and lower the risk of rear entry burglary.
- Stop anti-social behaviour, petty vandalism and graffiti in alleyways.
- Give the alleyways back to the community by making them safe.

MCST can offer support through:

- The Alley gating Guide, which takes residents step by step through the process of installing gates at the entrances to their alleyways, from designs & background information, to legal considerations and planning issues.
- Contributory grants for gating schemes in the borough.
- Information and advice to help residents complete their gating schemes.

For further information or to request a guide, call MCST's Alleygate Co-ordinator on: **020 8545 3317** or visit our website at **www.mertoncst.org**

The Chairman's corner

by Christine Mathews, Chairman

This is our second issue of the 'Merton Watch' in which we have been able to expand on the number of pages thanks to sponsorship. The association has now been running as a voluntary civilian group for around 18 months and the number of schemes has now increased to over 300+, and now covers in excess of 25,000+ dwellings, which is about 1/3 of the Merton borough.

Co-ordinators

We would like to ask all co-ordinators to help us keep our records accurate and up to date by keeping Lee Roberts, Neighbourhood Watch Manager, or your Beat Manager informed of any changes to e-mail addresses, telephone numbers or the number of newsletters required for your scheme. All Beat Managers now have mobile phones, (their phone number is available from Lee Roberts) and it may be useful if you wish to contact him/her for any reason.

Communication

With more people having access to the internet, communications from us via e-mail is quick & easy and cost effective. If you have access to the internet, please inform your co-ordinator with your details so that your name can be added to their contact lists. Your co-ordinators will make sure that this information is not passed on, as all e-mails are sent out as 'blind' carbon copies, (Bcc) this prevents your details being passed onto anyone else. If you are already on your co-ordinators lists and have changed your details, please let them know.

Sponsorship

We would like to thank local firm **Magrath Security** who are based in Mitcham town centre, and **Safer Merton** for their support in the publication of this newsletter.

NHW Schemes

New schemes are always welcome across the Borough, if you have friends or neighbours wishing to start a scheme ask them to contact Lee Roberts (see numbers to note on the back page) or your Beat Manager for an information pack.

Thanks

We would like to thank the Merton Community Safety Trust (MCST) and the Merton Police for the excellent support we have received from them, and especially the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Michael Wood, and his team of officers and staff for their support and enthusiasm. I would also like to thank all the co-ordinators for their valued and continued support.

Graffiti removal service

Can't remove that graffiti tag from your property? Then don't worry, because Merton Council now offers a free graffiti removal service to residents in private housing to combat tag or racist graffiti. If you are unable to remove graffiti or tags from your property, and it is visible from the highway or public area, the council will send a specialist approved contractor to remove it for you, and they will have it removed within five working days of it being reported.

This new service is a step forward by Merton in tackling the problems of graffiti in the borough. To take advantage of this new service or for further information about the Graffiti Team, you can contact them on **020 8545 3170** or send an e-mail to graffiti.project@merton.gov.uk

Calling time on Taggers

by Caroline Ellis, Safer Merton Strategy Officer

Safer Merton have now launched a tag database that goes by the name of Tag Tracker, which can be found on their website. Tag Tracker is the home for pictures of various 'tags' (the names graffiti writers use) that have seen around Merton.

Tagging is a criminal offence and the Council is keen to stamp it out. Merton Council and Crimestoppers are offering £500 reward for anyone who can provide information on the writer of a tag that leads to a successful conviction.

To report a tag, visit Tag Tracker at www.safermerton.gov.uk and follow the instructions

Is your home secure?

Everybody needs a holiday some time, and however much we like our homes, there is nothing like a change of scenery. We all want to return and find our home as we left it. At least half of all burglaries to houses or flats occur when they are empty or when we go on holiday.

By following a few easy steps below, you can make all the difference to protecting your home from being burgled. For instance, if you get on with your neighbours, ask them to keep an eye on your property, collect the post, open and close curtains, park their car on your drive. Let your neighbour know your travel dates and how long you will be away, and any contact numbers in case of any problems.

Before you go

- Make your home look like someone is living in it, don't close your curtains - in daytime, this shows the house is empty
- Cancel any milk or newspaper deliveries
- Uncollected mail from your doormat is a sign that the house is empty
- Fit a light timer switch to your front room or hallway, and set timings for the light to switch on and off at different times of the day
- If fitted, make sure that your outdoor security lighting is in good working order

Most burglars are opportunists who will quickly capitalise on weaknesses via accessible windows and doors and poorly lit areas.

Merton Police has a specialist Crime Prevention officer, PC Sandy Bayliss who can be contacted on **020 8649 3249**.

Alternatively, you can log onto the internet and visit the following websites www.met.police.uk and then click on the section named 'crime prevention' or www.safermerton.org.uk

Save the trees..

Do you wish to receive future newsletters from The Merton Neighbourhood Watch Association via e-mail?

If the answer is 'yes' then please forward your E-Mail address to:

lee.roberts@met.police.uk

These will be sent out in PDF Format, you will need Adobe Acrobat to open this file. Adobe Acrobat is also available as a free download from www.adobe.com

An insight of "my pledge to the community" so far...

by Borough Commander, Michael Wood

I am pleased to be asked by the Merton Neighbourhood Watch Association to provide another article for the Merton Watch newsletter, and be able to pass on details of some of the good work that my team of officers have been involved with since the time of my last newsletter article.

In April 2005, a scheme called Cab Watch was launched, this has given us better and improved communications between the black cab drivers who operate in the borough and the Police. Its aim is to assist in tracing suspects and the search for vulnerable missing persons.

Stop & Searches

During the school half term breaks, Police Officers patrolled the Borough's parks and green areas as part of a pro-active operation to tackle anti-social behaviour including graffiti and minor problems. While on patrol, Police Officers carried out 59 stop and searches, in which one lead to an arrest for graffiti, and there were also confiscations of alcohol from underage drinkers.

As part of their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award, ten young people have been taking part in a Police Service Course. This involved the youngsters finding out about the Metropolitan Police Service, Police procedures and the law, as well as taking part in a self-defence session.

Three Police officers are due to receive commendations for their bravery after tackling a suspect with a firearm, disarming him of his firearm, which had been used during a shooting moments before in Footlights nightclub, Wimbledon. The suspect was then arrested and charged with attempted murder and possession of a firearm weapon with the intent to endanger life.

This is just a insight to some of the tremendous work that my officers are undertaking on a daily basis.

Creating a safer London

London now has 33,000 police officers, more than ever before. A record 7,500 officers have been recruited since March 2001, reversing the trend of falling numbers in the 1990s. The aim is to reach 35,000 officers by 2007.

As well as more police there are now almost 1,345 Police Community Support Officers. They provide a uniformed presence on the streets across 32 London boroughs, excluding the City of London, which has its own police force. There are also 301 transport police to deal particularly with crime on buses, London Underground, and with illegal minicabs.

Whistling for help!

Villagers are putting the wind up thieves by arming themselves with whistles.

All this is a result from the lack of police cover in rural Ilton, in Somerset, which has become an easy target for thieves. The parish council now plans to issue all 400 residents with a whistle in case there is an emergency or the need for assistance.

Distinctive sound

One resident who is a parish councillor and a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator said, "A whistle is so distinctive, that if someone hears it they know to come and help, and the response would be a lot quicker and it might make the criminal think twice".

This was a simple idea raised by a resident who was getting fed up as her calls to the police went unheeded as the thief was trying to break into her property. In today's society, if a person starts to shout, people have the tendency to ignore it, but given a whistle people take notice, imagine if all the residents of Merton were issued with whistles!

Luckily the residents of Merton are now starting to see more police officers on their streets, so the whistle idea albeit a good one, hopefully won't be needed here, unless you're a referee and need a whistle to blow.

Numbers to Note

Emergencies	999 or 112
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Crime Prevention Office	020 8649 3249
NHW Manager	020 8649 3213
For non-emergencies	
Merton Police	020 8947 1212
Wimbledon Sector Office	020 8649 3144/3145
Mitcham Sector Office	020 8649 3218/3267
Morden Station Office	020 8649 3125
Graffiti Team Helpline	020 8545 3170

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Safer Merton

Working Together To Keep Merton Safe & Sound



Your Neighbourhood
Watch Co-ordinator is: