



# Merton Watch



ISSUE 3 2006

The Official Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter for Merton

## News in brief

**How to deal with ID theft**  
 Are you worried about someone stealing your identity? Would you like to know how to safeguard yourself from this growing trend?  
**Turn to page 2**

**Trickster burglars target OAPs**  
 Fraudsters are targeting the elderly and vulnerable within Merton posing as a representative of one of the utility companies.  
**Turn to page 2**

**Feeling safer**  
 Merton has been voted the 3rd safest borough in London  
**See page 2**

**Safer Neighbourhoods are Go...**  
 The Borough Commander shares his vision in tackling crime within Merton, find out how  
**See page 3**

**Can you beat the burglar?**  
 A Burglar gives his top 10 tips on how to keep him out of your home, find out more.  
**See page 4**

**Help and Advice**  
 Have you been affected by ID fraud or know someone that has, for help & advice,  
**See page 4**



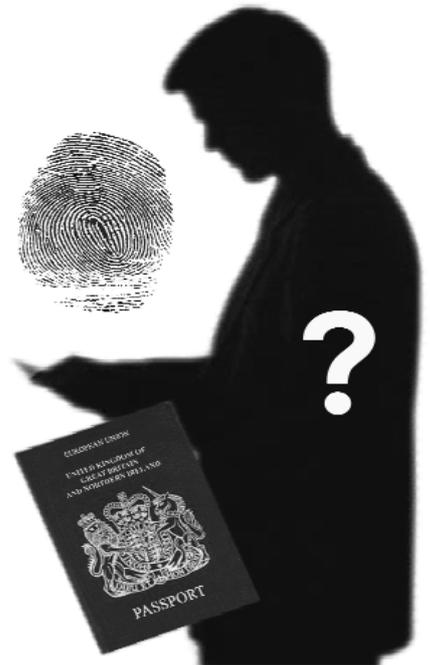
Your Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator is:



# One in ten people are falling victim to ID fraud...

The problem of identity theft soared by 45% last year and is becoming a growing concern with 90% of people who have heard of this crime, worry about falling victim to it. Identity theft is when a fraudster uses someone else's personal details to apply for credit or benefits.

Fraud prevention service CIFAS (UK's fraud Prevention Service) estimated that there will be about 130,000 reported cases of identity theft this year, and levels are expected to continue growing until the complete introduction of chip and pin cards. Even among those who were aware of what identity theft was just as many underestimated the knock-on effect falling victim to the crime could have. About 43% of people did not realise that they may face problems opening a utility account if someone had damaged their credit record by borrowing money in their name with no intention of repaying and 30% didn't realise they could be wrongly accused of criminal activities such as benefit fraud. Nearly two-thirds of people were also unaware that being a victim of identity theft could make it difficult for them to apply for a job, as many companies do credit checks on potential employees or check they have no county court judgments against them. The consequences can be very distressing and take many months for victims to sort out.



The No.1 tip from experts on how to stop yourself becoming a victim of identity theft is to shred all important documents, anything with your name & address (inc. mail shots) because one of the easiest ways thieves can get hold of personal information is by going through bins or black bags, a practise known as 'dumpster diving'. You may not always think about it, but transactions you take for granted every day put you at risk for identity theft. Whether you're banking online, making a purchase with a credit card or paying with a cheque, a thief might be paying attention to your every move. Fraudsters can use personal details to gain access to bank accounts, run up bills, launder money, create false documents such as passports or birth certificate. Credit reference agency Equifax estimates it can take up to 300 working hours just to resolve one case.

## You have reached your destination.

With satellite navigation equipment becoming more popular with motorists, it is also becoming more popular with car criminals.

Where it is portable keep it safe by taking it, together with the support cradle and suction pads, with you when you leave the car and remember to wipe away any suction pad marks left on your windscreen or dashboard as thieves will look out for these. Never leave the equipment in the glove compartment, thieves will usually check there first.

You can also help by following these tips,

- 1 - Mark your satellite navigation equipment with your post code, or vehicle registration using a special marker.
- 2 - Make a note of the model, make and serial numbers, and keep them somewhere safe, and not in the car.
- 3 - Do not leave anything on view in your car, remember to lock your car at all times, even the sunroof if you have one.

**REMEMBER, KEEP IT SAFE, KEEP IT HIDDEN, KEEP IT LOCKED**

## How To: Deal with Identity theft

Here's what to do if you think your identity has been stolen, play detective and look for these five signs that warn of identity theft:

- 1- Bills arrive for a credit card account you never opened.
- 2- Credit card bills include charges you did not make.
- 3- Credit card statements do not arrive before the billing cycle passes.
- 4- Bank statements include unfamiliar transfers or withdrawals.
- 5- New cheque books / credit or debit cards you ordered do not arrive at your house.

Once you realise you have been a victim of identity theft, time is of the essence, so act quickly. Call your card issuers, and they will place a fraud alert on your credit file to alert the financial institutions.

### Call your bank

Notify your bank if you have had cheques or a debit card stolen so they can check your account for unauthorised transfers and withdrawals. Banks **will not** phone you asking for sensitive information such as confirmation of address, passwords or PINs

### Program non-obvious PINs

For credit cards and bank accounts, do not use easily obtainable personal identification numbers like your birth date, the last four digits of your National Insurance number or your phone number.

### Computer safeguards

Do not store sensitive personal information or financial information on your laptop or handheld PC unless it is secured, with a non-obvious password. Personal information is more secure on your home computer.

Make sure you have the latest virus protection software for your computer, such as McAfee or Norton, check regularly for new updates on virus alerts. If using Internet Explorer, visit [www.windowsupdate.com](http://www.windowsupdate.com) regularly if you do not receive automatic updates. Invest in a good quality firewall program such as Norton Firewall especially if your computer is online 24 hours a day via a high-speed internet connection (broadband). Watch out for e-mails from people or organisations you do not know. **When in doubt, do not open such e-mails**, Fake versions of legitimate websites can be hard to spot but if you do have concerns about a web page there are common signs to check if a site is legitimate.

1). Look at the website address on your browser bar. If you are supposed to be on a secure site, the start of the address should be 'https://' rather than just 'http://'. In internet explorer, choose properties from the file menu to display more information.

2). Look at the page layout and design, company logos are easy to copy from the internet but if the site looks different and you are unsure call the company and check

### Shredding documents

Electronic shredders can be purchased for as little as £15 and can help take some of the hassle out of destroying documents. Destroy any documentation that contains your name and address this also includes direct mailings.

### Moving house

Moving home can be an opportune moment for potential fraudsters. People are also advised to notify all companies of their change of address, that send mail to them on a regular basis. As a matter of precaution redirect your mail to the new address for at least one year. This should cut down the chances of it being intercepted by potential fraudsters. People who suspect their mail may have been stolen or being tampered with, can contact the **Royal Mail** on **08457 740740**.

For further information on how to protect yourself from ID theft, turn to **page 4**, under the heading

### "Credit agencies and organisations",

all of these offer help and advice.

## Trickster burglars target OAPs

A spate of distraction burglaries targeting the elderly people has triggered a police alert for pensioners to be on their guard.

In our neighbouring borough of Wandsworth the police have issued a public warning. Police intelligence has revealed that the burglars con their way into homes by posing or claiming that they are from the local council, home help, water board or gas officials, or even police officers.

### Preying on the vulnerable

The tricksters usually operate in pairs and on the odd occasion on their own and are looking for the usual things, such as money, pension books, credit cards and jewellery that could be lying around.

Although homeowners of all ages have been targeted the victims are usually aged between 60 and 85. Most of the burglaries tend to take place during the day time and are carried out by people aged between 20 to 30 years of age.

The Merton Neighbourhood Watch Association recommends that you take the following precautions:

- If you have a door chain, use at all times
- DO not answering the door to unrecognised callers,
- If the caller is a representative of one of the utility companies, ask for a form of ID to prove that the caller is who they claim to be. If you are offered ID, then take and check it, if in doubt **CLOSE THE DOOR** and call the number on the card a genuine person will have no qualms in waiting until you return to them, If you are still unsure then call the police.
- refuse entry to people offering repairs or selling goods.
- REMEMBER keep cash and valuables stored away safely in a secure place.

Work as a community to look out for the elderly and those that need it, and make your neighbourhood a safe place to live. Should you need advice on home security then you can contact your local Crime Prevention Officer, the phone number can be found on page 4, listed under the heading of

### 'Numbers to note'

## Feeling safer in Merton

Its official, Merton was voted the 3rd safest London borough, in 2005.

Since 2002, a reduction of 33% on young first time offenders, a 17% reduction in the number of public disorders and a 26% reduction in the number of burglaries being reported to the police. MNWA sends its congratulations to Merton Police.

## ***If it's worth taking, it's worth marking***

Have you had a mobile phone or bike stolen, then now is the time to register any valuable items that you may have on the **Immobilise National Property Register**.

This site was set up to help reunite owners with lost or stolen property. Registering any item is free and you can register as many items as you want, even adding photos of your property. More than 300 mobile phones are reported stolen in London and more than 90 bikes go missing every day. Around 900 people who registered with the **Immobilise National Property Register** are contacted about recovered items every month.

The **Immobilise National Property Register** is supported by the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, the mobile phone industry and the Bicycle Association.

To register simply log on to [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com) and complete the form. Once registered you can also search for lost items on the UK Police Lost & Stolen Register, and on the public and second-hand trade searchable Stolen Property Database at [www.checkmend.org](http://www.checkmend.org)

## ***Have you registered for the best security...***

*By Inspector Chris Fowles*

The Metropolitan Police Service has recently launched Safer Homes, a new London-wide initiative aimed at protecting homes and properties from burglary.

A key holder database has been setup which will enable the Police and emergency services to contact your key holders in the event of an incident at your property. Under the London Local Authority Act 1991 all properties in the London boroughs with an audible alarm of any type are legally obliged to register by law as well as the key holders

Details of every property, with or without an alarm, and those people who hold keys to your property can be registered on the database

Registration costs £15 (inc. VAT) per year, per household, and £35 (excl. VAT) for businesses and non-residential properties. Owners of multiple properties must register properties separately.

Payments and registration can be made online at [www.metkeyholders.org.uk](http://www.metkeyholders.org.uk) which is a secure and robust system adhering to all Metropolitan Police and Industry regulations. Alternatively you can phone on 0870 060 1212, lines are open 9:00am to 17:30pm Monday to Friday.

The information that you provide will not be passed on to any third party or Government department unless permission is granted.

Remember, if you have a property with an audible alarm system or have key holders with access to your property, then you are legally obliged by law to register with the Police.

For further information and frequently asked questions visit the website on, [www.metkeyholders.org.uk](http://www.metkeyholders.org.uk)

# Focus on Crime

**Merton is divided into three police areas, Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden  
Here the Borough Commander, gives his vision of crime priorities.**

## ***Safer Neighbourhoods are Go...***

*By Borough Commander*

*Chief Superintendent, Michael Wood*

These are exciting times for the communities within the Borough of Merton. As April 3rd 2006, approaches, the people of Merton will see the roll out of all Safer Neighbourhood Teams on each ward across the borough, (20 in total). Initially this will consist of 1 Sergeant, 1 Constable and 2 PCSO's, (a further 1 Constable and 1 PCSO, in place by the latter part of the year). Safer Neighbourhood teams allow a more visible police presence and tackle crime that has a damaging effect on the community such as graffiti and anti social behaviour, by developing lasting partnership-based solutions to these local problems. The results have been extremely positive, where the Safer Neighbourhood teams are already in place.

### ***ShopWatch & BoroughBeat***

In addition to the Safer Neighbourhood teams, new initiatives such as ShopWatch and BoroughBeat, Street Pastors and Police Cadets have all been launched within Merton. ShopWatch and BoroughBeat are both designed to increase the number of Special Constables in the Borough. I am very pleased that the Borough of Merton has given their overwhelming support to the BoroughBeat scheme, which will see their employees working as special constables as part of their 'day job'. All these schemes have been introduced as a means of providing additional support to policing from both members of the community and local businesses to ensure that all those who live, work and socialise in Merton are able to do so without the constant fear of crime.

I would like to encourage anybody who wishes to help in the policing of the Borough to consider applying for the role of 'Special Constable' or as a volunteer to help with a wide range of support functions. If you would like further information then please contact **PS Peter Balchin** on **020 8649 3017**.

## ***The Chair's Corner***

*By Christine Matthews*

Welcome to our third edition of the "Merton Watch" Newsletter, which again is full to the brim with useful information and tips on keeping safe.

The general public in Merton are starting to show an interest in setting up Neighbourhood Watch schemes, which are consequently on the increase throughout the Borough. This is very good news for the Association. Our long term aim would be to see every area and street in every ward with an active scheme. If you know of anyone who lives within the Borough and does not have a Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) scheme, please try to encourage them to become a coordinator.

The Association also ran several NHW coordinator training sessions during last year which proved to be very successful. We also plan to arrange meetings with all NHW coordinators on a ward basis during this calendar year.

We would like to thank all those who attended the Merton Neighbourhood Watch Association AGM in January. The evenings events saw the committee re-elected for a second term in office, a question & answer session then followed which proved to be very useful feedback and will enable the committee to make the NHW more successful in Merton.

In conclusion, may I ask that if anyone changes their contact details, could you please let your coordinator know, that way we can keep our schemes active, and our database up to date.

I would like to thank the Borough Commander Michael Wood and his team of officers for their continued support, and finally to everyone who makes time to promote NHW schemes within the borough and especially to those who deliver this newsletter.

# Can you beat the burglar?

By A. Burglar

By the time you get this Newsletter, the clocks would have gone forward to British Summertime, which gives me more time during the hours of daylight to go round your neighbourhood and look for those homes that would make an easy target for me to break into maybe during the day or in the summer months, during the night, so your home could be one of them if you decide to give me the opportunity.

## What I look for

As a burglar, I tend to look for houses that have windows left open, or doors just pulled shut and not locked, also access to the back of the house, which can be an easy get-away, because when I break-in to your home the last thing that I want to do is disturb your neighbours while I'm going about my business in your home.

Sometimes when I carry out a burglary I take just what is around and try not to make too much mess, then there are other times that your home becomes a total mess and that's when you know I've been. The things that are of value to me are the items that I can get rid of quickly which are most electrical goods, jewellery, cash and if you leave your car keys where I can find them, then I'll take your car as well to carry off my stash.

## So here are my top 10 tips on how to keep hold of your valuables and keep me out of your home.

1. If you're going away, remember to cancel your milk, newspaper. Bottles on your doorstep or an overflowing letterbox tells me that you're not at home, and try not spread the word that your going on holiday, you never know who's listening

2. Never leave your spare keys under a doormat or flowerpot, that's the first place I would look.

3. Buy yourself a timer that operates the lights and radio on and off. It will keep me guessing as to whether you are in or not.

4. Keep valuables where they can't be seen from outside your property, having that new widescreen TV in full view makes your front lounge look like a shop front display window.

5. Make sure not to leave doors and windows open or unlocked, even if you're just popping out for 5 minutes, if you do, I can get in without the need of forcing my entry. Get some decent locks put on all your windows, you'll be surprised how small a space I can get through, if I can't, then I would use a smaller person to get me in.

6. If you leave your car in your driveway, you might just fool me into thinking that you're in.

7. Upgrade the locks to your patio doors, top and bottom, because I have come across some that are really easy to open, even when locked. Fit a 5-lever mortice lock to your front door and also a letter box cage, this will stop me from using my rod & hook to open your door.

8. Install a visible burglar alarm and high wattage lighting which can be activated by a movement sensor, and CCTV if possible, I certainly would in your position.

9. Keep garden walls, fences or shrubs low at the front of your home, because your neighbours can't see me at work if they are high, I don't like thorny shrubs around your window, these can put me off in having an interest in your home.

10. Put away your ladders, garden tools and garden furniture that could help me break into your home. If you have valuable tools in your shed, fit a decent padlock to the door.

Merton Neighbourhood Watch Association would like to see the trend reversed, and see your home as secure as possible so that you can beat the burglar at his game, for more advice on how to create that secure and safe home contact the **Crime Prevention Office on 020 8649 3249.**

## Credit agencies and organisations that can offer help and advice!

### Consumer Finance identity theft information:

**British bankers' Association**  
www.bba.org.uk

**CIFAS (fraud prevention service)**  
www.cifas.org.uk

**CIFAS (protective Reg Service)**  
Tel: 0870 010 2091

E-mail:  
protective.registration@equifax.com

**APACS**  
www.apacs.org.uk

### General Fraud Prevention: Crimestoppers

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

**Foreign & Commonwealth Office**  
www.fco.gov.uk

**Fraud Reduction Website**  
www.uk-fraud.info

**Home Office**  
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

**CardWatch**  
www.cardwatch.org.uk

### Reporting theft or loss of mail and documents:

**DVLA**  
Tel: 0870 240 0009  
www.dvla.gov.uk

**Royal Mail**  
Tel: 08457 740 740  
www.royalmail.com

**UK Passport Service**  
Tel: 0870 521 0410  
www.passport.gov.uk

### Obtaining your credit file:

**Callcredit Plc**  
Tel: 0870 060 1414  
www.callcredit.co.uk

**Equifax Plc**  
Tel: 0870 010 0583  
www.equifax.co.uk

**Experian Ltd**  
Tel: 0870 241 6212  
www.experian.co.uk



Working together for a safer London

## Useful Numbers

Abandoned Vehicles	<b>020 8545 3189</b>
Domestic Violence	<b>020 8545 1637</b>
Fly-Posting	<b>020 8545 3170</b>
Fraud	<b>020 8545 3223</b>
Highway Safety	<b>020 8545 3206</b>
Noise Control	<b>020 8545 3025</b>
Pests Control	<b>020 8545 3022</b>
Safer Merton	<b>020 8545 4146</b>
Victim Support	<b>020 8545 1637</b>

## Numbers to Note

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

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