



News in brief

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Residents feel safer after alleygate install

A NHW Co-ordinator in Pollards Hill has made the residents in his area feel safer after alleygate scheme is installed.

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Your Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator is:



Is there a suburban pot farm near you...

Suburban householders are being asked by police, to be on the look-out for neighbourhood cannabis factories following an explosion in production of the drug since the introduction of the Government's controversial decision to relax the laws on cannabis.

These are often run by South East Asian crime syndicates, with the potential for rich pickings. A domestic factory can produce £500,000 worth of drugs a year but cost as little as £20,000 to set up. Police raids were carried out during January and February of this year on addresses where they suspected cannabis was being grown.

Telltale signs

As part of the operation, police are asking the general public to look-out for telltale signs of cannabis factories being run from houses in their neighbourhood. These include windows and doors being sealed with blinds or sheets and a pungent smell emanating from the property.

Criminal gangs are attracted to cannabis production because it is seen as low risk compared with the Class A drug trade. A crop of 200 cannabis plants in a typical domestic factory could produce as much as £30,000 worth every three months.

Last year police indentified more than 700 cannabis farms in London alone, the surge has created dangers within the neighbourhoods with three murders linked to these farms, as rival gangs fight over territory. Also in many cases, they tamper with the mains supply to get free electricity to light the plants, making them fire hazards.

The operation carried out by the police sent out a clear message that cannabis production is a serious offence and that offenders will be brought to justice. With every cannabis farm that is found, the money from the cultivation is ploughed back into serious crime, but the by-passing of electricity that is required to run these farms run the risk of electrocution, these methods have already caused several devastating fires.

Cannabis was reclassified from a Class B to a Class C drug in January 2004. Most users caught by police are given a formal warning but do not receive a criminal conviction.



How to tell if one opens near you

1. Gangs often tamper with the mains to get free electricity to light the plants, it means 'farms' are littered with dangerous wires.
2. Large pipes supply hot air to keep rooms at a temperature of around 86F (30C), using ten times the energy of a normal home.
3. Doors, windows and air vents are completely sealed with curtains, blinds, sheets and tape to trap the heat and stop prying eyes.
4. High powered lights enhanced by silver covers to generate extreme heat and brightness needed for plants to thrive.
5. Plants are grown in pots filled with soil, with chemical enhancers for a higher yield. Some gangs use a hydroponic system, where the roots are in a nutrient solution instead of soil which accelerates growth.

Asbo Generation shame world war vets..

by W.B.Picano, Acting Chair



Date: July 1st, 1916.
The first day of the battle of the Somme. Hearts pounding as loud as shell fire, mouths dry as dirt and eyes wide with fear, Britain's youth went "over the top."

Running directly into enemy gunfire, 60,000 of them were scythed to the ground. This was the worst day in Britain's military history, by the end of the battle five months later, 420,000 British soldiers were lost, the equivalent of wiping out the whole of Merton twice.

The millions that died during the World Wars made the ultimate sacrifice. So those men who gather every Remembrance Sunday deserve the utmost respect, for they and their comrades fought so that we could enjoy our freedom today.

As they advanced across "No Man's Land" 90 years ago, those brave teens and twentysomethings on the Somme could never envisaged of what would become of the country they were fighting for.

Badge of honour

The survivors of two World Wars could not have foreseen a country where the old and frail are treated with little or no respect by groups of youths who run wild, treating the elderly as easy targets, get drunk outside their local pub or convenience store, joyriding around their estate or choose to live off the state rather than earn a living. Neither could they have imagined a culture in which ASBO's are worn as a swaggering badge of honour. Yet too many, youngsters are feckless and idle and act as if everyone owes them.

Recently, on national television was the programme "Bad Lads Extreme", where 30 lads from around Britain with ASBO's or bad behaviour were put through their paces 1940's style for 4-weeks. Some showed resistance and were escorted off the camp, others were determined to make a go of it and they actually changed their ways of thinking. Yes, there were signs of these lads pleading stress, but after a 1-to-1 chat with the army personel they were persuaded to give it a second chance.

To all those youngsters who hold the same arrogant attitude to life, remember those casualties on the Somme who did not get a second chance.

Today's, borough of Merton, also has its own fair share of ASBO's being issued, but with the right attitude to life, and living in a respectful way amongst your communities all this can change, and Merton would be an even safer place to live.

an-ti-so-cial *adj*l:

- 1: Behaving in a manner that violates the social or legal norms of society.
- 2: Adverse to the society of others

2006, A great year for merton

by Borough Commander
Micheal Wood

I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and thanks for the continuing commitment and hard work that has been demonstrated by everyone involved in Neighbourhood Watch across the borough and with your efforts and hard work, Merton is currently the third safest borough in London.

It also has the second lowest crime rate in terms of the ten priority crimes including personal robbery, residential burglary and common assault, which is good news for those who live, work and visit Merton. A great position to end 2006.

I am also pleased to report that since December 2006 every SN Team has been up to full strength.

These teams can now be contacted on the new style Mobex phones, which incorporate and operate as both landline and mobile phones, and the details of these Mobex phone numbers can be found on the Metropolitan Police Website www.met.police.uk and Safer Merton Website www.safermerton.org.uk then follow the links, or you can contact the SN teams by e-mail.

Also in January, we moved to a new communication system, which is part of the Metropolitan Police programme, which will mean that getting in contact with police in Merton will be vastly improved than the present system. These developments have got to be good news for everyone.

My role in merton

by
Superintendent Graeme Thompson

I joined Merton Police in March 2006 as Superintendent responsible for Community & Partnership. I have over 23 years of service and previously served in the Diplomatic Protection Group, in Lambeth, the Territorial Support Group and at Merton as a sergeant eight years ago.

The roll out of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams across the borough of Merton is now complete. Every one of the boroughs wards now has a fully staffed SN Team consisting of 1Sgt, 2 Pc's and 3 PCSO's.

Every team has their own e-mail address and contact telephone number, details of which can be found on the Safer Merton website (www.safermerton.org.uk) and will also be contained in a Safer Neighbourhood newsletter that will be delivered to every address in the borough.

The SN Teams are there to deal with the issues that local people identify as impacting on their quality of life and fear of crime, such as anti-social behaviour and graffiti. The teams will work together with other agencies, such as the London Borough of Merton and Safer Merton, to adopt a problem solving approach (PSP) to the issues identified.

Neighbourhood Watch is an excellent and effective way to prevent someone becoming a victim through raising awareness, marking of property, keeping a watchful eye on your street and reporting suspicious activity.

Merton Police are fully committed to supporting both SN Teams and local Neighbourhood Watch schemes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your help and support in making Merton a good and safe place to live and work in.

Sat-navs targeted

Thieves are targeting car satellite navigation systems in a crime wave sweeping across Britain. Demand for these devices, which can cost up to £900, has fuelled demand in a multi-million pound black-market trade, and The London Borough of Merton is no stranger to this crime being committed.

The Merton NHW Association, Safer Merton and the Merton Police urge all owners of these devices to take precautions when leaving their cars, and to take the sat-nav system with you including the bracket, and make sure that you wipe off any suction marks left on your windscreen. Don't leave it in the car, because you may not find it where you left it if a thief is watching from a distance.

Phones that scream when stolen

Imagine you're out with a bunch of friends, you reach for your phone to check for new SMS messages...only it's not there, it's been pinched. That's it, all your SMS messages, contacts, music, ringtones and anything else you've downloaded gone forever. Now what do you do?

Mobile phone crime could be wiped out by a system that makes stolen handsets completely useless. As soon as a phone is reported stolen a 'self-destruct' message can be sent to it, wiping out all contents and permanently locking all the keys including the 999 facility.

If the thief tries to replace the sim card with their own, the phone will emit an ear-piercing scream. The scream will only stop when the battery is removed.

Around 700,000 mobile phones are stolen every year in the UK alone, and as they become more like hand held PC's the greater the risk of becoming stolen.

You can subscribe to an anti-theft system, called 'RemoteXT' which has the facility to store and update your phone details, including numbers, texts, e-mails and music downloads on an external server which is protected by a military-style encoding system.

When the victim gets a new phone, RemoteXT will send back all their details that were on their original phone, which will save all the hassle of re-entering the details in by hand, this will also apply to any music files, e-mails, pictures and ring tones.

RemoteXT can be found at the following website: www.remotext.com then follow the prompts.

Website helps to track down suspects

A website listing Britain's most wanted suspected criminals has been going since January 2006. The Crimestoppers site at www.mostwanted-uk.org carries pictures of suspects, their personal details and their alleged crimes.

Anybody can log on to the website and search details of crime suspects listed by area or by the type of crime they have allegedly committed.

The public can also give information about suspects anonymously on the site if they don't wish to contact the police directly.

The site provides the opportunity for the public and the police to work together in a unique way, it will also help all the UK forces to find named individuals as well as identifying unknown, wanted individuals at the click of a button.

Focus on Crime

Merton is divided into three police areas, Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden
Here the Safer Neighbourhood teams on Cricket Green ward, provide us with their latest achievement

Through the eyes of a PCSO

The Cricket Green ward covers two main parts, Willow Lane, which is a large industrial estate, and the Phipps Bridge Estate. After walking the beat on this ward for nearly two years, it is amazing to see the difference in how the ward has changed in that time.

When I started on the ward both areas suffered from different problems, Willow Lane had fly tipping, stolen cars, and Go-ped problems, and Phipps Bridge had suffered with high robbery, theft, and a high levels of anti social behaviour, and problems with youths.

The Phipps Bridge estate has been the biggest challenge to date, the team and I started off by getting to know the local community by introducing ourselves to the residents, shop owners, the Phipps Bridge Community Centre, and by chatting to the local youths on the estate. During that time, we have been able to help the youths with their concerns as to why they were loitering around in the streets.



Working in conjunction with our partners i.e. Merton council and other organisations in Merton, we have helped to get the area cleaned up, by removing graffiti and rubbish, and also working towards better lighting and CCTV for the estate, which has created a cleaner and safer place to live.

In my view, Safer Neighbourhoods has definitely made a difference in this borough, especially on Cricket Green ward. There has been a significant reduction in crime and graffiti on the ward, it is also very pleasing to hear people say how the area has got so much better and that they feel safer out and about, even at night. There is definitely more work to do, our ward is far from being perfect, but with help from the residents we can make progress in the right direction.

Stop.. in the gnome of the law

Police are in dispute with the owner of a glowing garden gnome dressed as a bobby. The officers ordered the owner to remove the gnome dressed in a bobby's uniform as it was offensive to his neighbour who was a former policeman.

But the owner is refusing to remove the gnome in defiance of police who served him with a notice under the Protection From Harassment Act 1997 for "placing a garden gnome with intent to cause harassment to his neighbour".

The owner, who could be arrested and prosecuted, said "When there's a knock at the door you don't expect to be told to remove a garden gnome.

The owner has been in a long running dispute with his neighbour over another matter. A Devon police spokesman insisted: "This is not a petty issue, it's been going on for two years.



With this source of information being made available it will make it easier for the public to assist the police and contribute to making the communities safer.

The site proved to be so popular, that on the day of its launch, it had more than 200,000 registered hits in its first two hours.

Crimestoppers, which was setup in 1988, has received information from the public that has resulted in more than 64,000 arrests and charges.

Residents feel safer after alleygate install

by George Georgiou

NHW Co-ordinator, Pollards Hill

Over the last few years a number of alleyways across Merton have been gated off to eradicate fly-tipping, graffiti, anti social behaviour and to provide residents enhanced security for their homes and garages.

It was back in February 2004 when I decided to do something about the alleyways in mine and the adjoining roads. The reason was purely due to the fact that I was sick and tired of the graffiti, the instances of fly-tipping, individuals using them for drinking and the general state of the alleyways. The scheme in my area covered 4 roads, it was very straight forward and the whole task took 6 months from start to finish.

I got in touch with Merton Community Safety Trust ('MCST') who guided me through the process. Once I understood the principals, the aim was to get everyone in the surrounding roads to sign up and agree to have the alleyways gated off.

I drew up some broad plans and after liaising with the Council to agree where the gates could be sited I produced a newsletter explaining what I was trying to achieve and why, this was followed up with door to door knocking to introduce myself, (it is best to have a few helpers if there are a lot of properties) and to discuss the scheme in more detail and answer any questions the residents had.

All the residents agreed that installing the gates would be a good idea.

With the agreement in place, an ironmonger was sourced to provide the scheme with an estimate for making and installing the gates. Once the estimate was received I then applied to the MSCT for a grant to subsidise some of the gate

costs, the rest came from the residents.

After the Alleygates installation was completed, a community clean-up weekend was arranged, this saw residents coming out to help clean up the alleyways and get to know each other. In addition, the Council were also on hand to clean up the graffiti and assist in our clear up. It's been two years since the gates were installed and the alleyways still remain as clean as ever, and everyone I speak to is pleased of the security the gates bring.

Getting approval

As alleyways are rights of way (not public rights of way) for the residents whose properties back on to them, you need to ensure that everyone approves, otherwise you could find yourself not being able to erect a gate where you want to. Also any utility company that needs to have access to the alleyway (e.g. an electric substation) must be approached for approval and along with the residents, be given a key to the gate.

Here are some of the pictures of before and after the installation



Before the gates



A cleared alleyway



Alleygate installed



Some of the rubbish collected

Calling all Neighbourhood Watch Members!

Merton NHW Association is currently on the look out for interested members to join their committee. They would welcome applications from any member, but are keen to hear from anyone who has fundraising, editorial or presentation experience.

If you feel that you have something to offer the committee, then we would like to hear from you.

For more details or an application form please contact

Lee Roberts, NHW Manager
020 8649 3213

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Lee Roberts, NHW Manager
020 8649 3213

Safer Merton

Working Together To Keep Merton Safe & Sound

Useful Numbers to Note

Emergencies	999 or 112	Wimbledon Sector Office	020 8649 3144/3145	Highway Safety	020 8545 3206
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111	Mitcham Sector Office	020 8649 3218/3267	Safer Merton	020 8545 4146
Crime Prevention Office	020 8649 3249	Morden Station Office	020 8649 3125	Victim Support	020 8545 1637
NHW Manager	020 8649 3213	Graffiti Team Helpline	020 8545 3170	MCST	020 8545 3622
Merton Police	020 8947 1212	Fly-Tipping / Fly-Posting	020 8545 3170	Abandoned Vehicles	020 8545 3189

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