

*Merchiston Community Council*  
**NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

*Chair: Bridget M. Stevens*

4 September 2005

Dear Neighbour,

This is the third of our Neighbourhood Watch Newsletters. If you are new to the area and would like to see the first two issues (dated August 2004 and May 2005), please let me know. The streets which we cover are given at the end of this letter.

*1. Next Meeting/Social Event*

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**Sunday 25 September**  
**4.00pm**  
**The Royal Ettrick Hotel, Ettrick Road**

**Guest Speaker:**  
**Best-selling writer, creator of Detective Inspector John Rebus**

**IAN RANKIN**

**Also present at this meeting to answer your questions will be the real  
PC Alan Hopper, Community Beat Officer for Merchiston**

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*2. Update on events/developments since last Newsletter*

**A meeting was held on 24 April, with talks on several aspects of crime prevention and a display of locks for houses, garden sheds, garages etc. A locksmith was in attendance to advise on the fitting and use of these. Free Personal Alarms for the over 60's, donated by the South Edinburgh Crime Prevention Panel, were eagerly claimed.**

**On 14 May, following a spate of burglaries in the area, police teams carried out a house-to-house "blitz" of properties in selected streets, advising home owners on security and crime prevention generally. This was much appreciated by residents, and we are pleased to hear that it may be repeated.**

**Requests for improvements in *street lighting*, notably in Polwarth Terrace, have been lodged with the City Council. A letter from John McFarlane, Street Lighting Manager, suggests that this may not happen before 2007! We will continue to press through local councillor Sue Tritton for this to be speeded up. Dark streets are a gift to criminals.**

**Street Co-ordinators continue to collect *Emergency Contact Forms*. These are a means, entirely voluntary of course, of providing details of any relatives/lawyer/other contact whom you would like to be informed in the event of emergency. Completed forms are passed on to the police. Many people have commented that this is an excellent idea. Ask your Street Co-ordinator if you'd like a form.**

**The Friends of *Harrison Park* in association with the City Council are now doing good work in the way of cleaning up (literally and metaphorically) the park, which had become a haunt for (mostly young) people up to no good. Harrison Park and the Union Canal are a fantastic local resource and we want them to remain pleasant, clean and safe. FOHP can be contacted through Kay Smith: email [secretary@harrisonpark.org.uk](mailto:secretary@harrisonpark.org.uk) The Friends' website is [www.harrisonpark.org.uk](http://www.harrisonpark.org.uk)**

### ***3. Police Reports***

**These continue to be received on a monthly basis. Issues for April, May, June and July are either attached now, or your Street Co-ordinator (details at the end of this letter) may have been forwarding them to you on a regular basis. Again, please ask us if you would like to see back copies.**

### ***4. Incident Reports***

Quite separately from the Police Reports, we encourage people in our area to let us know of any crime-related incidents in which they have been involved or which they have heard about. These may or may not have been reported to the Police but neighbours can often learn from them. Two such incidents have been reported by Gillsland Road Street Co-ordinator Ian Doig. The first, in March, concerned someone's garage which was broken into in broad daylight. The owner returned to find that quantities of petrol, butane gas, meths etc had been used up and various receptacles left blackened from, presumably, substances having been burned in them. All this would appear to point to intruders (ab)using the premises as a place to smoke dope. We should all be on the lookout for this kind of thing. The second incident, in July, concerned a suspicious-looking man found roaming in gardens in Gillsland Road. When challenged separately by two residents, the man muttered the name of someone he claimed to be looking for. It was discovered later that several house windows had been partially forced (but good window locks had prevailed), and a number of items stolen from the garden. Both incidents were reported to the Police, who attended promptly and took details. Later a man in his thirties was apprehended. It transpired that he had carried out several burglaries that day in the Merchiston/Churchill area. Some of the stolen items were recovered. Neighbours, who had been alerted by Ian Doig, have written to say how pleased they were with the Police's handling of this incident. We are happy to pass on the commendation!

Again, the important thing is to be vigilant at all times, and to report anything suspicious you see not just in your own home or back yard but in your neighbour's as well. Looking out for one another is what Neighbourhood Watch is all about. The number to ring is 666 2222 (Howdenhall Incident Centre) or in the case of serious emergency 999. Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 is the number to ring if you want to talk confidentially about your suspicions of a particular crime or a particular individual.

Another way of looking out for one another is to let your neighbours know if you are to be away from home.

### *5 Fire Safety Checks*

Lothian & Borders Fire Brigade are still providing these free of charge. Telephone 0800 169 0320. In this connection, we have been warned that some elderly people in the area have received bogus telephone calls purporting to come from the Fire Brigade. Please note that the genuine Fire Brigade personnel never make contact by phone and always carry official ID. There are other checks you can carry out – please ask us for details.

### *6. Home Security Checks*

These too are free of charge. Telephone PC Andrew Cameron on 221 2050 or PC Jim McKenna on 221 2051.

### *7. Whistles*

Residents in a remote village have been issued with whistles to alert neighbours after a spate of break-ins. We doubt if Merchiston could be described as “remote” but it’s an interesting idea!

### *8. Cycling on Pavements*

Following complaints from a number of residents, it is confirmed that cycling on pavements is illegal and should be reported to the Police. Ask us if you’d like to see the wording of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. Thanks to PC Alan Hopper for doing the research on this one.

### *9. New NNWA Website*

The National Neighbourhood Watch Association has announced its new website at [www.neighbourhoodwatch.net](http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.net) It contains a range of information and a discussion forum for the sharing of good practice and issues relevant to neighbourhood watch.

### *10. And finally.....*

A little reminder that Neighbourhood Watches are voluntary schemes, run by volunteers who personally bear the costs involved. We receive no funding and are therefore always on the lookout for ways of minimising these costs. In this connection, we want to be able to communicate with as many of you as possible by email so, if you haven’t already given us your email address, please do so now. If you do not have email, please don’t worry – we are delighted to continue providing you with a paper copy. I should add that any contributions towards printing, xeroxing etc costs are always gratefully received.

Thanks to you all for your feedback and support. And we look forward to seeing you at our Ian Rankin event on 25 September.

With best wishes,  
Yours sincerely,

*Bridget M. Stevens*