

Merchiston Community Council
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Chair: Bridget M. Stevens

14 March 2006

Dear Neighbour,

This is the fourth of our Neighbourhood Watch Newsletters. If you are new to the area and would like to see the earlier issues (dated August 2004, May 2005 and September 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 9 April 2006

4.00pm

**Room A17, Napier University, Colinton Road
(enter by Jack Kilby Computing Centre, to left of main
entrance)**

Guest Speaker:

Award-winning author of *44 Scotland Street*, *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and (just out) *Blue Shoes and Happiness*

ALEXANDER McCALL SMITH

Also present at this meeting to answer your questions will be our Police Community Beat Officer, and Mike Harper of the Bruntsfield Lock Shop.

2. Update on events/developments since last Newsletter

A packed meeting on 25 September heard local resident, author *Ian Rankin* talk in characteristically modest and entertaining fashion about his famous creation Inspector John Rebus and what it is like to live and work as a crime writer in Merchiston. Our dedicated Community Beat Officer, PC Alan Hopper, was also present and answered a wide range of questions from the audience.

On 6 March, there was a public meeting, *Meet the Chief*, at which Lothian & Borders Police Chief Constable Paddy Tompkins talked about policing plans for 2006/7. Other representatives of the police were present and the meeting, although rather thinly attended, was a useful opportunity for members of the public to provide feedback and ask questions. There was widespread approval of the Community Beat Officer scheme, and our PC Hopper in particular.

Another police/public meeting, but for Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators this time, is to be held on 27 March. There will be presentations on Crimestoppers (see 4. below) and Anti Social Behaviour. If any of you have questions or issues that you'd like us to raise at this meeting, please get in touch.

As reported last time, requests for improvements in *street lighting* in Polwarth Terrace, have been lodged with the City Council. The wheels of bureaucracy turn very slowly but we will continue to press through Merchiston 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.

3. Police Reports

These continue to be received on a monthly basis. Ask your Street Co-ordinator if you'd like to see these.

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.

A local resident has contacted us with the following. *“I thought you would be interested to hear a report of some recent burglary incidents in Merchiston. And a 'result' for Merchiston Neighbourhood Watch!*

On a Friday evening about 2 weeks ago, my daughter & her boyfriend were astonished to see a young lad wandering in our garden, having climbed in over a high stone wall from a neighbour's garden in Spylaw Road & entered our garden via a 10 foot drop in total darkness. He was a stranger of around 20 year old, looked very furtive & was carrying a suspicious bundle (could almost have been marked 'swag' by his appearance!).

His movements were intercepted by our security floodlights, 4 of which came on as he tried to move about in our garden in darkness- so he was disturbed before he could attempt another burglary. When he realised he had been spotted, he ran away through our front gate & disappeared into Gillsland Road.

I immediately phoned the Police Howdenhall Incident Centre & reported the incident. Our family were pleasantly surprised when, one hour later, we received a phone call from the Police, saying that they had picked up the lad in Polwarth from the description & timing information we had given. The Police had been on the lookout for this lad for a spate of previous thefts, including from the Sick Kids Hospital, from several shops at Bruntsfield & from houses in Merchiston - a one man crime wave. The Police caught him in possession of jewellery he had stolen from a house in Mid-Gillsland Road & he appears to have been looking for more easy pickings in Merchiston when he was spotted. He is a known heroin addict & has a long history of thefts to pay for his addiction. He is now in Saughton Prison awaiting trial for a whole series of offences.

The Police told us that, apart from charging him with a series of thefts, he would be charged with an offence of entering private property with intent to steal (or similar wording).

I have been very impressed again at how on the ball our local Police are. Our neighbourhood is safer without thieves like this roaming around.

***So, if you see anything suspicious, DO PLEASE REPORT IT TO THE POLICE.
Howdenhall Police Station tel. no is 0131 666 2222.***

***Our Community Beat Officer, PC Alan Hopper, is very helpful & is
contactable at Howdenhall or by e-mail alan.hopper@lbp.pnn.police.uk “***

As always, 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. You can contact Merchiston Community Beat Officer PC Alan Hopper either via 666 2222 or by email at alan.hopper@lbp.pnn.police.uk

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. If the Fire Inspector considers that you need a smoke alarm, and you would like one, this will be provided and fitted free of charge.

6. South Edinburgh Crime Prevention Panel

We were represented at the last meeting of the panel by Ian Doig and Irene Terris. Their report includes the information that more resources are being applied to “bobbies on the beat”; that bogus callers are still a serious problem; that theft from cars is a growing problem; that the Police are finding it more difficult to obtain warrants to raid premises for suspected drugs because of European Human Rights legislation and that a Housebreaking Survey is being funded by the City of Edinburgh Council.

7. Cycling on Pavements

Following complaints from many residents, and several radio and TV programmes by BBC Scotland, the City Council, prompted by Merchiston Councillor Sue Tritton, is looking into ways of eliminating this problem. 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.

8. NNWA Website

The National Neighbourhood Watch Association's website at www.neighbourhoodwatch.net contains a range of information and a discussion forum for the sharing of good practice and issues relevant to neighbourhood watch.

*9. And finally.....**MAY WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS PLEASE ?***

The customary reminder that Neighbourhood Watches are voluntary schemes, run by volunteers who personally bear the costs involved. We receive no public 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. Being able to get in touch with you by email also means that you can receive quick alerts about matters, for example, that the local police feel should be brought to residents' notice quickly. But, if you do not have email, please don't worry – we are delighted to continue providing you with a paper copy of the Newsletter. 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 Alexander McCall Smith event on 9 April.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Bridget M. Stevens