

MERCHISTON & POLWARTH

# NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

PUBLIC MEETING / SOCIAL EVENT

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009  
2.30pm, Polwarth Parish Church Hall



## THE DIGITAL SWITCHOVER – PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THE CONMEN AND THE SCAMS!

**John MacNeil, Assistant National Manager of  
Digital UK, and Inspector Richard Horan of  
Lothian & Borders Police will give advice.**

&

*P.C. Alan Hopper will present a summary of crimes and  
crime trends in our area since May 2008.*

**REFRESHMENTS**

*All local residents welcome!*



# ***MERCHISTON & POLWARTH NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER***

[www.NeighbourWatch.org.uk](http://www.NeighbourWatch.org.uk)

4 December 2008

Dear Neighbour,

Welcome to the eighth Merchiston & Polwarth Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter! I hope you find it useful and interesting.

## ***OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AREA:***

We have two logos (shown on the front cover), one of our own and one attesting to our membership of the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches ([www.aosnw.co.uk](http://www.aosnw.co.uk)). The competition, launched in our previous Newsletter, for a slogan or motto produced an interesting set of suggestions. The winner was Sebastian Tombs with 'Spier Point' (a sophisticated kind of acronym!).

## ***REVIEW OF LAST MEETING:***

Our last meeting, in May, was extremely well attended – around 50 local residents came along to hear Willie Hunter talk about property trends in our area, with particular emphasis on maintenance and security. The advice and practical help from Mike Harper of the Bruntsfield Lockshop was also greatly appreciated by many residents.

While on the subject of property, just a reminder that it is always worth mentioning to your home insurance company that you live in a neighbourhood watch area. This can sometimes result in a discount on your premium. Especially if you can confirm that you are an active member. Another incentive to join our online email contact register? Please see message from Website Manager Nevil Hopley later in this Newsletter.

## ***NEXT MEETING: A Good Neighbour's Guide to the Digital TV Switchover***

Our next meeting will be on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009, at 2.30pm in Polwarth Church Hall. See details on front page. The date of the Digital TV Switchover in this part of the country is 2010/11. By that time it will be essential, if you wish to continue to watch TV, that you have made the switch. There are several ways of doing this, and our guest speaker **John MacNeill** will explain them – in very simple language for those of us who are slightly nervous about technology! John is employed by Digital UK, the independent organisation which is leading the change to digital across the UK. He has a collection of extremely helpful CDs and DVDs which he will hand out (free of charge!) at the meeting. The same information will also be available in leaflet form. Finally, John will explain the Help Scheme which is available for certain categories of householder.

**Inspector Richard Horan** has been stationed in South Edinburgh since March and has made a point of attending meetings of community groups. We are delighted that he has agreed to be one of our speakers on 1<sup>st</sup> February (see front cover of this Newsletter). Inspector Horan previously worked in the Borders, which was the first region in Scotland to "go Digital". He thus has good knowledge of the scams that are perpetrated by conmen in connection with the change - and how to avoid them.

At this meeting we will also be giving details of recent developments to do with empty properties and changes to parking regulations in our area.

Again, we are grateful to Polwarth Minister, Linda Dunbar, for allowing us to use the hall.

### ***POLICE REPORTS:***

These are produced on a monthly basis and are available directly from the website ([www.NeighbourWatch.org.uk](http://www.NeighbourWatch.org.uk)). You can subscribe for free to the RSS news feed from the website, so that you know when each one is posted. Alternatively, you can ask your Street Co-ordinator to let you see a paper copy.

### ***NEWS ALERTS, BREAKING NEWS & INCIDENT REPORTS:***

Since our last meeting in May, we have received and posted on our website 14 Crime Alerts. These have included:

- A suspicious male trying door handles in Napier Road.
- Car wing-mirror vandalism in several Merchiston streets.
- Lottery scams where you are rung up and informed that you have won a big cash prize, but first you must pay an admin fee of £1000. *You should never do so.*
- Continuing damage to cars in Merchiston Avenue.
- Several “slip-in” thefts (these are thefts involving property taken from a dwelling where security has not been breached ie the house has been left unlocked).
- A telephone scam being perpetrated in the name of Waitrose - here you are asked to ring a certain telephone number in connection with an order, or a competition. *You should never do so* as this could result in your being connected to a foreign premium rate number at £50 a minute.

In October, PC Hopper alerted us to a couple of thefts by housebreaking, where neighbours had heard the properties being broken into but had done nothing. In one case a burglar alarm had been activated at 3am in a residential street and neighbours had heard it but decided not to phone the police. PC Hopper says *“Do NOT be afraid to contact the police. We would rather investigate a matter to discover it is a false alarm, than to be involved in a long and protracted investigation into crime. DO NOT think that you will be wasting police time. You may in fact be saving police time and assisting with the detection of offenders.”*

The Police have a unit at Fettes HQ which stores and analyses information of this kind received from the public. The number of arrests made using this data is apparently most impressive.

### ***If you see anything at all that you think is suspicious:***

DO PLEASE REPORT IT TO THE POLICE. The telephone number for St Leonard’s Police Station, which covers our area, is 0131 662 5000.

Our Community Beat Officer, PC Alan Hopper, is always very helpful & can be contacted at St Leonard’s Police Station on 0131 662 5022 or by e-mail [alan.hopper@lbp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:alan.hopper@lbp.pnn.police.uk)

If you live in Polwarth Grove, your Community Beat Officer is PC Julie Cochrane, also very helpful. She can be contacted on 0131 221 2008 or by email [julie.cochrane@lbp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:julie.cochrane@lbp.pnn.police.uk)  
Inspector Horan is based at St Leonard’s Police Station (tel. 0131 662 5000), and his email address is [Richard.horan@lbp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Richard.horan@lbp.pnn.police.uk)

In emergency, of course, you should ring 999.

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 garden but in your neighbours' property as well. Looking out for one another is what Neighbourhood Watch is all about.

### **FROM OUR WEBSITE MANAGER:**

*Nevil Hopley writes* "The Merchiston and Polwarth Neighbourhood Watch website has continued to expand since its launch back in April 2008. Seven monthly Police Reports have been added as well as 14 separate Breaking News Bulletins amongst other items of local interest.

There have been nearly 600 hits on the website, with the most frequently viewed pages being the monthly Police Reports.

The Breaking News section has been a useful forum for circulating relevant, local information quickly. These have included incidents ranging from car wing mirror vandalism to phone call scams. However, the most remarkable posting was a reminder from the police that when you go away for the weekend, you shouldn't leave your patio doors open for the benefit of your pet cat to enter and leave the property!

It's no surprise to know that the effectiveness of these news bulletins is directly linked to the number of people who can access them quickly. We currently have over 100 email addresses on our mailing list of local neighbours who have opted to receive updates of our Newsletter, the Police Reports and/or Breaking News bulletins.

The more contacts that we can gather, the better our Neighbourhood Watch will be for everyone and for the safety of our neighbourhood.

Listed below are the house numbers of the streets for whom we currently hold email addresses – **if your address isn't listed, then please visit the website ([www.neighbourwatch.org.uk](http://www.neighbourwatch.org.uk)) and click on the word 'Contact'**. This takes you to a short online registration form.

Ettrick Grove	5
Ettrick Loan	1/3, 1/4
Ettrick Road	4a, 6a, 8, 10/1
Gillsland Park	3/2
Gillsland Road	1, 2, 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2J, 2K, 3, 3C, 4, 4/7, 6/1, 8/4, 17/2, 17/9, 17/10
Merchiston Avenue	10, 15, 27
Merchiston Crescent	12/d, 18
Merchiston Park	9C/1, 9C/2, 18A, 18B, 31
Mid Gillsland Road	3, 5
Napier Loan	3, 4, 7
Napier Road	1/1, 1/2, 1C, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 8A, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21B, 24, 28
Polwarth Grove	5, 6
Polwarth Terrace	2, 8, 22B, 24B/1, 24B/5, 39A/2, 44, 44A, 46A, 70, 84, 94A, 97/4, 100A
Spylaw Road	25, 31/1, 33, 36, 38, 40, 49/1, 49/4, 56, 56/10
St Teresa Place	2/2
The Limes, Napier Road	3, 4, 12, 16
West Castle Road	4

Don't let Napier Road put the longer streets to shame!

If you're not sure who's in charge of your street, then click on the words 'About Us' on our website and scroll down the page to see the full rogues' gallery of portraits...

The website is also a way for you to pass on suggestions to the Neighbourhood Watch Committee – we are waiting for your contact!"

### ***EMERGENCY CONTACT FORMS:***

Street Co-ordinators continue to supply and collect *Emergency Contact Forms*. These are a means (entirely voluntary and confidential of course) of providing details of any relatives/lawyer/other contact whom you would like to be informed in the event of an emergency. They can also be used to record information about people who hold keys to your property. Completed forms are passed on to the police to assist in case of emergencies – the information is not shared with any other individuals or organisations. Many people have commented that this is an excellent idea. Ask your Street Co-ordinator if you'd like an Emergency Contact Form.

### ***SOUTH EDINBURGH CRIME PREVENTION PANEL:***

This is a forum, organised by PC Carlyn McGhee of the Crime Prevention Unit of Lothian and Borders Police, on which Neighbourhood Watches from all over South Edinburgh are represented. I try to attend its meetings and to pass on concerns that we have in this area. If anyone has anything in particular that they'd like me to raise, please let me know. Email [bridget@neighbourwatch.org.uk](mailto:bridget@neighbourwatch.org.uk)

The Panel obtains, for selling on at cost, small items relating to personal and home security, such as Personal Attack Alarms (£4), Shed Alarms (£10) etc. We have a supply of these, which are illustrated on our website [www.NeighbourWatch.org.uk](http://www.NeighbourWatch.org.uk) Contact us if you'd like to purchase one. Neighbourhood Watch window stickers are available free of charge.

### ***MERCHISTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL:***

Speaking up for the People of Merchiston! This is the motto of Merchiston Community Council (MCC), under whose auspices Merchiston & Polwarth Neighbourhood Watch was established. We are a group of around 15 local residents, all volunteers, whose statutory responsibility is to ascertain and reflect the views of the people living in our area, on a wide range of topics – planning, licensing, anti-social behaviour, parks maintenance, re-cycling, pavement repairs and parking, to name but a few - and to do what we can to get any problems resolved by the relevant authorities. All of our meetings are open to the public. The next meeting of Merchiston Community Council will be on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January at 7.00pm in the Eric Liddell Centre, Holy Corner. All local residents are welcome. Website [www.merchistoncc.org.uk](http://www.merchistoncc.org.uk) or tel 0131 447 8846.

MCC has a seat on the Board of the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership (SCNP) which will shortly be producing a Local Plan for the area. The next meeting of SCNP is on Monday 15 December at 7.00pm in the Business Centre, City Chambers. Staff from the Council and partner agencies (NHS and the Police) will be available from 6 - 7pm to provide an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions or raise local issues.

### ***NOT ANOTHER MEETING.....?!?***

No! A Christmas Sing instead. With the support of the City of Edinburgh Council and George Hardie & Sons Joiners of Colinton Road, MCC has organized a short concert of seasonal music to be performed by local community choir *Songworks* and George Watson's College Chamber Choir. This will take place outside (inside if it's raining – or snowing!) the Eric Liddell Centre at Holy

Corner from 6.00 – 7.00pm on **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December**. The Christmas tree lights will be switched on by Mike Pringle MSP. Mince pies courtesy of Tesco. Hot drinks. All welcome.



***FINALLY:***

Again, we are extremely grateful to local Estate Agents Hunters Residential (part of Gillespie Macandrew LLP Solicitors) for covering the cost of our Newsletter. Also to Nevil Hopley for arranging for the copying to be done at George Watson's College and to both Nevil Hopley and Linda Alston (who also maintains the distribution list) for their patience with seemingly endless re-typings and re-formattings! NHW receives no public or other funding and we do have costs that need to be met throughout the year. Contributions towards these are always gratefully received.

Thanks to you all for your feedback and support. We look forward to seeing you at our meeting on 1st February.

With best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Good, Safe and Secure New Year,

Yours sincerely,

*Bridget M. Stevens*

Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and Chair, Merchiston Community Council  
Email [bridget@neighbourwatch.org.uk](mailto:bridget@neighbourwatch.org.uk)

***Summary of relevant Police telephone numbers for Merchiston/Polwarth NW area:***

St Leonard's Police Station Incident Centre: 662 5000

Police – for all serious emergencies: 999

Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111

This is the number to ring if you want to talk confidentially about your suspicions of a particular crime or a particular individual.

Merchiston Community Beat Officer PC Alan Hopper: 662 5022  
or by email at [alan.hopper@lbp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:alan.hopper@lbp.pnn.police.uk)

Polwarth Grove Community Beat Officer PC Julie Cochrane: 221 2008  
or by email at [julie.cochrane@lbp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:julie.cochrane@lbp.pnn.police.uk)