

Merchiston & Polwarth Neighbourhood Watch Public Meeting / Social Event

**Sunday 6 March 2011
2.00pm for 2.30pm
Polwarth Parish Church Hall**

'Trees'

**We have a lot of them – do we know enough about them?
Here is an opportunity to learn more - with the following guest
speakers:**

Ross Woodside, formerly Tree and Woodlands Officer with
Edinburgh City Council, now with Edinburgh and Lothians
Greenspace Trust.

Sandy Crook, Proprietor and Managing Director, Treeshape.

***Refreshments will be available from 2.00pm – please come along and
meet your neighbours informally over a cuppa.
All local residents welcome!***



www.NeighbourWatch.org.uk

MERCHISTON & POLWARTH NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER

February 2011

Dear Neighbour,

Welcome to the tenth Merchiston & Polwarth Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter! I hope you find it both interesting and helpful.

► **OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AREA**

... was established in 2004. Initially, it covered only Napier Road, Napier Loan and The Limes, Ettrick Road, South Ettrick Road and Ettrick Loan, Gillsland and Mid-Gillsland Roads, and Polwarth Terrace. Under the excellent stewardship of Bridget Stevens it has been extended over the years until today it covers these original streets and also East and West Castle Roads, Ettrick Grove, Merchiston Park, Merchiston Avenue, part of Merchiston Crescent, Polwarth Grove, Spylaw Road, Gillsland Park and St.Teresa Place. It has probably reached an optimum size.

We are members of the national Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches, further details of which can be found at www.aosnw.co.uk The front cover of this newsletter shows both their logo and our own.

► **OUR LAST PUBLIC MEETING ...**

... on 21 February 2010 was devoted to safety and security, crime and crime prevention. It was both informative and engaging. Some 50 people attended. We had three excellent contributors: Sgt Brian McRae and our own PC Alan Hopper from Lothian and Borders Police; and Sheriff John Horsburgh.

Sgt McRae briefed us on the progress of a review being conducted, as part of the Chief Constable's wider Crime Prevention Strategy, on the delivery of community policing. Brian was Project Manager for the review.

Additional officers would be provided as part of the Scottish Government's commitment to increase the number of police on the beat and adjustments would be made to deployment and the determination of priorities which it is hoped will have a positive impact on crime prevention in local areas. Neighbourhood Action Teams would be created using new and existing officers. That should allow the provision of more continuous round the clock support to communities. Alan Hopper would be a member of the Action Team that will provide coverage for our area. The mechanism for local consultation on determination of priorities had still to be finalised.

PC Hopper brought us up to date on police matters in our area over the last year or so, highlighting the nature and extent of crimes in our area and providing helpful guidance on measures that we could take to minimise risks. In particular, he stressed that in many cases of attempted or actual burglary, or of theft from or of cars, the criminal's job had been made easier by lax personal security – failure to lock doors, sheds, garages etc. or leaving house or car keys in easily accessible places.

Sheriff John Horsburgh, one of our most experienced and highly respected sheriffs, gave us a very informative and highly entertaining insight into the links between the various aspects of the justice system and the implications for the courts.

In a splendid talk, anecdotally illustrated, he took us through:

- how cases proceed from police charge to the courts
- the minefield of responsibility for establishing and implementing sentencing policy, and how this impacts on criminal behaviour
- and the challenges currently facing the courts in responding to crime in the Edinburgh area.

He rounded off an excellent contribution by answering our questions in typically pithy style.

► **OUR NEXT MEETING ...**

...on Sunday 6 March 2011 will be in Polwarth Church Hall at 2.00pm for 2.30pm. The main theme will be '**Trees**', with coverage of legal rights and responsibilities; good husbandry; and related safety and security issues. There will be inputs from

Ross Woodside, formerly Tree and Woodlands Officer with Edinburgh City Council, now with Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust

and

Sandy Crook, Proprietor and Managing Director, Treeshape

....who will then together respond to our comments and questions.

We will of course also ensure due emphasis on matters of safety and security more generally with input from our community police officer who will provide a summary of crimes and crime prevention measures in our area over the last year or so.

► **TAKING ELECTRONIC ADVANTAGE**

In our last newsletter we made a strong plea for as many neighbours as possible to provide us with their e-mail addresses and as a result of responses received then we now have about 140 e-mail addresses on our electronic mailing list.

There are significant advantages in both immediacy of provision of information and efficiency if we do have your e-mail address (which will be shared with no one else):

- you receive news bulletins and police and incident reports for the area, along with short adverts for local events that bring the Neighbourhood together, immediately they are available;
- you help us save on the costs of printing and paper, and on the physical demands of pavement delivery.

However, we still have e-mail addresses for only about 20% of the homes in the area. There must be many more residents in the area who do have internet access but whose e-mail addresses we do not yet have and to whom we are therefore unable to distribute information electronically.

Please do register if you have not already done so, by visiting our website (www.neighbourwatch.org.uk) and clicking on the word '**Contact**'. This takes you to a very short online registration form.

You can be assured that your contact details will **not** be shared with any other individual, group or organisation at any time.

Our web site manager, Nevil Hopley, writes.....

'It goes without saying that the worth and effectiveness of the various bulletins is linked directly to the number of people who can access them quickly; and the more contacts that we can gather, the better our Neighbourhood Watch will work for everyone and for the safety of our neighbourhood.

Over the past 12 months, our website has continued to share relevant information including Police Reports and Incident and Breaking News Bulletins.


*The **Breaking News** section has proved to be a useful forum for circulating relevant, local information quickly. These have included incidents ranging from car vandalism to phone call and cash machine scams.'*

Communication is two-way! Please use the web site or speak to your street coordinator to pass on any **suggestions** you have to the Neighbourhood Watch Committee. If you're not sure who is the coordinator for 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, or see the list at the end of this newsletter.

► **POLICE REPORTS**

These have been produced until recently on a monthly basis (but following the recent reorganisation of community policing they have been more irregular) and are available directly from our website (www.NeighbourWatch.org.uk). You can access them by:

- registering your details via the website and requesting a monthly e-mail alerting you to when a new report is available for download;
- subscribing for free to the  RSS news feed from the website, so that you know when each one is posted;
- asking your Street Co-ordinator to let you see a paper copy.

► **NEWS ALERTS, BREAKING NEWS and INCIDENT REPORTS**

Over the last 12 months, we have received and posted many Crime Alerts and Reports on our website. Among the more recent have been:

Car Theft - 28 April 2010

*'Between the hours of 11:30pm and 7:30am, in West Castle Road, a new Hyundai car had its front passenger window broken, whilst parked outside its owner's house. Nothing was stolen; no fingerprints were left. It was suspected that the Sat Nav holder on the dashboard gave the thieves their motive. The resident reported that the Police were on the scene within 30 mins, and were very supportive. **They recommend that Sat Nav holders are removed from sight (along with any front windscreen circular sucker marks)'***

ATM Skimming - 13 August 2010

*'There have been a number of incidents of **ATM skimming** throughout Scotland recently. Please continue to be aware of this and take the following simple steps:*

- **Check** the card reader before inserting your card. If you are suspicious do not use it and contact the bank or police as soon as possible.
- **Check** for additions to the ATM that are unusual (such as a leaflet holder).
- **Cover** your hand as you enter your PIN by holding your other hand above it.
- **Check** your account balance regularly.
- **Inform your bank immediately** if your account shows any transactions you did not make'.

Don't share your details over the 'phone!- 13 August 2010

*'A number of householders have been contacted by a company claiming to be from a Crime Research organisation. They ask about the security of your home, including if you have an alarm and if you are in a Neighbourhood Watch. **You should not give** this kind of information over the phone. The company are trying to sell security systems and charge a very high maintenance rate. If you are interested in buying a security system, please seek a few quotes from companies that you trust, and be sure that you understand all of the costs involved, including ongoing costs'.*

'If you are unsure of a caller's identity on the telephone, always ask them to write to you with the information they want to provide. To reduce the number of telephone calls you receive from companies trying to sell you items, register with the Telephone Preference Service: <http://www.mpsonline.org.uk/tps/>'

Suspected Criminal Activity - 10 December 2010

'A young man in a woolly hat, claiming to be from the Council, has been calling on houses on the east side of Merchiston Avenue, saying that Council workers will be along to clear snow "in about 45 minutes", but that they should continue to clear the pavements in front of their houses. He was not asked to show his identity card - but might well have been unable to produce one! The neighbour making the report thought he looked suspiciously like a would-be

thief on look-out'.

How not to De-Ice Your Car - 15 December 2010

'Do not de-ice your car by leaving it running with the keys in the ignition.

*Across the country, many people do this by starting the car up and leaving it running on their driveways or outside their houses while they nip back in doors. **Under the terms of a comprehensive policy you should never do this.** Leaving a car running with the keys inside breaches your 'duty of care' under your policy and is grounds for an insurer to turn down a claim if it is stolen. Already in 2010, insurers have turned down hundreds of claims from people whose cars have been stolen during the few moments when the car is unattended'.*

Warning - Young Male Flasher - 8 January 2011

'The police are investigating an incident of a young male (early 20s) exposing himself to two teenage girls in the Merchiston area in the late evening of 7 January 2011. This is a serious matter for the police and no additional description can be posted here. Please take extra care at night and be aware of any strangers or unusual approaches; and report any such events, concerns or any significant information to the police immediately'.

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

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."

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.

The organisation of community policing has changed since our last newsletter. Safer Neighbourhood Teams have been created. From a Team covering a wider area, we are served by two Safer Neighbourhood Officers:

PC Alan Hopper, who is already well known to us, can be contacted at St Leonard's Police Station on 0131 662 5022 or by e-mail **alan.hopper@lbp.pnn.police.uk** and

PC Vikki Shaw, who can also be contacted at St Leonard's Police Station on 0131 662 5022 or by e-mail **victoria.shaw@lbp.pnn.police.uk**

In emergency, of course, you should ring 999.

► SOUTH EDINBURGH CRIME PREVENTION PANEL

This is a forum, organised by the Crime Prevention Unit of Lothian and Borders Police, on which our Neighbourhood Watch and others in South Edinburgh are represented. If there is anything in particular that you would like raised, please e-mail me at

nisbet@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 still have a few of these which will be available for purchase at the meeting on 6 March 2011.** Neighbourhood Watch window stickers are available **free of charge.**

► MERCHISTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

'Speaking up for the People of Merchiston' is the motto of Merchiston Community Council (MCC), under whose auspices our Neighbourhood Watch was established. MCC is a group of around 21 local residents, all volunteers, whose statutory responsibility is to ascertain, reflect and represent the views of the people living in our area on a wide range of topics: planning, licensing, anti-social behaviour, parks maintenance, recycling, pavement repairs and parking, to name but a few - and to do what we can to get any problems resolved by the relevant

authorities. We are statutory consultees on planning applications and sit on a number of City of Edinburgh Council committees. Other recent specific initiatives have included:

- enabling two very active Residents' Associations to get established and supporting their fight against unsuitable development;
- influencing plans for the refurbishment of East Harrison Park;
- mounting our 'Big Sing' at the Eric Liddell Centre which saw Grant Stott 'switching on' the Christmas lights, and Songworks and one of George Watson's Choirs sing festive songs followed by festive refreshments.

All MCC meetings are open to the public. The next ones are at 7.00pm on Tuesday

- 15th February in the Merchiston Tennis and Bowling Club, Polwarth Terrace
- 22nd March in St Michael's Parish Church Hall, Slateford Road
- 17th May in The Eric Liddell Centre – our AGM
- 21st June in Polwarth Parish Church Hall

For all sorts of useful information please visit our website **www.merchistoncc.org.uk** or email **secretary@merchistoncc.org.uk**

Ian Doig is a member of both MCC and our Neighbourhood Watch and provides a useful link between the two organisations whose aims and activities have in common that they serve the interests of local residents.

Dr Mairianna Clyde is MCC Chair (chair@merchistoncc.org.uk)

Anne Craig is MCC Secretary (secretary@merchistoncc.org.uk)

► **EMERGENCY CONTACT FORMS**

Street Co-ordinators continue to supply and collect *Emergency Contact Forms*. These are a means (entirely voluntary and confidential) of providing details of any relatives/lawyer/other contact who 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 Coordinator if you would like a form or they can be obtained from our website in either Word or Adobe PDF format.

► **AND FINALLY**

Again, we are extremely grateful to local Estate Agents **Hunters Residential** (part of **Gillespie Macandrew LLP Solicitors**) for covering the cost of the printing our Newsletter. Also to Nevil Hopley for arranging for the copying to be done at **George Watson's College** and to both Nevil and Linda Alston (who also maintains the distribution list) for their patience in finalising and formatting the Newsletter. 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 the meeting on 6 March 2011.**

Yours faithfully,
Nisbet Gallacher

Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and Chair.
e-mail: **nisbet@neighbourwatch.org.uk**

► **SUMMARY OF RELEVANT POLICE TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR OUR AREA:**

St Leonard's Police Station Incident Centre: 0131 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.

Safer Neighbourhood Officer PC Alan Hopper: 0131 662 5022 or by e-mail

alan.hopper@lbp.pnn.police.uk

Safer Neighbourhood Officer PC Vikki Shaw: 0131 662 5022 or by e-mail

victoria.shaw@lbp.pnn.police.uk

► *A Word from our Sponsor*

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