

Community Beat Officer Report & Neighbourhood Watch Bulletin

February 2006

New Milton and area

Last month's report for December began with a report on the whole year of 2005. Figures were quoted that showed that reported crime fell by 35% during the year against the figure for 2004. We begin 2006 aiming to reduce crime even further, but certainly intent on at least maintaining the lower level of crime we achieved last year.

January has got us off to a good start with reported crime down a shade (approx 5%) even on last January's low figure of 187 reports. For those reading this report for the first time it would be useful for you to know that January 2004 saw 312 reports.

'Police speak' revealed

The question has been asked, 'What is the difference between 'reported crime' and 'recorded crime'? - The former being regularly used in this report. Is this some police attempt to mask the true figures? Not at all! The answer is, that it is a little ironic that a term we have used in an attempt to demonstrate a more open and honest approach to our statistics should, in itself, be perceived to be a smokescreen! We have resisted referring to our figures as 'recorded' crime because of the implication that they tell the whole story, when clearly much crime, particularly minor crime, goes unreported. So, 'reported' crime, is crime of which we have become aware, not only as a result of calls from the public, but also crime discovered directly by the police. Our 'reported' figures accept that the true crime figure is higher. However, there is value in the figures we quote, because, whilst not telling the whole story, they do demonstrate trends for less serious matters. More serious matters such as burglary, serious physical/sexual assault, robbery and vehicle crime do get reported and so the figures for these offences do more accurately reflect the true situation.

Force policy is to encourage the public to report crime, and we have been taking every opportunity to do that for some time now, and more crime is being reported, particularly low level crime. Why do we do this? Well, unless we know what is happening, and where, we cannot respond to it. The down side for us in encouraging the public to report crime is that our figures are consequently higher than they would otherwise be. It is important that the public understand the figures we quote and draw the correct conclusion from them. We do appreciate that this involves an element of trust, and to that end we are as open about the extent of crime in new Milton as we can be.

Juvenile nuisance and anti-social behaviour

The one area in which we have seen a marked increase in the number of calls from the public is in respect of juvenile nuisance and anti-social behaviour. The important thing to note at the outset is that they are not one and the same thing as far as our ability to deal with them is concerned. Unfortunately, in the public eye, they very often are confused and combined. We have some very useful tools in our box to deal with anti-social behaviour and have some experience now in using them to good effect. We have successfully dealt with offending groups and individuals in the recent past and are confident that wherever, and whenever, such behaviour occurs we can repeat our success. However, it is a different story when we receive complaints of 'nuisance', as in this area we do not have the same sort of powers. Whilst the complainant may consider the nuisance to be 'anti-social' I'm afraid that doesn't make it so as far as our ability to deal with some of these issues is concerned. It is a subjective matter very often.

The Crime & Disorder Act defines anti-social behaviour as:

'..behaviour that has caused, or is likely to cause harassment, alarm and distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the complainant.'

As a general rule, anti-social behaviour needs to include an identifiable offence, however minor, which is to the detriment of the community, and yet very often, the substance of calls received amount only to 'nuisance.' To illustrate this point, a recent study of calls about behaviour on the Recreation Ground showed that over a three week period 36 calls were received. Of these, 21 referred only to 'groups' of youths who had gathered or to 'noise' from groups of youths. Only 8 calls spoke of behaviour that might have resulted in a recordable offence, and therefore, behaviour that might be considered 'anti-social.' The gathering of groups of youths is not in itself an offence, and even the noise they might make is often a difficult issue for us to effectively deal with. More often than not, these types of situations are reported to the police and to the Town Council as 'anti-social behaviour' and our

inability to solve the problem once and for all is seen as a failure. Of course we do respond to nuisance calls and we do our best to resolve those situations by advice, and encouragement to those involved to behave and to be considerate of others. However, it would be a help to us if the public realised the difference between nuisance and anti-social behaviour, and appreciated our limited options in some of these situations.

The Town centre – PC Steve Jennings

There were a total of 40 reported crimes for the Town Centre during January which compares to 34 reports in January 2005. There is no one category of crime that accounts for the increase on last year's figure. There were 4 more theft reports, 4 more damage reports and 2 more assaults this year.

Juvenile nuisance

I reported last month that one evening of disorder on Friday 23/12 marked an otherwise quiet holiday period. That weekend was the first of three consecutive weekends that saw varying degrees of nuisance and disorder which was centred on the Recreation Ground. Over those three weekends, which took us into early January, there were a total of 10 people arrested arising out of four separate incidents. Because of this resurgence in disorder extra resources were targeted on the Rec. but there was no repeat of similar behaviour in the second half of January.

In January I attended a multi-agency meeting that meets periodically to discuss youth behaviour on the Rec. There was a minority view expressed at that meeting that the issue of anti-social behaviour never seemed to be settled for good. As somebody who has to deal with these issues on the frontline, I can understand the frustration of never appearing to get to the bottom of the problem. Unfortunately, it is in the nature of all crime and disorder, that any measures taken to combat a situation will only be successful for a season – we always hope for a long season! There will always be the 'next generation', and in the context of criminal behaviour, a 'generation' tends to be somewhere in the region of 12 -18 months. We gauge our success not only by whether the problem at any given time is solved or reduced, but by whether our actions result in specific individuals no longer being part of the problem. The youths who were causing trouble in the Rec. in the last quarter of 2004 are not amongst the group currently mis-behaving, and that has to be seen as a success. We can justifiably expect to be able to deal with this year's crop of miscreants as we were able to deal with last year's; we have some effective powers and procedures and we are better practised at using them. BUT, we will have to go through this process periodically.

Damage

There were 7 incidents of damage during January. A shop window at the top of the town was broken during the early hours of the 17/01, but there were no witnesses and the damage was discovered the next morning. The only other incident worthy of mention is that residents in the area of Yew Tree Court, in lower Station Rd, have been subjected to the attention of youths who have caused minor damage, and other nuisance, such as ringing doorbells etc. It is thought that the youths involved, possibly three lads on cycles without lights, come through from Eastlands via Newlands Rd. If anybody can assist in identifying these boys I would be glad to hear about it.

Assaults

After a surprising total of just one minor assault, and that on a police officer, during December in the town centre, January has seen a total of 10 reports. Of these, 4 were either between family members, neighbours or children. Four more were sustained during arrests, and of the remaining 2, 1 was between youths on the Rec one evening, and it is only the last which is of particular concern. That incident was an attack on a young woman walking home through the Rec after midnight on the 13/01. Although the woman did not sustain serious injury she was grabbed, and was badly shaken by the experience. As relatively safe as New Milton town is, I would advise woman not to take short cuts across isolated and dark areas at night when alone. The attacker was described as being in his 20's and about 5ft 10in tall and of medium build. He wore a dark coloured 'hoodie.' Any information concerning this incident would be appreciated.

Milford and Barton – PC Del Jones

During January there were 24 reported crimes for the Milford and Barton on Sea area. This compares to 67 reports in January 2005 and 46 reports in December.

Assault

For the month of January only five reports of assault were received for my Policing area, one of which related to an alleged fight outside the Red Lion Public House in Milford Village in the early hours of New Years Day. However, despite Officers being on scene within minutes of the call there was no sign of any disturbance and no persons have since made any complaints to the Police regarding that incident. Of the remaining four reported assaults, two were as a result of the same incident at Hoburne Naish, enquiries are still ongoing in relation to this matter.

Burglary

There has been a reduction in dwelling burglaries reported this month, with only four reports as opposed to seven last month. Three of the four burglaries occurred in Barton, and two of these were unoccupied houses. In Milford, offenders entered a dwelling whilst the occupants were away overnight. They gained entry through the conservatory, and whilst inside stole items of jewellery, china and militaria. In Barton, the offenders attempted to force open a double glazed window but failed and then fled empty handed.

Theft

There were reports of theft this month, including one where an Officer on patrol saw a male riding a cycle without lights and in an erratic manner. The Officer spoke to the male who could not account for his possession of the cycle and as a result, the male was arrested on suspicion of theft of the cycle.

Vehicle Crime

Overnight on the 28th/29th of January a set of number plates were removed from a vehicle in Barton. A vehicle in Milford on Sea was targeted by thieves three times in a fortnight whilst it was parked in the High St. Items, to a total value of £250, were removed from the vehicle without causing any damage. If you have any information about this or any other crime you can call Crime Stoppers in confidence on 0800 555 111.

Although there were only 24 recorded crimes in Barton and Milford during the month of January, Police also dealt with a range of non crime incidents. These incidents included various disputes, incidents involving mental health issues, missing person enquires, road traffic collisions, sudden deaths and suspicious callers. As Beat Officers we are also expected to attend meetings of local organisations such as the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Watch. At a recent meeting I was asked to explain what Police Officers did during the course of the day following recent reports of falling crime in the New Milton area. I hope the above will demonstrate that we do not just deal with crime but a whole range of social and community issues.

New Milton West – WPC Chrissie BENFIELD

During January 2006 there were 37 reported crimes for my beat. This compares with 29 reports in January 2005, and 34 reports in December.

The Bridge

There have been several "Public order" reports concerning the Davis Field Bridge and the area of Pleasance way. It is apparent that youths are beginning to congregate here again causing concern in the community.

I would ask that you continue to report any anti-social behaviour in this particular area so that we can tackle it pro-actively, and as promptly as possible.

Theft

There have been 5 theft reports taken this month, compared to the 4 in December. Two out of the 5 reports were the theft of pedal cycles, both of which had been left insecure. There was been no pattern in the dates, times or locations of these thefts.

Assaults

The number of assault reports taken this month has remained fairly consistent with December's figures. In December 5 reports were taken, compared to the 8 reports this January. Out of the 8 reports, 5 aggrieved parties knew and could identify their aggressor. On the 22/01/06 an assault occurred at the Chewton Glen Hotel when a guest was punched in the face by an unknown male. The male left before Police arrived and has not been identified. If you have any information that may assist with the identification of this male then please contact either my self or crime stoppers in confidence.

Criminal Damage

There has been a reduction in the number of criminal damage reports taken this month, a total of 6, which compares to 17 recorded in December. Two out of the 5 reports resulted in the offender being identified and arrested. Between the 20th and 21st January there were 2 incidents in Compton Road, one resident had their fence damaged and at present the offender(s) are yet to be identified.

New Milton East – PC Sam BLAKE-WATKINS

There were 46 reported crimes for the Beat in January which compares 34 in December and 36 for the same period in 2005.

Criminal Damage

Police received 7 reports of damage in January; all of these were damage to cars. Two cars in Manor Road were 'keyed'; a car had its rear windscreen smashed in Earlswood Park, and in that instance, the offender was located by Police. Another car was 'keyed' in Ashley Common Road and a motor bike was set on fire in Lower Ashley Road. Finally, a third vehicle was scratched in Woodvale Gardens. Most of these occurrences happened during darkness, please call Police if you hear or see anything suspicious.

Burglary

There were four reported burglaries during January. In Marston Road a small pain of glass was smashed in the front door and access gained. A back door of a property in Ashley Common Road which had been left insecure allowed a thief to enter and steal a handbag. In Oak Road, a conservatory window was smashed and then entry gained to the house through a bathroom window. Please continue to be vigilant, lock doors, windows and leave lights on when appropriate to deter, and hopefully stop, burglars. The evenings are gradually getting lighter which will have an increasing effect on the number of burglaries.

Internet Theft

An attempt to steal from an internet bank account was reported. The aggrieved had not maintained his 'firewall' and a 'hacker' managed to get all the passwords and codes for the account from the computer remotely. Please ensure that you have a firewall installed on you computer and that you keep it operational if you have sensitive records stored.

Vehicle Crime

In Derwent Rd some youths attempted to steal a car but were disturbed. Another vehicle in Earlswood Park had its satellite navigation system stolen after the offenders smashed a window to gain access to it. A car door was forced in Hilton Road and a stereo and speakers were stolen. Please remove or conceal items of value when leaving vehicles unattended. If you have an expensive radio or CD system, consider garaging your car or investing in an alarm system.

HORDLE & SWAY – incorporating: EVERTON, BASHLEY, TIPTOE and HINTON. - PC Dave WOOLFREY

This year has started positively with 23 reported crimes, the same as for December, and compares with 28 for the same period last year.

I was able to take the mobile office out to Sway and Hordle at the chilly end of January. They were particularly quiet visits, although those who came for a chat had very few grumbles.

Assault

On the 15/01, in the early hours of the morning, a young woman who was walking home alone in Hordle was grabbed from behind by an unknown male. She managed to run off and apart from being shaken was unhurt. The attacker was described as 40yrs, medium build with dark curly hair and a beard wearing a brown jacket and dark trousers. Any information concerning this man would be appreciated. Crimestoppers 0800 555 111

Dwelling Burglary

Two dwelling burglaries were reported this month. A house in South Sway Lane was entered and cash was stolen. An attempt was made on a property in Old Christchurch Road at Everton, where fortunately, entry was not gained and nothing was taken.

Non Dwelling Burglary

A partly built new property in Tiptoe was targeted by someone with little luck or sense. After removing the boiler from the property, the offender moved his vehicle closer to the property on the site and became stuck in the mud there. Both vehicle and boiler were left abandoned. The investigation is ongoing. A garden shed in the Shirley Holms area was broken into and ski wear is believed to have been taken.

Theft

Just two thefts were reported in January. An excavator bucket was stolen from a building site in Pitmore Lane overnight on the 15/01, and a set of alloy wheels were taken from a property, again off Pitmore Lane, on the night of the 23/01.

Vehicle Crime

There were six cases of theft from unattended motor vehicles. In four of these cases valuables had been left in the cars. The property taken, included a lap-top computer, two handbags and a camera. Two of the vehicles had their radios removed. These incidents occurred in various locations across the beat without any particular pattern.

If you would like to make any comment regarding the content of the Bulletin, or you have information that would enable us to target our patrols to address your local problem, your input would be welcomed. You can leave a message for either PS Dave TANNER or PC Steve JENNINGS on 0845 045 4545.

**If you have information about any crime you can call 'Crimestoppers'
0800 555 111**
