

New Milton Police Community Beat Officers

Neighbourhood Watch Bulletin

October 2004

New Milton and area.

When we promised to have a new look at the N.W Bulletin with a view to publishing something which was more worthwhile, it was not anticipated that it would take so long to actually get the job done. So, with apologies for the delay, this is the 'new look' Bulletin. I hope you will find that it gives you a greater idea of what has been happening in your particular area and what our response has been. It is anticipated that, at first, we will aim to produce this report on a monthly basis, although we might wish to be flexible on this, depending on what we have to report to you in any given month. If, between Bulletins, information needs to be passed to you that cannot wait then a short supplementary Bulletin will be sent out

As this is the first 'new format' bulletin it would be appropriate to give an overall summary of the year to date and make comparison with the same period in 2003. Unfortunately we will always have crime to deal with, but to enable us to keep it in perspective it is useful to make the comparison.

Total reported crime is down this year by 6%, which, although a marginal figure, is going in the right direction. In all the major categories of crime, with the exception of burglaries, we have seen well into double figure percentage falls. That means fewer assaults, thefts and vehicles broken into. It means we had less damage and fewer shops and offices broken into. The only major category of crime that has seen an increase is that of burglary – 11 more instances on last years figure of 79 for the same period. This is of concern, particularly as we have seen great reductions in previous years, and we still have the likely busy 'pre-Christmas' period to go through.

We are always aware that for those on the receiving end of crime, one burglary or one assault, is one too many. However, it is important that we get across to the public the wider picture. This will counter an often inaccurate perception of crime which generates fear in the community, particularly amongst our older folk. It is also an encouragement, not only to police officers, but also to those in the community who play their part in co-operation with us, to see the fruit of their efforts.

The Town centre – PC2291 Steve Jennings

Crime figures for the year to date in the town centre largely mirrors the wider situation, with fewer assaults, incidents of damage and car related crime. Reported incidents of public disorder have also fallen slightly and house burglaries in the town area are down. We have seen an increase in shop and office burglaries, the number for these boosted by a recent spate of incidents – more on that a little later. Altogether, crime in the town area overall has fallen by nearly 10% on last year to date. Since April this year every effort has been made to put more high visibility patrols in the town in addition to me as the Beat Officer.

Recreation Ground

Between the months of March and July this year residents and shop proprietors in the vicinity of the Recreation Ground suffered from the disorder and anti-social behaviour of a group of twenty or so youths, both male and female, who were in the habit of congregating near to the Skate Board Park. We received complaints of damage, intimidation and general loutish behaviour. We did respond to those complaints and targeted those involved, putting much time and effort into the process, often at the cost of policing elsewhere. Although I am sure that those on the receiving end of this anti-social behaviour often thought little was being done, we had, by the end of July, given this group sufficient reason to stop congregating in this area. This was achieved through making arrests where able, the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices and the seizure of vehicles. On the 15/09 a joint meeting was held with the Town Council, landowners and interested parties, to discuss steps that could be taken to prevent a re-occurrence of this year's experience.

Office and shop Burglaries

Since early August we have suffered a series of night-time burglaries of office/shop premises in the town – 11 incidents to date. The offender forces entry, usually through small windows at the back of premises, and is

looking for cash. There is a possibility that the offender is from out of town and may be parking a car and then prowling around. This is likely to be in the early hours, and so sightings of suspicious persons are likely to be few and far between, but we do need folk to ring in if anyone is seen at night going to or, coming from behind, shop premises.

Cash Machine Crime

New Milton has, throughout this year, suffered attacks by criminals who have attached devices to our ATM's which have collected bank card details, allowing cloned cards to be made and then subsequently used to empty accounts. The devices are cleverly made and unobtrusive and can easily be overlooked when using the machine. It usually consists of a dummy card slot which is affixed over the machine's own slot and which allows the card to pass through into the machine and for the transaction to be made, while recording the card's magnetic strip details. At the same time a very small camera mounted in the roof of the ATM records the number being punched into the key-board. The customer, unaware that his card details have been obtained, knows nothing until he discovers that his account has been emptied. We seized such a device in July from the Abbey ATM and are hopeful, as a result of forensic examination that an arrest will follow. The offenders are often not far away from the machine, ready to remove their device should a customer become suspicious. We know that some of those committing this crime are of eastern European origin, and in a couple of incidents two or three people were involved, including a woman. We all need to take particular care when using the machines and to report to bank staff or to the police if anything appears unusual. It is good practice to get into the habit of covering your own hand when punching in the pin numbers.

Shoplifting

Although reports of theft are down by nearly a quarter on last year, New Milton is still seen to be an easy target by thieves from outside our area. This is probably largely due to the lack of CCTV cameras in our main street. Consequently, in addition to our own homegrown variety, we also have thieves using the train to come and go to do their shoplifting in our town. Any suspicious persons or behaviour seen in the town or at the Railway Station, if reported at the time, would be gratefully received.

Cycling on the pavement

Although regarded by the offenders as a minor matter, it is still the subject of many complaints. We have been running a campaign for several years now whereby offenders get one warning which is followed up by a formal letter which makes it clear that any subsequent offence is likely to result in prosecution. This campaign is particularly useful for dealing with juveniles who are not eligible for a Fixed Penalty Notice. I continue to give attention to this offence when on patrol.

Milford and Barton – PC3075 Del Jones

I took over this beat in January 2004 from PC MITCHELL, now retired, who had responsibility for Milford and Everton, and from WPC BROWN, who has moved to Lyndhurst, who had responsibility for Barton. It was seen as an appropriate time to amalgamate the two beats.

The level of crime in the area for the first nine months of the year, compared with 2003, shows a 5% increase overall. There has been a dramatic fall in the number of reported assaults and public disorder offences, and reports of damage, theft and vehicle crime remain at the same level. The increase has been in reported offences of burglary – which include beach hut break-ins – and it is these that have boosted the crime figures for this year.

Burglary

Barton and Milford have traditionally been targeted by burglars and the figures for this year to date do show that we have started to be targeted again. We have had some success recently with two burglars being disturbed in Keyhaven by officers on patrol. A quantity of property was recovered and a vehicle seized. Enquiries are in hand and an arrest is anticipated. Also, as a result of information from a member of the public, another burglary came to light and has since been investigated and a male arrested. **Your information is invaluable.**

Damage

We have had a recent spate of damage reports both in Milford and Barton. Residents in Barton Court Rd seem to have been particularly affected by those making their way home from local hostelrys. Police patrols have been asked to pay attention to this area at the relevant times. In Milford two youths were recently detained for

causing damage to an unoccupied property, and when they were dealt with a number of other offences were cleared up- this too was a the result of information received from the public.

A number of people have expressed concern about the continual damage caused to the Kingsland Rest Home in Milford. I am in the process of negotiating with the developers to have the building properly secured.

Beach Huts

The problem of policing the beach huts has been one that has faced previous Beat Officers over the years. A high number of reported crimes in Milford and Barton are in relation to beach hut crime, and as previously said account for the increase in the crime figures for this beat. Local officers and members of the Special Constabulary have been tasked to patrol these areas on a regular basis in an attempt to disrupt anti-social behaviour and vandalism. The Crime Reduction Officer at Lyndhurst will also be visiting the area shortly to offer advice on security of huts.

Vehicle Crime

There has been very little vehicle crime in either area reported in recent months. However, on my patrols I still regularly see valuables on display in unattended vehicles and, more often, vehicles left insecure. Please help to get the message out there that fighting such crime is a team effort and that folk need to limit the opportunities for crime by keeping handbags and other valuables out of sight and vehicles locked.

Milford village – Parking

There continues to be a great number of complaints about parking in the centre of the village. Particular areas of concern are the junction of Sea Rd with the High St, and also Park Rd with Church Hill. Despite the issue of several £30 Fixed Penalty Notices the regulations are still being ignored. Our records show that the majority of culprits are local people!! If we don't abide by the law in our own village how can we expect visitors to!

I intend in future to hold a 'Beat Surgery' once a month – at a venue still to be decided. The aim of the service is to provide a point of contact for those unable to get to the Police Station in person for advice, information or just a chat to get to know the Beat Officer.

New Milton West – PC2954 Colin Stratton

I recently took over as the community Beat Officer for the North Milton Estate and surrounding area in June 2004, after serving at Southampton Central and Bitterne Police stations. Total crime has fallen over the same period in 2003 – 16% down with falls in all categories with the exception of 'burglary', where we have had just one more than last year, and 'drugs' where our pro-active stance has resulted in recorded drugs offences more than doubling because offences were recorded when arrests were made.

Railway Footbridge

Since the work on the railway footbridge linking Davis Field to the North Milton Estate, where a protective 'cage' was installed, the reported incidents of harassment, nuisance and violence have substantially dropped. Regular patrols indicate that the problems caused by large groups congregating in this area have diminished. There was recently one reported incident of objects being thrown onto the line and three juveniles were arrested and successfully prosecuted.

North Milton Estate

Drug misuse features highly in conversations with residents and we are making a dent into the drug problem on the estate. There have been a number of drug related warrants executed, with quantities of Class A drugs being seized. A number of arrests have been made, and prosecutions are pending. We still need more information on who is active in the area, and information can be passed to us either directly at the Police Station or anonymously through Crimestoppers.

There has been a steady increase in the amount of untaxed vehicles on the estate, particularly along Marryat Rd and in Chatsworth Way. In conjunction with DVLA we are actively targeting these vehicles and the owners are being prosecuted. It is a slow process and at present the police do not have the power to remove these vehicles. Statistics show that a high percentage of untaxed vehicles also have no insurance or MOT, which is more worrying.

Juvenile Nuisance

Now that the evenings are drawing in and the children are back at school, the number of reports about juvenile nuisance has fallen, especially in the Raleigh and Drake Close areas. The NFDC has placed 'No ball game' signs around the estate and we are working with the NFDC to make children aware of the problem and a number of warning letters have been sent to parents.

There are a number of youths on the estate about whom we are collating information and evidence with a view to obtaining Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's). Since this procedure started, the youths being aware that they were under observation, things have quietened down considerably.

Vehicle crime

There has been a recent spate of thefts from motor vehicles, particularly in the Doe Copse Way and Pleasance Way areas. Thieves have targeted vehicles where attractive looking objects have been left in the cars on display overnight. Fortunately, in two cases, the property has been recovered, having been discarded by the offender and we are waiting for results of a forensic examination on these items. Please do what you can, and encourage others, not to leave items of value visible in unattended vehicles.

Industrial Estates

There has been an increase in the number of incidents on Queensway Ind. Est., with premises broken into and damage caused. There have also been thefts, including that of fuel from lorries. Regular patrols are being undertaken in this area, particularly through the night.

New Milton East – PC1229 Ray Gait

As an area Ashley has quite a large population of young people and so it is not surprising that we suffer from the effects of the crime-committing minority. The beat has seen a decrease in theft and vehicle crime over the same period last year, whilst at the same time experiencing a considerable increase in assaults. By far the majority of these are minor juvenile assaults that we have to record and do not reflect on any sudden deterioration in our community. Overall, recorded crime has increased by 24% this year, which is largely due to an influx of juvenile crime displaced by successful police action elsewhere in the New Milton area. My colleagues and I will be addressing this increase by targeting the criminal and loutish minority amongst our young people.

Public order

There has been an increase in the number of reported incidents of disorder, up from 62 to 73 for the same nine-month period of the year. The increase was mainly confined to the area around Ashley Cross where there were two particular houses in which groups of young people were placed by housing associations. Both of these houses have now closed down as a result of pressure from both public and police in conjunction with other agencies working in the area. One of those houses has now reopened with different criteria for its residents. The other house remains closed and it is not known if it will reopen for the purpose of housing young people at this stage. As a result of the closures there has been a significant drop in reported incidents in this area.

The problem of young people and the anti-social behaviour that often follows their gathering in large numbers has not gone away. There is a particular problem within the confines of the Recreation Ground in Ashley at this time with most of the problems created by the misuse of alcohol. The problem is being tackled vigorously by officers seizing alcohol and dispersing groups when possible. There are moves afoot to work with off licences throughout the New Milton area to formalise a plan of action to further restrict the supply of alcohol to juveniles.

Anti-social use of vehicles

There is growing concern over the use made by youths of their motorcycles and cars, which have had an impact on the quality of life of many Ashley residents. We now have new powers that have just made it possible for us to address this anti-social behaviour, powers which have already been exercised and which have resulted in the seizure of two motorcycles. However, we do need the support of the public who we would encourage to report any incidents of careless or inconsiderate riding/driving to the police. We do need members of the community to be prepared to make formal complaints and be prepared, if necessary, to go to court to give evidence – failure to do this makes our job of trying to solve YOUR problem that much more difficult.

Burglary

The figures for this offence show that whilst this offence has only shown a small increase in the Ashley area, elsewhere the number of burglaries is increasing, and there is still the pre-Christmas period ahead of us. I would urge everyone, both to take reasonable precautions to address the security of their own property, and also to be more ready to report to the police any suspicious or unusual behaviour around property, particularly in the evenings.

Hordle and Sway – PC922 Dick Beszant

For some time now the Beats of Hordle and Sway have been combined creating quite a large rural area to cover and includes the villages of Bashley and Hinton.

Reported crime figures for the first nine months of the year show a fall in excess of 37% on 2003. This dramatic drop can largely be put down to high visibility policing, targeting those areas where youths were gathering, and the general decrease in crime across the whole Sector. The only category of crime to show an increase was 'assaults' and these were virtually entirely minor juvenile incidents.

Internet crime

There have been a number of complaints made to the police in recent weeks involving buying and selling on the Internet. Several cases involved items that had been put up for sale generating interest from buyers in Nigeria. Negotiations via email followed with the buyer agreeing to pay the full price and the cost of shipping, which in one incident was £400. With everything agreed the buyer then asks for a 'favour'. He states that that someone owes him some money and that it would assist him if the seller would accept that 'owed' money in the form of a cheque in the seller's name, cash the cheque and having deducted the amount owed for the item bought, plus £50 for doing the buyer a favour, and then forward the balance to the buyer in Nigeria. Sounds like a good deal? Not so good when the bank later informs the seller that the proffered cheque was a counterfeit and that the seller, believing it to be genuine has wired the balance to Mr Bogus in Nigeria!

If you would like to make any comment regarding the content of the Bulletin, your input would be welcomed. You can leave a message for either PS Dave TANNER or PC Steve JENNINGS on 0845 045 4545

'Crimestoppers' – 0800 555 111