



Operation Safer Homes

By Femke van Iperen

Following its latest crackdown on burglary with a new London-wide police campaign, the Metropolitan police are hoping to strengthen its ties with communities to reduce the risk and fear of crime.

Operation Safer Homes was launched in November and aims to protect homes and businesses from burglaries with a co-ordinated response throughout London, targeting burglary 'hotspots'. To help borough detectives, additional Police and Territorial Support Group officers will be deployed.

According to police figures, between 25 and 27 October over 237 suspected burglars were arrested in London and property of the value of around £442,240 was recovered. (In East Finchley, a suspect, 34-year old Kevin James, was charged at Hendon Magistrates Court on 28 October with an East End Road burglary on 26 October.) Commissioner Sir John Stevens said: "These arrests demonstrate our determination to put a stop to the activities of burglars and sends a clear message that anyone committing these crimes can expect to be arrested."

Helping ourselves

The Met, hoping for more community cooperation, offer public advice and information. So, what can we do to help the police and ourselves? Although it's important to remember that break-ins and attacks on people at home are less common than most people think, prevention is worth considering if only for its deterring effect. Alarms are

important and Government statistics have shown that around 60% of burglaries fail with alarmed homes. Alarms, which can be registered with a police "alarm inspectorate", vary from traditional "bells-only" systems to DIY variations, or more expensive monitored alternatives, which are connected to an "alarm receiving centre" for quicker police response.

Locks are important too, and although figures have shown that determined burglars are affected the same by a locked or an unlocked door, it is still wise to do as much as you can. Most DIY shops provide five-lever mortise deadlocks for outside doors, door-hinges need to be robust, a restrictor inside the letterbox will prevent anyone reaching inside for locks, and peep-holes allow you to check before opening. Spare keys should not be left in obvious places, preferably not inside or near your home at all.

Further crime prevention can be found on www.met.police.uk and the BBC's crime prevention website www.bbc.co.uk/crime/prevention. The Met is also using the new campaign to ask the public to call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 to tell police of anyone they believe may be involved in burglary and handling stolen goods.



Tony Benn by Femke van Iperen

Tony Benn Helps the Hospice

By David Hobbs

The chance to hear Tony Benn, veteran Labour politician, speak at Christ's College School ensured a packed hall on 22 October. The event, a fund-raiser for North London Hospice, was a sell out and made in excess of £2,500. Before introducing Tony Benn, Dr. Chris Donovan, the Chair of the Hospice said that it was one of the very few multi-faith hospices in the world and that although it cost £2.4 million a year to run, the government only contributed 18% of the budget. "We feel that perhaps they should support us a little more generously", he said, adding "but the community is extremely generous".

Introduced as a man who has "educated and entertained us for many years" Tony Benn began by paying tribute to the hospice movement. Explaining that his wife, Caroline, had died in a hospice, he praised their work and called on more people to support them.

Democracy

Drawing on his many years of experience he said that the role of people of his age is "to understand the world and to encourage people". He recalled being 10 when he heard Oswald Mosley and that Mosley's politics had frightened him. This, he said, was something that had stayed with him and why he was frightened by some people's attitude to Muslims today. Having lost a brother in the last war, he said that he did not want any more wars.

In a wide ranging talk he spoke about politics, commenting that part of the current problem with politics was that no one listened and that this had helped lead to apathy amongst young people. In his opinion student loans were wrong because they taxed people for being educated, not for being rich. This led him on to the great achievement of the 1945-51 Labour Gov-

ernment, the National Health Service. It was "an incredibly brave thing to do" at a time when the country was practically bankrupt and a shining example of what could be achieved in a democracy.

To Tony Benn there is very little that is more important than democracy and having served as an MP for 51 years he said, "don't belittle democracy" and encouraged people to get involved. As he sees it, progress is change from the bottom up. If people want change then they have to do something about it themselves. "I don't think anyone in power really likes democracy", he said.

Pet Shop Joys

By Diana Cormack

Government proposals recently outlined on the care of pets were regarded by the RSPCA as the biggest advance in animal protection for years. Part of the Animal Welfare Bill includes preventing children under the age of sixteen from buying a pet unless accompanied by an adult. Animal welfare minister Elliot Morley has been quoted as saying that children cannot be trusted to make a decision to buy and care for a pet on their own. At present the age restriction is twelve.

However, this does not apply at Finchley Pets on the corner of Lincoln Road and the High Road. Owner Mike Ryan has always had notices on display stating that under eighteens without an adult will not be sold animals and proof of age could be asked for. All pet sales are recorded in a register and names, addresses and phone numbers are required. Advice and help on the care of the creatures is readily available from Mike and his invaluable assistant, son-in-law Gerry Ryan. They follow their logo "Small Enough to Care" before and after they have made a sale.

Not as a gift

But don't rush round there now expecting to buy a pet as a present, because they prefer not to sell for children during the two weeks before Christmas for


fear that it may not really be wanted and subsequently may not be properly looked after. However, at any other time you can buy fish, birds, rabbits, hamsters, kittens, etc. as well as all the food, housing, accessories and toys that they need.

The pet shop at Lincoln Parade was originally set up by Peggy Darvill's family over forty years ago. Despite the serv-

ice offered, trade is not what it used to be and it would seem that, sadly, some East Finchley pet owners are not shopping locally. Unfortunately, there is currently a dispute with the landlord. The Bill providing the powers for changes in animal welfare is unlikely to reach Parliament before 2004. Let us hope that, by then, Finchley Pets is still successfully trading.

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