



A thief smashed the window of this car in East Finchley and snatched the satellite navigation system.

Smash and grabs are on the rise

Thefts of valuable gadgets from cars have doubled in the UK in a year, according to a survey, but Barnet Police are fighting back with a message to the car thieves: 'Beware when you steal from a motor vehicle; it may be a police car.'

Barnet Police have introduced a number of decoy cars across the borough containing smart security systems to gather evidence against anyone who steals from the vehicle. This evidence will assist in more successful prosecutions.

Satellite navigation systems have become a favourite target of the thieves with 814 stolen in Barnet in the last 12 months, nearly a quarter of all thefts from vehicles.

One third of owners admit to leaving the cradle of their Sat Nav machine on display, and 10 per cent leave the whole system in place, even when their vehicle is parked in public. The simple message from police is: "Don't".

It's not just Sat Navs. At 41 per cent, the number of respondents who said electrical equipment had been taken from their car was twice as high as last year. Stolen items included laptops, stereos, MP3 players and mobile phones.

Remove your valuables.

The research, commissioned by Autoglass, went on to say that 15 per cent of vehicle owners leave their valuables in full view and 28 per cent think that hiding things under the seats or in the door pockets is good enough

protection.

Detective Superintendent Richard Walton of Barnet Police said: "Theft from vehicles is still a prolific crime and the high priced gadgets often left inside vehicles in full view or poorly hidden in pockets or under seats is an increasing worry.

"I urge everybody to be responsible with possessions. Leaving your Sat Nav on full view in the window of your car is leaving yourself vulnerable to becoming a victim. Take it with you. Together we can make Barnet a safer place."

For more information about crime prevention go to www.met.police.uk/barnet.

Is history your thing?

The Finchley Society's Local History Group wants to expand its activities.

Anyone interested in getting involved, or who knows about any project to do with Finchley's history which the Society may not be aware of, should contact the Group's secretary Margaret Cullen on 020 8346 2091 or at margaretcullen@f2s.com.

Leaders of the pack in short supply

By Chris Haslam

It's quiet. Too quiet, but they're out there in the dark and they're coming. A single searchlight sweeps the barbed wire, scanning for wily infiltrators. They're almost close enough to feel their breath. Suddenly the searchlight finds one. "Gotcha!" cry the sentries and the enemy soldier shrugs as he gives himself up.

South Africa, 1901? The Second Boer War? North London, 2006, actually, and it's the 8th Muswell Hill Cub Pack playing their favourite game. Okay, the barbed wire is a barricade of stacked-up chairs and the searchlight is a bike lamp but when the lights are switched off and the collective imagination of 30 eight to ten-year-olds is switched on we could be behind the lines at Mafeking, back where scouting started.

Colonel Robert Baden-Powell brought the idea home and in 1907 started a movement that in its centenary year boasts nearly 30 million members worldwide. Starting with Beaver Cubs at six, boys and girls move up to Cub Scouts when they're eight, Scouts at 11 and Explorer Scouts at 14.

The 8th Muswell Hill has 33 Cubs and 32 Scouts on its books, but there are another 42 on the waiting list. With no troop in N2, East Finchley boys hike to Muswell Hill for their Scouting.

Ten-year-old Joseph is one of them. As leader of Black Six, he says he can spot a fellow cub even out of uniform. "It's easy," he says. "Cubs are more confident and have more abilities

and more adventures." In just one year, Harry, also from East Finchley has been camping, learned rifle shooting, archery, rock-climbing, kayaking and the fine art of making rockets.

Could you do your best?

The good news is that a new Scout troop is being set up in Muswell Hill, but there are no plans to establish a troop here in East Finchley. In Scouting's centenary year, perhaps that could change: all it takes is a handful of parents to be prepared to do their best.

Subscriptions vary from pack to pack: the 8th Muswell Hill, based in the United Reform Church Hall on Queens Avenue, charges £15 per term and the 9th, who meet at St. Peter-le-Poer Church in Colney Hatch Lane, £17.50. Uniform, comprising sweatshirt and cargo pants, costs £25. Scarf and woggle are free. Information and contact details of local packs at www.scoutbase.org.uk

Crash closes NCR junction

The slip road exit from the A406 to the A1000 opposite Strawberry Vale was closed on Monday 15 January after a serious crash occurred at 8.15am.

A white Peugeot 106 collided with a grey Vauxhall Zafira. The roof of the Peugeot had to be cut off by the fire brigade in order to free the woman driver, who was taken by ambulance to Barnet General Hospital. Her injuries were not life-threatening. The road was re-opened just under an hour later.

Philip King

THE ARCHER team was shocked and saddened to learn last month of the death of Philip King from cancer after a short illness.

Philip spoke up for local people as chairman of The Walks Residents' Association and was the driving force behind the campaign to protect the Stanley Road Playing Field from housing developers.

We will publish a full obituary in our next edition and in the meantime pass our condolences to Philip's family and friends.

How to discover your inner genius

Life coach John Williams, who lives and works in East Finchley, suggests a seven-step plan to help unlock our creative forces.

Have you noticed what a creative place East Finchley is? We have the East Finchley Open artists; writers, musicians and entrepreneurs; a loyal following for our independent cinema; a new art gallery and a community that's active about local issues.

Creativity isn't just for artists. We can all develop and use it in every aspect of life, from work to health to relationships. Here is my seven-step plan to enable anyone to discover their inner creative genius.

Try these steps for better results on your next challenge, whether it's writing a novel, tackling a new project, or working towards a goal you've set for 2007.

First clarify the problem you are trying to solve or the outcome you want to achieve. "A problem well defined is half solved," said psychologist John Dewey.

Secondly, work on your project a little every day, ideally first thing in the morning. In between, your subconscious will work on it. Aid it by doing something physical and simple: walking, gardening or washing up. The creative process often resembles sculpture, chipping away and refining something over time until you get the finished work.

Thirdly, immerse yourself in the topic. Watch videos, read books and visit exhibitions related to your project.

Fourthly, creativity researcher

Dr Robert Epstein says those we consider creative simply have good "capturing skills": they take all their ideas seriously and record them. So take a notebook and pen everywhere, in bed, on the train or at work, and note down any ideas.

The fifth step is to think 'quantity' not 'quality'. Generate as many ideas as possible, write for a set period of time per day, or take a set number of photos per week. This removes the pressure of getting it 'right' and generates more creative results. Later, go back and edit or choose your best results.

The sixth tip is to brainstorm with friends or colleagues if you get stuck, or to talk aloud to someone for 30 minutes while they simply listen. If on your own, try writing continuously on the topic for 10 minutes and see what comes out.

And finally, celebrate! Always acknowledge your successes when you crack a problem or reach a goal. Reward yourself and show your results to colleagues or friends.

Go to www.coachingcreativity.net for John's email newsletter.

Love the environment

Show your love for the environment this Valentine's Day by continuing to recycle everything you can. Currently, recycling in the UK cuts the amount of CO2 released into the atmosphere by 10-15 million tonnes a year. This is comparable to taking 3.5 million cars off the road.

Recycling from home can be done through Barnet's Black Box service, which collects glass bottles and jars, newspapers, junk mail and magazines, food tins and drink cans, aerosols, car and household batteries, foil, mobile phones, shoes, textiles, engine oil and Yellow Pages.

The more items we recycle in Barnet, the less rubbish has to be sent to landfill sites. For further information about the scheme, contact ECT Recycling by telephone on 020 8371 3670, by email at barnet@ectrecycling.co.uk or visit their website at www.barnet.gov.uk/recycle-from-home.

Did you know..?

... An average Briton will spend £1,537,380 during his or her lifetime, a survey from insurer Prudential suggests.

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