



Questions over policing as crime rates rise

By Janet Maitland

Nearly 100 people attended a public meeting with Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe at Christ's College Finchley, East End Road, on 1 February.

Facts and figures

The commissioner said that crime had increased in London by 4.3% in 2015 compared with 2014. However, Barnet crime went up by 6.4%.

Furthermore, violence with injury was up by 7% in Barnet (London up 6%), theft from a person up 16% (London up 9%) and criminal damage up 8% (London up 6%). Even when London saw a reduction for some crimes, Barnet levels increased. Robberies were up 11% (London down 4%) theft from cars up 6% (London down 4%) and residential burglaries up by 4% (London down 9%).

dential burglaries increased by nearly 16%, up from 38 to 44.

Neighbourhood policing

When asked if the reduction in the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) over the last few years had had an impact on burglary and violent crime, the commissioner said there was no evidence of a connection. "If there was, it would be evident across London. However, we are not in a good place at the moment. But I think there's a reason to be hopeful about neighbourhood policing when the new borough arrangements are sorted out over the next few weeks," he said.

Sir Bernard was referring to the possible merging of Borough Command Units (BCUs), which he first mooted last October as a likely consequence of impending government cuts. This is still on the table although the government cuts were not made.

Warning on cuts

However, Andrew Dismore, London Assembly member for Barnet and Camden, told THE ARCHER that George Osborne's announcement last December that the police cuts were stopped was misleading. "The Met still has to make £400 million of cuts over the next four years," he said. "This is bound to affect local policing, but Sir Bernard has yet to spell out how these cuts will be made. It is almost certain that Barnet police will soon be merged with Harrow and Brent to save money."

A police spokesperson informed THE ARCHER that the Met 'won't be making any decisions until the new Mayor takes office'.



Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, speaking at Christ's College. Photo Mike Coles

Questions about burglary rates dominated the meeting. "We need to put the 4% increase into perspective," said Sir Bernard. "It's 116 additional burglaries, just over two a week." He confirmed that the clear-up rate for burglary was 3%, adding that nationally it's "less than two digits".

There were 98 residential burglaries in East Finchley in 2015 and 112 in 2014, a decrease of 12.5%. Non-resi-



Closing in: The formation is almost complete as the last few wingsuiters fly into their slot at the back. Photo by Dan Dupuis.

Skydivers fall into place

When we last reported on skydiver Brian Cumming (THE ARCHER, October 2015) he was on the point of travelling to the States to attempt to break two world records in the skies above California.

Well, the news is that Brian and his fellow skydivers absolutely smashed them both. In the first, after many failed jumps, they managed to pull 202 people together in a massive formation as they plummeted earthwards. The previous record was 136.

Then after a 10-day gap Brian was part of a 61-strong team which effectively set the wingsuit formation record, using their 'flying squirrel' style suits that gave them much more control over their speed and direction. The previous record in this type of dive was set aside because the rules of the jump have since been tightened.

Back to earth

Brian, 38, a former resident of Deanery Close, N2, now living in Regents Park Road, N3, said the whole trip was a "very emotional" experience, coming as it did just two years after he underwent major organ surgery.

"It was a huge relief to achieve both records," he said. "We had a goal and committed a lot to it, travelling all that way. It

was tough but it all clicked into place. The wingsuit record is a new discipline and I'm sure the record will grow very quickly in the future."

Brian's back on terra firma

but he doesn't stay there for long. He is qualified as an instructor in the UK and US and runs his own skydiving school. Find out more at www.askmeaboutskydiving.com.



Thin air: Wingsuiters exit from the skyvan. Photo by Dan Dupuis

Meditation - is it for you?

Retired dental surgeon and local resident Eddy Levin leads mindfulness sessions through EFAB after studying many meditation systems for the past 50 years.

Eddy says: "Many people today feel stressed, harassed, agitated, overworked, or that they are underachieving. Meditation can benefit people suffer-

ing from these modern lifestyle problems.

"I know many people feel unsure about whether meditation is for them, wondering

if it is something which only hippies or spiritual searchers can get into. It is not, it is great for everyone. I would say to people who are unsure, come along, try it out."

Eddy's classes run at the Archer Academy, Eagans Close, N2, on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 - 9pm. The next set of six sessions starts on Tuesday 5 April; the last class is on 10 May. Each session costs £4 to cover room hire, materials and refreshments. Contact Lisa on 07909 998453 or email us@efab.org.uk.

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