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***Royston Rural Watch, March 2019***

PC Mark Ellwood 371 & PCSO 6531 Penny Tomsett, PCSO Chris Brabrook 6522

Sgt Jon Vine 1841

***Our Non - Emergency Number 101***

**On the Beat** –

Royston church fire not suspicious

•Extensive investigations have concluded the fire was not suspicious.

•Every possible line of enquiry has been followed up.

•Local officers still working closely with the church to enable them to function.

Following an extensive investigation in partnership with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, officers from Hertfordshire Constabulary have concluded that the fire which destroyed part of the roof and bell tower of a church in Royston was not arson.

The fire at St John the Baptist Church started on December 9, 2018 and early indications suggested that the fire might have been started deliberately or as a result of lead being removed from the church roof.

However as the investigation continued it became apparent that this was not the case. Detective Constable Mike Hardiman explained: “Every possible line of enquiry has been followed. All initial aspects of this incident which supported the idea of third party involvement, have been investigated and ruled out.

“No lead had been taken, no equipment used by a would-be suspect was found and there were no tyre marks or foot prints found in the immediate area.

“I know that at the time there was great concern within the local community that the church had been deliberately targeted and this was very upsetting, particularly as it was in the run up to Christmas.

“As the investigation progressed it became apparent that much of the initial evidence that suggested criminal behaviour could actually be accounted for and the incident was deemed as non-suspicious.

“We take all possible cases of heritage crime very seriously and it was appropriate that we carried out a thorough investigation, appealed for potential witnesses and ruled out all possibilities.”

Neighbourhood Inspector Richard Lilley added: “The fire had a big impact on the local community and we are still working closely with the clergy whilst the church is repaired. We have provided both meeting facilities and storage space to enable the church to function as effectively as possible. “

Complaints about neighbours?

Don’t let problems with a neighbour get out of hand – try talking before considering other options.

**Talk to your neighbour**

Your first step should be to discuss the problem with your neighbour.

You could try to do this in a neutral venue. Agree that you can bring a friend or adviser with you if needed and make a note of what you discuss.

If your neighbour rents their property you could complain to their landlord or letting agent.

The landlord may be able to help deal with antisocial behaviour. Some landlords will even take steps to evict their tenant if they are behaving antisocially.

**Consider mediation**

Mediation involves getting someone who is not involved in the dispute to help you reach an agreement. You and your neighbour both have to agree to take part.

Different types of mediation service are available depending on your circumstances.

In some cases, your council, Local Police Team or housing association may offer free mediation if you make a complaint about a problem you’re having with a neighbour.

Sometimes you have to pay for mediation but this can still be cheaper than taking legal action to resolve a dispute. You can search for a civil mediator in your area on the Ministry of Justice website.

**Noise and littering?**

The council should investigate complaints of environmental nuisance, such as loud music or littering.

If the problem is affecting your health the council can serve an order for your neighbour to stop. In certain cases, the council could seize property or have your neighbour prosecuted.

A court may also grant you or your landlord an injunction ordering a neighbour to change their behaviour.

**Visit Gov.uk** to report noise nuisance to your council.

**Problems with hedges, trees and boundaries?**

You can complain to your council about a hedge that is more than 2 metres high.

If the hedge is causing a nuisance, the council may serve an order on your neighbour for the problem to be sorted or do maintenance work.

The council will usually want to see proof that negotiation between neighbours has failed before intervening. It can also charge the hedge owner for any work carried out.

Overhanging trees can be cut back to the border between you if the tree’s owner has refused to do it themselves.

Your council can also take action over a tree that could cause damage to property.

Title plans record land boundaries, allowing you to see whose property hedges and trees are on.

Check these at the Land Registry if you’re a homeowner or ask your landlord to do it if you rent.

If the exact boundary is not shown on the plan you can agree one with your neighbour and register it at the Land Registry. This could include information on responsibility for things like fences, walls or hedges.

Find out more from Gov.uk about boundary disputes

**Antisocial behaviour**

You can contact the police or your local council about antisocial behaviour. Or you can contact a housing association if the perpetrator is their tenant.

They all have powers to order someone to stop behaviour that causes alarm, distress or harassment to others.

It might support your case if you keep a diary recording instances of the behaviour or take photos or video.

If your neighbour is being violent towards you or threatening you with violence, contact the police.

Advice issued after vehicle thefts

•Advice issued following increase in vehicle crime

•Visit our crime prevention pages for vehicle security advice

Following an increase in motor vehicle crime over recent months, police are issuing advice to residents to help them secure their vehicles.

Thieves often target homes for vehicle keys that have been left close to letter boxes or insecure windows and doors, enabling them to drive the vehicles away. Thieves are also employing special equipment which can hijack the signal from keyless entry fobs that are left inside the home close to where the vehicle is parked. The equipment can be used to unlock the vehicle and even start the engine.

Inspector Andrew Palfreyman from Hertfordshire Constabulary’s Crime Reduction Unit said: “Most of the newer vehicles in the UK use a keyless fob and have very sophisticated security systems, however criminals are evolving their tactics all the time and are using technology to bypass these systems allowing them to gain access and steal vehicles.

“You should never give anyone you do not know access to your keys or vehicle and when using remote central locking check the door to ensure they really are locked before leaving your vehicle. You should also get into the habit of storing your fob as far away from your vehicle as possible when at home. Placing keyless entry fobs in a metal box or faraday pouch will make your vehicle even safer.”

Following some of these steps will also help to protect your vehicle:

• Never leave your vehicle keys close to the front door of the home and always keep them in a place of safety. If your vehicle has a keyless entry system ensure you place the vehicle tablet key in your home address, as far away from the vehicle as possible, ideally place the key in a metal box or protective cover to prevent the key signal being read. Approved products can be found at [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)

• Always lock your vehicle. If possible, park your vehicle in a locked, alarmed garage.

 •Investing in a door bell video camera will help deter criminals from targeting vehicles at the front of your property

• Consider fitting an ‘OBD safe’ device, a secure lockable device that fits over the vehicle’s on board diagnostic port, in the vehicle cabin. This prevents criminals using software to code an electronic key for the vehicle. Approved products can be found at [www.protectavan.co.uk](http://www.protectavan.co.uk)

• Never hand vehicle keys over to a third party or leave the vehicle unattended at a valet parking, car wash or other parking places, where criminals can gain access to the vehicle and code a key electronically.

• If your vehicle is fitted with on board wi-fi consider switching this facility off, if you do not need it which will reduce the chance of criminals hacking into the vehicle’ system; your banking details or personal data from linked devices.

• Consider fitting a dual band tracking device that works on VHF/UHF and GPS, to ensure that one tracking system is still functioning if criminals use GPS blocking techniques to avoid detection. Devices approved by Thatcham help to combat this type of vehicle theft, as vehicles equipped with a tracking device are often promptly recovered. To find our more visit [www.tracker.co.uk](http://www.tracker.co.uk)

• Criminals can also employ remote/keyless entry jamming equipment; so make sure your car is locked physically by trying the door handle and viewing the indicators flash, before leaving it.

• Ensure that ‘home’ on your vehicle ‘Sat Nav’ is shown as the post code of your local police station and not your actual home address.

• If advertising your vehicle for sale online, ensure that the registration number is not displayed when photographed to avoid the cloning of its identity. Always accompany prospective purchasers on a test drive and carry a mobile phone with you for contact in the event of emergency.

•Use a good quality crook lock or full cover steering wheel security lock to immobilise your vehicle

•Consider replacing van locks with a high security door lock that is resistant to picking or breaking and slam or deadlocks. Approved products can be found at [www.protectavan.co.uk](http://www.protectavan.co.uk)

**Local Crime Information**

**G4E - Ashwell, Hinxworth, Bygrave, Newnham and Caldecote**

Overnight on 10th February Ashwell was targeted for Thefts from vehicles. In some cases the vehicles were unlocked and other reported vehicles had no sign of forced entry. The offender has gone from vehicle to vehicle checking door handles and removing property from within. In total Police received ten separate reports.

Between 16th and 18th February in North Road, Baldock. The victim discovered that padlocks had been removed from a garage. On closer inspection it became clear that offenders had entered the garage and stole power tools from within.

Between 18th and 21st February two properties were burgled in Bygrave village (Weeden Way + Ashwell Road). Both properties were entered at the rear of the property and various items removed from both properties.

**G4D – Barley, Barkway, Reed, Therfield, Kelshall and Nuthampstead**

Between 5th + 6th February at a property in The Mount, Barley a shed was targeted. The offenders used a crow bar to jemmy a padlock to gain entry, no property was taken.

Overnight on 21st February a BMW X5 was stolen from a drive in Picknage Road, Barley. Unknown how the offenders removed the car as the IP had both set of keys in his possession and no smashed glass was left on the driveway.

**G3C - Sandon, Wallington, Rushden, Clothall and Weston**

Between 22nd and 23rd February a barn was broken into Fore Street, Weston. The offenders entered using the field at the back of the property and approached the barn. The offender used a crow bar or similar to remove a padlock and gain entry, once inside the offenders removed items to the value £4600.

Between 22nd and 23rd February an outbuilding was burgled in Hitchin Road, Weston. The offenders entered the garden and forced the padlocks, once inside a search took place but no items were removed.

Between 27th and 28th February vehicle number plates were removed from a car in Dark Lane, Sandon.

**Your local Neighbourhood Police Teams website**

<http://snt.herts.police.uk/Teams.aspx?TeamID=G01>

Useful Links

<http://www.herts.police.uk/>

<http://www.doglost.co.uk/>

<http://www.stolenhorseregister.com/>

**Royston Rural Neighbourhood Team Tel – 01438 757935**