



# Colin's Blog

16<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Watching you, watching me

I know that it's not for me to try and sort out the country or even the world problems or dilemma's, I prefer to look for the good things around us, and subscribe to the wise words of Marie Curie, who once said: "All through my life, the new sights of Nature, make me rejoice like a child. I have always subscribed to those thoughts. However, I get annoyed by the way that many people abuse the wonders of nature, by defacing our land with discarded litter, or indiscriminately carry out fly tipping. How dare they blight our land through their selfish, thoughtless behaviour!

Reflecting on the rocky road to 70, I look back at the many challenges that, I, like lots of my readers, that I have taken on, or faced up to, through the 'Walk of Life.' Whilst trying to maintain a steady course, dealing with the public, and one often finds that it is a matter of 'Walking on Eggshells, or sometimes even 'Dancing with Wolves! That's why I try to steer away from politics, religion and other inflammatory issues.

Many of us often ask in conversation: When's Summer? So, in order to put the record straight here is an appropriate interesting 'Factoid,' shared on social media by the Met Office, about the Astronomical season.

**This year the astronomical summer begins on 21 June 2017 and ends on 22 September 2017.**

The astronomical calendar determines the seasons due to the 23.5 degree tilt of the Earth's rotational axis in relation to its orbit around the sun. Both equinoxes and solstices are related to the Earth's orbit around the sun.

Solstices and equinoxes are considered to be the astronomical transition points between the seasons and mark key stages in the astronomical cycle of the earth. In a year there are two equinoxes (spring and autumn) and two solstices (summer and winter). The dates of the equinoxes and solstices aren't fixed due to the Earth's elliptical orbit of the sun. The Earth's orbit around the sun means that in early January, the sun is closest (known as perihelion) and in early July it is most distant (aphelion).

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, **I will no longer be sending out Burglary Hotspots** with my weekly blog which goes out primarily to our Neighbourhood Watch members across Epping Forest, Brentwood and Harlow.



Terry Fowles, my ex Essex Watch Colleague, is taking over the distribution of the Burglary Hotspots, until my replacement comes on board, hopefully sometime next month. Any further enquiries relating to the Burglary Hotspots or other Police issues should now be referred to Terry at: -

[terry.fowles@essex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:terry.fowles@essex.pnn.police.uk)

Tel: 101 ext: 420149

In future, my blog will continue to concentrate on views, news, alerts, crime prevention, security and personal safety from the Neighbourhood Watch and Community perspective, which I hope that you find informative and helpful.

As I write this, I am saddened by Wednesday's tragic fire in a Tower Block in London, and I join with everyone to offer my thoughts and condolences to the families of those victims who have died, and my sincere wishes for the recovery of the many people injured.

My wife and I were in London yesterday, under different circumstances, celebrating our recent Birthday's, as we enjoyed watching a performance of 'Half a Sixpence' at the Noel Coward Theatre. A wonderful exhilarating performance, full of hope and energy, in the true tradition of musical theatre! Upon leaving the Theatre, our thoughts once again turned to the tragedy which was still on going, just a short distance away.

Now is not the time to point fingers or indeed blame, but much will come apparent in the coming weeks. London Fire Brigade, and the Met have both suffered horrendous cutbacks to staff and resources in recent times, perhaps it is time for those responsible in government to address the foolhardy financial constraints made to the Emergency services of the past? However, that's for others to contemplate.

## **Rogue travel agent jailed for defrauding customers**

- Anas Ahmed stole over £42,000 from victims for non-existent flights and has been sentenced to 12 months in prison.
- Reports from Action Fraud assisted Brent Trading Standards investigation.
- One victim lost £1,600 after booking flights to Pakistan for a family holiday.

**A rogue travel agent who stole thousands of pounds out of unsuspecting holidaymakers with non-existent flights has been jailed for a year.**

Anas Ahmed, director of AirBridge Travel Limited (ABT) was brought to justice by Brent Trading Standards in a detailed investigation that involved assessed and analysed reports from us.

Mr Ahmed pleaded guilty at Harrow Crown Court on May 2 and was sentenced to 12 months in prison for defrauding multiple victims out of £42,000.

The court heard that more than 30 would be holiday goers were led to believe they had booked flights through ABT, only to find out these flights had not even been booked.

A witness, from Huddersfield, spoke of his “complete disappointment” after paying £1,000 to fly to Pakistan for his sister’s wedding, only to find out through the airline itself that his tickets had not been booked at all. Not only did he lose the money paid to ABT, but he had to pay out more money for a replacement flight, so that he didn’t miss the wedding.

Some customers were fortunate to have discovered that their flights had not been booked before they were due to fly. Others did not find out until they arrived at the airport ready for their holiday only to be left stranded.

Customers were told to transfer money directly into their bank account, as ABT would not accept payment through its website. Yet once payment had been received, many customers reported feeling ignored when trying to follow up on the booking.

### **Ruined family holiday**

Another victim lost out after paying more than £1,600 for a family holiday to Pakistan for his wife and children, only to find himself out of pocket when he discovered that no tickets had been booked. The witness who also spoke in court said he was so desperate to recoup his lost money that he travelled six hours to ABT offices in Brent, only to discover that nobody was physically based in the office.

Simon Legg, Brent Council Senior Regulatory Service Manager, said: “Brent Council is doing everything it can to support local businesses to thrive and tackling the small number of rogue traders, like Anas Ahmed, who try to con consumers is part of this approach.

“Many of us save up all year looking forward to a week away and to be left stranded at an airport with no flights or accommodation is a cruel blow but Mr Ahmed can now look forward to a 12 month stay in prison”

If you are booking a holiday, make sure you **follow our advice on how to stay safe**. Report **fraud and cyber crime** and receive a police crime reference number.

## **Booked non-existent tickets from Goticketsuk.com? Here's what to do**

- Victims have reported not receiving tickets for Robbie Williams and The Demon Dayz Festival.
- Victims cannot get hold of the company and haven't received any tickets.
- Action Fraud is working on shutting down the website and phone number.

**Action Fraud has received a number of reports from victims who have purchased non-existent tickets from 'Goticketsuk.com'.**

The **Goticketsuk.com** website which is taking people's money for concerts and festivals due to take place later this year is actually a fraud. We are working with our partners in law enforcement to get the website and phone number taken down to stop others from falling victim.

Victims who have purchased tickets are instructed that they will receive physical tickets along with further correspondence nearer to the event date; however, as the concert or event date has drawn closer and victims have attempted to contact 'Goticketsuk.com' for an update, a response has been received suggesting a number of reasons why tickets cannot be sent.

These include an overbooking of tickets at the venue, a delay receiving the tickets from a supplier, or that the tickets have simply had to be cancelled.

When victims have responded to the email or attempted to seek further information via 'Goticketsuk.com' social media platforms, there has been no further contact. Some reports have also indicated that victims have been promised a refund, though we are currently unaware of any refunds being awarded.

In these cases there appears to be a number of victims who were expecting to attend a Robbie Williams concert and there have also been some reports which have indicated fraudulent ticket purchases for The Demon Dayz Festival.

### **What to do if you've been affected?**

- If you have fallen victim, it is important that you **report it to Action Fraud**. This will allow police to gain a better understanding of the scale of the fraud and will help

build an investigation. Everyone that reports to Action Fraud will receive a Police Crime Reference Number (NFRC) and an update in writing 28 working days later.

- If you have paid by Credit Card, contact your provider as they will be able to reimburse you under **Section 75** of the Consumer Credit Act. If you paid by Debit Card, also contact your provider, but remember it might not always be possible to get your money back.
- This guide from Which? explains how to **get your money back after a fraud**.

More than **21,000** people have reported falling victim to ticket fraud in the last 3 years and lost **£17 million**. When buying tickets online, **follow our advice on how to stay safe**.

## **Apple blocks Binary Options trading apps**

- Apple has reportedly updated its developer guidelines for apps, making it clear that they will **not allow any which facilitate Binary Options trading**.
- The change in guidelines removes the potential for new apps to be added to the app store and potentially limiting the opportunity for updates.
- The news of this change comes as we continue to **warn of the risk presented by fraudulent Binary Options schemes**.

Binary Options are called 'Binary' because there can be only two outcomes – win or lose. To trade, all you need to do is bet on whether the price of something (such as a currency or precious metal) will rise or fall below a certain amount - if it is correct, you win and get paid. If not, you lose all of the money you originally invested.

These schemes also allegedly involve, among other things, the refusal to credit customer accounts or reimburse funds to customers, identity theft, and manipulation of software to generate losing trades.

Binary Options trading itself is not illegal, but fraudsters have exploited the huge growth in popularity, with companies aggressively targeting social media platforms with flashy commercials promising impressive returns. Fraudulent Binary Options websites are often well-designed and professional looking, and brokers and traders - often working from scripts - will sound friendly, professional and knowledgeable. They will be paid on commission and have no interest in ever making successful trades for the 'investor'. In fact, we believe they will often use the victim's credit and personal information to access further funds without the victim's knowledge.

## How to protect yourself

- Be suspicious of any approach via social media as many fraudsters tend to operate via social media due to the anonymity it allows. Carry out as much research on the company/details provided as possible.
- Do not give out personal or financial details and never agree to anything or send money upfront, without making your own enquires into the company or individual first.
- Further advice on Binary Options fraud can be found online on **Action Fraud** and those of our partners at the **Gambling Commission** and **Financial Conduct Authority**.
- If you have been contacted by a suspicious firm or have been affected by this, or any other fraud, report it to Action Fraud by calling 0300 123 2040, or by **reporting online**.
- Please have to hand any contact details for the suspect(s) including addresses, phone numbers and email addresses; and any details of payments made to the suspect(s) bank accounts (these can be obtained from your own bank if required) including account numbers, sort codes, payee names and/or references and IBAN and SWIFT numbers if payments were sent abroad.
- Please also consider **reporting any suspect companies to the FBI**.

Report **fraud and cyber crime** and receive a police crime reference number.

[http://actionfraud.police.uk/report\\_fraud](http://actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud)

# Action Fraud

Report Fraud & Internet Crime

## 0300 123 2040

Sign up for free to **Action Fraud Alert** at: [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) to receive direct, verified, accurate information about scams and fraud in your area by email, recorded voice and text message.



That's it for now, please keep alert, keep secure, keep safe and have a good weekend. Just in case the sun keeps shining 'Don't forget the sun cream!'

Colin

