



Colin's Blog

Friday 22nd June 2018

Here we are, already approaching the end of June, and before we know it, July will be upon us. Let's hope that our weather will continue to be kind, and, keep us in good spirits, through to the advent of the School Holidays and beyond. After all, there is nothing worse than trying to keep children and young people occupied and happy, when the weather turns against us. Especially when parents and others spend a fortune going away on holiday, only to end up wet, miserable, or broke from paying out to keep them amused. It is also harder to keep the youngsters away from the distraction of technology. When I used to take Cubs, Scouts and, or my youth group away, the only technology that was allowed were cameras! This saved a lot of heartache, from broken, stolen, or misused devices, and meant that they had to spend their time in the great outdoors, and be sociable with each other. (Now there's a thought!)

Mind you, Smartphones, Tablets and other such items, either weren't invented, or available in the late 70's and early 80's. So the problem of getting the children's attention, and communicating face to face by word of mouth, wasn't quite such a challenge, as it appears to be today!

Perhaps as time goes on, we will ecologically evolve with smartphone bodyclips, bellybutton on / off switches, as well as, slim and longer texting fingers. The mind boggles!

The picture above, shows me on the deck of HMY Britannia, following afternoon tea. So why is it that the scores of occasions that I have passed Buckingham Palace, I never once, invited in for tea or coffee?

I hope that you found last week's scam prevention advice useful, and that you won't become a victim of the many hundreds, if not thousands of scams that confront us every year.

More than £3 million lost to ticket fraud in one year prompts a warning from Action Fraud 13th June 2018

Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, Action Fraud received **6,486 reports** of ticket fraud.

- In the same period, the total reported losses to victims were **£3,344,835**; an average of **£568 per victim**.

- With lots of music concerts and sporting events taking place in summer, it is an opportunity for fraudsters to take advantage of unsuspecting fans.

How is this happening?

Earlier this year, Action Fraud warned football fans planning to travel to the World Cup to be cautious when buying tickets or accommodation because the event is likely to be targeted by fraudsters looking to take advantage of unsuspecting fans.

Action Fraud saw a spike in reporting in June 2017, in which 1,072 reports were made. This suggests that fraudsters are taking advantage of people during the peak season for ticketed events.

Fraudsters will pose as a website or agent for a music concert or festival, a sporting contest such as the World Cup, or a live comedian or performer. Victims will purchase tickets that either don't arrive or turn out to be fake.

How can I protect myself?

- Only buy tickets from the venue's box office, the promoter, an official agent or a well-known and reputable ticket exchange site.
- Should you choose to buy tickets from an individual (for example via an online auction site or social media), you should pay using a secure payment service. Avoid making payments through bank transfer or money transfer services, as the payment may not be recoverable.
- Paying for your tickets by credit card will offer increased protection over other payments methods, such as debit card, cash, or money transfer services.

In April 2017, Action Fraud showed just how easy it is to be tricked into buying fake tickets online through a series of Facebook flash advertising, in which more than 1,500 people tried to purchase music tickets from 'Surfed Arts', our fake ticket sales website.

Following over 550 complaints made to Action Fraud which were later disseminated to Essex Police, two men were convicted last month of a ticket fraud involving over 309 victims who were conned out of high profile sporting tickets.

Spot the signs

- Check the contact details of the site you're buying the tickets from. There should be a landline phone number and a full postal address. Avoid using the site if there is only a PO box address and mobile phone number, as it could be difficult to get in touch after you buy tickets. PO box addresses and mobile phone numbers are easy to change and difficult to trace.
- Fraudsters create fake websites with URLs similar to that of a genuine site, so double check the web address to make sure you're on the correct website.

Any webpages you enter personal or financial details into should start with 'https' and display a locked padlock icon in the address bar.

- Is the vendor a member of Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers (STAR)? If they are, you're buying from a company that has signed up to their strict governing standards. STAR also offers a service to help customers with outstanding complaints.

Director of Action Fraud, Pauline Smith, said:

“Criminals are taking advantage of people’s desire to buy tickets for popular concerts and sporting events, which are often sold out. This is why it’s so important that people are vigilant and aware that there are fraudsters all over the globe trying to make money out of innocent victims.

“To avoid disappointment, always buy tickets from an official event organiser or website and if you are tempted to buy from a secondary ticket source, always research the company or the person online before making the purchase.

£22 million lost to rental fraud 21st June 2018

Between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2018, **18,645 reports** relating to rental fraud were made to Action Fraud.

- In the same period, victims reported losing **£22,103,940** to rental fraud – an average of **£1,396 per victim**.
- Action Fraud is now warning potential tenants, and students in particular, to spot the signs of rental fraud when searching for a property.

Rental fraud happens when prospective tenants are tricked into paying an upfront fee to rent a property. In reality, the property does not exist, has already been rented out, or has been rented to multiple victims at the same time. Victims will lose the upfront fee they have paid and are not able to rent the property they thought they had secured. In 429 cases, victims reported losing £5,000 or more.

Fraudsters will often make contact with their victims online. The adverts will seem genuine and are often accompanied by photos and contact information. In some cases the victim will view the property in person, but in most cases the payment is made without prior viewing.

Action Fraud sees a spike in reporting levels in July and August. This yearly peak is likely due to people looking for holiday accommodation during the summer months, with holiday fraud accounting for approximately 27% of all rental fraud reports during this period.

The next topic makes interesting reading for students and their parents or guardians.

University rental fraud

Fraudsters will often target college and university students ahead of the new term with fake lettings in local accommodation, taking advantage of the huge demand to collect fees up front to secure a deposit.

Between April 2014 and March 2018, 930 reports of university-related rental fraud, with losses of £1,103,416, were made to Action Fraud. However, the true figure is believed to be higher, as the figure is dependent on victims making their student status known when reporting to Action Fraud.

The number of reports peaked each year in September when students are likely to be organising their accommodation for the academic year. 61% of university rental fraud victims reported a 'significant' impact on their health or financial wellbeing as a result of being defrauded.

Director of Action Fraud, Pauline Smith, said:

"Whether you're booking a well-earned holiday or looking to secure university accommodation, it's important to be wary of devious fraudsters who are looking to take your money.

"The impact of rental fraud can be severe, both emotionally and financially. By taking simple steps such as visiting the property you intend to rent or checking that the owner is on an approved accommodation list, you will be able to protect yourself from this type of fraud.

"If you think you have been a victim of rental fraud, contact Action Fraud."

Protect yourself from rental fraud

- **Visit the property before you pay** – Watch-out for adverts with no photos, or where multiple adverts have the same photos as they could be fake. Do not pay any money until you or a reliable contact has visited the property with an agent or the landlord.
- **Be cautious about how you send money** – The safest way to make a payment is by a credit card in person at the letting agent's office. Be sceptical if you're asked to transfer money via a money transfer service.
- **Don't be pressured into transferring large sums of money** – Under no circumstances would a genuine bank or another trusted organisation force you to make a financial transaction on the spot.
- **Check that the owner is on an approved accommodation list** – Check with your student union or accommodation office as many universities and colleges will have an approved housing list. Also look for accreditation membership such as National Approved Letting Scheme (NALS), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or Association of Residential Letting Agents

(ARLA).

- **Every Report Matters** – If you have been a victim of fraud or cyber crime, report it to us online: https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud



KEEP ALERT
KEEP SECURE
KEEP SAFE
AND HAVE A GREAT
WEEKEND!

International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2018 26th June 2018

LET'S DEVELOP
OUR LIVES
OUR COMMUNITIES
OUR IDENTITIES

WITHOUT DRUGS

It may not have the snappiest title but the **International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking** is a key plank in the United Nations' war on drugs.

Originally instigated by a resolution of a special session on drugs of the UN's General Assembly in 1987, the annual awareness day was founded to mark the centenary of China's early efforts to combat the trade in opium – widely regarded as the start of the international war on drugs. Celebrated each year on June 26th, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime uses the commemorative day to highlight the dangers of drug use and their illegal trade and provides educational material to teachers and public officials all over the world to help spread the message about the extreme cultural and economic harm the trade in drugs is still doing across the globe one hundred years after the war on drugs was initially launched in Shanghai around the start of the 20th Century.

The importance of the strategy was reinforced in April 2016 when the UN decided to hold a General Assembly on drugs to mark a milestone in the progress of an earlier policy document which called on members states to combat both drug demand and supply, while improving access to treatment for addicts.

Each year the Office on Drugs and Crime chooses a new theme to promote – from “Sports Against Drugs” in 2001 and “Think Health – Not Drugs” in 2010 to “Listen First!” last year.

United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture 2018 26th June 2018

The United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture – 26 June is held annually on 26 June to speak out against the crime of torture and to honour and support victims and survivors throughout the world.



*It is the month of June,
The month of leaves and roses,
When pleasant sights salute the eyes,
And pleasant scents the noses.*

—N. P. Willis (1807-67)

I look in wonderment at the beautiful honeysuckle that is thriving in my garden, and it reminds me that there are two birth flowers that relate to June, and they are Honeysuckle and Rose. I immediately thought of Cadbury's Roses, as apparent, according to an old advert

'Roses Grow on You!' Mind you, eat too many, and it's your belly that grows!

I LIKE STRAWBERRIES - FLY ME TO THE MOON

The next full moon of the current lunar cycle will rise in the skies towards the end of the month on Thursday, June 28. The so-called Strawberry Moon is the seventh out of 13 full moon phases to rise this year. It will peak around 5.53am BST

My friendly neighbourhood Blackbird has taken a break, so I am currently being serenaded by the breezy wind, and various chirps from the hedgerow and trees. I think they are trying to tell me that the bird feeders need topping up!

But, isn't it great to be able to have doors and windows wide open, letting in the sunlight, and the sounds of nature!

It is also a good opportunity to make sure that we all remember to close our windows and lock our doors, even if we just pop out for a short while. It may only take seconds for an opportunist thief to take advantage of our lapse.

Unless of course, you suffer from Hay fever, it is great to see Summer arrive in a blaze of colour, and bring the sunshine with it. It encourages us to make the most of it, and, with this in mind, I am reprinting some important advice, which all of us

should take on board as we head towards the weekend and more hot and dry weather: -



SENSE & SENSIBILITY

KEEP SAFE THIS SUMMER

Many of us will be out and about with our family and friends and, enjoying outdoor activities over the next few months.

Here are a few thoughts and facts to consider:-

- A Fire can destroy a tent in less than 60 seconds.
- In the UK, around 79,000 fires are started on grass and heath land every year (This is an average of 216 every day!)
- On average, 1,400 fires per year occur in caravans.
- Avoid: open fires in the countryside. Always have them in safe, designated areas.
- Never, throw cigarette ends or matches out of car windows. **(Such thoughtless actions, are the cause of thousands of fires every year).**
- Don't leave bottles or glass in woodlands, or anywhere that sunlight shining through glass, can start a fire.
- Remember, Barbecues and excess alcohol do not mix. Always ensure that safety guidelines are followed, and that the Barbecue is under the control of a responsible, sober adult.

Children are naturally curious about barbecues! They want to see what's going on, how well lit it is, what's cooking and are always keen to know when it's going to be ready to eat. They're drawn to where the cooking is going on, yet that's the most dangerous place to be. In fact, each year about 1,000 people suffer injuries, such as burns, caused by barbecues.

Ensure children are supervised well at any barbecue. Tell them of the dangers of going close to the barbecue and that the person doing the cooking needs to have plenty of space to cook safely. Running about and playing in the garden may not be practical if the garden is small, and you don't want to run the risk of a child colliding with the barbecue.

Instead, organising for an adult to play games with children away from the cooking area is beneficial, such as inside the house or in a front garden. Or, if you haven't got much space, perhaps they can take them out to a park whilst the cooking is in action. This way, they could certainly use up some energy and work up an appetite before they come back and eat!

Setting the Barbecue Up Safely

Firstly, ensure that it is alright to light a barbecue or Fire at your chosen location. (Many open spaces such as Epping Forest are protected by Bylaws which make it illegal to do so).

To ensure everyone stays safe when you're barbecuing, the person in charge needs to set up the cooking device correctly, on a clear flat surface, light it properly and take care as they start to cook.

- Before you start, ensure the barbecue is in good working order.
- Find a place to set it up where the ground is flat and way from any sheds, fences, trees or overhanging shrubs.
- Never light a barbecue indoors or in a garage.
- Use charcoal and cover the base of the barbecue - about two inches deep.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for lighting your barbecue, as models differ.
- If it's windy, ensure the wind is blowing away from you when you light the barbecue.
- Keep children away from the barbecue as you light it.
- Don't wear loose clothing, or anything could dangle onto the flames.
- Don't use any flammable accelerants, such as paraffin or petrol.
- Light the barbecue at arms length.
- Once the barbecue is lit, keep children away from it.
- Keep a bucket of water close at hand, in case of emergencies.
- Never leave the barbecue unattended and don't try to move it whilst it's lit.
- When you've finished cooking, don't try to move the barbecue until it has cooled down completely. Then empty the ashes onto garden soil.
- Don't put ashes straight into a dustbin or wheelie bin - if they are still even slightly hot, they'll melt the plastic and cause a fire.



REMEMBER THIS SOBERING THOUGHT:-

ONE TREE CAN MAKE A MILLION MATCHES

ONE MATCH CAN DESTROY A MILLION TREES!

**ONE CIGARETTE BUTT CAN DO JUST AS MUCH
DAMAGE!**



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You can also read my blog at: <http://www.eppingforestnhw.org.uk/>



HELPING COMMUNITIES TO HELP THEMSELVES

