

Colin's Blog

Friday 12th January 2018

Well, we have certainly had some interesting weather over the past few weeks.

Have you noticed that no matter how the weather changes, many road users fail



to change the way that they used our roads, in accordance with the weather conditions prevailing at the time? It never ceases to amaze me as to the number of drivers, who fail to use their lights, when conditions dictate it, they blindly drive along with no lights, when it's wet or foggy, or as daylight dims, not only reducing their own visibility, but, reducing the chances of other road users seeing them approaching in good time. I also noticed the increase of IDS (Indicator Deficiency Syndrome) over the Christmas and New Year period, leaving it to other road users to try to work out, the offending drivers' direction of travel, under the miscomprehension that other road users have the benefit of a crystal ball!

Now, let's turn our attention to the considerable number of cyclists that I have seen in the same period, cycling with either ineffective or sufficient lights, and in some cases, no lights at all, during bad weather, poor visibility or darkness.

Then of course, there's the pedestrians, who think that they are infallible, and go around in the hours of darkness, or during bad weather, when visibility is poor, wearing dark clothing, as they walk in the roads or lanes, and crossing busy roads, without the thought of how long it takes a vehicle to stop in such conditions!

So, alongside **IDS**, I am introducing '**WUTS 2018**' (**Wake Up to Safety in 2018**). (No connection to any other acronyms).

It is important that we remember to check all of our vehicle lights, including Brake Lights and Indicators, before embarking on a journey at any time of the day or night. **Our lives or the lives of others may depend upon it!**

Much is said about the appalling behaviour of drivers who break the law by using handheld mobile phones whilst driving.

Little is said, about the dangers of cyclists and indeed pedestrians (especially runners and joggers), using headphones whilst out and about, making them unaware of many of the dangers around them. They also need to: **Wake Up To Safety!**

FLOWER POWER



We often wake up to miserable weather, but, few things can cheer us up, as well as the sight of flowers, especially as we tread the path towards Spring. Hyacinths not only bring a welcome splash of colour into our lives, we can look forward to the arrival of snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils, narcissi, tulips and other seasonal blooms, to start to bring hope and joy back into our lives, as we look forward towards longer days, and hopefully a brighter future ahead.

From my early childhood, flowers have always played an important part in my life. Way back from when I first started to pick dandelions. (There is no truth in the old wives' tale, that if you pick dandelions it makes you wee in bed!) Perhaps that referred to the Dandelion and Burdock drink? But the flower itself was never a wee problem to me! As someone who spent their early childhood surrounded by several bomb sites in London, I remember the one nearest to me, had a good number of Michaelmas daisies, Dandelions, Yellow daisies and even Chinese lanterns, growing amongst the rubble. I have mentioned before, about how close I lived to the Waltham Forest end of what we know collectively as Epping Forest, and the wonderful wildflower meadow, which was almost opposite the Water Works in Walthamstow. How I loved to walk through that meadow, watching the bees gathering nectar, and several species of butterflies fluttering from flower to flower (Red Admirals, Peacocks, Cabbage Whites, to name but a few) adding to a feeling of peace and tranquillity, so close to the trolley Bus terminal and the hustle and bustle of everyday life. I felt that I was in a different world, and using my childish imagination, immersed myself into the joy of nature.



Many of you will know, that when I retired as a Police Officer in 1993, I became the Essex Fundraising Manager for Marie Curie Cancer Care, a role I held for seven years. Daffodils played a very important role as the chosen logo or emblem for the charity, and the same still applies today. Whilst raising money for the good work of the charity, with the help of my team and several volunteers, I was responsible for organising the planting of thousands of Daffodils, in several 'Field of Hope,' across Essex, including Stansted Airport and on the A414 near the entrance to Hylands Park. Relating to the charities Hospices, we then introduced 'Beds of Hope,' in several schools and other

locations across the County. Since then, my love of flowers has continued, so together with the members of the Rotary Club of Ongar, and through the purchase and planting of crocuses, as part of the Rotary International Fundraising Campaign

towards eradicating Polio across the world. (Match funded by Bill Gates founder of Microsoft), flower power continues to 'Make a difference,' which by coincidence, happens to be the current Rotary slogan.

Through our President Elect, we also organised Poppy collections in Ongar in November, and collected in excess of £3,000 for the appeal.

In common with many other community based clubs and organisations throughout the UK, Ongar Rotary Club, raises money for both the local and wider community and through Rotary International, in response to worldwide appeals in respect of natural disasters, famine and other crisis situations, and, meets on Thursday evenings in Ongar. Please contact me, if you are interested in coming along to one of our meetings.

Through my blog, you will have seen that Flower Power, goes way beyond, the pretty flowers that you see planted around, but also forms the base, or the inspiration, for many good deeds and projects, spreading joy, in what are often troubled times.

SOAP BOX CORNER



SENSE & SENSIBILITY?

I am not of any particular political persuasion, however, whilst talking about 'troubled times,' I am fed up to the teeth, with television debates and other media coverage, showing their seemingly *juvenilistic behaviour*, of numerous members of Parliament, who seem to want to avoid many pressing matters of

government, by embarking on what could be termed a an aggressive game of table tennis, ping ponging along, and trying to score political points against each other, whilst delaying important decisions in respect of the future of the UK, which will affect each and everyone one of us today, as well as, the safety and well-being of future generations.

Perhaps it is time that changes are made to the way that politicians are appointed to senior positions in government, and that the emphasis should be on the individuals, track record, and their skills set, and their ability to perform and carry out their duties in the best interests of the country, rather than if they favour left or right, blue, red, yellow or green. Above all, their allegiance should be to the country and to the people first, and party second.

Those in power, who dictate and moralise to the rest of us, should be subject to stricter controls and constraints, that the rest of us, in the private, public and voluntary sectors already have to adhere to. Perhaps it's time that they should be paid by results, and therefore, subject to performance related pay, and we could say to them: **'Welcome to our World!'**

Through my membership of Neighbourhood Watch, as well as Probus and Rotary, I am privileged to meet and mix, with so many wonderful level-headed, and wise people, who have a wealth of life skills as well as an understanding of a wide spectrum of issues that concern us, from all walks of life, and across the political divide. Drawing on their experience, they can analyse many aspects and issues of life, and give a balanced view, which provides a far better view, than that is often given through biased media hype and political activists!, politicians.

LATEST FROM ACTION FRAUD: -

Fake NatWest text messages appearing in message threads

Posted 10th January 2018

We have received reports about fraudsters sending out a range of messages purporting to be from NatWest that lead to websites harvesting personal banking information.

Fraudsters are using specialist software which alters the sender ID on the message so that it appears as if it's come from NatWest, adding it to any existing message threads on the recipient's phone.

If you already bank with NatWest and had a legitimate message from them in the past this could easily catch you out. It seems to be targeting individuals regardless of whether they are customers of NatWest or not.

If you click on the link you'll be taken to an exact replica of the NatWest website that asks for sensitive personal information including full name, address, contact details, PIN and debit card numbers.

This is known as smishing. Smishing is when criminals pretend a message is from your bank or another organisation you trust. They will usually tell you there has been fraud on your account and will ask you to deal with it by calling a number or visiting a fake website to update your personal details.

Fraudsters are also using social engineering when text messages don't work

Interestingly some victims have also received calls purporting to be from NatWest after receiving these scam text messages. One woman reported receiving a fake text message like the ones above that urged her to "avoid account suspension" - which she ignored.

Later on that day she received a call from a withheld number on her mobile phone from a fraudster posing as a member of the NatWest security team. The fraudster said she would be sent a text message with a 6 digit security code and once she received it to immediately tell him what that code was.

The text came through instantly whilst she was still on the phone and she gave the fraudster the code. This was in fact a genuine NatWest message which contained a warning not to disclose the code.

The victim then got a real text from NatWest to say a different mobile number to her own had been registered to her NatWest mobile banking app. After the victim immediately checked her app she found £130 had been removed via the Get Cash function. NatWest are investigating the fraud.

A genuine bank or organisation will never contact you in this way. Only give out your personal or financial details to use a service that you have given your consent to, that you trust and that you are expecting to be contacted by. Report fraud and cyber crime and receive a police crime reference number.

https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud

ActionFraud
Report Fraud & Internet Crime
0300 123 2040

Well, I think that I have said enough this week, so, I'll sign off by reminding everyone to please Keep Alert, Keep Secure and Keep Safe. Don't forget that you can also read my blog at: <http://www.eppingforestnhw.org.uk/>

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If you have any news items, scams or alerts that you wish to share with my readers, please email me at the above address.

