

Rural Matters

Rural policing in Kent – a magazine for residents and businesses

Summer 2017



In this issue:



**Kent
Police**



Fly tipping



Caravan thefts



Protecting heritage

Plus the latest news on rural and environmental policing in Kent

Introduction

Welcome to Rural Matters. See inside for the latest news on how Kent Police is working with partner agencies to prevent crime.

We report on new measures to protect heritage sites; staying vigilant against rogue traders; keeping caravans safe, and how you can report fly tipping.


We've the latest contact information on the Rural Liaison Team – officers dedicated to supporting Kent's rural communities.

Team Leader



Insp Dave Smith
07800 675376

Rural Sergeant



Sgt Darren Walshaw
07870 252185

North Division



PC Preston Frost
07980 770574



PC Darren Reed
07989 992283



West Division



PC Marc Pennicott
07980 700534



PC Nick Lingham
07817 956427

East Division



PC Wayne Wright
07980 770585



PC Dan Perry
07967 331664

Your rural PCs are also on Twitter!

Our officers regularly provide updates on their work, including what to watch out for and any live incidents – plus the latest crime prevention advice on rural issues.

Follow [@kentpolicerural](#) for the latest news and information.



Latest news

New sergeant responsible for Rural Liaison Team

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to Rural Matters readers. I'm Sergeant Darren Walshaw, the new sergeant responsible for the Rural Liaison Team.

I was born and raised on a farm, so the rural community and way of life is never far from my thoughts. While at Hadlow College to study general agriculture I worked on a large farming estate in Sittingbourne, joining the livestock team and spending 14 years as shepherd/stockman, successfully showing livestock at the South of England Show and Kent County Show.

I've been with Kent Police since 2000 working with community and neighbourhood policing units, as a response officer and as a custody sergeant at Medway Custody. While with Faversham Rural Task Force I worked with landowners and gamekeepers on Operation Tree, a joint Swale and Maidstone operation to combat hare coursing, which resulted in successful prosecutions. This operation has now evolved into today's Operation Salmon against poaching offences.

I've worked with the rural community during investigations with Kent Fire and Rescue Service into a series of large barn fires in Swale; utilised new anti-social behaviour legislation and delivered the Kent Police response to the summer population increase in Leysdown in 2013 and 2014. I feel comfortable within the rural community,



New team member PC Nick Lingham

Another new Rural Liaison Team officer is PC Nick Lingham, pictured right. He takes over from long standing West Division rural officer PC Geordie Laidlow, who retired in January. PC Lingham originally worked in a response team in North Kent, moving to neighbourhood policing in the Swanley area and latterly in West Malling. He started work with the Rural Task Force in January 2017. Contact PC Lingham (see details opposite). New role for Geordie, see [page 14](#).



understanding seasonal changes and the impact on rural criminality. This gives me a platform to build relationships and trust in Kent Police. I understand the need to support residents and landowners affected by rural crime and that to be successful the

team needs the backing and trust of the community. I'd ask rural residents to work with the team by reporting anything that is to them 'not quite right.' In return it's important to show and update our rural communities about the work we do and the results we're getting.'

Latest news from the Rural Liaison Team

- The team were recently involved in a day of action, working with Trading Standards, targeting rogue trading and fraud. The offences are linked to teams of travelling criminals committing high value frauds against elderly repeat victims. See [page 6](#).
- Suspects wanted in relation to an elderly man who had £2,000 stolen in a burglary were identified in the vehicle (pictured left) driven dangerously while eluding police patrols. It was tactically stopped. Both occupants were arrested.
- A tactical vehicle stop by rural officers from North Division of two vehicles whose occupants were believed to be involved in the supply of firearms and ammunition led to four people arrested and a live firearm and ammunition found.
- Officers are investigating a report from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons that a person in the Ashford area had been falsely conducting veterinary work under a genuine vet's details. Inquiries are continuing.
- A case file is being prepared by one of the team in partnership with the National Wildlife Crime Unit around Bat Habitat destruction.





Left to right Peter Rolington (Country Eye); Sir David Steel (Chief Executive at Leeds Castle); Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott; Kelvin Wood (Leeds Castle); and Mark Harrison (National Policing and Crime Advisor for Historic England)

First National Maritime Heritage Metal Theft Workshop



Historic England organised a national workshop at Leeds Castle to step up the fight against unlawful salvage and theft from historic shipwrecks.

It was part of national Operation Crucible, which focuses on the prevention, investigation and enforcement of metal theft from the historic environment on land and under the sea. Over 70 delegates including police, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the diving community, and academic and security sectors are working together to develop a strategy to tackle this heritage crime.

National Policing and Crime Adviser for Historic England, Mark Harrison, said: 'Our message to criminals who are stealing metal from historic shipwrecks and selling it on, is simple. We're making it harder for you to sell stolen metal and gain from your activities.'

Heritage Watch launched to protect county's history



The historic setting of Leeds Castle was a fitting location for the launch of Heritage Watch – aimed at protecting the county's history and cultural assets from crime.

The event was launched by Kent Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott earlier this year.

In Kent there are 17,944 Listed Buildings, 422 Scheduled Monuments, 62 Registered Parks and Gardens, 11 Protected Wrecks and two World Heritage Sites.

Former Kent Police officer Mark Harrison, National Policing and Crime Advisor for Historic England spoke about the scale of the problem and the Chair of Kent Crimestoppers Peter Rolington about **Heritage Watch**, which encourages people to use their eyes and ears to help protect the county's

history using tools such as the free **Country Eye**, crime prevention app.

Mr Harrison said: 'The Heritage Watch partnership and the Country Eye app provide the community with modern technology that helps us protect Kent's past for future generations.'

Sandra Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive of Visit Kent, added: 'Kent is a treasure trove of some of England's finest heritage assets attracting over 60 million visitors each year. We will be promoting Heritage Watch to all Visit Kent partners to get behind the campaign.'

Mr Scott said: '**The cost of crime in rural areas is reportedly more than £800million across England and Wales**, and heritage crime can represent a large proportion.'

'By their very nature heritage sites across Kent, like churches, monuments and war memorials, and wrecks off our coasts, are vulnerable to crime so it is fantastic the agencies involved have worked together to start up a new Heritage Watch scheme.'

'I encourage everyone to download the free Country Eye app from the Heritage Watch website and use it to report anything suspicious in their communities to the Country Eye volunteers.'



To download the free app go to the Apple App Store or Google Play and search for Country Eye

www.countryeye.co.uk
info@countryeye.co.uk

Two charged over removal of shipwreck artefacts

Two men have been charged in connection with the alleged removal of items from a sunken Royal Navy warship in the English Channel.

HMS Hermes was a protected cruiser built in the late 19th century and converted into an aircraft ferry and depot ship ready for the outbreak of the First World War.

It was sunk by a German submarine in the Dover Strait in October 1914 with the loss of 44 lives. Officers from Kent Police's Rural Task Force launched an investigation in August 2015 after being informed that a number of historical artefacts had been reported missing from the wreck.

The investigation into the alleged offences was carried out in partnership with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Historic England, the Marine Management Organisation, the Receiver



of Wreck, Sussex Police and the French authorities.

John Blight, 57, of Old River Way in Winchelsea, East Sussex, has now been

charged with three counts of dishonestly failing to disclose items of wreck to the Receiver of Wreck with intent to make a gain. Nigel Ingram, 56, of

London Road, Teynham, has been charged with the same three counts in addition to being in possession of £16,000 worth of criminal property.



Arrests in rogue trader operation

Four men have been arrested by Kent Police during a crackdown on rogue traders.

They are suspected of targeting a number of vulnerable and elderly residents by pretending to be legitimate tradespeople.

A national day of action on 10 May involved police officers, Kent County Council and Medway Trading Standards teams, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the Environment Agency and Home Office Immigration Enforcement.

A 46-year-old man from Orpington, a 24-year-old man from Cranbrook and two men from Erith aged 20 and 31 were arrested on suspicion of defrauding vulnerable and elderly victims by overpricing for building work and repairs. They were all released pending further inquiries.

Officers worked with the partner agencies conducting checks and searches at premises connected to suspected rogue trading and illegal waste disposal, and visited a number of farm and business premises to check

workers employed at the sites.

Superintendent Tim Cook from Kent Police's Partnership and Crime Reduction Department said; 'Rogue traders prey on the most vulnerable in society and we are determined to bring to justice these criminal gangs who are often responsible for stealing large amounts of money from those who can least afford it. This operation allowed us to work with other agencies to arrest offenders and gain some significant evidence relating to their criminal activities.'

Useful contacts

- For advice and information, contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **03454 040506**, or visit **citizensadvice.org.uk**
- Kent County Council Trading Standards recommends **checkatrade.com** online or call **0333 0146 190** for reputable Kent traders.

Reduce the risk of employing a rogue trader:

- Don't deal with doorstep callers offering work on your home or garden and never pay in cash.
- Check they are from the company they say they are from.
- Ask for quotes in writing.
- Ring more than three traders to get a feel for an average price for the job.
- Remember traders must give you written notice of your right to 14 days cancellation when agreeing to do work at your home, including work gained from a cold call.
- If you believe a doorstep crime is happening or about to happen call the police on **101** or **999** in an emergency.



Warning over rogue trader scam with squirrels

Rural residents should be on their guard against rogue traders following a scam involving a dead squirrel.

Kent Police has received a number of reports about suspicious activity in the Tunbridge Wells area, where a man has been knocking on doors offering roof repairs.

After inspecting the roof the man claims the property has an infestation of squirrels which are causing damage. He then tries to claim money to get rid of the infestation and for other unnecessary work. On

one occasion he's reported to have produced a dead squirrel and demanded £300 from the homeowner. The victim later got their roof inspected by a reputable company which verified no infestation or damage caused by squirrels. Sergeant Andy Miller said: 'This man targets people by cold calling and demanding cash up front. Work then carried out is either minimal, or nothing has been done at all. We are continuing to investigate a number of complaints. Our advice remains the same

for anyone dealing with cold callers. Do not deal with people who knock on your door offering work on your home or garden and if you have any concerns call the police.'

Rogue traders may also offer services such as cleaning driveways or roof/guttering repairs.

A 34-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of fraud by false representation and bailed until 5 July. A 22-year-old woman was also arrested and released pending further investigation.

Joint patrol nets results in fishing operation

Kent Police's Rural Liaison Team launched Operation Dew to deal with people fishing illegally and potential links to other crimes.

Joint patrols have recently been carried out with the Environment Agency Fisheries Team during the close season, which runs from 15 March to 15 June.

The Environment Agency concentrates on illegal fishing prosecution and the Rural Liaison Team tackles organised criminal gangs responsible for the bulk theft/poaching of fish stocks from rivers and lakes. Rural Liaison Team Inspector Dave Smith said: 'By working in partnership with each other, we've been able to arrest many outstanding offenders in relation to serious offences while the Environment Agency achieves their priorities in protecting their fish stocks from illegal fishing activities.'

On 28 March a rural team officer caught an 18-year-old man illegally fishing on the River Darent at Eynsford. This is a private stretch of river for use by members of the Darent Valley Trout Fishers only. The man wasn't a member and has been reported for Fishing in the Close Season and Fishing without a Rod Licence.

On 1 April during Operation Dew at Brooklands Fishing Lakes in Dartford a number of people were checked and a 35-year-old man arrested for failing to attend court – having been wanted for over a year. He was later convicted for the original offences.

Rural team PC Marc Pennicott said: 'These results demonstrate our commitment to supporting our partners in delivering a first class service. While most people fishing do so legally, a small minority chose not to do so and are often committing other offences – as demonstrated by this arrest. Everyone aged 12 and over who is coarse fishing must hold a valid rod licence issued by the Environment Agency.' Further Operation Dew patrols are planned for the rest of 2017.

Penalties for illegal fishing activities

The maximum fine for not having a rod licence is £2,500. It's also important to ensure you are not fishing on rivers during the close season – as this is an important time to allow fish to breed successfully. You must also ensure you have permission to fish on private stretches of river as you may be committing an offence of the Theft of Fishing Rights and, as well as being prosecuted, have your fishing equipment seized.



Criminals using rural roads targeted

Rural officers working on an operation to target criminals' use of the rural road network (Operation Farm) seized stolen jewellery and arrested a man wanted for burglary offences.

Officers were in the Ash, Stansted, Fairseat and West Kingsdown areas when an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) alert flagged up a vehicle linked to a man wanted for recall to prison and other offences. It was traced to a hotel at Brands Hatch and

then stopped on the A20. Jewellery, champagne and false number plates were found. The driver denied knowing the original suspect but inquiries revealed they'd both been seen checking into the hotel that day and a search of a room uncovered more stolen jewellery.

A victim from a burglary in the Ash area was able to identify items.

The arrested man was charged with two burglaries and having no insurance. Inquiries are continuing.





Clamping down on the fly tippers blighting the countryside

'This type of offence is particularly emotive and has an adverse effect on the communities where it takes place. If you see fly tipping, don't assume it has been reported and please take the time to notify your local authority. Fly tipping can also be reported directly via the Country Eye App and will then be passed on to the correct local authority for them to investigate and remove'

PC Marc Pennicott,
Kent Police Rural Liaison Team



To download the free app go to the Apple App Store or Google Play and search for Country Eye

www.countryeye.co.uk
info@countryeye.co.uk

Lee Steel reports

The beauty of the Kent countryside is often marred by irresponsible fly tippers who blight the landscape, harm wildlife, pollute waterways, threaten health and damage land – ruining the rural environment for residents and visitors alike.

The statutory power to deal with fly tipping lies with the Environment Agency and local authorities. Kent Police Rural Liaison Team works closely with Kent County Council and local councils to investigate and bring offenders to justice.

John Evans, Kent County Council, Waste Enforcement Advisor, said: 'KCC, Kent Police, the Environment Agency, Highways England and the local district/ borough councils are all part of the Kent Environmental Crime Practitioners Working Group, which is run by the Kent Resource Partnership.

'Through KCC the group can quickly share intelligence concerning vehicles and suspects involved in fly tipping. Arrangements can be made with Kent Police to assist in arrests of suspects, execution of search warrants and waste crime road checks.'

Rural PC Marc Pennicott is part of this group. He said: 'The Rural Liaison Team regularly supports our partners from the Local Authorities Environmental Enforcement Teams and the Environment Agency to tackle the illegal transportation and fly tipping of waste.

'The Rural Liaison Team set up Operation Assist and regularly carry out joint operations patrolling hot spot areas, conducting road checks on vehicles carrying

waste. This has resulted in a number of vehicle seizures and prosecutions against those transporting waste illegally.

'We are also part of a working group which incorporates KCC, local authorities, the Environment Agency and Trading Standards which was established to improve intelligence sharing and working practices and has led to a joined up approach to tackling fly tipping.

'This type of offence is particularly emotive and has an adverse effect on the communities where it takes place. If you see fly tipping, don't assume that it has been reported and please take the time to notify your Local Authority. Fly tipping can also be reported directly via the Country Eye App and will then be passed on to the correct local authority to investigate and remove.'

According to the National Fly Tipping Prevention Group, just over two thirds (67 per cent) of fly tips involved household waste (an increase of 6.5 per cent from 2014/15) with highways being the most common target (50 per cent of total incidents in 2015/16 – a 7.9 per cent increase on the previous year).

Incidents of fly tipping on footpaths and bridleways increased by eight percent in England in 2015/16.

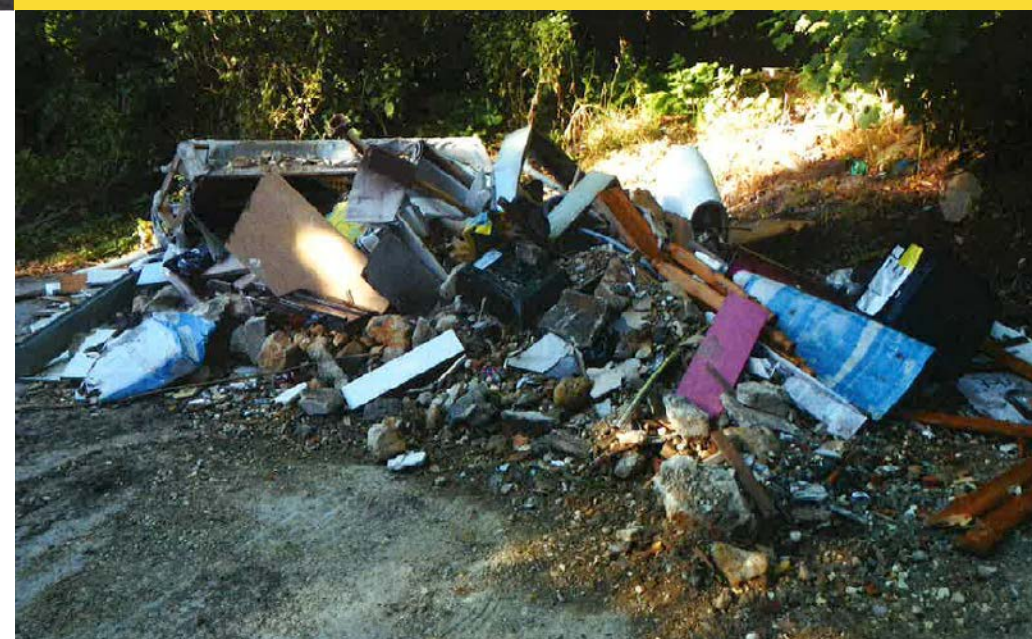
The estimated cost of clearance for fly tipping in England in 2015/16 was £49.8 million. One Government recommendation under its proposed new national litter strategy, currently out to consultation, is doubling litter fines and for offenders on community sentences, including people caught fly tipping, to help councils clear up litter and fly tipped waste.

Fly tippers in court

A joint investigation between the Rural Liaison Team, Dover District Council and Dover Community Policing Team saw two men convicted of nine counts of fly tipping across the district.

This resulted in blockages to an access route leading to a residential property; waste being set alight, resulting in Kent Fire and Rescue being called to extinguish the fire and costs being incurred by both private land owners and the district council to clear the waste. The investigation focused on increased fly tipping in rural areas around Aylesham and surrounding villages from November 2015.

Johnathan Smith, 37, from the Snowdown Caravan Site, Snowdown, pleaded guilty to nine counts of fly tipping, and Michael Smith, 36, from the same site pleaded guilty to four counts of fly tipping. On 25 January 2017 at Folkestone Magistrates Court Johnathan was sentenced to a 16 week prison sentence suspended for two years, 200 hours unpaid work, 20 days completing a rehabilitation activity requirement, and £1,500 costs and Michael to an eight week prison sentence suspended for two years, 200 hours unpaid work and £1,000 costs. The vehicle involved was also forfeited.



Fines for tippers

Two separate cases of men collecting waste from households then dumping them resulted in fines and clear up costs for the offenders.

The investigations by Tonbridge and Malling waste and enforcement officers Beverly Horn and Amanda Neimer took nearly a year.

One offender collected from a household in Watlington and dumped it in Old Chatham Road. He denied the offence but was found guilty and fined £420 plus £650 legal costs, £183 clear up costs and a victim surcharge of £42.

The second offender collected from a household in Larkfield then dumped half of it in Water Road, Trottiscliffe and the rest in Brook Lane, Snodland a few days later. He received two £600 fines, £700 legal costs, £308 clear up/compensation and a £120 victim surcharge. Amanda said: 'He didn't turn up at court which resulted in an arrest warrant, executed by Kent Police. He was taken to North Kent Police Station. I had to rush to Medway to hear his plea via a live link. He bailed to appear at Sevenoaks but again failed to appear. He was found guilty and sentenced in his absence.'

Most frequently fly tipped items:

- Household rubbish
- White goods such as fridges and freezers
- Construction, demolition and home improvement rubbish
- Garden rubbish
- Rubbish from businesses

Factfile:

- Fly tipping is the illegal deposit of (liquid or solid) waste on land contrary to Section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- Local authorities are responsible for clearing waste (up to 20m³) from public land. They can investigate dumping on private land but have no obligation to clear. The Environment Agency investigates major fly tipping on public or private land where there's an immediate environment and human health risk.
- The terms fly tipping and illegal dumping are used to differentiate between the roles of the local council and the Environment Agency.
- All tradesmen who dispose of waste must hold a Waste Carrier Licence. You can check they hold a valid licence by visiting www.environment-agency.gov.uk or by calling 03708 506 506
- The National Fly Tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG) seeks to identify good practice in preventing and tackling fly tipping and to advise Government on the problems and potential solutions
- Local authorities carried out 494 thousand enforcement actions in 2015/16 at an estimated cost of £16.9 million.

Protect your property

County round-up



Heating oil theft alert

Residents and businesses are being urged to take steps to avoid heating oil being stolen. Between 1 January 2016 and 13 November 2016 there were 94 crimes relating to theft of heating fuel countywide. Tanks are often targeted during the summer as thieves know they are not being used. Areas of Ashford, Medway and Tunbridge Wells have seen the highest number of offences and rural officers are urging residents and business to remain vigilant. Rural team PC Nick Lingham said: 'The theft of heating oil from domestic tanks can cost as much as £2,000 to £3,000 to replace. It not only hits families in the pocket but can cause great distress as it may also mean they are left without any heat and hot water over the winter months. 'Taking a few simple security steps to protect your tank can really reduce the chances of you being a victim. One of the most important decisions to be considered should be around adding protection to

- the tank, including fitting a sturdy lock to any caps and perhaps installing a protective cage around the tank and any pipes. Ideally, any casing should be locked with a shackle padlock, which can't be easily broken with bolt croppers.'
- Stay secure**
- The simple act of keeping your yard or drive gates closed and securely locked could prevent a theft. Ensure gates and fences are in good repair.
 - Consider CCTV along with suitable security lighting.
 - The location of storage tanks can be critical. Ideally they should be situated within sight of your home, office or business while at the same time being difficult to see by the general public.
 - Regularly check fuel levels to spot if the level drops. Remote electronic oil level gauges can be fitted which set off an audible alarm if the oil level in the tank suddenly drops.
 - Good quality alarms, CCTV, locks or any security devices will last longer.



- Check oil is covered by household or business insurance.
- Record details of any unfamiliar vehicles and their occupants seen in the area.
- Defensive Planting: Try planting prickly rose bushes, holly and thorny bushes around your tank. Thieves generally avoid things that may catch on skin or clothes and leave forensic evidence.
- Neighbourhood Watch: If you are going on holiday, ask a neighbour to keep an eye on your oil tank and report any suspicious activity.

Beware distraction burglars

Be on guard against distraction burglars posing as police officers or offering gardening services. People are particularly vulnerable at this time of year with doors and windows left open in warm weather. In one incident an elderly woman in Coxheath reported two men had entered her kitchen through a back door. They claimed they were police officers and had arrested a man outside for burglary. One kept the women talking while the other searched the house. Similar incidents were reported in the North of the county. In another recent case East of the county a woman in her 80s in the Ramsgate area answered her front door to a woman asking for gardening work. She later realised her handbag containing cash, cards and personal items had been stolen. It's believed the offender entered through a back door left open in the warm weather as the victim went to answer the front door.

- Stay secure**
- If you are suspicious of someone claiming to be from Kent Police, don't let them into your property. Ask to see their warrant card and then contact 101 – or 999 in an emergency. A call handler can verify if your caller is genuine.
- Lock your back doors and windows before answering the front door – thieves often work in pairs, distracting at the front door while the other tries the back.
 - Use a spyhole and chain and ask who they are through the door first.
 - Check for identification, even if a person has a pre-arranged appointment.
 - Don't let someone in if you are not expecting them and they don't have ID.
 - To check a caller is genuine, you can look up the number in the phone book or a recent bill and check it against the caller's card. Don't just ring the number on the card – it may be fake.



- Close the door if you need to leave to get something.
- If in doubt ask them to leave and come back at a more convenient time when a family member or friend can be with you.

New at risk form to help find people with dementia

A partnership approach has been set up by Kent Police and other agencies to help trace people living with dementia who are reported missing. Missing Person Liaison Officer, PC Feebee Sparks said: 'Kent Police receives approximately 10,000 missing person reports every year, and an increasing number of these are for people living with dementia. Some people with dementia are prone to simply wandering off, while others set out with a planned destination but become confused during their journey and end up lost. We wanted to look at ways in which we could help find them as quickly as possible.' Kent Social Services, the Alzheimer's Society, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Kent Search and Rescue, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust and the National Crime Agency's Missing Persons Bureau are developing new protocols and best practice. They've devised an At Risk of Going Missing form to provide quick, detailed information about a person's background and history to help speed up the time taken to find them. PC Sparks said: 'We need information about their mobility, preferred mode of travelling, routes



frequented, general health issues and significant places they are likely to gravitate towards. This form enables this information to be documented in advance, expediting the missing person investigation.' Police advise the completed form is kept safe but can be found easily. 'Having this information already available saves us having to work through these questions at what can be an extremely anxious and stressful time for the loved ones of the missing person,' said PC Sparks. The group is also investigating ways in which GPS trackers can be used to

locate missing people and is compiling an impartial guide on trackers for families wishing to buy one. If you have questions about dementia and the services available in your area contact the Alzheimer's Society – Kent and Medway on 01303 260674, email them kentandmedway@alzheimers.org.uk or visit www.alzheimers.org.uk. Or phone the 24 hour Kent Dementia Helpline on 0800 500 3014. The At Risk of Going Missing form can be downloaded from the Kent Search and Rescue website www.ksar.co.uk

MP joins team out on patrol



Faversham and Mid Kent MP Helen Whately asked the Rural Liaison Team to join a patrol after hearing about the good work officers had been doing within the farming communities of Kent. She met the team at Faversham and was given an Operation Farm briefing in relation to some target vehicles the team was looking to stop. Rural PC Preston Frost said: 'She joined us on patrol for part of a late shift equipped with a list of target vehicles to keep an eye out for. This gave her an insight into our role and some excellent feedback has been received from her office. 'The team have been invited to attend the Houses of Parliament so we can have a tour and visit her office to see what Helen's role involves as a Member of Parliament.'

Drug driving training

The Rural Liaison Team have received training to deal with people driving while under the influence of drugs. They will be using these new skills as part of Kent Police's drink/drug driving campaigns to reduce serious injuries and deaths on the county's road.

Action against cockfighting and stolen birds

The rural team continues to support the RSPCA against animal cruelty offences. A search warrant was executed in Bean around illegal cockerel fighting. Two men were arrested and the RSPCA is continuing to investigate. A search warrant was executed in Gravesend relating to illegal trapping of wild birds. Three wild goldfinches were found. A man is being prosecuted by the RSPCA.



Stolen Land Rover uncovered



The rural team received information that a suspected stolen Land Rover Defender was being stored in a barn. Police checks and Automatic Number Plate Recognition showed its movements and it was identified as stolen from Maidstone in November 2016. It was found stripped of several parts which had been placed in another Land Rover Defender belonging to the man who rented the barn. The stolen parts were removed and seized along with the stolen vehicle. A man was arrested for handling stolen goods and the investigation is ongoing.

Caravan thefts – record important information

Owners of caravans, plant and trailers are being advised to make sure they keep them secure and record important details following a number of thefts. PC Marc Pennicott said: 'We continue to see a trend of caravans, plant machinery and trailers being stolen and encourage owners to ensure they've recorded all of their serial numbers and unique identifying features. Please also take additional security measures and report all suspicious activity to Kent Police.'

The Rural Liaison Team has received additional training from Vehicle Crime Intelligence Police Services (NaVCIS)

to help them in identifying plant machinery, vehicles and caravans. Work is ongoing and a joint operation with this unit is being planned in the near future to target those responsible for these thefts. The training took place at the Port of Dover and during a road check a vehicle was stopped which contained a stolen vehicle engine from the Metropolitan Policing area, which was recovered. Inquiries are ongoing in relation to this seizure. The team identified a Silver Mazda involved in the theft of a caravan from West Kent. The vehicle was recently traced and the driver was arrested for a total of seven offences.



Trailer thefts

There has recently been an increase in thefts of trailers, particularly Ifor Williams. PC Pennicott said: 'Ifor Williams holds a database of owner details for their trailers and horse boxes and it's important to update them when you buy or are about to buy a trailer as they will be able to confirm if it is a stolen one. Please also consider photographing and recording the details of your trailers including chassis numbers and any other identifying features.'

New Volunteer and Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer for East Kent



Andrew Judd has taken over from Alex Harrington as the new Volunteer and Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator for East Kent – covering Ashford, Folkestone, Romney Marsh, Dover, Canterbury and Thanet areas. The retired police officer has been in post since December and is based at Ashford Police station. He'll be putting his Neighbourhood Policing experience to good use, especially with Country Eye (see [page 5](#)). He said: 'I'm very keen to establish new watches particularly in our rural areas so residents can join together to make their communities safer places. 'If you are interested in volunteering with Kent Police or considering establishing a new watch in your community. I look forward to hearing from you.' Andrew can be contacted on 01233 896151 or by email, andrew.judd2@kent.pnn.police.uk

Owner delighted as stolen tractor returned

The owner of a stolen tractor never thought he'd see it again. The red Case JX90 was taken from a barn in the Hever area between 5-6 May. It was stolen with an earth bucket attached and the offenders are thought to have guided it through a hole in the hedge into a lane. But a widespread circulation of the details through the Rural Liaison Team and a media appeal resulted in it being traced to Oxted, Surrey on 14 May and returned to the grateful owner. Chris Prior-Willeard said: 'Thanks to the circulation of the identification information they were able to confirm its ownership quickly. I'm grateful for the rural team's support and action as I really thought it had gone for good.'



First Special Constable on horseback

Special Constable Alaine Benardis and her horse, Jack, have been carrying out regular patrols in New Ash Green. Alaine is Kent Police Special Constabulary's first mounted special and is out and about during the day to provide extra police visibility and engage with landowners and the local community. Being mounted means Alaine and Jack can reach isolated and remote parts of the community more easily than using a vehicle. One part of Alaine's role is to gather and share information about crime and anti-social behaviour with Rural Watch and other community groups. She'd responded to a call from Kent Police for horse owners and riders, with access to a horse, to consider volunteering with the Special Constabulary and Alaine successfully completed her training programme. Mounted special constables have to demonstrate they are capable of controlling the horse in a range of different scenarios, including riding on minor roads. They'll be assessed on an annual basis. Alaine, who's has been a volunteer officer with Kent Special Constabulary for 10 years said: 'I love being a Special Constable and I've always enjoyed riding so this was the perfect opportunity for me to combine both and do something a little different. 'I hope it might attract other new potential volunteers with horses to consider volunteering for this exciting role which supports the local community.'



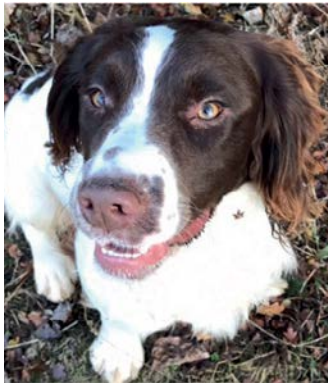
How do I become a mounted special constable?

Volunteers who want to join the Special Constabulary must be at least 18, meet medical and fitness standards and be willing to give a minimum of 16 hours every month on a voluntary basis. Additional training and animal welfare assessments are provided for successful applicants. Kent Police Special Inspector Adam Houghton said: 'Alaine and Jack are important members of the policing team and will provide invaluable support to their local community by being a visible presence and a point of contact.' Anyone who might be interested in volunteering for the Special Constabulary can find out more at www.kent.police.uk/jobs-recruiting-nowspecial-constables

Stolen working dogs recovered

Two working farm dogs were swiftly recovered following a theft from a Birling Estate, West Kent. Rural officers liaised with the local Police Community Support Officer and Maidstone colleagues to identify a potential suspect and vehicle. Two people were arrested and two vehicles seized. One dog was found in Watlington on the same day as the offence, along with a further four suspected stolen dogs. Three days later a man handed himself into Tonbridge Police Station and the second stolen dog was recovered. Both dogs were reunited with their owner after checked microchips made the process much easier. PC Nick Lingham said: 'The owners of the dog were extremely happy with the swift response and decisive action taken by Kent police in this case.'

Two men and a woman have now been charged and are due to appear at Maidstone Magistrates Court in June.



County round-up

News in brief

Cross border rural crime action

The rural team has been part of a cross border proactive operation targeting criminality on the Kent, Sussex and Surrey border. Officers from each force joined proactive patrols of repeat locations for rural acquisitive crime. The team carried out a number of vehicle checks and visits to addresses in Edenbridge, Cowden and Oxted, Surrey. Offences targeted included robbery, burglary and handling stolen goods.

Badger baiting investigation

An investigation into badger baiting and animal welfare saw the rural team execute a search warrant at an address in Gravesend. Two dogs with injuries were recovered as well as other items associated with illegal hunting. A suspected illegal firearm was also recovered and a 21-year-old man was arrested.

Fruit theft warning prompts arrest

The team were contacted by a local soft fruit farmer experiencing problems with people leaving designated footpaths on his land and helping themselves. A man who became abusive when challenged was identified and visited by police to warn him. He was found to be wanted in relation to an alleged stolen vehicle and was arrested.

Stolen cement mixer and tools returned

Officers responded to a theft in progress in Leysdown where a cement mixer and building tools were stolen. They stopped and seized a vehicle, recovered the items and arrested two men.

Hare photographer donates thermal imager

Hares are a favourite subject for conservationist and photographer Russell Miles. He gives regular talks on their preservation, receiving small donations, which he has collected and donated to the Rural Liaison Team to buy a thermal imager.

This can be used for searching for poachers at night and is a very useful addition to the rural officers' toolkit. Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'This thermal imager cost £516 and is a very generous gift which will assist our ongoing work against poaching. We are extremely grateful to Russell for making this contribution.'



Photographer Russell Miles

Rural team's farewell to 'Geordie'

Rural team regular PC Michael 'Geordie' Laidlow (pictured centre) retired from Kent Police on 31 January.

Rural Inspector Dave Smith said: 'We would like to thank him for all of his support in dealing with rural and wildlife crime for the past 15 years and for the excellent work he has carried out with our partner agencies and now works as a Volunteer and Neighbourhood Watch and Volunteer Coordinator in Canterbury.'

PC Nick Lingham has taken over from Geordie covering



West Kent and can be contacted via nick.lingham@kent.pnn.police.uk or 07817 956427. Contact Geordie about

volunteering or Neighbourhood Watch at michael.laidlow2@kent.pnn.police.uk or 07816 291343

Action against nuisance motorbikes and vehicles

Officers from Kent Police have been out tackling nuisance and illegal vehicles. Patrols, including PCSOs and Proactive Target Team officers on motorbikes and unmarked cars visited Bredhurst Woods, Boxley Warren and Walderslade Woods during the weekend of 11-12 March.

They worked with Boxley and Bredhurst Parish Councils, Kent County Council, Boxley Warren Nature Reserve Management Committee and Bredhurst Woodland Action Group.

- A total of 16 vehicles were stopped, with drivers' insurance details checked.
- Three motorbikes stopped on Scragged Oak Lane, Detling. The riders found to not have a valid driver's licence and no insurance.
- A stolen motorbike was recovered after being stopped on Blue Bell Hill and found to be driving on false number plates with a false chassis number stamped on the frame.



PCSO Matt Adlington said: 'We understand the concerns of local residents and officers will continue to carry out patrols in Maidstone where concerns have been raised. We are always grateful to members of the public who have provided us with any information and we continue to urge people to report any issues and where possible take down registration numbers. This will assist us in taking action should we identify these vehicles driving in an anti-social way.'

Spotlight

Meeting the challenge of transporting bigger and heavier loads



Lee Steel reports

Trying to manoeuvre a massive metal structure across and around Kent's roundabouts, junctions and bridges is testing enough on the day.

So coordination is vital in advance, often taking several months of planning between Kent Police, the hauliers and partners.

Inspector Nick Sparkes, Strategic Planning, Operations and Tasking, said: 'The route has to be checked for height, width and weight, minimising disruption and also contingencies in case of other problems – weather and blocks – it's difficult to 'just pull over.'

The most challenging bits are the unexpected problem solving, and tying it all together to look seamless.'

In recent months Kent Police's Traffic Management Unit has been working with the National Grid and their partners on the Sellindge Transformer refit project, Sellindge Transformer Movement.

A number of transformers are due for refurbishment, which requires being sent to Germany for refit. Due to their size National Grid needs Kent Police to help safely transport them via the A20 and M20 into Dover Western Docks.

Friday 3 February saw the latest with a Kent Police team working

with partners to safely negotiate the route. Inspector Sparkes said: 'The police team of seven involved officers from the Traffic Management Unit, Roads Policing Unit, Pro-active Team and for the first time motorcyclists from the Special Constabulary.'

Rachel Bozier, Traffic Management Abnormal Loads Officer, said with more movements of the transformers to Germany and back anticipated in the next couple of years, and other projects being planned, Tactical Operations and the Specials Roads Policing Unit will receive updated abnormal load awareness training.

She said: 'Last year we received 14,000 abroad notifications, an increase of 22 per cent on the previous year (many contain more than one load). I can get anywhere from 60-120 emails per day, depending on month or day of the week. That can be anything from aircraft parts, steel drums, paper mills, a lot of boats and mobile homes. Also some mobile cranes are abroads, and agricultural machinery such as harvesters. You are likely to drive past an abroad on the road and not necessarily pick it out as anything out of the ordinary. Kent Police only facilitate the largest of the abnormal loads, these tend to be transformers and wind turbines, although I wouldn't rule anything out!'

'It's the length of the Wembley stadium pitch; weighs 543 tonnes and takes up two full lanes of the motorway – a National Grid transformer on its way to Germany for a refit is just one of the often huge and bulky abnormal loads which challenge officers policing the roads each year'



Partnerships

Working with partners to protect rural communities



The team use their expertise to support Local Neighbourhood Policing Teams, PCSOs or core response officers. The team are all fully trained Wildlife Crime Officers.

The Kent Police Rural Liaison Team is a Tactical Operations team of six officers from the Rural Task Force, led by Inspector Dave Smith and Rural Sergeant Darren Walshaw – split into three teams of two covering the North, East and West Districts of the county. The team also come together to deal with specific county crime.

The team are responsible for targeting and dealing with active criminals committing crime in their respective rural wards as well as being a point of contact for help and advice in relation to Wildlife Crime, Heritage Crime and Environmental Crime and work closely with agencies such as the RSPCA, RSPB, Environment Agency, Maritime Coastguard Agency and local councils.

Follow the team on Twitter:

@KentPoliceRural



Key partners working with Kent Police to keep rural communities safe

CRAG – Crime Rural Advisory Group

CRAG, formed in 2012, brings together main rural stakeholders, including the National Farmers Union and Country Land & Business Association – representing a large percentage of land occupancy countywide. They bring their own insights to CRAG to help keep Kent Police informed on ever-changing issues in rural Kent.

www.btfpartnership.co.uk email: **michael.bax@btfpartnership.co.uk** phone: **Michael Bax: 01233 740077**

Kent Association of Local Councils

KALC is a not for profit membership organisation serving member parish and town councils and parish meetings in Kent and Medway. It offers training, advice and services to member councils. KALC works with rural officers to disseminate information on their behalf, and to gather crime information from towns and parishes.

www.kentalc.gov.uk email: **kalc@kentalc.gov.uk** phone: **01304 820173**

National Farmers Union

The NFU champions British farming and provides professional representation and services to its farmer and grower members. Around 70 per cent of full time farmers are NFU members. They aim to support Kent Police to engage with members' extensive local knowledge, working in partnership with CRAG and other stake holder organisations.

www.nfuonline.com email: **isobel.bretherton@nfu.org.uk** phone: **01730 711950**

Kent Fire and Rescue Service

Kent Fire and Rescue Service is responsible for delivering fire and rescue services to more than 1.7 million people. Each year fire officers deal with around 16,500 incidents including road crashes, house and barn fires and more than 2,400 non-fire rescues. KFRS works with the Kent Police, NFU, and CRAG to provide safety and risk reduction advice to support the agricultural business community.

www.kent.fire-uk.org email: **enquiries@kentfire-uk.org** phone: **01622 692121**

Historic England

Historic England is a public body which looks after England's historic environment. There are over 400,000 protected sites and buildings in England and Historic England works across a range of partnership to prevent the loss and damage to our shared cultural heritage. Former Kent police officer Mark Harrison advises the organisation and works closely with rural officers and CRAG.

www.historicengland.org.uk email: **southeast@HistoricEngland.org.uk** phone: **01483 252020**

