

Berwick St James - The Marshal's Christmas Flood, Drainage and Village Security Update – December 2018

There follows a summary of points gleaned from a number of meetings I have attended recently on behalf of the village.

Flooding and Drainage Issues

There are 84,000 gullies in Wiltshire. A Gully is a roadside drainage pit covered by an open metal grating; its purpose is to drain rainwater from the highway into the sewerage system. Until recently all of them were cleared annually, and, flushed or 'jetted'. Reduced funding and manpower budgets now mean that a gully will only be cleared if it impacts what they please to call a 'high speed' route or highway. Furthermore, such has been the reduction in regional funding that unless there is a serious risk to life it is unlikely that the Fire Brigade will respond to flooding.

I am tempting fate by writing this but, thus far this year rainfall levels have been below average, which would suggest that we will be OK Ground Water-wise in Feb-Mar next year which is traditionally when we are most vulnerable as a village. But,

- The trend for short, sharp but violent downpours appears to be growing and they are no longer just a summer phenomenon. This is a concern because we are very vulnerable to flash flooding when 'run-off' from the Plain converges in the centre of the village
 - Interestingly, it takes a minimum of ten days for ground water to subside once it becomes present within Salisbury. It never disperses faster and is thus a major consideration for Salisbury's flood contingency planning
 - If you spot the emergence of Ground Water please can you report it to me

Be aware that in the New Year – but in all probability not until February - Wessex Water (they deal with the sewers and drains) will start conducting work in the village. There were some issues with the village sewer system during the long wet winter of 2013/14 when ground water managed to get into the sewer. So, to fix the sewer, or, more precisely, seal, clean, repair and, if necessary, 'upsize' the pipe work (I love all this modern millennial terminology when really they mean 'mend') Wessex Water need to wait until the Ground Water levels are high enough for them to conduct a meaningful survey and develop a sense of the scale of the problem. The work will largely be confined to the southern end of the village. Watch this space for updates.

Neighbourhood Watch and Security Issues

There continues to be a slow but persistent trickle of criminal activity within the Till Valley. Cars have been broken into opportunistically when attractive items are left on display and vehicles have been specifically targeted.

Targeted theft is not a casual crime. There have been two targeted vehicle thefts within the village in the recent past; one of which stole a significant amount of equipment from a double locked storage area with locked inner and outer doors. Earlier this week there were two, brazen, break-ins within the village. In both cases desirable items appear to have been identified that **must have been identified in daylight**. Alarmingly, **both were done right under people's noses**.

So, please be watchful for strangers or suspicious behaviour in the village.

If you are at all concerned by something please report suspicious activity directly to the police. You should dial 999 if it is super urgent or life threatening. If it is not life threatening but nevertheless urgent dial 101 and ask for the 'Control Room' and then report the incident.

Your home security would be enhanced by external security lights.

On another note, if you hear a house or car alarm sounding please investigate its provenance rather than trying to blank it out or, frankly, ignoring it. We are a long way from an operational police station now and rely on everyone in the village playing their part in respect of the village's health and security. Ignoring an alarm is unacceptable.

The Internet and You

Metaphorically speaking the 'high street' is dying, people increasingly rely on the internet to shop and organise their lives, from making appointments to finding cheap deals to online banking. I am prepared to bet that the vast majority of you regularly use Amazon or Paypal if not several other services. If you do, do yourselves a huge favour and DO NOT rely on one common password to access all of these services. Guess what, you can now use an 'app' that hacks passwords, and, having identified a person's password it then identifies all the services that are used by that person.

If you use services such as Gmail, Yahoo, Instagram, Paypal and they are 'free' then remember that you are not the customer. The service you use sells 'you' and your data and online habits to other businesses – its how they make money. Many apps rely on knowing your location – they claim to do so to "enhance the user

experience". Furthermore, in their eyes your data is fair game for exploitation. So let me give you some examples:

- Some apps (such as weather forecast apps) track your individual movements up to 14,000 times a day. Sports or fitness tracking apps that record run or ride routes and timings are particularly vulnerable to exploitation
- Paypal sells all of your data (name, address, telephone number, credit card number and security code etc etc) to the two main People Search databases in the UK and the US. Furthermore Paypal sells all of the aforementioned plus a photo of you (if they can get one) to Microsoft
- In the US now, personal injury lawyers have started calling people if they identify through their phone's movements that they have been in or near the Accident and Emergency ward in a hospital in the hope that they will use them to make a claim

So, from an internet security point of view please rely on more than one password when using your computer and, if you can remember to do so, turn off the button on your phone that identifies your current location – it makes you much less of a juicy prospect for exploitation.

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