

## The Oasis Centre - Cornwall

Registered Charity Number 1139355, founded to serve the communities in the parishes of St Columb Major, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Eval and St Ervan



### Looking Out for ..... Holidays

Number 05 in a series of notes on important issues.

Are you planning a holiday? If you are, there will be lots of things demanding your attention before you go. There are the bookings to be made, tickets to be purchased, holiday clothes and all the other assorted bits and pieces to be sorted out and packed and then of course there is the passport and the foreign currency. In amongst all of this, you will need to think about the care of your home while you are away. What follows is based upon guidance provided by the police.

Your first care is to ensure (so far as you can) that your house does not look unoccupied while you are away. You will of course cancel milk and newspaper deliveries but what about the post man and other deliveries? A parcel left on the doorstep is a clear sign that there is nobody in. If bulky deliveries that will not go through the letterbox are likely, you will need the assistance of a trusted neighbour unless delivery can be deferred until you get back.

Neighbourly assistance, if available, could also cover other indications of occupation such as the opening and closing of curtains, the parking of vehicles in the driveway and the watering of plants. You will (of course) have to cut the grass before your departure, knowing that an unkempt garden can advertise the lengthy absence of the gardener.

Inside your house, lights operated by timers can be programmed to come on in rooms normally in use in the evening. A talk radio station on a timer can be set to come on at appropriate times. A fake TV (yes, they are readily available) also on a timer can be left on in an upstairs, front-facing bedroom to add to the image of occupancy. If you have a glass lower panel in your front door, put something over it, so that an opportunist thief cannot see post piling up on the floor inside.

Next, there is the security of the house itself. Doors and windows must be secured properly and the alarm set. No keys should be left inside external doors. They are the first things an intruder will look for in order to secure his escape. Most importantly, no keys should be left in a key box on the wall or other obvious location – particularly labelled keys to a neighbours' house. You may need to consider whether to leave important documents or particularly valuable items with family members or at your bank.

Then, there is the fundamental question, often overlooked, of who is to know of your absence. An announcement via social media such as Facebook and Twitter is not a good idea. Criminals make it their business to pry into such matters and will be only too delighted to have advance notice of the fact that your house will be unoccupied. The same applies to the use of the same media to tell friends and family that you are now celebrating your first swim in the pool at your holiday hotel – complete with pictures. The best advice is to keep the number 'in the know' to a minimum.

Jeremy Simmonds, Chair, The Oasis Centre - Cornwall