



For the latest news visit our website – [www.villagewatch.co.uk](http://www.villagewatch.co.uk) – or join our Facebook group

## Booking your Holidays?

Christmas is all over and many of us will be looking forward to booking our summer holidays. Unfortunately, not all bookings turn out to be what they promised.

Fraudsters advertise attractive holidays on the internet at temptingly low prices but can do so because you will get much less than they promise. For example, you might get a flight but find, when you get there, that the accommodation falls far below the standard that was promised, is double-booked or does not even exist!

### Protect yourself from holiday fraud

- Make sure you have the booking company's name and full postal address and check that it actually exists.
- Keep an eye out for bad spelling and grammar; this is often a sign of fraud.
- See if the company has only recently been set up or changed hands; this can be another sign of fraud.
- Ensure that the company is a registered member of a trade body such as ABTA, the Travel Association or ATOL, the Air Travel Organisers Licensing.
- Make sure that their website uses the padlock symbol to indicate that it is secure before you send any money.
- **Never pay by cash or through money transfer agents such as Western Union. If possible, only pay by credit card to protect your payment.**
- Check carefully that the details on the paperwork match what you think you have booked and read carefully the terms and conditions to confirm exactly what you are buying.
- Double check your booking just before you travel but also earlier if there is a long time before the travel date.
- **Most importantly, if you have any doubts DO NOT BOOK IT.**

### If you book your accommodation separately

- It is always safer to book directly with a well-established hotel or through a reputable travel or booking company.
- Be very careful to ensure that you are dealing directly with the genuine property owner or letting agent.
- Research the property or hotel that you are booking through web searches and online street-view maps to verify that it really exists. Check that the pictures match those in the advert and read any reviews from previous visitors.
- Ask the owner in detail about the property and the local area and then do your own research to confirm that what they have told you is true.
- If you use a letting agent, use a search engine to check them out and look for any reviews. Ask them what checks they make on the properties and their owners.
- **Taking extra care and not rushing to book and pay in case you lose the offer, will greatly reduce the chances that your well-deserved holiday will turn out to be an expensive disaster and disappointment.**

## Free Debt Advice

The credit card bills that arrive after Christmas can come as a shock, especially if debt is already a problem. Changes to the way banks will manage overdrafts from now on may also make life more difficult.

Debt can be a serious problem and a short-term solution adopted by many of those affected is to borrow even more. This is obviously not a good idea and, in extreme cases, can lead to homelessness and even worse if unlicensed money lenders are involved!

Free help and advice are available from reputable charitable groups but it is easy to be misled by organisations out to make money for themselves. Any internet search for debt advice will produce a list of websites that have paid the search engine to put them at the top. Signing up to them involves paying fees that will only add to the problems.

**Genuine websites will appear further down the list. Before committing yourself, read the details very carefully to make sure that it is a free service.**

Some of the organisations that offer genuinely free help and advice are:

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)  
[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)  
[www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)  
[www.capuk.org](http://www.capuk.org)

## Neighbourhood Link

Neighbourhood Link is now well established and is the official Police Community Messaging Service for Leicestershire. It provides news and information that you can rely upon and trust.

If you subscribe you will receive regular email alerts with the latest local news about crime, Police activity, safety advice and related issues as they occur. You will also have the ability to give feedback on the information you receive and respond directly to our local Beat Team.

You can select the geographical area you are interested in and what kind of news you want to receive.

The service is free and you can unsubscribe at any time  
[www.neighbourhoodlink.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodlink.co.uk)

## Our Advice Line

Our Watch phone **0756 2422 756** always goes to an answering service and we respond to messages as quickly as we can.

Occasionally, we get messages about possible criminal activity at the time but can do very little when we hear them many hours later apart from forwarding them to the Police.

**If you are concerned about something when it is actually happening, call the Police on 101 or 999.**

## Saturday Advice Shop

15th February 2020

10 a.m. to 12 noon

Robert Dickinson Building

10 Sibson Road

(Opposite the Garden Centre)

# STOLEN

Your Number Plates are Valuable  
Keep them Safe with our Free Security Screws

# Still Only a Pound per Household

This month we are distributing our membership fee collection envelopes and once again, despite many years of inflation, are asking households to contribute just £1 to support the Watch activities for another year. Of course, we are always grateful to those of you who generously choose to give a little more.

These contributions pay for, among other things, lamppost signs, this Newsletter, our Watch Phone, our dedicated website, leaflets, door stickers, free security marking for cycles and similar items, general running costs and useful security products that we sell to members at cost price in our Advice Shop.

The Watch contributes towards the upkeep of our local Police Office on Sibson Road, a resource we would not want to lose as so many neighbouring villages have done recently. We also pay for the required annual calibration of the speed gun provided by the Parish Council for use by our Beat Team to monitor traffic through our villages.

Please return your envelope to your Coordinator at your earliest convenience and we will issue you with your membership card as soon as we can. Envelopes received near the end of a month may not be processed until the following month.

## Beat News

The most recent *Beat News* is published in full on the *Police News* pages of our website – [www.villagewatch.co.uk](http://www.villagewatch.co.uk)

The reports are also printed each month in the *Birstall Post*.

Here is a summary of the December *Beat News* from PC Dave Jaeckels:

- There were forty-six crimes reported in December, an increase from forty in November.
- Eleven assaults, an increase from four, although most of these were from one incident on Christmas Eve.
- Eleven offences of theft from vehicles, an increase from six with three being stolen number plates.
- Five house burglaries and two non-dwelling burglaries.
- Four public order offences.
- Seven reports of criminal damage of which two were to vehicles.
- One drug offence.
- Four other thefts.
- One reported robbery.

Further information can be found at:

[www.police.uk/leicestershire/NL60](http://www.police.uk/leicestershire/NL60)

## Crime Prevention Advice

There was a robbery reported this month where a man was assaulted and had his wallet stolen while walking through School Lane Park. This is a very rare occurrence in Birstall but here is some advice to avoid putting yourself in a vulnerable situation:

1. When out walking alone, try to stick to well-lit paths and be aware of your surroundings.
2. Avoid taking short-cuts if they take you through dark alleyways or through wooded areas etc.
3. Consider taking a panic alarm with you which you can activate if you feel afraid or in fear.
4. If possible, let someone know where you are going and when you will be back, so they can try to contact you and will know where to look if you do not return when expected.

## Neighbourhood update

We have been conducting enquiries to identify the riders of two off-road motorbikes who have been riding around the village in a dangerous manner. We have been given a name and efforts have been made to locate him. If you have any information about this, please get in touch, before someone is seriously injured.

Over the Christmas period a number of drivers have been breathalysed and two arrested for being over the limit. Remember that, if you are driving, the best thing to do is to simply not drink, as being over the limit is not only dangerous, but can also have serious long-term consequences if you lose your licence.

## Sign up for Email News

We regularly post local crime-related news on our website. You can receive emails alerting you to all new postings.

Please go to our Home Page at:  
[www.villagewatch.co.uk](http://www.villagewatch.co.uk)

Most modern phones and devices will work best if you choose the 'html' format.

**ALWAYS PAUSE AND  
GET ADVICE FROM  
SOMEONE YOU TRUST  
BEFORE RESPONDING  
TO UNEXPECTED  
MESSAGES**

## Police Beat Surgery

You can meet one of our local Police Officers to discuss, in confidence, any issues that concern you on:

**Saturday, 15th February at the NHW  
Advice Shop in the Robert Dickinson  
Building, 10 Sibson Road, between  
10 a.m. and 12 noon**

*(Times are always subject to Officers not being required elsewhere in an emergency.)*

## Contacting Birstall and Wanlip Neighbourhood Watch

Email: [watch@villagewatch.co.uk](mailto:watch@villagewatch.co.uk)

Phone: **0756 2422 756**

*Calls go to our answering service but we  
always do our best to reply within 24 hours  
Please remember to leave your number*

**Write: c/o Birstall Parish Council  
Council Office, Birstall Road,  
Birstall, Leicester, LE4 4DH**

*We also have a post box on the counter  
in the Council Office*

**Thank you to Birstall Parish Council for continuing to support the Watch – [www.birstallparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.birstallparishcouncil.org.uk)**

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