

## **WAN column, October 2019**

### **Back to basics**

Surrey Police recently reported an increase in thefts across the county. While Woking is one of the less-affected boroughs it makes sense to consider some easy, inexpensive and free things that will reduce your chances of being burgled.

For starters, introduce a regime in your home where the last person leaving is responsible for checking that all the windows are closed, doors are locked, shed and garage are secure and any back gate locked. Children respond well to these regimes, but adults often need to be reminded.

If you're going away, make your property look as if someone is home. Put timer lights in upstairs rooms. Have a neighbour, friend or relative regularly check there are no parcels on the doorstep or oversized post in the letter box. If they have a key, ask them to regularly move visible items around and open and close curtains. Ask them to move cars in your drive, and invite them to park their cars there.

The next thing to consider is some relatively cheap devices the police have recognised can play a role in reducing burglaries. The first is a doorbell with a camera. Most of these send a message to your mobile phone when the bell is rung and operate a camera. You can then log in and see who is there. The more sophisticated ones will allow you to have a conversation from your phone via a microphone/speaker in the doorbell. Even if yours does not have this option, just seeing a video of who is at your door gives you the option of contacting a neighbour to go around and check.

The second effective tool is a simple CCTV camera that records when movement is detected. This may not stop a burglary, but the police say the quality of the images is such that they can be used for investigation or used as evidence in a prosecution.

The last effective tool concerns those of you who have French, or patio doors. If they have lever handles on the outside, determined thieves can wreck the locks to disable them and then operate the lever handles to get in. There's a nifty solution for this, called Patlock.

The ultimate deterrent, of course, is a house alarm. Fully wired systems are better, as wireless ones need batteries in all the devices and we often forget to replace the dead batteries, especially when they are outside. If you can't afford an alarm, buy a dummy bell box for the outside wall with a built-in flashing LED. A burglar is unlikely to risk finding out whether it's real or not – instead they will move on somewhere else.

*Interested readers can find out more about Patlock here:*

*<https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/knowledge/patlock>*