

## **Some Thoughts about close season security**

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During the past few weeks two member clubs have been the target of thieves. It, therefore, seemed appropriate to share some thoughts about securing club premises for the close season. The League has a great range of clubs as members, playing on grounds in a great range of locations, so any thoughts are at best “memory joggers” about tasks that need to be done. For other clubs, who have already started “packing away” this may prove to be a useful check-list to ensure that they have not forgotten anything.

### **The nature of the risk**

The nature of the risk seems to be changing, creating additional concerns for local police forces and insurers. The “raids” (for the want of a better word) seem to be getting more sophisticated. In one of the thefts above the thieves twice visited the ground on match days to assess the site. They, then, returned to the ground with the equipment that they had determined to be necessary, for instance powered cutting equipment to cut through padlocked steel doors. Having completed their theft they returned a couple of weeks later hoping to break in to the same store and steal the insurance-funded replacement items. They were unsuccessful.

Most of these raids involve the use of motor vehicles (for obvious reasons). A couple of winters ago clubs in remote/rural locations on the fringes of conurbations were particularly suffering. The League has a number of such clubs. It also has a number of clubs and grounds in truly remote locations.

### **Possible Actions**

By their very nature, cricket grounds are vulnerable to “raids”. No single, or set, of precautions will guarantee security. However, a thoughtful selection of appropriate precautions may deter potential thieves or encourage them to look elsewhere.

These are a list of thoughts in no particular order:

- Are the boundaries of the site secure/robust? Most raids involve the use of motor vehicle(s) and the thieves are looking for a move quickly on to, and then away from, the site.
- Are those of your neighbours who overlook the ground aware that you have finished playing? Do they know whom they should contact if they see something suspicious.
- Neighbours need to be assured that the police are happy for them to ring 999 if they think they are witnessing suspicious activity
- Is it possible to move small scale “gardening” items off site. Strimmers, 12” mowers, light rollers, can be quickly taken and have users other than on cricket grounds. (Sets of gang mowers are possible less vulnerable). There may be a member or a friend who could store them in the corner of a shed or barn.
- Does some of your more portable equipment have distinctive markings? Painted bands in club colours? [A few years ago police crime prevention officers were suggesting to schools that they paint their audio-visual equipment pink, on the basis that a man walking in to a pub with a garishly coloured recorder under his arm might look suspicious.]

- Have the name of the club marked both visibly on the outside of a piece of equipment and, then, again in a less obvious/visible place (this would help identification in the event of recovery.)
- Remove from the site motor vehicles that are no longer in frequent use. Tractors (large and small), quad-bikes, etc., all have uses in other settings. Again, is there a barn or a garage where they could be stored?
- What has happened to the wicket covers? If the covering material has been removed and stored (to prevent weathering) then the frames can quickly begin to look like scrap metal awaiting collection. Half an hour with an angle grinder can reduce each section to “trailer sized” pieces.
- If you have to replace items do not store the replacements in the same place as the originals. Thieves will be delighted to return to steal brand new equipment.
- Where appropriate, make it obvious that buildings do not contain anything of value. Take out the cash drawer from the till and stand it up beside the till. Remove all optics and bottles of alcohol. Take down curtains and neatly stack furniture.
- Make sure that all door locks and bolts and all window catches and fixings are sound, effective and closed (even the ones in the “ladies’ loo”). Replace breakages.

### **Further Thoughts**

Is it possible to ask, say, three club members to conduct a site survey; to walk around the site and go through the buildings looking for weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Use their report to create a jobs list.

Contact the local PCSOs / Community policing team (they now usually hold the crime prevention brief). They may have an officer who would be prepared to inspect the site and premises with a club member.

Does your club have an equipment (assets) register? This might be useful if the worst comes to the worst and you have to make an insurance claim. A simple arrangement might be ring binder containing a number of see-through sleeves – one for each item. A record might contain an up to date photograph, the invoice/receipt from the purchase, invoice/receipts for any repairs or enhancements (which might have increased the value), a list of serial number(s) and/or identifying markings, etc.

Marshall Wooldridge are the League’s insurers. They have drawn up a check list of end of season tasks. This can be accessed from the League’s website

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*Stephen Baldwin.  
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