

Tilley Award 2003

## WEEKEND WORRIER

**Category:**

Crime & Disorder reduction

**Name of Police Force:**

Lancashire Constabulary

**Endorsing Chief Officer(s):**

Chief Constable Paul Stephenson

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## WEEKEND WORRIER - SUMMARY

**Force:** Lancashire Constabulary  
**Contact:** PC 3879 Nick Mattock  
PC 3023 Jon Miller

Richmond Caravans was a caravan storage site for about two hundred and fifty caravans close to the M65 at Clayton Le Moors in Lancashire. It was situated on a piece of land that formed part of a single controlled entrance business park and bordered by open fields with public access. The arterial main road that runs between Blackburn and Burnley also adjoined the site.

Between February and June 2002 the site was subjected to a spate of criminal incidents encompassing criminal damage and thefts from a total of forty-seven caravans as well as damage to the site's exterior fencing. These were all committed during the hours of darkness.

With no signs of the rise in these crimes abating, patrol PCs Nick Mattock and Jon Miller were tasked to examine the root causes and contributory factors leading to the crimes and, if suitable, bring about a Problem-Oriented Policing approach.

They gathered information from a variety of quantitative, qualitative and visual sources and found that the recorded crimes under-represented the true number and value of crimes with a 'dark figure' of crimes that were not reported for a variety of reasons. They were hindered in their research by the obstructive attitude of Richmond Caravans management.

The two officers prepared a list of possible police and partner responses including improving lighting, CCTV, access to the site and serious consideration being given to total relocation of the business to a more suitable and defensible site. In the short term, high visibility police and security patrols were conducted within the site as were 'flyovers' by the Constabulary's Air Support Unit. PCs Mattock and Miller also contacted the Caravan Storage Site Owners Association who award ratings to storage sites that are used by insurance companies when deciding on premiums. Richmond Caravans rating was withdrawn, compelling them to take action, as caravans could not be insured on the site without security improvement.

On the grounds of cost, Richmond Caravans chose to relocate to a new site. Taking advice from CaSSOA and the police, the new site is an example of best practice in caravan storage site security with palisade fencing, effective CCTV coverage of all caravans and, most significantly, the innovative way in which caravans are parked to restrict access.

# WEEKEND WORRIER

A Problem Oriented Policing approach to thefts from caravans on a caravan storage site



***The Caravan Storage Site  
Owners' Association.***





## SCANNING

The computerised SLEUTH briefing package used by all divisions in Lancashire Constabulary incidents was initially responsible for bringing the problems at Richmond Caravans to the attention of police officers in the area. The package collates crimes and incidents and then presents this as a one-screen presentation that is used daily to brief officers starting their tour of duty. It became apparent that the frequency of incidents was increasing dramatically and the geographic policing Inspector tasked us to see if the issue would be appropriate for a problem-oriented approach.

Our primary source of information was the Data Warehouse facility on the SLEUTH package, which we interrogated to extract information regarding the frequency of the crimes. This revealed that between 03/02/2002 and 24/06/2002 seven crime reports had been taken covering a total of forty-seven caravans that had been broken into and a fence had been damaged on the Richmond Caravans site. In addition to this, a further three incidents had been recorded in which the security staff on the adjacent industrial estate had called police to suspicious activity at Richmond Caravans. Each crime listing on the SLEUTH system provided us with the modus operandi of each spate of thefts and the damage. It became apparent that the criminal damage to the fencing was probably in preparation for the following thefts. All thefts were carried out during the hours of darkness.

In order to deal with the problem in a problem-oriented manner we decided that a more holistic information base was required rather than just using the quantitative information and modus operandi provided by the SLEUTH package.

Qualitative research into the problem also formed an important part of the information gathering process. This did not take any formal means and was conducted by both of us. Our primary source of qualitative information was the manager at Richmond Caravans, Les Brown. He was responsible for facilitating our access to the site and was able to provide us with his perspective on the problems. He informed us that the responsibility for security on the site lay with St Modwen Properties as he paid them ground rent to provide cameras, fencing and security guards. As such, he refused to pay for any security arrangements. However, he was concerned that any maintenance in or increase of the crime rate would lead to him losing customers. Having spoken with the St Modwen Properties manager responsible for the Junction 7 business park site, of which Richmond Caravans was a part, he stated that whatever was within the fences was not his remit and that, furthermore, the amount of rent paid by Richmond Caravans did not justify him spending any more money on upgrading the physical security at the site. He did acknowledge however that the crime at the site might have a 'knock on' effect with regards to crime on the estate itself.

We had problems in speaking directly to the caravan owners themselves, as Richmond Caravans did not provide us with contact details for them despite numerous requests and promises to say that they would. The probable reasoning behind this was that they did not want customers to gain the impression that there was a crime problem on the site. We attempted to approach this important group of people by different

means and contacted two national caravanning organisations, The Caravan Club and The Camping and Caravanning Club, in order to cascade knowledge our project to a local level within these organisations and solicit response in that manner. However, it was found that the infrastructure of these particular organisations did not fulfil our requirements. This did hamper the Scanning phase of the POP, as we were not able to ascertain the concerns, views and ideas of the very people who would ultimately benefit from any action that we would take. However it did become clear that our qualitative data was inaccurate and that there was a 'dark figure' of unreported crime. Many caravan owners has chosen not to report damage and theft to their caravan as "it was not worth the hassle" and the value of the insurance claim was either less than the policy holder's excess payment or would affect their premium. It soon became clear that the actual cost of the crimes was in the region of £8000.

During our search for national or local caravanning organisations we were told about an organisation called the Caravan Storage Site Owners Association (CaSSOA). The contact point at CaSSOA was Ted Young. We approached Mr Young who was able to inform us about the work of CaSSOA in providing safety, security and other general advice to caravan storage sites and also that they awarded sites a bronze, silver or gold rating based upon the state of the facilities that they had. Richmond Caravans held a silver rating but this was based upon their previous site and their site at the Junction 7 business park had not been visited or rated by CaSSOA representatives. Mr Young was also able to provide us with a list of the criteria upon which his organisation rated sites. This was very helpful to us as it was the only piece of crime prevention information we had been able to source that specifically pertained to caravan storage.

We were fortunate to have access to the Home Office Crime Reduction Toolkit through the Constabulary's intranet site. Whilst the version we were able to view was limited in scope due to the fact that external internet links did not work, we were able to gather information on subject areas that we believed may be relevant to our POP i.e. Business and Retail Crime and Travelling Criminals. Also available to us was the Home Office's caravan crime leaflet.

Another source of information with regards to the location involved in the crimes was by using aerial photographs taken by the Constabulary Air Support Unit and by utilising Ordnance Survey maps of the area.

By extracting formal and informal information from this wide range of qualitative, quantitative and visual sources we felt that we had sufficient information to begin a holistic analysis of the problem.



## ANALYSIS

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the information that we had gained during the Scanning phase of the POP, which are discussed further in the Assessment section of this report, we decided that we had sufficient information to equip us to undertake the analysis phase. Both of us were involved in the analysis of our information and our information sources. As we input our analysis onto the Constabulary's POPs guide on the SLEUTH package, our progression was monitored and supervised by the POPs co-ordinator for our geographic policing area. This ensured that a person not directly involved in the research and implementation of the POP was able to view our analysis objectively and by delivering constructive feedback, indicate any area within our analysis that required further investigation prior to a response being formulated.

In keeping with the Constabulary's accepted approach to Problem Oriented Policing we began to analyse the information that we had by using the Problem Analysis Triangle. This enabled us to organise our information into three areas that we were then able to examine separately, whilst considering the effect that each may have on the other two. The three constituent parts of the Problem Analysis Triangle that we used are victim, offender and location.

### VICTIM

The term 'victim' is one which, when used holistically, can encompass a large number of persons and parties. These range from the caravan owners themselves whose property is stolen and damaged, through to the Police whose time, resources and money is spent on attending, recording and investigating the crimes. For the purposes of our analysis we made a conscious decision to include all parties that could be considered as 'victims' so as to achieve as complete an understanding of the problem as we reasonably could.

The first, and most obvious, victims that we considered were the caravan owners themselves. From the quantitative information that we collated, we were able to determine that there were around forty-seven different caravan owners who had had their property stolen and/or their caravans damaged. The recorded value of the crimes varied between £15.00 for stolen kitchenware and £600 for a caravan door and frame that was damaged beyond repair. From examining the property lists on the crime reports, it became apparent that some caravan owners were disproportionately affected in terms of cost due to the fact that they kept more items of greater value in their caravans. With a minority of caravan owners accounting for the majority of the value of goods stolen, it was quickly identified this was one area in which action on our part may lessen the impact of the offences. Our qualitative research, conducted on an informal basis with the small number of caravan owners that we actually spoke to, showed that whilst there was appreciation of crime prevention techniques whilst on touring sites, there was very little awareness amongst the caravanning community with regards to when the caravan was in storage. Combined with the difficulty that we (as police

officers) experienced in gaining specific information in this field, this was also identified as an area in which a response could be appropriately directed.

Richmond Caravans were another victimised party. It was their business that would eventually begin to suffer as caravan owners began to see that the site was not somewhere that their caravans could be left with fear that they would become the targets for criminal activity.

Similarly, St Modwen Properties and the businesses who rented property on the business park can be classed as victims as they were in danger of becoming victims as a high crime rate on the caravan compound may have encouraged criminal activity on the estate proper. Also, a rise in the crime rate for the compound may have caused the insurance premiums of neighbouring premises to increase. St Modwen Properties pay for the security guards for the Junction 7 business park and, although they maintained that they are not responsible for the security inside the caravan compound itself, it is these people who were the informants to police with regards to the crime and, on one occasion, they pursued the suspected offenders.

As mentioned above, another victim in this situation was the police. The very fact there were a total of forty seven individual aggrieved parties meant that a considerable amount of police time and local resources were being spent in tracing the owner of each caravan, contacting them, waiting for them to re-contact with precise information as to what damage had been caused and what, if any property had been stolen and then regularly updating the crime reports to accurately reflect the modus operandi and stolen property listings. Unfortunately, crime is not committed according to the police's shift pattern and different officers were on duty as the crimes were being reported to the police. In addition, as the crimes were being reported at staggered intervals as each caravan owner discovered, or were informed, that they had become victims, it was necessary for a Crime Scene Investigator to attend on each occasion. After one night in which a large number of caravans were broken into, a team of specialist search trained officers were required to attend to search routes which the offenders may have taken, searching for evidence and abandoned or concealed stolen property. The way in which all these police resources were being deployed was not cost effective and was not the best use of the available local and specialist policing resources and, as such, had a disproportionate effect on other local policing objectives.

## **OFFENDER**

Despite the tasking of Eastern Division's Intelligence and Source Unit as well as work by the geographic policing teams in the local area, there was very little indication of who the offenders were.

Anecdotal evidence from Accy Gas staff suggested that members of the traveller community who visit the compound to buy gas canisters paid an unwarranted interest in the caravans and, at times, had been found wandering amongst the caravans. There was no evidence or intelligence however to support any allegation of their involvement in the crime problem.

Visits to all registered second hand shops in the local area failed to recover any of the stolen property and, as such, was unable to provide any further leads as to the possible identity of the offenders.

## LOCATION

As can be seen above, a large amount of the information that we gathered in the Scanning phase pertained to the location of the crime problem. By analysis of the modus operandi obtained from the crime reports we were able to ascertain that the point of entry was via a hole in the fence that bordered the open fields to the rear of the compound. This was the only damage to the fence and, given the bulk and weight of some of the stolen property, the only way in which the property could have been removed from the compound. A search by specialist officers revealed that the likely route of the offenders was either to a lay-by on the nearby 'A' road or across the fields to Rishton Road, Clayton Le Moors. It would have been necessary for the offenders to have a vehicle at either of these two points. Again considering the bulk and weight of the stolen property, the lay-by on the 'A' road was thought to be the most probable place to park a vehicle, due to its proximity to the hole in the fence.

The Richmond Caravans compound is on land owned by St Modwen Properties and forms a part of the Junction 7 business park. The only legitimate entrance to the site is a padlocked gate from the estate, entrance to which is controlled by a security guard operated barrier. The Richmond Caravan compound is rectangular in shape. Two sides adjoin the estate. One side borders open countryside to which the public have access by a footpath and the fourth side adjoins a busy 'A' road that leads directly to junction seven of the M65. The fencing around the 'exposed' sides of the compound is of a plastic coated metal criss-cross design. Richmond Caravans was co-located on the compound with Accy Gas, a business owned by the same people as Richmond Caravans. Accy Gas supplies BOC style gas canisters to business and recreational users all over the UK.

One CCTV camera mounted on the gable end of a building on the business park covered the compound; this was monitored by the security guard at the estate entrance. During the hours of darkness, this camera was rendered ineffective by the poor lighting on the compound. This is a clear example of Hearnden's finding (1996) that CCTV equipment bought by business is typically cost driven and often inappropriate or technically deficient.

The map on the following page shows the location of Richmond Caravans (indicated by a caravan graphic). The emphasised dotted line to the left of the site shows the line of the footpaths across fields to the rear of the site.





The picture below shows the layout of the Richmond Caravans site itself, as taken from the entrance gate on the St Modwen business park. In the distance can be seen the fields and wooded area which border the far side of the compound. Accy Gas is housed in a separate gated area to the left of main gates. This is the perspective from which the sole security camera viewed the site.



The way in which the caravans themselves were arranged, as shown above, permitted easy access to each caravan. This was done specifically to allow caravan owners access to their caravan at any time. Unfortunately it also meant that offenders could do the same and, because of the proximity of the other caravans, they could do so without being seen.

At the conclusion of the Analysis phase we decided to define the problem as:

*"Sporadic high volume thefts from unattended caravans on a storage site adjoining an industrial estate and open countryside, close to arterial roads".*

We recognised at this stage that the analysis that we had carried out, whilst being effective for our purposes, did have flaws. The most obvious gap in our analysis was that in the Offenders section of the Problem Analysis Triangle. This was due to the fact that no firm information had been gained in the Scanning phase with regards to this area. As such, we had to make a decision that the Response phase would have to encompass as many types of offenders as possible. This would, obviously, flaw any response, as we would have to generalise rather than act specifically against target nominals or target groups. Secondly, our analysis of caravan owners' own thoughts and actions was stunted due to our lack of access to them, again during the Scanning phase.

In consultation with geographic patrol supervision and the POPs Co-ordinator, we decided that a time scale of six months would be set and that success would be:

*"A significant reduction in the crime rate for thefts from and damage to caravans on the storage site"*

*"Professional and self satisfaction for the two officers running the POP"*

## RESPONSE

Brantingham and Faust (1976) identify that there are three categories into which crime prevention initiatives can be grouped – primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary crime prevention is defined as that which reduces opportunity for criminals and potential criminals without reference to the actual criminals or potential criminals themselves. It has long been identified as area in which the police have taken the lead, despite the blurring of these boundaries by more recent multi-agency approaches to crime prevention (Pease, 1997). Buck (1997) states, *"many people engaged in local crime prevention have little idea of the difference's between them"*. In this instance however, we made a decision that primary crime prevention would be at the forefront of our response.

Rational Choice theory (Cornish & Clarke, 1996), which deals with the decision to commit a particular crime in a particular context, has been heavily criticised as only being applicable to crime that is committed for gain. Following the analysis of the information available to us it became apparent, as discussed above, that the due to the wide variance in types of property stolen, the crime we were dealing with was highly likely to be for gain. As such, rational choice on the part of the criminal could be actively used against the criminal by acting in an equally rational manner.

In confirmation of this, an in-depth study of a group of commercial burglars found that the most common motive for committing commercial burglary was to obtain money. The same report stated that offenders identified the most effective deterrents as the presence of security guards and the existence of premises overlooking the target. (Butler, 1994)

## PROPOSED RESPONSES

The initial possible responses that we identified as those that we could initially employ in our POP are shown on the following page in the setting of rational choice using Clarke's Taxonomy of Primary Prevention (1995). All are aimed at the site itself rather than at the offenders but do consider both offenders and potential offenders:



Clarke's Twelve Techniques      Our proposed response

*Increasing the Effort*

- |    |                     |   |
|----|---------------------|---|
| 1. | Target hardening    | - Upgrading the fencing at the point of access  |
| 2. | Access control      | - Increased vigilance and monitoring of legitimate access to compound<br>- Only possible point of entry to be main gate |
| 3. | Deflecting Offender | - Possible relocation of site   |
| 4. | Controlling means   |   |

*Increasing the Risks*

- |    |                       |  |
|----|-----------------------|--|
| 5. | Exit/entry screening  | - Recording of details about those entering site on legitimate business  |
| 6. | Formal surveillance   | - Actual entry of patrolling St Modwen security staff and police onto compound during hours of darkness<br>- High visibility flyovers by the Constabulary Air Support Unit whenever it was in the area on other operations or taskings |
| 7. | Employee surveillance | - Installation of more, and better-positioned CCTV cameras   |
| 8. | Natural surveillance  | - Improved lighting to increase CCTV effectiveness   |

*Reducing the Reward*

- |     |                      |  |
|-----|----------------------|--|
| 9.  | Target removal       | - Removing target property and valuables from caravans   |
| 10. | Identifying property | - Marking of any property left in caravan                |
| 11. | Removing inducements | - Rapid repair of damage to fencing                      |
| 12. | Rule setting         | - Registration of all site customers and vehicle details |

There was, at no time, any thought that all of the above responses would be possible. In fact it had been established as early as the Scanning phase that very little consideration would be given by St Modwen Properties or Richmond Caravans to any response that required funding.

**ACTUAL RESPONSE**

In the short term, a briefing sheet was prepared with a pre-planned response to any 'suspects on' situation at the compound. Copies of this were forwarded to internal partners for the POP, a list of which can be found in Appendix A. This was based on the fact that the vast majority of offender movements are relatively short and that much of the travel associated with crime is not primarily driven by plans to offend but appears to be much more dependant upon opportunities presenting themselves during normal routines (Wiles & Costello, year unknown). Also enacted were the Formal Surveillance responses as outlined in the table above. Coloured A3 posters displaying a warning and a picture of the Air Support Unit were affixed to the site gates.

Furthermore, we supplied Richmond Caravans with a simple A4 sheet containing five crime prevention 'tips' that they undertook to supply to all the caravan owners so as to put the Target Removal aspect of Clarke's

Taxonomy (1995) into practice. A copy of this can be found in Appendix B. At the same time we also supplied some ultra violet marker pens to the site so that they could be loaned to caravan owners to postcode their property. These could not only be used to identify property that was left on site but also property that would be left in the caravans when on touring sites.

The actual response was not what had originally been anticipated but combined a number of the responses that we had originally suggested:

On our advice, CaSSOA withdrew their silver award for Richmond Caravans. This had the effect that when caravan owners came to re-insure their caravans the insurance companies would not be able to obtain the required information from CaSSOA as to the security and safety offered by the site and, as a result, they would not insure caravans on that site until a new award was granted. Without significant improvement (i.e. acting on our and CaSSOA's crime prevention recommendations) this award would not be forthcoming. In short, Richmond Caravans were compelled to take corrective action.

Richmond Caravans relocated to a new site in Accrington. This new site was in an urban area and, in accordance with Butler's (1994) findings, overlooked by other buildings. The fact that it is on a main road allows passing members of the public and high visibility routine police patrols to see into the compound and increases the chances of an offender being detected. Additionally it has virtually one hundred percent CCTV coverage using pole-mounted cameras, which is supported by building mounted lighting which illuminates all the areas of the site where caravans are stored. The site has solid, ten-foot high gates and new fencing. The edges of the compound which border waste-ground in the process of being fenced using metal palisade fencing and the fencing bordering the road is of an aesthetically pleasing yet reinforced rubber coated metal criss-cross type which permits view in the site by public and police alike.



The most simplistic, yet most effective, part of the response was the layout of the new site, which was pioneered by the management at Richmond Caravans at the suggestion of ourselves and CaSSOA having heard that a storage site in Nelson was trying the technique. This was to position the caravans a matter of



inches apart, thereby restricting access to them without the assistance of Richmond Caravans staff. By undertaking this redesign of the way in which they worked, the site owners took a large business risk. However, it also meant that they could fit more caravans onto their new land and increase their financial takings. Customers now have to give the staff a minimum of twenty-four hours notice in order that the caravan can be brought to the front of the site for supervised collection. It was feared that this change in policy may encourage customers to move their

business to a site allowing them easier and more spontaneous access but, frankly, this has not been the case and, with proper explanation by Richmond Caravans, the customers have appreciated the improved security measures and, in the main, have kept their caravans with Richmond Caravans.



## ASSESSMENT

After the Analysis phase of the POP we decided that success would be:

*"A significant reduction in the crime rate for thefts from and damage to caravans on the storage site"*

*"Professional and self satisfaction for the two officers running the POP"*

### DIFFICULTIES

There were two specific difficulties affecting the success of this POP. The first of these was a lack of accessible information with regards to the caravan owners and their thoughts. This was due, in no small part, to the initially obstructive nature of Richmond Caravans as well as the lack of an existing infrastructure in the national caravanning organisations through which to disseminate information and receive feedback. Not only did this stunt the Scanning phase of the POP but, as a direct result, affected the Analysis phase as well. This is one flaw of a naturally progressive POP in which each phase grows from that which precedes it. The second difficulty that we encountered which, like the first, continued throughout all phases of the POP having begun in the Scanning phases, was the lack of information with regards to offenders. As we were able to acknowledge this gap in our POP, we were able to work around it and it was a large influencing factor in adopting the primary crime prevention methodology that we adopted in our planned and actual response.

As mentioned above, we did make extensive use of the Constabulary's SLEUTH computer package in all phases of the POP. However, one technical difficulty that we encountered was the lack of internet access in order to conduct our research. We believe that this would have aided our ability to find storage site-specific crime prevention information at an early stage in our Scanning and, also, more of it. Furthermore it may have helped us to find other initiatives or literature of similar situations which may be helped us to better develop our POP.

### SUCCESS

From the time at which the POP commenced to the current date, there has been a one hundred percent reduction in crime at Richmond Caravans, on both of the sites that it has occupied during that time.

Moreover, there has also been a one hundred percent reduction in theft related crime on the adjoining business park. Whilst this cannot be shown to be directly attributable to this POP there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the increased high visibility police and security activity, added to greater crime prevention awareness by St Modwen staff has contributed to this.

As part of our assessment process we have conducted further qualitative and quantitative research and have found no noticeable displacement of crime within our geographic policing area as a result of this POP.

Throughout the whole POPs process we constantly considered the cost implications of what we were doing, and what we were asking of our partners. The end cost to the Constabulary has been minimal, covering only the cost of eight ultra violet marker pens. The cost to Richmond Caravans is unknown but the money that they have spent on relocation has been a major part of their expansion and improvement of their business and, as such, has been calculated by them to make business sense.

Our professional development has benefited from this POP as we have both gained experience in building and maintaining partner relationships as well as in basic qualitative and quantitative research skills.

Whilst appreciating that this POP is not one that is easily transferred to other situations en masse unless the same situation arises, we believe that it does demonstrate the importance of the SARA and PAT models in developing effective POPs. Also, it is a clear example of how research and use of easily available academic material does have a place in practical contemporary policing. One other, final, lesson that we believe can be learned from our POP is that geographic policing officers can undertake POPs and that they can be successful - POPs are not purely the remit of Community Safety or Community Beat officers.