

# It Will Never Happen

Gareth Jones locks the doors and sets the alarm as he examines the best methods and advice to keep out the criminal elements.

How many times have we uttered the immortal words "It will never happen to me"? It is a sentence that escapes the mouth with delicate ease all too frequently. Unfortunately it is also a phrase that has a nasty tendency of coming back to haunt us. We can all think back to one time or another when this has been the unhappy case, and I bet the majority of us can link it back to a time when we have been a victim of crime, either in our personal or professional lives.

If you are one of the lucky people who has yet to experience such things, you may well be sitting down and thinking just that - it will never happen to me. However, as golf becomes more exposed though the media and, as result, becomes more popular to play, so does the awareness of the criminal element that golf equals rich rewards.

Like magpies, they are drawn to the shiny objects abundant at golfing venues the length and breadth of the UK. From a member's new Callaway clubs to the greenkeeper's trusty old greens mower, if not securely locked away, a thief will gratefully except the opportunity to increase his knowledge of the inside of a golf club's facilities.

While statistics for reported crime occurring at golf clubs are impossible gain, as the majority of the UK's police forces do not have a separate category for golf, it is possible to link the latest general crime figures to the industry. The 2004/05 Crime in England & Wales Report makes for some interesting reading. Compiled from actual police recorded crime figures and the findings of the British Crime Survey (BCS), which documents people's real experiences as various offences often go unreported, the report makes a pleasing impression on the surface. The report shows a dramatic fall in the number non domestic burglaries, as incidents at business property or sporting venues are down by 14% compared to 2003/04. However, burglary, theft and criminal damage remain the highest sectors of British crime, and these elements are the biggest headache for golf club employees.

As a brief outline, London recorded the highest figures of all reported crime, 1,023,806 cases, while it was the Yorkshire and Humber Region that contained the highest theft and burglary levels. In total 589,874 crimes were recorded in 2004/05 in the area. In Scotland, the Lothian & Borders police force report a 4% increase in recorded crime compared to the previous year. Vandalism has witnessed the most significant rise in the area and mindless destruction on courses has become the bane of many greenkeepers' lives.

"Vandalism represents almost a third of recorded crime in the Scottish

Table 1: Recorded crime by region, 2004/05

All recorded crime (th)	Recorded crime rates per 1,000 population							Drug offences
	All recorded crime (th)	All recorded crime (th)	Robbery	Burglary	Theft and handling stolen goods	Vehicle crime	Other	
258,204	100	16	1	13	34	12	20	4
782,105	115	21	2	15	39	15	28	4
589,874	118	20	1	17	42	17	24	4
424,419	107	19	1	16	34	13	21	4
531,243	100	19	2	13	34	11	20	3
481,283	100	19	1	10	35	18	18	3
1,023,806	100	16	1	10	36	19	18	3
725,813	100	17	1	11	33	11	18	3
443,622	100	16	1	10	32	13	22	4
267,642	100	16	2	13	38	14	22	4
ENGLAND AND WALES	5,562,691	100	2	13	38	14	22	4

Table 2: Percentage change in recorded crime rates by region, 2003/04 to 2004/05

All recorded crime (th)	% change in rates per 1,000 population							Drug offences
	All recorded crime (th)	Robbery	Burglary	Theft and handling stolen goods	Vehicle crime	Other	Other	
-8	-8	-22	-18	-11	-17	-17	-2	-14
-5	-2	12	-11	-21	-8	-13	-1	-10
-13	-13	-28	-21	-18	-14	-21	-1	-10
-11	-12	4	-16	-6	-16	-2	-1	-4
-4	-5	8	4	-4	-8	-15	-8	-2
-1	2	17	-12	-12	-7	-14	1	-3
-3	-4	72	-22	12	-8	-16	-8	-2
-8	-7	8	-13	-17	-11	-17	-2	-3
ENGLAND AND WALES	-8	-7	8	-13	-17	-11	-17	-2

Borders and in terms of volume is our biggest single challenge. The most common acts of vandalism are those committed by youngsters often seen as a prank," has stated Challenge Divisional Commander, Chief Superintendent, Charlie Common, in a recent report.

Greenkeepers in Wales and the north east of England can sleep slightly easier at night, as these areas recorded the lowest figures. Just 258,204 crimes were noted in the north east, while Wales experienced 267,642. In the East Midlands burglary has been cut by 19% and theft has been lowered by 14%.

According to the Avon & Somerset Police thieves realise that many properties within a golf club are vacant during the day, with greenkeepers having to work a fair distance from their facilities at points. This therefore makes greenkeeping maintenance facilities a soft target. This is a view endorsed by the security experts.

"Storage facilities for valuable turf care equipment are often quite basic, this makes them an ideal target for thieves. While many mowers are now fitted with datatags, this is only a trace method and does not prevent a theft happening in the first place," said Ian Howard, Managing Director at Howardson.

So what can the ordinary greenkeeper do to keep his beloved compact tractor safe from opportunist thieves without turning the club into a venue more suited to the likes of Norman Stanley Fletcher or the Bad Girls' inmates?

The major body of advice being issued to golf clubs, by both the police and security specialists, is to cover as many bases as possible. One service or product will not be enough to halt a determined criminal, however a combination of protective methods may just keep a thief at bay. The key message is to make it as hard and as time consuming as possible for the would be perpetrator. A thief will be put off by any job that will take time as it greatly improves the odds of being caught red hand. They will no doubt move onto an easier location, rather than spend a copious amount of time attempting to break into a greenkeeping version of Fort Knox, as Nottinghamshire Crime Reduction Manager, Dave Fisher, confirms.

"On average, burglars will only spend four or five minutes trying to break in so it makes sense to slow them down. Burglars seek easy access, so the more difficult you make it for them the less chance they have of success."

There are numerous ways to do just that and protect your greenkeeping facilities and their valuable contents.



### IDENTIFICATION

Marking equipment makes it harder for criminal types to sell on, while also making it easier for the police to trace the rightful owner should the unfortunate occur. An ultra-violet pen can put an invisible mark on your chainsaw, which can only be seen using a UV lamp. UV marking on golf equipment is only advised when other marking methods would reduce the value of the kit, as a UV mark can fade in time, especially when exposed to sunlight, and can be washed off so it needs renewing regularly.

Creating an indelible marker on kit, using paint or etching the golf club's name using a punching technique, is advised by the police because it is a permanent mark. However this will not be suitable for most golf clubs if re-sale is planned in the future or the vehicle is leased, plus what will the Greens Chairman say when they see you taking a hammer to your shiny new utility vehicle?

It is recommended that golf clubs invest in an organisation offering property marking and asset registration services. It maybe one of the more expensive options in the short term, but will be vastly cheaper than replacing your equipment when it disappears in the dead of night.

"Each method can fall short of providing effective identification, especially where owners apply their own marks or microdots and then fail to register the identification. What is required is a professionally installed irremovable and useable coding system that further deters thieves," said Bob Rowlands, Sales & Marketing Director at Lincmaster.

Systems are now on the market where a unique computer generated number is placed in up to 50 random recorded locations on a machine. This ensures not only the identification of the complete machine but also its component parts. Electronic tags and microdots can also be installed in random locations on a machine, however they require specialist equipment to read them.

### BARRIERS & BOUNDARIES

"Golf clubs are increasingly becoming the target for opportunist thieves. With the high number of prestigious vehicles and expensive golf course equipment on site, thieves are making golf clubs their prime target," stated John McClellan, Managing Director of Jaymac Security Products Ltd.



Automatic barriers located at car park entrances have become a common sight at golf courses across Britain in recent years as they provide a reliable and robust means of effectively controlling vehicle access. Safety barriers vary in type, including rising road blockers, automatic gates and one way flow paths. The key is to find the right barrier system for your club's needs. For instance are you trying to keep thieves out, or trying to stop them escaping should they break in? There is so much choice in barrier type there is bound to be one out there to suit each club's individual wants.

Maintaining secure boundaries around a golf course is an age old concern and one that is almost impossible to solve, particularly on courses that have public right of ways. Advice from the Nottinghamshire Force for stopping machinery theft includes creating suitable access control measures. By building ditches and blocking unnecessary tracks you can force offenders to follow dictated routes out of the course. These can either be alarmed or can lead to clearings so there is more chance of them being spotted as they attempt to flee.

While thorny hedges along course boundaries can act as a deterrent, it is crucial not to conceal the greenkeeping facilities themselves. This is very much dependant on the location of the sheds and while the club may not want them on view for aesthetic reason, for security purposes the facilities must be clear from vegetation to ensure criminal types cannot hide during their acts of sin.

## ALARMS

"Alarm systems are a worthwhile investment in the protection of your property. Studies reveal that it is far less likely that you will become the victim of a burglary if you have a correctly fitted and well maintained burglar alarm system," confirm the Metropolitan Police.

With so many alarm systems on the market, this area of security can be a tricky subject. A basic starting point is that the installation of any alarm should meet with British Standard 4737. This type of installation refers to hard-wired systems as opposed to wire-free. Though more expensive than other packages on the market, hard wired systems are more reliable and conform to the Association of Chief Police Officers Intruder Alarm Policy.

The Met recommends remote Signalling Alarms for large facilities and these must be maintained and used in accordance with British Standard. The reaction of the local force to their activation will be based on the assumption that an offence is taking place, but will be measured against competing urgent calls and available resources. A response will also be dependant upon the number of false activations in any 12 month period. Simply put, the more false alarms you incur the lower the police priority and the increased chances of a thief riding away on your quad bike.



# Warning!



Images may be monitored for the purposes of crime prevention.

## CCTV

"One of the first principals is that CCTV should not be relied on to be the only layer of security defence, it should form part of an overall security package, for instance, in conjunction with a monitored alarm, staff vigilance or internal motion detectors," advise the Cambridge Constabulary.

The main reason behind the explosion in the use of Closed Circuit Television is that it is extremely useful for both monitoring and deterring criminal activity. However, the luxury of CCTV comes at a price with hidden costs and implications that may not be immediately obvious. The equipment must be regularly maintained and suitably sited, and some systems will require additional lighting. Then decisions have to be made as to who will monitor it, will it be recorded, where will it be placed, who's budget does it come out of and if there is adequate signage to warn of the presence of CCTV, while implications from the Data Protection Act will also have to be considered.

After the system is installed it is then crucial to keep the cameras in a good working state. Making sure the camera's lense is clean and that it is covering the correct area of the golf course is vital, while tapes should be changed daily and used no more than 12 times. The picture that is produced by the system should be continually checked, so it remains crystal clear in order to identify individuals and vehicles.

"CCTV is a powerful weapon in preventing and detecting crime. But without proper maintenance, clean lenses and decent tapes it's a bit like looking at things through a snowstorm," said Sir John Stevens, Metropolitan Police Service Commissioner, in a recent press conference.

The final piece of the security jigsaw is to keep everyone at the club vigilant. From members to the green staff, everyone needs to play their part in keeping the club and its property safe. It is incredible how little things can make a big difference, by reporting suspicious behaviour, keeping gates locked and making sure expensive equipment is out of view can stop even the most skilful criminal. So cover as many aspects as practically and financially possible, stay watchful and gain advice from your local Crime Prevention Officer. Do all of these things and it really might never happen to you.