

Motorbikes targeted by thieves, police warn

MOTORCYCLISTS have been warned to look after their bikes after a spate of vehicle thefts in Tunbridge Wells.

Officers are investigating three mopeds stolen since May 5 – one of which was recovered but will cost £100 to repair.

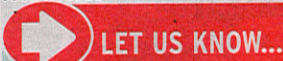
The force have now called on bike owners to be vigilant and invest in high quality locks or ensure motorbikes are kept in garages.

In one of the thefts, the bike was still removed despite having a chain on the wheel.

Acting Kent Police chief inspector Justin Watts said: "We are publicising these reports in the hope that we can raise awareness amongst bike owners and prevent further thefts from taking place, as they cause great inconvenience, and cost, to the victim."

"The bikes that have been targeted are all lightweight, small capacity bikes. It is important to secure bikes to secure bike stands, and to use equipment such as disc-locks and alarms, which are a good deterrent, as are parking bikes within view of CCTV."

■ Anyone with information about the thefts is asked to contact Kent Police by calling 101. Alternatively, contact Kent Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555111.



■ Are you one of the riders who have had a bike stolen? GET IN TOUCH AT:

thisiskent.co.uk

Cockroach in coffee set off mental health woes

Bipolar man whose troubles were sparked by bug raising awareness

By Matthew Young

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A TUNBRIDGE Wells man whose mental health problems were sparked by accidentally chewing a cockroach wants people to talk more freely about the condition.

Steve Walter's life changed forever in January 1997 as he drank a cappuccino in a café in London's West End.

To his shock and disgust, he discovered something crunchy between his teeth as a cockroach from the drink fell into his mouth.

He sued the café and it closed down temporarily, but the impact on Mr Walter's life was far greater.

The incident left him furious and worked as a "trigger event", which prompted mental illness and a nervous breakdown.

Trigger

Speaking about his experiences during Mental Health Awareness week, which finishes on Sunday, he said: "Trigger events can be something such as a close member of your family dying, which puts a lot of stress onto you."

"This was quite a minor incident, although it seemed major at the time. I got wrapped up in all sorts of depressed anger, with the indignity that I had a cockroach in my mouth."

"I just took a swig of my drink and there was something gritty and crunchy between my teeth."

"Angry? I was furious – especially having been an Environmental Health Officer – the irony wasn't lost on me."

"There could've been some underlying concern with me beforehand but it just took that trigger to realise the problem."

His behaviour and mental state began to alter in the following months.



HIGHLIGHTING ISSUE: Steve Walter has been speaking about his experience of being bipolar in Mental Health Awareness Week

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"I came back from holiday in the March and just began to race – I was on a bit of a high," said the 53-year-old.

"I was having more grandiose ideas and thoughts, and gradually people around me realised there was something wrong."

In June 1997 he had a nervous breakdown and was admitted to a hospital, and it took him three months before he could begin to return to work.

"It took me months to get back onto my feet and in 1999 a similar thing happened again," said the father-of-two.

He ended up back in hospital and was diagnosed as bipolar.

Mission

His condition is now under control – but he has a mission to make mental health something which can be freely discussed by those who it affects.

"I'm more aware now, I watch for signs and try to feel the ground ahead of me to predict and prevent that first slip into madness," he said.

"My vision is for mental health to be discussed freely in every part of the country, over coffee, over a pint, without stigma,

judgement or gossip.

"I think there is self-censorship and reluctance to say anything because of the public consequence – and the fear of maybe losing friends if they didn't understand."

"People don't understand it's common,

depression and anxiety can build up over time and affects a quarter of the population."

"I agree with my former psychotherapist, who said she always looked to get to know the person she was treating as fully as possible, as there are often underlying strengths that can be used and always reasons for temporary or long-term inability to cope."

Awareness

"This year Mental Health Awareness week is all about physical exercise and how good it is for mental health. Let's take this opportunity to share our experience of mental health, frankly, honestly whoever and wherever we are."

Mr Walter, of St John's Close, has written two books about mental ill health – *Fast Train Approaching* – about his own experiences and most recently *Voices*, focusing on other people's experiences.

Follow the Time to Change campaign for the latest in tackling stigma and mental health at www.time-to-change.org.uk, and see Mr Walter's website at makingconnectionsmatter.org.



BIG BUG: A Madagascan Cockroach; Mr Walter's mental problems were triggered when one of its smaller relations was in his coffee in a café

Organisers promising a fun-packed show

WITH just one week to go before the annual Heathfield Show, organisers have promised to deliver a "spectacular" occasion.

The agricultural event – sponsored by the Kent and Sussex Courier – will take place next Saturday and Sunday at The Showground in Little Tottingworth Farm.

More details have been revealed about some of the activities on the day.

The horse committee will be parading a variety of horses from tiny Miniature Shetlands to the Highland breeds.

Organisers said a greater

emphasis will be put on teaching children about farming, with a special education tent on hand to give people the chance to do arts and crafts and learn about agriculture.

For the more adrenaline filled visitors they will get the chance to watch "Big Pete" destroy cars in a monster truck display.

Farms and organisations from around the south east will bring their livestock to the event hoping their cows, pigs and sheep will win a coveted rosette.

■ For more information visit www.heathfieldshow.org



MAGNIFICENT: One of the few long faces at last year's Heathfield Show

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