



**CLEVELAND
POLICE**
Putting People First

Tilley Award 2004

Title

Operation Royal

Category: Crime and Disorder

Cleveland Police

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SUMMARY

Project Title: "Operation Royal"

Stillington is a small village, with less than 500 residences, to the north west of Stockton-on-Tees. A railway line that runs east to west through the centre subdivides it. The area south of the railway line is residential while to the north it is predominantly industrial with a small residential site to the east.

In October 2003 a problem came to police notice regarding a small gang of young people varying in age from 15 to 22 years, responsible for antisocial behaviour and crime in the village.

To the western end of the village there is a pedestrian tunnel under the railway where the gang would gather on a regular basis. Lights in the tunnel were smashed almost as soon as they were repaired and troublemakers used it as a highway from one side of the village to the other. Nearby fences were damaged and access was gained to the railway line which was also used as a highway by many of the troublemakers. Small amounts of drugs paraphernalia were found in and around the tunnel and along the railway track.

Police Inspector Keith Daley, who was responsible for the area, attended a meeting that was organised to form an action group for Stillington to tackle the problems. Membership of the meeting included the residents, local businesses, police and parish councillors.

Several measures were introduced including improved security around some of the units on the industrial site, diary sheets being given to the residents to identify those responsible for the trouble and involvement by the Anti Social Behaviour Team.

Intelligence identified two main ringleaders; a hard core of nine followers and a further nine hangers on.

Police patrols were increased, trouble was addressed quickly and arrests were made in relation to crime. It was demonstrated to the gang that their behaviour would not be tolerated and police would deal with trouble as a matter of urgency.

Call on police resources has reduced by over 50%, residents' quality of life has improved and the gangs' activities have all but ceased.

Between 1st July 2003 and 30th November 2003 the police received 146 calls to a variety of incidents that included 22 reports of criminal damage. In the period between 1st December 2003 and 8th February 2004 there were 37 calls with only 1 report of criminal damage.

K. Daley
Acting Inspector, Stockton CPT

Operation Royal

Scan

On 14th October 2003, letters were sent to Deputy Chief Constable R. Hogg of the Cleveland Police from two businesses, North Eastern Iron Refining Company (NEIR) and Darchem Engineering Limited (Darchem), that had premises on Stillington Industrial Estate, Stockton. Both letters referred to the increase of vandalism to property owned by the companies and stated that the identities of the youths responsible were well known.

A meeting had been arranged between representatives of the various companies on the industrial estate and the Divisional Director of NEIR, [REDACTED], concluded his letter by inviting Mr. Hogg to send a member of his staff to the meeting that was to take place at his offices on 24th October 2003.

Acting Inspector Keith Daley was the Police Inspector in charge of a number of Community Policing Teams in the Stockton area one of which, under Sgt Dave Chard, was responsible for Stillington.

Between them, Inspector Daley and Sgt Chard attended all of the Neighbourhood Watch and Residents Group meetings. Inspector Daley attended regular meetings of the Stillington Industrial Estate Action Group and met representatives of the companies. He had also investigated the crime report figures for the previous six months and agreed that there was a noticeable increase in crime and disorder.

Dave Chard was the Police Sergeant in charge of the Community Policing Team responsible for the Stillington area.

At the commencement of each period of duty Sgt Chard interrogated the Cleveland Police computer records to identify patterns of crime and disorder and to familiarise himself with all of the incidents in the area.

The British Transport Police were contacted at their Darlington office and advised of the damage to their property and the ongoing problems in and around the village.

[REDACTED] the licensee of the village pub, who was also a resident of the village, a member of the Neighbourhood Watch and also the Residents' Group, contacted Sgt Chard and invited him to meet with her to discuss the problems in general and her difficulties in particular.

The objective of "**Operation Royal**" was to tackle the disproportionate level of anti-social behaviour and criminal activities of a gang of youths, in a relatively isolated village. This was to be achieved by forming multi-agency action groups and gathering intelligence from a variety of sources to identify those responsible and formulating responses to address each facet of the problem.

Analysis

Stillington is a small village of about 450 houses 4 kilometres north west of Stockton-on-Tees. A railway line runs east to west through the centre and divides the village roughly in half. South of the railway line the village is residential and, while the northern half is predominantly an industrial estate, there are some residences to the eastern side. There is a road tunnel under the railway line in the approximate centre of the village and a pedestrian underpass to the western end.

Beginning in March 2003 and reaching a high point in October 2003 there was a growing incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour in the village, caused by a gang of about 20 youths aged from 15 to 22 years. Police were receiving calls to attend reports of burglary, criminal damage and violence and there was growing evidence of drug use.

In the letter from NEIR, [REDACTED] expressed particular concern for his employees' physical safety and job security.

“The possibility of injury to employees or extensive damage to our buildings such as resulting from arson”.

“The loss of a place of employment as a result would have a considerable effect on a number of law-abiding citizens”.

Residents in the village felt intimidated and their patience was wearing thin. [REDACTED] mentioned this in his letter to the police.

“I have heard casual talk by individuals in the village suggesting taking matters into their own hands and employing a group of thugs”

Stillington is one of four villages in the area covered by this team of officers and consideration was given to the problem to try and identify why this village had problems to a degree that did not exist in any of the others. It was noted that Stillington was the only one of the four villages with an industrial estate attached. It was also felt that the majority of the residents in Stillington belonged to a different socio-economic background than the residents of the other villages, a large number of Stillington residents being employed on the industrial estate.

A single gang of about twenty members aged from 15 to 22 years were responsible for most of the problems, which included criminal damage and anti-social behaviour. The village is a comparatively small one in which everyone knows everyone else so intelligence identified all of the members of the gang in a very short time.

There were two older males classed as ringleaders, nine classed as being easily led troublemakers and nine more who were merely hangers-on. The leader of the group was the oldest, a 22-year-old male who liked to think of himself as a “hard man” and who enjoyed his public image. He regularly trained with weights in his well-equipped garage at home, leaving the door open, to impress upon anyone who might see him, how “hard” he was.

Fireworks had been thrown and some were being aimed at buildings. Residents had fireworks put through letterboxes that exploded in hallways. On one occasion, a firework that was aimed at “The Royal” struck the wall of the building and bounced off, entering a neighbouring window. At the meeting in November 2003 the licensee of The Royal, [REDACTED] reported that 14 fireworks had been aimed at her pub. She felt that she was being targeted by the youths as they had identified her as a driving force against their behaviour. She has had a number of threatening phone calls that were particularly disturbing to her daughter.

She had become involved in an argument with one of the girls in the gang who had been smashing bottles on the footpath. During the altercation [REDACTED] was struck in the face. Police investigated the matter but the girl was able to call on twenty witnesses who would support her claim that [REDACTED] struck her first.

Criminal damage to cars was a regular thing with paintwork being scratched and tyres slashed. Damage was also being caused to buildings on the industrial estate with CCTV cameras and security lights being shot at with air rifles.

One small section of the industrial estate comprises a courtyard with 3 units along either side. [REDACTED] has owned a picture framing business in one of these units since July 2003. In August 2003 she went there at about 6.30 p.m. and found one of the neighbouring units had been broken into and damaged. A group of youths had run off when she approached but they returned as soon as she left to report the damage. There were axe marks on the walls in the unit and evidence of vehicle skid marks inside. At the first meeting of the Action Group Mrs. [REDACTED] stated she was afraid to go to the unit at night or at weekends.

The pedestrian underpass was dark and poorly maintained with damaged lighting and a great deal of litter. The gang used it as a gathering point and a place to shelter during inclement weather. It also provided a convenient route between the two sides of the village and as an easy escape route when the gang wished to avoid police or any other security personnel.

Damage to the fencing along the railway line afforded easy access to the line, which was another route used by the gang, and a quantity of drugs paraphernalia was found along the

line and in and around the underpass. British Transport Police were contacted at their Darlington office, advised of the damage and invited to attend the next meeting of the Stillington Industrial Estate Action Group.

One assault case was dropped due to witness intimidation and the family involved believed themselves to be above the law. This was having an adverse effect on the moral of the villagers. They had suffered enough from the activities of this gang and tensions were approaching boiling point.

Response



When Inspector Daley attended the first meeting of the Stillington Industrial Estate Action Group he was met with a list of complaints from the companies and advised of the members' concern at the apparent lack of police attention.

He informed the meeting of the legalities and the limitations of police powers, in certain cases, when dealing with incidents of anti social behaviour and also made them aware of the 5 level prioritisation criteria applied by Cleveland Police for responding to incidents (Most Urgent assigned as priority 0 to least significant assigned as priority 4). Due to the large demand on police time with regard to high priority response, lower priority calls were unlikely to receive a response. The community police officer would be tasked with following up enquiries into low priority calls and high visibility patrols had been increased over the previous weeks.

At that meeting a number of suggestions were made. The companies agreed to take joint civil action against identified individuals and retained the services of a solicitor. A solicitor advised the companies to take out injunctions limiting access to the environs of the industrial estate and apply for a power of arrest to be attached for breaches of those injunctions. The Darchem security guard was been provided with a camera and trained in its use.

Police intelligence identified specific residents who had complained. Police liaised with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team who sent out diary sheets (**App. 2**) to those residents of the village and employees on the industrial site.

The Anti Social Behaviour Team was established in May 2002 to deal with serious and persistent incidents of anti social behaviour and nuisance. The Coordinator for Stockton is the Crime and Disorder Manager who is also the team line manager. There are five officers one of whom is a police officer and they work closely with the Police and Community Safety Wardens to gather evidence to prepare cases for Court to apply for Anti Social Behaviour Orders, Injunctions and Possession Orders.

The team also provide the following services:

- Issue of warning letters following receipt of complaints from partner agencies, Councillors and members of the public
- Development and issue of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
- Attendance at resident meetings to offer advice and support
- Preventative work in schools and with youth services
- Housing Support – Advice and support to those who may be at risk of losing their tenancy because of anti social behaviour and to residents in an area effected by anti social behaviour
- Landlord liaison – Referencing scheme for landlords
- Case development for some housing associations and private landlords

Further intelligence was sought from Police Officers, Community Wardens, Police Community Safety Officers and security staff on the Industrial site. To date, warning letters have been sent out to a number of culprits but as yet no Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) has been issued. On the only occasion when an ASBO might have been considered, the offence was deemed serious enough to warrant criminal proceedings.

Suppliers were sought for the provision of a state of the art security camera. One of the requirements of the camera was that it should be capable of withstanding air rifle pellets as some cameras had previously been damaged by this method.

At the commencement of every period of duty, Sgt Chard interrogated the overnight computer logs. He selected all of the tasks for the Stillington area and, regardless of the nature of the call or how it had been dealt with, arranged for every caller to receive a personal visit from a police officer. This had the effect of demonstrating to the villagers that the police were taking note of their problems and intended providing whatever assistance they could. Mutual trust and respect grew between the police, the villagers and the businesses and a great deal of intelligence was gathered.

Prior to the identification of this problem, the area had usually been patrolled by a lone police officer, specifically appointed to the village. Sgt Chard identified that, over a period of time, some of the youths had become used to what they perceived as a lack of police interest in the area and responded by growing increasingly bolder in their anti-social behaviour, crime activities and drugs use.

From the earliest part of the project, Sgt Chard went to the village with five of his officers on a regular basis and at least once on every late shift during October to December 2003.

He briefed his officers to stop check the youths on a regular basis and take the names of anyone committing anti-social behaviour. Letters were sent to the parents (**App. 3**) and the Anti-social Behaviour Team was advised and consideration given to issuing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.

Sgt Chard had suggested that the underpass should be painted a lighter colour and the lighting should be repaired. It was his opinion that the darkness and untidy conditions there supported the activities that were going on and that any efforts to improve conditions would send a message to the residents in the village and the gang. At first this was rejected on the grounds that lighter coloured walls would attract graffiti but with the lighting repaired, a cleaned up appearance and lighter painted walls the visibility into the underpass was vastly improved.

The courtyard with the six units on the industrial estate has had a security fence built around it and security gates placed across the entrance.

The trust that had been formed between police and residents was justified in December 2003 when an incident occurred in the village involving a member of the gang with a firearm.

A long-term dispute that had existed for some months between a gang member and a villager in his twenties came to a head in December 2003. The villager was leaving Stillington Social Club and met the gang member outside. The gang member verbally abused and threatened the villager but friends separated them and the villager went home. Later that evening the villager's windows were broken and upon looking outside he saw two people, some distance away, firing an air rifle at the house. He identified one of them as the gang member and, with help from a companion, went out and caught the gang member with the air rifle. The other youth made good his escape.

The gang member complained to the police that he had been assaulted but when police investigated the complaint it was seen that if any assault had taken place it had been in the course of a lawful arrest or self-defence so no charges were put to the villager. Further investigation within the village, however, identified everything that had happened and the gang member was dealt with for firearms offences. He denied the offence but enquiries were conducted, with the cooperation of the villagers, revealing all that had happened and identifying the other gang member. Both were found guilty at court and are presently on bail awaiting sentencing.

Assessment

At the south side of the underpass is "The Royal" public house and customers there can see into the underpass with ease. It is now extremely difficult for any of the gang to do anything in the underpass without being seen and identified.

One of the gang members owned a car and it was believed it was being used to transport gang members to and from crime scenes. After one incident the police seized the car. The owner has since had it returned to him but it is rarely seen in the village any more.

The leader of the gang became so unhappy with all of the extra police attention his activities attracted that he has moved away from the village. The family of another youth was visited by one of the company owner's. After some discussion, regarding the youth's threats to burn down the company premises, his father has completely disassociated himself from his son's behaviour expressing support to the Action Group and police.

Youths from other towns and villages were in the habit of going to Stillington with the intention of joining in with the gang or sorting out rival issues. This no longer happens as often due to the reduction in gang activity.

Prior to the project taking effect, the residents were mostly concerned with what trouble the young people were causing. Since the project has shown such success there is a renewed interest on the part of the residents identified by the fact that enquiries are being made towards the building of an adventure playground for the younger children and an all weather sports area for the older children. Both of these are to be located near the football field at the west side of the village south of the railway line and will be easily accessible from the footpath

It had already been identified that the main drug in use in the area was cannabis. Over a period of time intelligence was gathered from a variety of sources within the village. As a result of this intelligence a search warrant was executed on Saturday 21st February 2004 at a house in Stillington. A quantity of cannabis and numerous deals, already wrapped in cling film, were recovered and the suspect was arrested for drugs offences. This person had also been identified with regards to anti-social behaviour. He owned an off road motorcycle that he used to ride around local nature reserves. In addition to the drugs offences he was also arrested and charged with riding whilst disqualified.

Before the gang became active in Stillington the police were receiving a maximum of 19 calls per month in all categories with reports of crime and disorder each in single figures. When the problem was at its peak in October 2003 there were a total of 41 calls for police that included 16 reports of crime and 18 of disturbance.

Although there are still a number of youths who gather together, they are much less likely to cause trouble. Crime and anti-social behaviour in the area have been reduced as shown by the number of calls for police attention (**App. 4**), the gang's activities have been reduced and the Action Group have expressed positive comments regarding contact with the police.

Appendix

Contents

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Appendix 2.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

INCIDENT DIARY

If you are unable to complete this form but have useful information to give please contact The Team on 415099.

This sheet is for information about one incident only. If there is a second incident on the same day or night, please start a new sheet. All information is given in strictest confidence.

Name:.....

Address:.....

Telephone Number.....

When did it happen? – Date: Time started: Time finished:
Who did it, or who was involved? – Put the name & address of the person responsible. If you know any way of identifying them such as nicknames or description write it here.

.....
.....

What happened? – Write down exactly what you saw and heard. If someone else saw or heard other things they must fill in their own incident diary. Put all words in full, including swear words.

.....
.....
.....
.....Continue on other side of the sheet if you need to

Any Witnesses? – Did anyone else see or hear the incident. (Please put name & address). Have they filled in their own diary sheet? YES / NO

.....

How has it affected you? – Include its effects on people who live with you. For instance has it stopped you sleeping, frightened your children. Are you more affected because of age or ill health.

.....
.....

Your signature – "I believe that the information I have given above is a true description of what I saw / heard"

Signed:

Print Name:

Date completed:

Use this side of the sheet to put down anything that won't fit on the front

A large rounded rectangular area containing 18 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Your signature – “I believe that the information I have given above is a true description of what I saw / heard”

Signed:

Print Name:

Date:

Return to:

Anti Social Behaviour Team,
Security Centre
The Square
Stockton On Tees, TS18 1TE

Appendix 3.

Name
Address
Town
Postcode

Date

Dear sir/madam

RE: ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR INVOLVING YOUR SON/DAUGHTER

Stockton Council Anti Social Behaviour Team and Cleveland Police have received information that your ***** has allegedly been involved in serious incidents of anti social behaviour in the ***** area. The incidents we refer to took place on ***** and involve

The Anti Social Behaviour Team- has been set up by Stockton on Tees Borough Council to deal with serious and persistent cases of nuisance, harassment, anti social behaviour. The team, alongside Cleveland Police have a number of powers to address problems of crime and disorder in our communities in order to ensure the safety of local residents and businesses.

The team can represent complainants in court as professional witnesses and have access to audio and visual surveillance equipment to use as evidence in addressing problems such as those detailed above.

With regard to the above incidents the team now has numerous witnesses who have provided evidence and will continue to provide evidence with a view to the team commencing legal proceedings if the alleged behaviour described above does not cease immediately.

I must advise you that if the behaviour does not cease the legal options available to the team, and the Police are as follows; -

1. Possession Proceedings- this may involve you and your family being evicted from your home. If a person is evicted because one or more of the household have been involved in anti-social behaviour this may result in a classification of "intentionally homeless" and, as such Tri-Star or any other housing provider may not have a legal obligation to provide you with alternative housing.
2. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders- these orders seek to prohibit actions which constitute anti-social behaviour and can be sought against anyone over the age of 10 years, a breach of an Order is a criminal offence and can be subject up to 5 years detention and/or a fine.
3. Parenting Orders- these Orders require parents to take action to help change the behaviour of named children aged 10-17 years to prevent the repetition of anti-social acts or the commission of crime. An order can require a parent to attend counselling and guidance sessions, the Order can last for up to 12 months and failure to comply would make a parent liable to summary conviction or a level three fine.

I must advise you that the evidence required for the legal actions detailed above can be used for all sanctions and where it is felt appropriate two or three of these options can be used together.

As you can see the Police and Stockton on Tees Borough Council take incidents of nuisance, harassment and anti-social behaviour very seriously and we will take all necessary steps to prevent such actions affecting the quality of life of the residents in the area.

With this in mind I would ask you to contact me as soon as possible to attend an interview where we can discuss *****s behaviour and attempt to resolve the issues before legal remedies are required.

At this interview we may propose that your ***** enters into a commitment with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Cleveland Police not to continue with specified anti social acts by signing an Acceptable Behaviour Contract.

I would be grateful if you would contact me as soon as possible on (01642) 415099 to arrange a suitable time to attend an interview.

Yours Sincerely,

Name
Title

Appendix 4

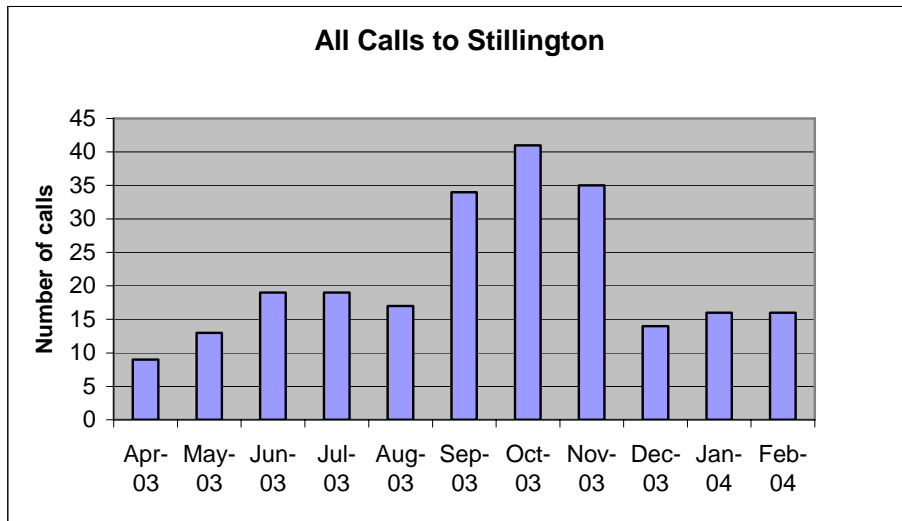


Fig 1.

Fig. 1 shows the number of calls for police attention in Stillington showed a dramatic rise in September 2003, peaking in October. There is a slight reduction in November coinciding with the commencement of police operations in the area and a marked reduction during December 2003 to February 2004.

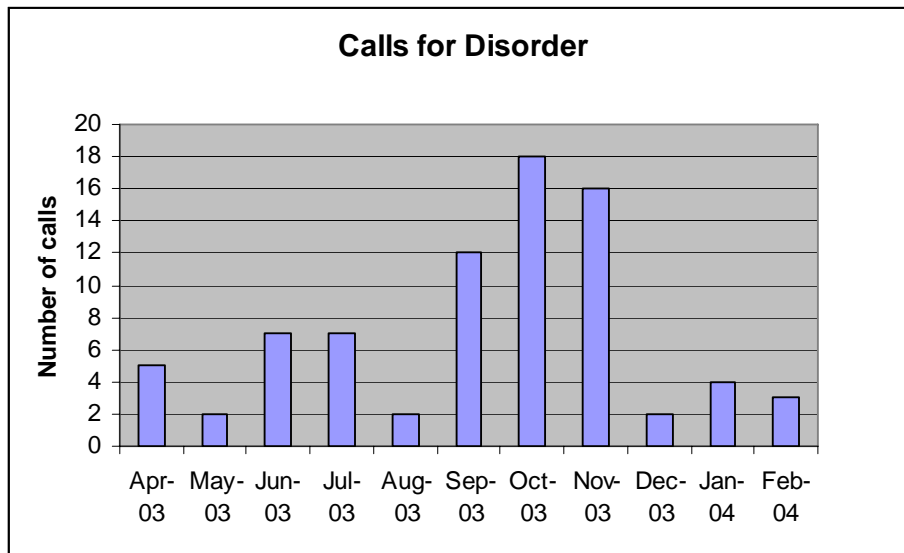


Fig. 2

Fig.2 shows the trend for the calls relating to disturbances following the same pattern as the calls in Fig 1.

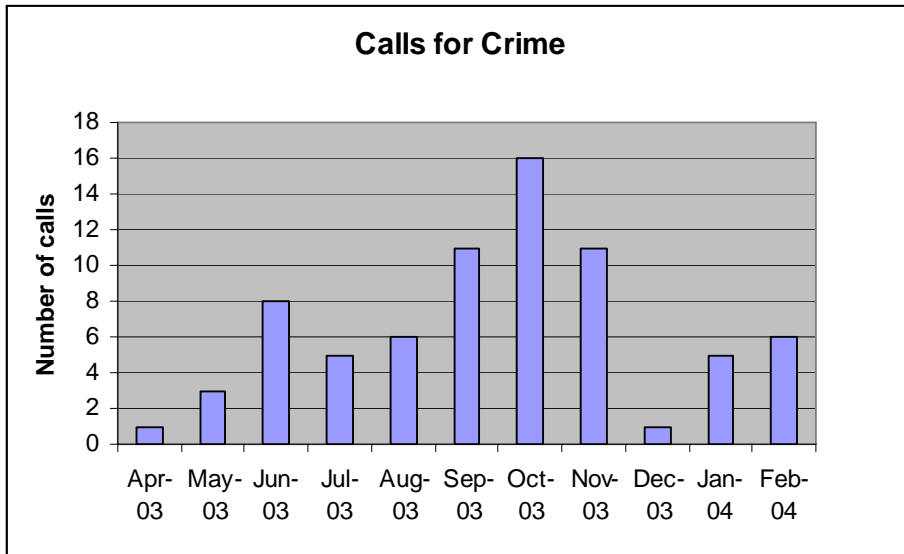
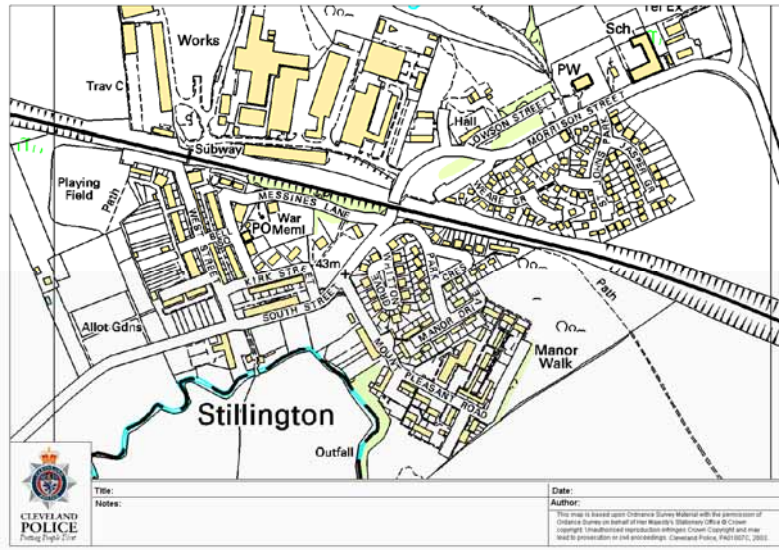


Fig 3.

Fig. 3 shows the number of calls per month relating to crime and again follows the trend shown in Figs 1 and 2.

Appendix 5.



O.S. map of Stillington Village

Appendix 6.



Aerial photograph of Stillington village.