

Sex offender broke rule with trip to Blackpool

by Sean Axtell

A convicted pervert broke a court order because he “forgot” to tell police he was taking children on holiday 330 miles away.

Vincent Hooker’s sex offender’s agreement orders him to tell police if there is a chance he will be in contact with people under 18 in a private place.

But in September 46-year-old Hooker, of London Road in Dover, breached the order by taking a number of children to Blackpool in Lancashire, a court heard.

The children cannot be identified for legal reasons.

Mitigating solicitor Keith Betts told Folkestone Magistrates’ Court on Wednesday Hooker “simply forgot” to notify the authorities and didn’t admit it in interview because “he panicked”.

But when presented with fresh police evidence benefit claimant Hooker admitted to failing to comply with the Sex Offenders’ Act.

Mr Betts said: “My client tells me when he goes to the police station he is read a long list of things he should do, a long list of things he shouldn’t. This is

simply a case of my client forgetting. When police came to arrest him he panicked and denied going to Blackpool.

“It is a breach that was born out of forgetfulness.”

Following his denial the court heard police gathered CCTV evidence of Hooker’s car in Blackpool and traced his mobile phone signal to the destination.

He admitted the breach in a second police interview.

Speaking softly and head bowed with his brother sitting in the public gallery, Hooker pleaded guilty to the breach. District Judge Justin Barron

ordered a pre-sentence report to be prepared before the next hearing.

Hooker was placed on the sex offender’s register after serving six years in prison for a previous crime, although the details were not read out in court. The court heard there was no suggestion the children had been touched.

Judge Barron told him: “At the moment I’m not thinking about immediate custody but that decision could change depending on the full report.”

Hooker will reappear at the same court on January 17 for sentencing.



Maria Doe and Bridget Abercrombie, from Inchwater Home Care, send off donated stamps

Stamps appeal can help air ambulance

A leading care company is asking Mercury readers to donate their used Christmas card stamps.

Over the past two years, Inchwater Home Care, in Maison Dieu Road, Dover, has collected more than 100 kilos worth of used stamps which have been turned into cash to help the Kent Air Ambulance.

This month, staff sent off a batch of about 60 kilos which they hope will bring a return of around £200.

They are continuing their campaign into 2018.

Employee Bridget Abercrombie said: “If anybody has any stamps after Christmas, we are quite happy to come and pick them up. Every little helps.”

They have thanked everybody who has contributed so far and offered a special thanks to Merrygardens florists in Deal, which acts as a drop off point for used stamps.

Mrs Abercrombie said: “They’ve gone above and beyond.”

Stamps can be of all sizes and nationalities. They can be franked, but not damaged.

The private care company, which was recently rated outstanding by the Care Quality Commission, is managed by Paul Watts.

Stamp donations can be collected or dropped into the Mercury office in Queen Street, Deal. Call Bridget on 01304 241684.

Fog warning after crash traps woman

A woman was trapped after her car overturned on a roundabout in heavy fog.

Police, fire and ambulance crews were called to the A256 near Betteshanger just before 3.30am on Wednesday last week.

They arrived to find the car on its side in the middle of a roundabout near Barville Road, with a woman trapped inside by her injuries.

Firefighters used hydraulic cutting gear to remove the roof of the vehicle and free the woman. She was then treated by paramedics.

Police directed traffic as crews made the scene safe.

The incident has brought a warning from the fire service.

A spokesman said: “It is believed there was heavy fog in the area at the time of crash and firefighters have urged drivers to remember to drive to the conditions of the road and to keep speeds down – especially in thick fog.”

Teachers praised as test levels show improvement

Primary schools in Dover and Deal are performing well above the national average as reading standards in England reached record levels.

This month it was announced a study into the progress of nine and 10 year-olds in 50 countries put England in joint eighth place for reading, the country’s highest ranking since the test was introduced in 2001.

It comes after the government changed the national curriculum to require schools to use and test phonics in 2010.

Primary schools in Dover and Deal are performing well above average: 61.6% of pupils in the area meet the expected standard of a scaled score of 100 or more in reading and maths tests, compared to 53% nationally.

Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke said: “It’s excellent news that standards in



Teachers have been praised for improving results

our schools are rising – and that pupils in Dover and Deal are outperforming their peers across the country.

“It’s crucial that our children get the skills they need to excel later in life.

“The hardworking teachers in Dover and Deal deserve huge credit for the improvements. We must do everything we can to ensure young-

sters in Dover and Deal get the best start in life.”

The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics has risen from 58% in 2012 to 81% in 2017.

More official statistics released last week show 9,643 children in Dover and Deal are now attending schools rated good or outstanding – an increase of 2,432 since 2010.



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