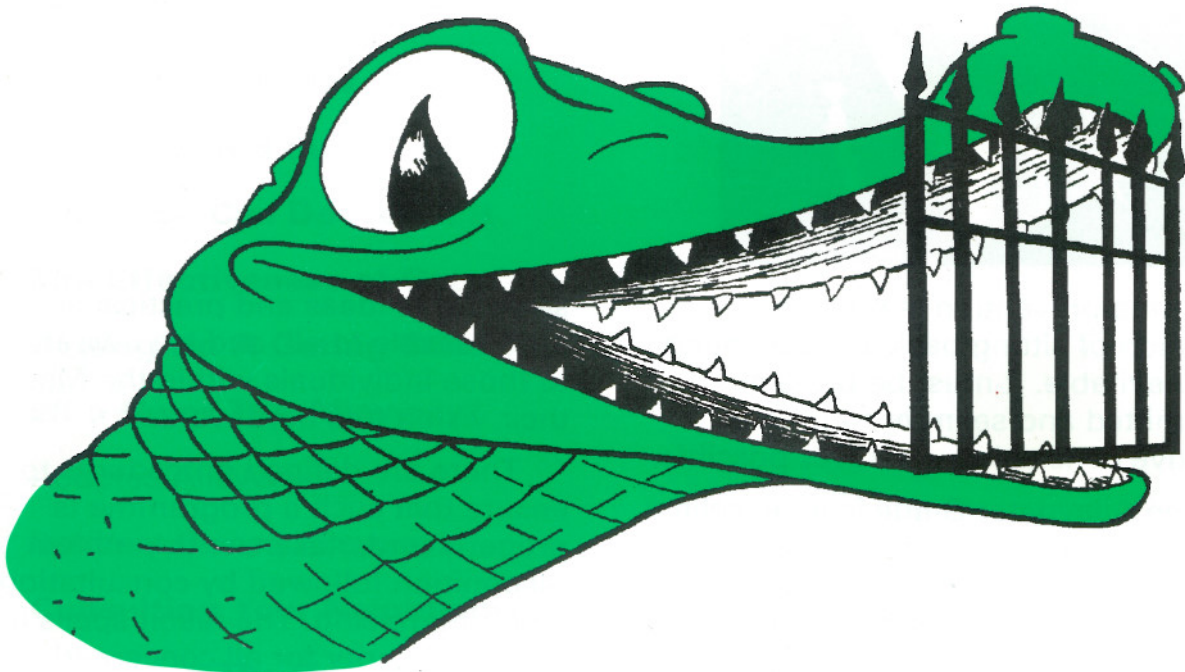




# **The Alleygater's Guide**

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## **To Gating Alleys**



***Take a Bite Out of Crime.  
Join the ALLEYGATERS!***

**Calvin Beckford**

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Crime Prevention Design Adviser  
Metropolitan Police

## Foreword

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By

John Stevens, Q.P.M., LL.B., M.Phil.,  
Chief Constable of Northumbria  
Chairman of the Association of Chief  
Police Officers' Crime Prevention Committee

Crime prevention is never a question of sitting back and accepting the inevitable. It must be pro-active, committed and seen through to a positive conclusion wherever possible.

The Alleygater Guide is an excellent example of how a partnership approach between community and police can achieve just such a positive result

In some parts of London, specific types of crime have been virtually eradicated by a programme of gating alleys to prevent all but bona fide residents or trades people gaining access to, for instance, the back of a row of shops, flats or houses.

Pioneered within the Metropolitan Police Force, the Alleygater Guide is the result of a carefully devised, well communicated and enthusiastically supported crime prevention initiative.

Taken several steps further, publication of the guide now means the

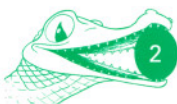
same good ideas and practical advice are available to all, and we owe thanks to those individuals within the Met for their vision and hard work.

There are defined procedures to ensure that such a programme is properly undertaken, with problem recognition followed by consultations and fund-raising. The result spells a greater security for all concerned.

There are those crime prevention measures which, by their nature, have a softer side.

There are others which have teeth; I suspect the Alleygater Guide falls into the latter category.

I hope you use it to good effect.



# About This Guide

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Gating alleys has proved to be very successful in preventing burglary in several places around the country and this guide will take you through the various steps to completing your own successful scheme.

Although alleyway gating is best suited to narrow, pedestrian width alleys on housing estates, the same principles can be applied to the gating of alleys used by vehicles and alleyways in industrial and commercial centres.

Of course, alleyway gating does not remove the need to fit good window and door locks; further advice about securing your home can be obtained from your local Crime Prevention Officer.

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## A Bit About Alleys

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Alleyways are known by many different names, depending on where in the country they are:- Entries, Ginnells, Backways, Snicketts, Passages, Paths and Walks to name but a few.

They serve a useful purpose by providing much needed access to the backs of terraced houses. They avoid the need to walk through the house with gardening and Do-It Yourself materials.

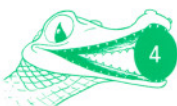
Originally they were used by dustmen and coalmen, a thing of the past for many areas.

During the bombing in Second World War, many gates were removed from alleyways to allow access to the Air -Raid Wardens. Unfortunately, most were never replaced.

In the past, when the builder included an alleyway in his housing development, crime would not have been foremost in his mind. Burglary was rare compared with today and alleyways were not perceived to be unsafe.

Alleyways are used less now many have fallen into disrepair and have become blocked by garden or fly-tipped rubbish. Household refuse is more often collected at the front of the house and regular deliveries to the back have become uncommon.

These changes have allowed the burglars to move in, taking the opportunity to steal from your garden and your home.



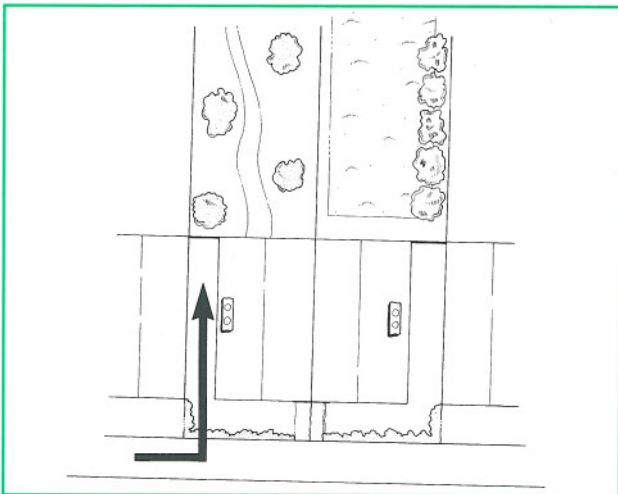
# The Alley and the Villain

Access to and from a house is one of the most important considerations for the thief when planning a burglary.

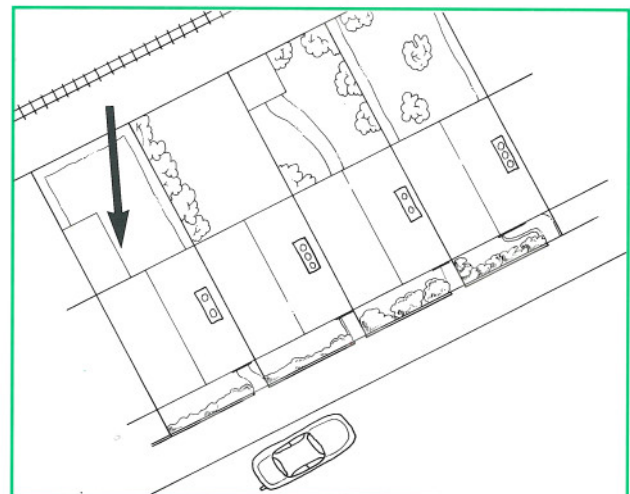
The majority of burglars break into a house through a rear or side window or door. Front door and window entries only account for about 15% of the national total and in many areas around the country this figure is as low as 5%.

There are three main ways for a burglar to gain access to the back of a house:-

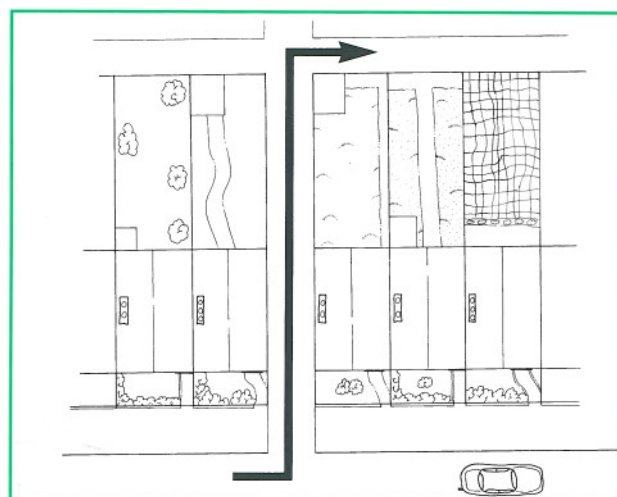
- Walking down the side of a semi-detached or detached house where he may encounter a climbable fence or gate
- Approaching from open land or perhaps a railway line
- Walking along the communal alleyway which is the method investigated by this guide.



Access down the side



Access from a Railway Line



Access down The Alley

## The Alley and the Villain

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The criminal can use the alleyway unseen by night or day, only emerging into a public road to cross over to the next alleyway.

Often, the thief has an intimate knowledge of an alleyway network providing him with a choice of escape routes if the need arises.

It has been known for a burglar to leave stolen property in an alleyway during the day, close to the house he burgled, returning to collect it under the cover of darkness.

The map on page 8 shows how useful alleyways are to the burglar. Note the concentration of burglary around the alleyways and the lack of it where they have been gated.





## What you can do About It

It has been shown at several places around London that by erecting climb resistant, locked gates at the entrances to alleyways, you can reduce the number of rear access burglaries.



This reduction can be as high as 90% and there are other benefits too: Fly-tipping, littering, dog fouling and unruly behaviour can be reduced, making the alleyway even more useful for the residents.

Children can play in the alleyways without fear of coming across a stranger; and there are no worries about them running out into the street because the gates create a barrier.



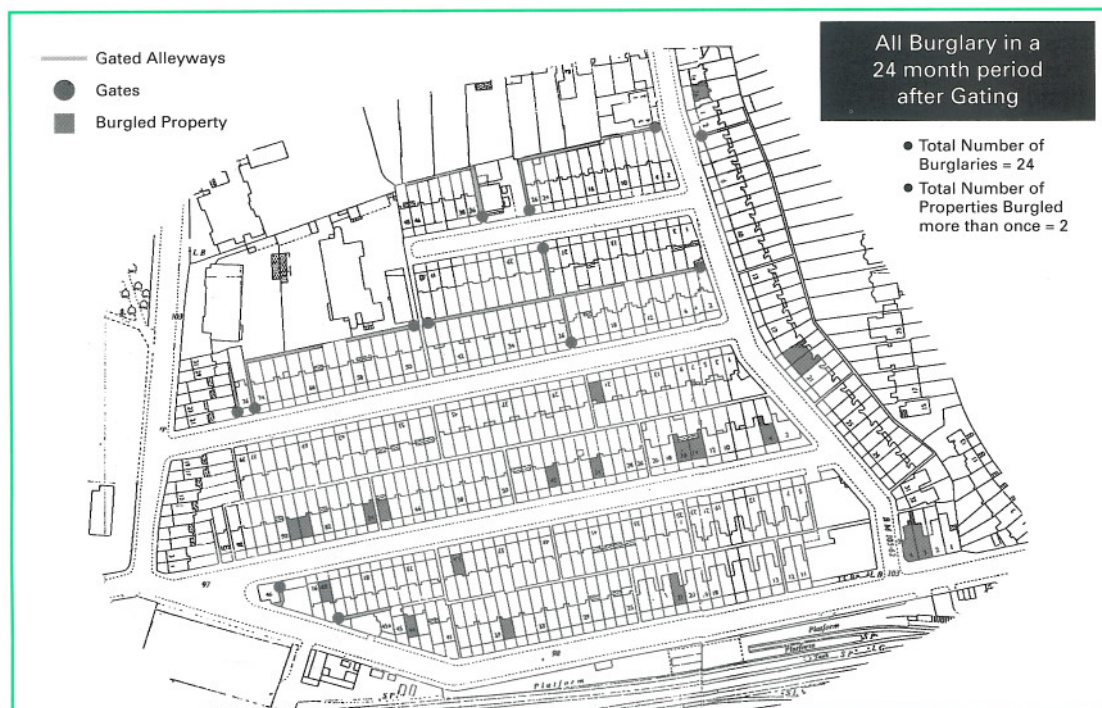
**Gating your alleyways will put YOU back in control**



# The Effectiveness of Gates

Residents in a small area of West London decided to take steps to reduce their vulnerability to burglary. In co-operation with the Crime Prevention Officer they all paid for and erected three strong gates to block off access to their network of rear alleyways.

These gates were quickly followed by others and soon there was a total of eleven gates. The effect on burglary was dramatic and now residents to the south of the estate are doing the same.





## Setting Up A Gating Scheme

Speak to your neighbours and ask them to help. Tasks and decisions can then be shared. Your Neighbourhood Watch will be interested and so will the Crime Prevention Officer.

Set yourself a timetable and get an initial letter (see page 12) off to all the residents who have a right of access to the alleyway, outlining what you would like to do. The Police can help you with this by providing some crime information relevant to your immediate area. Ask for volunteers and if you are lucky you may find you have a few resident experts; a solicitor, planner or builder for instance.

Formalising your group of volunteers into an Alleyway Committee with a Chair, Secretary, etc., would be a good idea, but it is not essential.

You may have an existing Residents' Association who can help or your Alleyway Committee may form the basis for such a group.

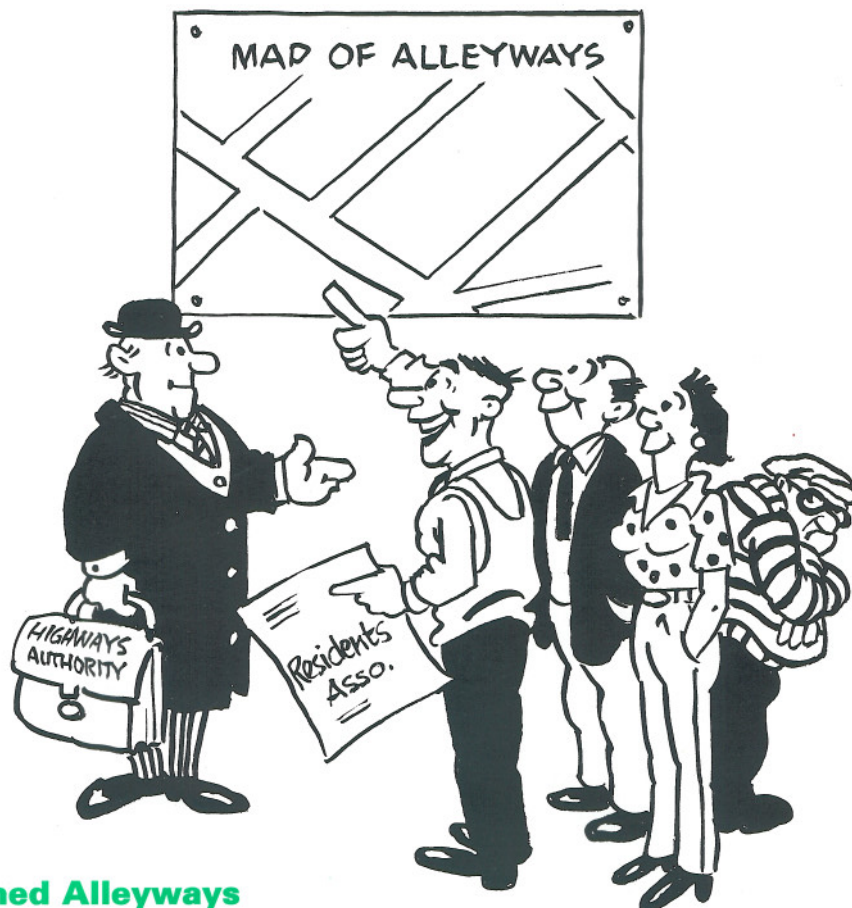


## Who Owns the Alleyways?

This falls under two headings. Either it has been adopted by the Local Authority, or it is owned by one or more of the residents.

### Adopted Alleyways:

These alleyways are called footpaths. They are highways over which the public have a right of way on foot only, but they are not a "way" in the sense of a "highway" which also has a carriageway for vehicles. They are maintained and cleaned by the Highways Authority. You cannot erect gates until you have contacted the Highways Authority and they have taken the necessary legal steps to stop up the footpath if they think it is acceptable to do so. This process is known as de-adoption. You may have to agree to take on the maintenance of the footpath and form a Residents' Association. There are likely to be costs involved for which the Local Authority may require reimbursement. (These may be negotiable). Please contact the Local Authority for further information.



### Privately Owned Alleyways

Ownership is often unclear. Sometimes two houses on either side of an alleyway will own one half each. Other times only one of the houses will own it, giving the residents on the other side a right of access. It is not uncommon for parts of an alleyway to be owned by unknown persons. In such cases information about who owns a piece of land, including alleyways, may be obtained from Her Majesty's Land Registry on payment of a small fee. Their telephone number is in the telephone book or may be obtained from Directory Enquiries.

You can also examine your house deeds regarding ownership and rights of access. If difficulties arise consult a Solicitor.



# Consulting Your Neighbours and Raising The Money

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Writing to each resident in the block is important, the letter should include a tear-off slip which they can return to you indicating their support. Here's an example of a letter:

*Dear Neighbour,*

**Re: The Gating of our Alleyways.**

*Last week my neighbour was burgled. They got in through the french doors and stole all her jewellery. As you can imagine she's extremely upset and she told me that this was not the first time this had happened. I understand that the people on the other side of her were burgled too.*

*I spoke to the Police about all these burglaries and it turns out that we've had twelve burglaries in as many months. They suggested I write to you about the possibility of gating our alleyways because this is proving very effective in stopping burglars getting in through the backs of houses.*

*The type of gate the Crime Prevention Officer recommends is about 2 metres high and is made of steel. It's fitted with a strong lock and all of you would have a key. I've included a rough sketch of the sort of gate we might have.*

*I'm happy to arrange a meeting, including the Police Crime Prevention Officer, when all your questions can be raised, but to do so I need your support in principle. So if you like the idea, please return the tear off slip below and I will do the rest.*

*Thanks in anticipation.*

*Rachel McCall*

*42 Exeter Street*

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*I agree/disagree to the gating of my alleyway. I understand that I will be supplied with a key to the gate in order that I may continue to enjoy full access along the alleyway.*

*I also understand that I will be supplied with a key notwithstanding my willingness or ability to pay towards the gating scheme.*

*I am able/not able to help with this project.*

*Date*

*Name:*

*Address*

*Signature*



# Consulting Your Neighbours and Raising The Money

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Having gauged their support and obtained a price for the gates, you can write to your neighbours again.

It is best to visit them personally to collect their contributions. Keep records of monies collected and issue receipts. Open a special bank account with the local bank so that cheques can be made payable to the scheme rather than to an individual person.

Consider approaching local businesses, both large and small, to see if they would like to sponsor a gate. Your Local Authority may also be able to help.

There are several other areas which may need financing:-

- Administrative costs
- Maintenance of the gate and alleyway
- Insurance
- Various fees (Solicitor, Planning Department, Highways Authority)
- Alleyway clearing and hiring of skips

All these additional costs should be considered at the outset so that each resident is asked for the correct amount of money.

An annual charge may be appropriate, so that there is always money available to change a lock, paint the gate and carry out general maintenance. This sum would be very small, probably no more than the cost of a gallon of petrol.





# Designing The Gate and Getting Quotations

The gate shown in the diagram on page 16 is the preferred design and costs about £450\*. However cheaper gates can be made by using steel palisade uprights bolted to a metal frame or by using timber. A timber gate requires more maintenance.

Whatever material you use, the design should take account of the following principles:-

## Climbing

Avoid horizontal bars and anything which could be used as footholds.

## Natural Surveillance

The gates should not prevent a clear line of sight down the communal alleyway.

## Strength and Maintenance

Steel which has been treated in some way to resist rusting, is the preferred material for gate construction across a communal alleyway.



## Locking

The locking mechanism should be of the 'slam-to-lock' type, otherwise known as an automatic deadlocking mortice latch. Ordinary mortice deadlocks can be left unlocked and padlocks often go missing resulting in an insecure alleyway and a gate which is constantly banging against a neighbour's wall in the wind! Avoid self-closing gates which can present difficulties. Each gate should have a different lock.

(\*1995 prices)

# Designing The Gate and Getting Quotations

## Height

Go to at least the maximum height of 2 metres (6'6") currently permitted under planning law if the gate will not be adjacent to a highway used by vehicular traffic (See page 16); higher than this and you'll require planning permission. The other important planning restriction is that a structure over 1 metre in height should not be immediately adjacent to a highway used for vehicular traffic. For example if you live in a terrace without front gardens and want to erect the gate at a position which is flush with the house wall you will require planning permission.

## Position

Where possible erect the gate towards the very beginning of an alleyway so that if someone is trying to climb over it they will be seen from the street. If the alleyway starts between two houses it may have to be positioned slightly back from the front walls of the house to avoid the step-up available from front garden walls.

For your assistance here's a specification for the preferred gate design.





# Designing The Gate and Getting Quotations

## The Preferred Gate Design

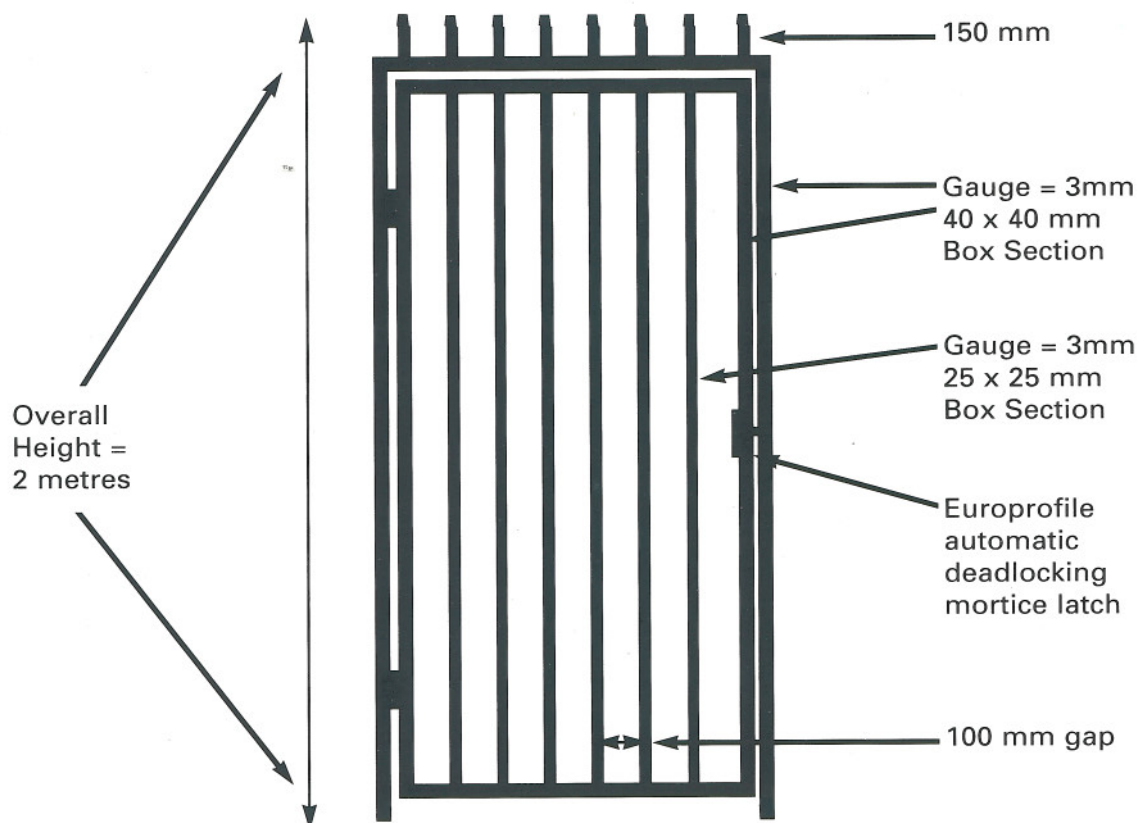
The design of your gates will be determined by local circumstances; the size of the alleyway, the wishes of your neighbours, the number of gates and the amount of money which can realistically be raised.

The design given is "preferred" in the sense that it has been tried and tested and found to work.

## Specification

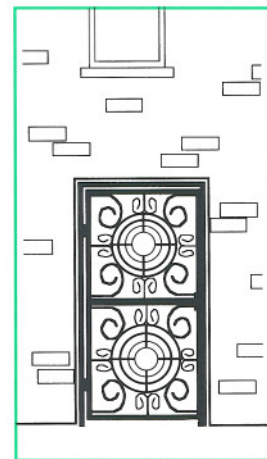
- The gate should be inward opening.
- All the sections use 3mm thick steel.
- Surrounding the gate is an outer box frame (like a door frame) measuring 40mm x 40mm and this is topped with 150mm blunted spikes. The top part of the frame is not essential and the spikes can be welded to the top of the gate itself. If a top section is included, it should be removable to allow bulky items to be taken down the alley. Fixing for the top section should only be accessible when the gate is open. The side parts of the frame should be fixed to the wall (or post) through the frame using heavy duty fixings. These fixings should only be accessible when the gate is open.
- The gate's outer box frame also measures 40mm x 40mm.
- The box section uprights for the gate are smaller, measuring 25mm x 25mm. The gap between them should be 100mm.
- The total height of the gate, if it is not to be adjacent to a highway used for vehicular traffic, is 2 metres, unless you have obtained planning permission for a higher gate, in which case 2.4 metres would be ideal. If the gate is higher than 2 metres, the dimension of the uprights should be increased.
- The steel should be galvanised, to protect it from rusting. This gives a grey finish which may not be acceptable to all. If this is the case it can be painted. The gate should be left to weather for six months and then primed with calcium plumbate. It can then be painted to the required colour using a minimum of 1 undercoat and 1 top coat.
- The hinges should not provide footholds for climbing and should be of a design which does not allow the gate to be lifted.
- Lock the gate using a narrow style, Euro profile, automatic, dead-locking mortice latch. Order sufficient keys for the residents, plus spares. The lock will be contained within the 40mm x 40mm frame about halfway up the gate.
- As an alternative to spikes, top the gate with an inward leaning frame known as a crank. This is more expensive, but makes climbing difficult.
- The gap beneath the gate should be small enough to prevent persons from crawling through.

# Designing Of The Gate and Getting Quotations



The design of your gate should, where possible, take account of the wishes of the residents. Involve your neighbours and their children in the design.

When the alleyway access forms a "doorway" beneath part of a building, the gate need not be designed to be resistant to climbing. However you are advised to contact the local Fire Brigade to discuss the method of locking.



Ensure that the gate manufacturers are well aware of the locking requirements. It is suggested that they contact a locksmith if they are unsure. Your local Crime Prevention Officer may have details of Gate Manufacturers and Locksmiths.

Self closing gates are not a good idea as they can cause difficulty when delivering heavy loads or taking in wheelbarrows, bicycles, etc.

Your neighbours will expect value for money, so you will need to shop around. Obtain at least three quotations from possible suppliers who should be provided with a specification so that the quotations can be compared with each other. Your Crime Prevention Officer can help you further with the specification and advise you on the best positions for the gates.



# Permission and Consultations

## Planning

If the gate does not exceed 2 metres in height and is not immediately adjacent to the highway you may not need planning permission, but it is still a good idea to consult a Planning Officer at the Local Authority. For example, you may live in an area which is subject to conservation orders or the building to which you want to fit the gate may be a listed building in which case you will require permission.

Many Local Authorities are working with the Police in partnership to prevent crime and may be sympathetic in the manner in which they deal with your application. Certain requirements concerning design and location may be necessary if the alleyway is adopted by the Highway Authority as mentioned previously.



## Public Rights of Way

It is possible that your alleyway forms part of a public right of way. A definitive list of rights of way is kept by the Local Authority. It is unlikely that you will be able to gate such an alleyway but speak to the Highways Department about what might be done.

## Access to Council Staff

Public sewers and their manholes are often located in private alleyways and you should consult with the Council before gating to ensure that arrangements are put in place to allow emergency access.

If refuse is collected from an alleyway you may still be able to gate it providing you use a standard Council lock. However, early consultation with the Council is vital.

Some Councils can help with removing accumulations of rubbish before the alleyway is gated.

Some Local Authorities provide subsidised skips to community groups; your project might qualify

for this. The Council might also be able to force the removal of rubbish by any person who is known to have dumped it or who owns the land where the rubbish has been dumped.

If you are not sure who to deal with in your Local Authority, then ask to speak to the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) for your area. The EHO is likely to know the answer to at least some of your queries and will probably be able to tell you who else you need to contact. The EHO might also be prepared to hold copies of the keys to facilitate access by Council staff.



# Permission and Consultations

## Neighbours

It is essential to obtain permission from the person whose house wall will be used for the gate fixings.

Providing the gate is installed by competent people, damage to the general fabric of the wall is unlikely. An alternative to fixing to the house wall is to sink a metal post into the ground and hang the gate from this post.

If all residents agree to the scheme, it should go ahead with minimum complication. However, everyone who has a right to use the alleyway must consent to the gating. If you do have a neighbour who objects, make sure that he or she understands that they will continue to enjoy full access albeit with the use of a key. If the person persists in his or her objection, or you come across other legal difficulties, you are advised to contact a Solicitor.

Reassuringly, schemes have gone ahead in the face of apparently insurmountable difficulties. It is, therefore more than likely that your gating scheme will be successful. So, be positive, use tact and good humour, and compromise if the need arises, perhaps by resiting one of the gates.

## Fire Safety

Gating can reduce the possibility of arson. However, you are advised to invite the Commander of the local fire station to visit the area and examine your proposals. The Fire Brigade is willing to give fire prevention and fire safety advice. In West London, schemes have received support from the local fire station Commanders.





## The Gates are Up. You've Done It!

Well done. Consider an "official" launch. Invite the local Press, Police and Local Authority. It would be useful to arrange a meeting with your helpers or committee soon afterwards, so that any problem concerning the gates can be ironed out quickly. Your group should meet regularly in order that the gates and alleyways are maintained in good condition.

Keep in touch with the Crime Prevention Officer and keep an eye on crime. Consider writing to your neighbours one year later to give them an update on crime. This would be a good opportunity to collect the annual maintenance money.



Now turn to the following pages which provide you with a timetable of work.

# Suggested Timetable of Work

The time it takes to complete a gating scheme will be dependent upon many things not least the size of the scheme and the ability of the residents to pay. The process can take a matter of weeks or occasionally more than a year.

To help you in your endeavours, here is a timetable of work set out over a period of 6 months: -

## Month 1

1. Speak to your close neighbours and ask them to help. Approach the Neighbourhood Watch or Residents' Association, if you have one, and hold a meeting at your home.
2. Invite the Police Crime Prevention Officer to attend and ask him to supply some crime data so that you can see how the alleyways are being misused.
3. Obtain a large scale Ordnance Survey map which shows individual alleyways and houses. These may be obtained from your Local Authority or you can call the Ordnance Survey Information Service on 01703 792912.
4. Plot the crime onto the map and also add any other incidents that you and your neighbours hear about. Keep this crime distribution map up-to-date.
5. Send a letter to all your neighbours. Ask them to return the tear off slip, indicating their support (which is likely to be high).
6. Visit residents who have not yet returned their tear off slips and take the opportunity to explain your intentions.
7. Meet with residents who have volunteered their help.
8. See a Planning Officer. Take the map with you and a copy of this Alleygater's Guide.
9. Submit a Planning Application if this is necessary. Applications can take as long as 8 weeks to process, but a small scale project such as this may be dealt with in half that time. Try to agree a single application fee for all the gates.
10. Establish ownership of alleyway.
11. Contact the Highways Authority if your alleyway is adopted. Negotiate the fee.



# Suggested Timetable of Work

## Month 2

1. If necessary formalise your group of neighbours into a committee. Elect a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Consider forming a Residents' Association.
2. If necessary hold a meeting for all the residents. Invite the Crime Prevention Officer to speak. If possible obtain the agreement of the residents for the committee to act on their behalf.
3. Approach local businesses and Local Authority regarding funding. Ask local businesses if they are willing to sponsor a gate. Suggest that the sponsor could fit a plaque to the gate, carrying the sponsor's name and message. (The plaque should not assist climbing).
4. Share tasks between members of the group.
5. Decide on a specification for the gate. The Crime Prevention Officer can help you with this. Remember that planning permission will be required if the gate is over 2 metres in height or immediately abuts the Highway.
6. Obtain quotations from gate manufacturers.
7. Calculate the total cost of installation which includes various fees, costs of letters, etc.

## Month 3

1. Set up a bank account in the name of the scheme (Bank charges can vary, so choose carefully).
2. Deal with objections. Talk to the Crime Prevention Officer, Fire Station Commander, Local Authority or Solicitor. Don't get anxious, get advice!
3. You will have obtained planning permission by now.
4. Write a second letter to the residents detailing the quotations and giving the committee's recommendations. Invite comments. The total figure should give the breakdown of costs and will include: - cost of gate, Council and Solicitor's fees, stationery, etc.

# Suggested Timetable of Work

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## Month 4

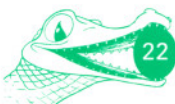
1. Collect the monies. Keep records of money received and from whom and cross reference with the receipts issued.
2. Order gates.
3. Speak to Local Authority about cleaning out the alleyways and hiring skips at a special rate.

## Month 5

1. Clear out the alleyways.
2. The gates are installed and keys issued to each resident.
3. Invite a Council Representative (Mayor, Local Councilor) your local Chief of Police, the Crime Prevention Officer and Local Press to an official launch.
4. Keys to the gates must be issued to each resident on the day of installation.

## Month 6

1. The Gating Committee or groups of helpers should meet to assess the quality of installation and effectiveness of the gates. Deal with any problems concerning the installation. Arrange to meet at least every 6 months regarding the maintenance of the gate and alley. Also provide a news update to the residents.
2. Enjoy the benefits.





# Notes

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Erle Jackson, Environmental Health Officer, London Borough of Ealing.

Steve Parry, Highways, London Borough of Ealing.

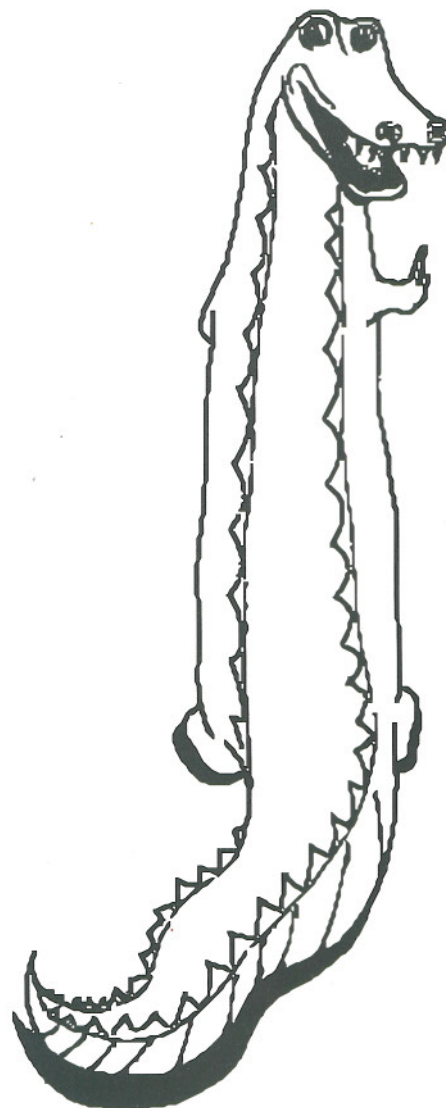
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Richard Marson, Co-ordinator, BEESAFE lock fitting scheme.

Staff of S03 Graphics Dept. New Scotland Yard.

Crime Data Supplied By The Metropolitan Police.



Please note that this document is only meant to be a brief guide on the steps necessary to gate alleyways. It is not intended to grant any consents that may be necessary and it is not meant to be an exhaustive guide on what is required.

The Association of Chief Police Officers, the Author, and contributors accept no responsibility for loss, damage or injury that may be caused by any inaccuracies, errors or omissions in this document or as a result of the implementation of a gating scheme.

