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Arson attack on cars in village

Police are appealing to anyone who saw anything suspicious in the Wheatley area on Friday night to come forward after arsonists attacked three cars in the village.

More than £3,000 damage was caused in three attacks.

Mrs Anthea Edwards told of her horror when the alarm was raised.

"A policeman was knocking like mad on our door. It was a terrible shock when we got outside," she said.

"My Datsun was parked right up against the side of our bungalow and flames were everywhere."

Mrs Edwards, of Roman Road, Wheatley, woke her son, Hildi, and ran to safety to watch her car burn out.

"It had just had a respray and two new wings because I was going to sell it," she said.

Two other cars were set ablaze in the Merry Bells car park, in Church Road, Wheatley. A Datsun and Volkswagen camper were left as blackened shells.

Owner of the camper, Mr David Ledwith, said his vehicle contained a gas cylinder which could easily have caused an explosion.

"I just cannot believe this has happened in a quiet village," said Mr Ledwith, 40, of Bell Lane, Wheatley.

He said on Saturday: "I was driving my wife to work this morning in my other car when I saw the caravanette. I almost drove off the road.

"It was a burnt-out wreck and the door had been completely ripped off."

Mr Ledwith believes that the arsonists may have had a grudge against foreign cars because a Mini and Ford Escort were left untouched in the same car park.

At Mrs Edwards' home a new Ford Granada and two Cortinas were ignored by the attackers.

"I want the police to make a full investigation and put whoever is responsible behind bars," said Mr Ledwith.

He said that the Merry Bells car park was the scene of an arson attack three years ago.

A few months ago a car was set on fire on the A40 at Wheatley.

Police are making inquiries in Wheatley. A spokesman said that the attackers forced entry into the cars and set fire to combustible material under the seats.

"It's apparently motiveless. Usually people steal cars before they set fire to them," he said.

"It is most unusual, however, for this number of cars to be involved."

Police say they will be following all lines of inquiry including the possibility that the attackers had a grudge against foreign cars.

Witnesses are asked to telephone Det. Con. Paul Church at Cowley police station on Oxford 777501.