

Monks Orchard Residents' Association

www.monks-orchard-web.org.uk
email: monksorchardweb@btinternet.com

Croydon

(Non Party)

(Independent)

NEWSLETTER - Winter 2006

Merry Christmas



*And a Happy New Year
To All Our Members!*

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The Monks Orchard Residents' Association was founded in 1923, and represents 2,500 residents.

Chairman's Comment

The Executive Committee wishes you a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year and offers thanks for your continued support. Grateful thanks are also offered to Area Managers and Road Stewards who form the leading edge of this Association. May the festive season be a time of peace, reflection and contentment for all?

At this time, I ask all members to consider making a New Year resolution to donate some of their time to help represent and forward the interests of the local community. There is good evidence that an active residents' association can successfully influence decisions made by local and national authorities. There is a need for help at all levels from Road Stewards, Area Managers, help with publications, planning, health, road safety and security. The tasks undertaken can be rewarding and sometimes exciting. If you can donate a few hours each month to help the local community please ring me direct on [REDACTED]. The continued existence of the local association of residents depends on people like you.

Watching a Webcast Beats Turning Out For Meetings

The Council spends on average more than a £1,000 pounds a year from the income of each family, but few residents are bothered or interested in how this money is being used. The yearly allowances are paid to Councillors, especially those holding senior positions in the Cabinet, but little or no interest is shown about how these elected representatives act on behalf of the residents. Council meetings are usually attended by only a handful of regulars who observe the proceedings from the public gallery. However, webcasting is proving a more popular and convenient way for residents to keep in touch and observe the debates, as an alternative to turning up in person for meetings at the Town Hall.

Figures show an overall average of 122 viewers for council meetings which can be seen on a computer via the internet. This compares favourably with actual attendance at meetings.

The comparative success of webcasting, which allows people with access to a computer to watch some meetings 'live' as they are taking place, has led the council to confirm its interest in continuing the service. It started as a government-funded trial in October 2005. Now, to coincide with the annual Local Democracy Week, the council has announced it is negotiating a three-year extension.

The council chamber is equipped with four fixed cameras that automatically focus on whoever is speaking at the microphone. A dedicated broadband

connection to a webcasting encoder ensures high quality pictures and sound can be watched by anyone in the world even though figures don't suggest that Croydon's popularity has yet reached global proportions. The equipment is used for all meetings of the council and cabinet as well as planning and some scrutiny meetings.

In addition, a separate mobile unit with two portable cameras is available for webcasting meetings away from the fixed cameras, including at various locations around the borough where neighbourhood partnership meetings take place. However, only meetings in the chamber can be viewed live. Others, where no broadband link is available, are recorded and posted on the council's website archive for viewing as soon as possible after the meeting.

In the year up to the end of July, 70 meetings were webcast, with 57 of them going out live. Since the facility was introduced, a total of 13,112 viewing hits have been recorded, including 1,632 live. Perhaps the most useful webcast for local residents are the regular Planning Control Meetings

Cabinet member for community cohesion, customer and organisational services, Councillor Enley Taylor, stated: "There's no doubt that webcasting is growing in appeal. It's a great device for helping residents understand what the council is doing on their behalf and to involve them in community activity. What's really exciting is that it has the potential to be used in a much wider range of applications which I hope to see developed during the extended period in which we'll be making use of webcasting in Croydon."

Anyone wanting to see a council webcast should visit the authority's webpage – www.croydon.gov.uk and follow the easy link. Reception is best via broadband but otherwise any computer with internet connection can be used.

The Gasman Cometh

Morrison Construction Ltd on behalf of Southern Gas Networks has commenced work renewing the gas pipes supplying properties in Monks Orchard. The work is part of a nationwide project to replace ageing iron pipes with plastic. It started in August and has since progressed along Fairford Avenue, Chaffinch Avenue and the Rosery, and on to Brookside Way. Two or more properties are worked on each day and access is required to the meter and any gas appliances. A hole is dug at the spot the pipe enters the property, usually at the front, to permit new plastic pipes to be inserted in the original supply pipes and involves the temporary disconnection of the gas supply for most of one day. Efforts are made to keep disruption to a minimum but homes containing children or the elderly should arrange for alternative heating to be on hand especially during the colder weather.



In order to comply with the current safety regulations, it is sometimes necessary to move the position of the gas meter. In such cases the new position can be discussed and agreed in advance. Surprisingly, the opportunity has not been taken to install external metering, which is part of Southern Gas Networks policy to avoid meter readers having to gain access to the property.

Following completion of the installation of the new supply, it is necessary to test and reconnect the internal gas supply. This includes trying to re-light any pilot lights as well as advising and taking appropriate steps to ensure that the installation meets all the safety requirements. Those undertaking the installation are friendly, approachable, and make as little mess or damage as possible. Residents that have newly paved or concreted front gardens may feel dismayed by the news that it may have to be disturbed, but experience shows that the subsequent repair and replacement is undertaken to a very high standard, making it virtually invisible. While the work progresses, residents will suffer restrictions of vehicular movements and parking, especially in the narrower roads. There is also the associated noise of pneumatic drills and mechanical diggers, and work can sometimes extend into the evening. The process of completion and clearing up the area also tends to extend for some time afterwards.



Giving to Good Causes

During the past decade there has been a spectacular increase in the donations made to worthy causes, which is evidenced by the generous response to recent appeals for the relief of the devastation caused by natural disasters such as famines, floods, and earthquakes. People in this country have a strong empathy with those worse off than themselves and raising money for worthy causes has become big business. Few will be old enough to remember the 'flag days' when fundraisers collected offerings in the street using collection boxes. The decline in the value of the national coinage has made this means of fundraising less attractive, although a few national charities, such as the British Legion, still use this traditional method.

Driven by the need to finance the work of worthy causes in the face of increasing competition from the National Lottery, campaign directors are forever seeking more effective methods to increase income. Direct mail shots are now favoured by many charities to attract larger donations and overcome the time-consuming task of handling a massive quantity of mixed coinage. The individually-addressed letters are usually illustrated with disturbing images of deprivation and suffering and few sensitive and caring persons would fail to be deeply touched by the heart-rending appeals for financial help.

Letters asking for financial help received through the post usually suggest the size of the gift that should be made and the recommended amount can range

from ten pounds or more in order to embarrass those contemplating giving a token amount. Even greater sums can be obtained if the supporter is persuaded to include the charity in their will of testament. People tend to support one or more good causes either with an occasional payment when their bank balance permits, by direct debit each month or through a salary scheme. Charities generally prefer supporters to pledge regular payments because it permits them to undertake advanced planning of their annual expenditure.

Giving to a charity can lift the spirits and provide a feeling of satisfaction especially if there is personal knowledge or experience of the excellent work undertaken. However, when financial help is given to one or more worthy causes, a curious thing happens. Personally-addressed communications begin to arrive from other charities seeking donations, and two or more can arrive each day. Fortunately, not all the 167,000 registered charities operating in this country will make an approach, but it soon becomes clear that there is a worthy cause for almost everything; hospitals, medical research, homelessness, welfare of the young, orphaned, disabled, the aged, plus the environment, birds, animals, education and natural disaster relief to name a few. It is easy to become depressed after reading each distressing appeal for help because it is financially impossible to respond positively and make a worthwhile gift to all.

To ensure further contributions supporters are rewarded with membership cards, badges, newsletters, progress reports and thank you letters, all of which include more pressing pleas for funding. A more recent approach is for charities to mail 'thank you' presents with the expectation that in return the recipient will remit a gift of greater value. It is not unusual for supporters to receive printed t-shirts, cuddly toys, umbrellas, greeting cards, address labels, wrapping paper, shopping bags, gloves, key rings, and magnifying glasses.

Some send small sums of money asking for the coins to be sent back together with a cheque for ten pounds or more to feed or educate the disadvantaged; these pleas are not easy to ignore. What is rather unexpected is that some charities offer supporters the opportunity to participate in raffles, prize draws or monthly lotteries all of which offer major money prizes, luxury cars or cruises. Some will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable with charitable donations being used to fuel the growing national addiction to gambling. Furthermore, some of the more well-known organisations have offices in prestigious buildings and employ dozens of full-time skilled employees, and this will inevitably give rise to the question 'is this the best way of using the money collected?'

There is a real danger of people becoming less responsive if they continue to be bombarded with cleverly worded appeals, not only by direct mail, but also in the press, on radio and television. Locally-based good causes with an

equally desperate need for help will find it more and more difficult to raise funds when competing with professional fund raisers and the allure of the opportunity of winning a massive amount on the National Lottery.

Another way of assisting good causes, is to take unwanted or surplus items, provided they are in a usable condition, to a charity shop or wait until a door-to-door collection takes place. Charity shops, staffed by volunteers, have established a major presence in shopping areas and can be found alongside coffee bars and restaurants. A 'throw away' society ensures a constant supply of saleable items and charity shops are known to receive more than they can sell. There are often curios on display that attract the attention of collectors, dealers and antique hunters. Charity shops provide an appealing dual opportunity to assist selected good causes, and also to recycle at the same time.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The eighty-third Annual General Meeting of the Association is to be held on Friday 16 March beginning at 8.00 p.m. in St. George's Church Hall, Elstan Way, Shirley. There will be reports from Local Councillors, and Andrew Pelling, Member of Parliament and Member of the Greater London Authority. Anyone wishing to become a member or wishing to help with the work of the Association is asked to let the Chairman know before or after the meeting.

The minutes of the previous A.G.M. are available on our website and were published in the Summer 2006 issue of the newsletter.

Reports from local Councillors and the Member of Parliament form an important and informative part of the Annual General Meeting. Those presenting the reports usually agree to take questions from the audience.

Members wishing to have a more considered answer to a complex question are asked to give advance notice, so that a more accurate response can be prepared. Questions should be sent in writing, with the name and address of the sender before the 16th March to Dave King, Secretary of Monks Orchard Residents' Association, [REDACTED], or emailed to monksorchardweb@btinternet.com.

Planning News

The continuing rise in the price of property has the potential to fundamentally change the character of Monks Orchard. The majority of the recently submitted applications for planning permission are for 'so-called' luxury detached homes or blocks containing one or two bedroom flats, whilst there has been a fall in the number of applications for traditional semi-detached

homes with three bedrooms. It would be pleasing if first time buyers attempting to gain a rung on the property ladder were purchasing the flats, but this is not the main reason for the dramatic increase in the number of applications for high-density accommodation blocks. Developers know their market and are only too willing to satisfy the demand for 'buy-to-let' properties. People who have increasing concerns over their pensions, who have seen an end to their final-salary schemes and diminishing investment returns, are fuelling the demand. Buying-to-let is considered a copper-bottomed investment because there exists a strong tenant demand being driven by demographics; an increasing number of immigrants looking for somewhere to live, the increasing number of students and the growing number of twentysomethings who do not want to get married and do not want to have children yet.

This evolution in the property market will bring about a change in the profile of those living in the area. The number of people choosing to make a permanent home in Monks Orchard will diminish and eventually be replaced by more mobile, transient residents without families and with little or no interest in local activities, schools or services. Sadly, this will inevitably bring about further deterioration of the already weak and disappearing community spirit.

There is a growing need for more homes and MORA has no objections in principle to the erection of blocks of flats no higher than three storeys providing full account is taken of the character of the surrounding properties. The worst nightmare of any homeowner is to have a block of flats erected on the site of an adjacent house or bungalow. Blocks of flats erected amid low-rise properties can be a blot on the landscape and result in a loss of privacy, outlook, and daylight and can completely change the nature of an area.

At present, there are two highly contentious proposals for the erection of high-density housing blocks.

In May, Unique Architects, agents for property developer McCullochs Homes, submitted an application for the erection of a three-storey building incorporating nine two-bedroom flats on the site of 21 Cheston Avenue, which is at present occupied by a single house. Subsequent to a campaign by local residents, supported by Monks Orchard and Spring Park Residents' Associations, permission was refused. An appeal has been made to the Planning Inspectorate and objectors are carefully studying the grounds given for the appeal: a decision is expected early next year.

In March S.E. Living Ltd. submitted an application for outline planning permission for the site at 114 Orchard Way, which is at present occupied by a single bungalow. The proposal is for the erection of a two/three storey building comprising 6 two-bedroom flats. In August, subsequent to a visit to the site by

the Planning Committee, permission was refused. An amended application has been submitted which is being resisted by local residents, supported by MORA.

Shock Horror!

Just imagine arriving home from work to find scaffolding has been erected over your property to allow building work to proceed on your next door neighbour's extension. This is what happened to one of our residents earlier this summer. Some neighbours take a very cavalier attitude and are very inconsiderate when it comes to building extensions to their properties. The picture here shows how scaffolding was erected over the owner's garage to allow the extension to the adjacent property to be built up close to the party wall. No agreement was made between the residents to allow this to occur.



It would be advisable when planning applications are sought, to ensure that the details of the owner and/or his authorised agent are contacted, and a statement made that prior to any works being planned or undertaken, due notice be given in accordance with the Party Wall Agreement Act 1990.

The Act provides a framework for preventing and resolving disputes in relation to party walls, boundary walls and excavations near neighbouring buildings. Anyone intending to carry out work of the kinds described in the Act **must give adjoining owners notice of their intentions and at least 2 months notice before the planned work starts.** The notice is only valid for a year. The Act covers various work to be carried out directly to an existing party wall or structure; new buildings at or astride the boundary line between properties; excavation within 3 or 6 metres of a neighbouring building or structure, depending on the depth of any excavations or proposed foundations. The Act sets out your rights if you or your neighbour wants to do work on an existing party wall.

If you intend to carry out any of the works mentioned in the Act you must inform all adjoining owners. The Act contains no enforcement procedures for failure to serve a notice. However, if you start work without having first given notice in the proper way, adjoining owners may seek to stop the work through a court injunction or seek other legal redress.

The building owner must provide temporary protection for adjacent buildings and property where necessary. The building owner is responsible for making good any damage caused by the works, or must make payment in lieu of making good if the adjoining owner requests it.

Our only advice when planning applications for extensions are sought is to request that, **if** the Local Planning Authority is minded to approve the

application, to request that the conditions of approval include reference to obtaining party wall agreement prior to any building work commencing. This will bring attention to the requirements by law of the Party Wall Agreement Act 1996. Copies of the Act and advice to neighbours can be found and downloaded at: http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/411/PartyWalleAct1996explanatorybookletPDF597Kb_id1131411.pdf, which sets out your rights and procedures in the event of conflicting attitudes.

Council Tax Campaigners Warn of Further Hikes in Council Tax

Christine Melsom, founder of the Isitfair council tax protest group, issued the following statement.



"Council tax continues to receive a great deal of media attention and there is renewed concern about revaluation of properties as the basis for massive increases in tax. In addition we have the prospect of intrusive property inspections and the introduction of additional sources of local taxation.

"Whilst some of the reports may not, at present, be based on hard evidence, we expect that council tax payers will continue to be treated as an easy target for hikes in taxation via the annual tradition of an inflation-busting increase in bills in return for diminishing services. It is beyond belief that the government can even contemplate heaping yet further burden on to people already struggling to meet the present levels of council tax.

"In addition to the well-publicised concerns about future council tax increases we would like to draw attention to the rapid and uncontrolled escalation in the cost of parish councils. The government likes to trumpet the fact that your annual council tax increase has been capped since 2004, despite this year's 5% cap being double the rate of inflation. But they prefer to keep their heads down when questioned about increases in the parish council element. Parish council charges are not capped, the consequence of which has been that the overall increase in many people's council tax bill this year was well in excess of 5%. We raised this issue many months ago with the Minister for Local Government Phil Woolas but our concerns have been dismissed.

"This is a serious issue, particularly in the light of last month's government White Paper "Strong & Prosperous Communities", which encourages everyone to believe that the future of local government will involve parish/neighbourhood councils being given greater powers. We see these proposals as a justification for further hikes in council tax and an additional layer of bureaucracy.

"At present, there are over 8,000 parish and town councils, mostly in rural areas, but there will be a dramatic increase in this number if the White Paper's proposals come into effect. Urban areas will get them under a different name,

such as neighbourhood or community councils. The names may be different but the impact will be the same; i.e. even higher council tax bills!

"Council tax was introduced in 1993 with average B and D in England set at £568 - it is now £1268, a rise of 123%. Over the same period, inflation was 39.7%. If Band D tax had risen in line with inflation since 1993 it would now be £794.

"The Isitfair campaign wants a fairer system of taxation to fund local services. The present system of council tax results in people on low incomes, who are not receiving means-tested benefits paying the highest percentage of their income in council tax.

"We encourage everyone to stand up and fight against this iniquitous tax - tell your elected representatives what you think about council tax, and demand a fairer system of taxation for local services related to everyone's ability to pay."

For further information, please contact: Christine Melsom on [REDACTED] or E-mail c@isitfair.co.uk.

Press release issued by Isitfair Campaign, Headley, Hampshire GU35 8PJ

Planning Report



Appeals

06/01177/P

Application Type: Full Planning Permission

Location: 21 Cheston Avenue, Shirley, CR0 8DE

Proposal: Demolition of existing building; erection of three story building comprising 9 two bedroom flats; formation of vehicular access and provision of associated parking.

Permission Refused: 17 / 05 / 2006

Appeal Lodged: 11 / 10 / 2006

Appeal Reference: A/06/2028389/NWF

Closing date of appeal: 11/12/2006

06/02145/P

Application Type: Full planning permission

Location: 9 Woodmere Gardens, Croydon, CR0 7PL

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings; erection of 2 detached four bedroom houses with attached garages; formation of vehicular access and provision of associated parking.

Permission Refused: 19 / 07 / 2006

Appealed Lodged: 30 / 08 / 2006

Appeal Reference: A/06/2025297/WF

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New Applications:

06/04296/P

Location: 89B Gladeside, Croydon, CR0

23 / 10 / 2006

Proposal: Erection of three bedroom detached house and provision of associated parking.

06/04589/P

Location: 16A Fairhaven Avenue, Croydon, CR0

Proposal: Demolition of existing building; erection of 5 three bedroom terraced houses; formation of access road and provision of associated parking spaces.

Registration Date: 06 / 11 / 2006

Representation by: 01 / 12 / 2006

06/03881/P

Outline planning permission

Location: 114 Orchard Way, Croydon, CR0 7NN

Proposal: Demolition of existing building; erection of two/three storey building comprising 6 two bedroom and 5 one bedroom flats; alterations to vehicular access and provision of associated parking.

Crime Alerts

Security Advice

With the winter evenings here, it is time to focus on keeping your home secure. Leaving your home during hours of darkness, without putting on lights or drawing the curtains, indicates to the opportunist criminal that there is no-one at home. Unfortunately, every year sees a spate of early evening burglaries associated with the clocks going back.



Please help us to help you by taking the steps outlined by Crime Prevention Officers below:

- Fit security lighting, either dusk to dawn energy efficient lighting that will come on automatically as dusk sets in, or a passive infra-red (PIR) light that will draw attention to movement.
- Use an automatic time switch on an indoor light, either in a room that cannot be peered into from the road, or upstairs. Consider drawing the curtains if you are in a room with the lights switched on. Regularly change the timing on the switch.
- Put a time switch on a radio that has been tuned to a chat station - this will give the impression that the house is occupied. Again, regularly change the

timing of the switch.

- Property mark your valuables. Some articles are unsuitable for marking so photograph them - with a ruler in view to show scale.
- Secure windows, paying particular attention to those on the ground floor and above flat roof areas. Always use locks and bolts and keep all your keys, including car keys, out of sight and out of reach.
- Ensure that gates or access to the rear of the house are locked and secure. Don't forget to lock your shed; your tools can be used to break in. Trim overgrown plants - don't give burglars a hiding place.
- Intruder alarms are an effective deterrent against burglars. Before choosing a system ensure it is the one most suitable for your needs.
- Trust your instincts. If you think a crime is about to happen or is in progress dial 999.

If you require any further advice, contact the Crime Prevention Office on 020 8649 1414 or visit our website; www.met.police.uk/croydon.

Communal Door Security

Please take the following precautions:

- Only admit people known to you, or callers that you are expecting.
- Never admit people on behalf of another resident.
- Where possible, take the trouble to meet your visitor at the entrance door and ensure the door is shut after entry.
- Make sure your communal door is shut after you enter or leave the building.
- If you see anyone acting suspiciously RING 999. You could prevent a crime.

If In Doubt, Keep Them Out!

DO YOU LIVE NEAR A PARK?

If the answer to that question is yes, you might like to keep this number handy. It is the number for Parks Security. Many parks in the borough get vandalised with objects being set on fire or swings being broken. Other groups may be drinking, taking drugs or generally causing a nuisance. Call this number to report them: 020 8726 6900 ext.62339

Clothing Collection

Leaflets with a red heart on it are being distributed in the Borough for a clothing collection. The leaflet refers to regular donations to children's homes which help orphans and children from broken homes. The leaflet also has a reference to a website www.rootscompany.eu which does not exist. There is no trace of the company on the Charities Commission website list and they do not claim to be a registered charity. The company was apparently registered on the 11 May 2006 by a Andrzej Watorek in Solec Kujawski in Poland.

Theft of Scrap Metal

Croydon Police are requesting local residents to be on the look out for any

suspicious activity on roof tops, particularly on religious buildings, building sites and small fabrication businesses who have been targeted for copper and sheet metal. There has been an increase in theft of lead and copper due to the increase in scrap metal costs. The number of theft of metal reports has doubled in the past six months, from 21 to 41.

Places of worship are normally irregular in shape and design and access to the roof is normally relatively easy due to cast iron fall pipes, for example. Anti-climb paint could be applied to fall-pipes not less than eight feet from the ground. This is a type of paint that does not dry and is very slippery.

If you see something suspicious, report it by contacting Croydon Control room on 020 8649 1212 or Crimestoppers free and anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Town Centre Dispersal Order

In response to concerns by local businesses and residents concerning acts of anti-social behaviour being committed by groups of youths and persistent aggressive begging, Sergeant Phyllis Rooney from the Town Centre team has secured the latest Borough dispersal order under Section 30 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.

The dispersal order commences on Monday 4th September 2006 for a period of 6 months. This legislation allows Police and the local authority to tackle anti-social behaviour by groups of youths and aggressive begging and will be reviewed with a view to a possible extension when the order is due to expire.

Burglary Hot Spot

With the Christmas peak shopping season in full swing, a reminder that snatches of handbags, mobile phones etc continue in the Croydon Town Centre area mainly in George Street, High Street, Park Street, North End, Whitgift Centre and West Croydon BR Station. Suspects are mainly groups of males with peak times being Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 12 noon to 4 p.m.

Have you reported a crime?

We have been asked to remind you to report every crime even if you think the Police will not be able to do anything about it. If the Police do not know about it they are not getting a clear picture of what is actually happening in the area. Crime can be reported to the Police on 020 8649 1212, or on the internet at www.police.uk

Reduce Junk Mail

You may have seen the newspaper articles in recent months regarding the postman who told people in his area how to stop the delivery of 'door to door'

unaddressed junk mail by writing to “Door to Door Opt Outs”, Royal Mail Door to Door, Kingsmead House, Oxpens Rd, Oxford, OX1 1RX. You can also sign up to The Telephone Preference Service on 0845 070 0707, which stops sales calls on your home or mobile phones. This service cannot stop text messages on mobiles.

Mini Motorcycles

We have warned about these before and now Croydon Council and the Met Police have introduced a new advisory leaflet for parents. Although often sold as toys, machines with electric or petrol motors are classed as motor vehicles. Accordingly mini-motos and electric scooters cannot be driven on public road, footpaths, pavements, cycle paths, car parks, recreation grounds or other public land. They may only be used on private land with the permission of the landowner.



YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- When a motor vehicle is used on public land in a manner which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress it may be seized by the Police under the Police Reform Act 2003.
- On first seizure the owner will be liable to a fee of £105 for the cost of recovery plus a £12 daily storage charge.
- After 21 days or on the second seizure, the bike can be destroyed.
- Mini-motos and go-peds are not legally suitable for road use. Anyone found using them on a highway will be prosecuted under the Road Traffic Act. This may include fines and or licence penalty points.
- To report nuisance or dangerous riding please contact your local Police.

For more information on this campaign please contact the Community Protection Team on 020 8726 6000.

Bogus Callers

In Shirley, a white male approx 30 years old, 5'07" with collar length black hair and wearing dark clothing claimed to be from the Water Board. The victim asked to see ID and some form of photo ID was shown but quickly put away before the victim could read it. It is believed there was a second suspect nearby.

There are still instances of burglars pretending to be representatives of utility companies gaining access to the homes of the elderly and committing theft, and there has been a recent increase in the number of bogus callers in the area, possibly operating in a gang targeting Croydon, so please be on the lookout. They may make up a story insisting to check drains, pipes or other appliances, but don't be alarmed as there are a number of safeguards you can take:

- Never fully open the door; keep it on a door chain, or just keep it closed.
- INSIST on seeing company identification or the person's identity card (even Police Officers) - any genuine person will only be too happy to show you.

- Ask to view the card in detail and take your time in doing so. The company can always be phoned to check identity. Many provide an appointment system and a password.
- When calling up a company to check, make the person wait outside with your front door FULLY SHUT. Do not allow them to rush you into making a decision. If they are genuine, they will be happy to wait. However, criminals don't like to be seen or stay in view for long periods of time.
- If you are not satisfied, CALL 999.

The Water Board does not normally call to check your water pressure or check the taps/ toilets etc unless you have called them first. Also, no plumber would need to check your water supply if they are working on other premises nearby - this is often given as an excuse by bogus callers. **REMEMBER: If in doubt, keep them OUT!**

If anyone requires Thames Water, or East Surrey password forms Sarah Gardner has plenty - just call 020 8649 0168. There are also plenty of 'Nominate a Neighbour' forms.

Operation Minstead (Attacks on Elderly People) Advice Update

- Be vigilant and aware of strangers appearing to be paying attention to yours or other people's property - if you have any doubts call police on 999, with a full description.
- Review your home security – contact the local Crime Prevention office or your Safer Neighbourhood Team for advice and assistance.
- Check your external security for good lighting – ensure any fencing is in good repair – adequate locks on gates – trim back hedges and gates.
- Make neighbours/friends aware of your personal circumstances.
- Consider the purchase of a home security system (intruder alarm) installed by an approved installer, or a personal attack alarm.
- If in a Neighbourhood Watch, make contact with your local Co-ordinator or member.
- If you do not live in sheltered accommodation then consider applying for a Croydon Council Careline or Help the Aged Senior Link Bogus Caller system.
- Remember to contact your local Crime Prevention Office on 020 8649 1414 if you require any help or advice.



Key points about the suspect:

- 1) He rides a motorcycle, or has owned one in the past
- 2) He is a black man aged between 35 and 45, with a well spoken voice
- 3) He's tall - between 5'10" and 6'2". He has a round face and big lips.
- 4) He has knowledge of South East London, and a connection with Brighton - although he may not live in either place now.

A reward of up to £40,000 is on offer to anyone who provides information that leads to the arrest, prosecution and conviction of this offender.

PDS (Parcel Delivery Services) Chain Email

We have received several reports of a new chain email circulating referring to the above premium rate scam which was reported last year. The email is being forwarded in increasing numbers so ICSTIS, the Premium Rate Regulator has posted the following information on their website:

Parcel Delivery Service – Chain Email

It has come to our attention that a chain e-mail has been circulating the internet. It makes reference to the Royal Mail, the City of London Police and Parcel Delivery Services. ICSTIS appreciates that consumers want to find out more information about this alert and have issued the following statement:

During the Christmas period 2005, a number of people across the UK received cards from Parcel Delivery Services (a service run through a service provider called Studio Telecom). When ICSTIS were informed of the content and promotion of this service, we invoked our Emergency Procedure (for details visit this website - www.icstis.org.uk/service_providers/complaints/default.asp) and removed access to the service (operating on 20 numbers) on 29 December 2005.

We do not believe that this service is operating again and have issued a statement to the industry to reiterate that they fulfil their responsibilities under our Code of Practice and ensure that any premium rate service running on their network abides by our regulation.

If you are invited to call a premium rate number (starting with the dialling code '090') and believe there is a problem with the content, promotion or operation of the service then please call our Contact Centre for free on 0800 500 212. Our staff will be able to look up the number for you and give you any information we have about it. Alternatively, you can check a number yourself at: www.icstis.org.uk/consumers/ncd/default.asp

This particular case will be adjudicated on as soon as possible. Until then, all the revenue will remain frozen and will not be passed on to the operator. Until then, we will not have details posted on the website as we need to publish the exact facts and final outcome.

The email you received referred to a £15 charge. This is in fact an urban myth. It is not possible for a £15 charge to be made on connection. We also have a number of measures in place in our Code of Practice to ensure that consumers are protected from unexpectedly high charges. Calls and texts cost a maximum of £1.50 per minute. The particular service referred to in the chain e-mail used a recorded message which lasted a maximum of 6 minutes - making the total cost £9.

Under the Code, all service providers must state clearly in promotional material the likely costs for calls to each service (either per minute or total charge inclusive of VAT).

It is worth remembering that the vast majority of premium rate services operate within the ICSTIS Code of Practice and cause no consumer harm. Sadly, a small number do and consumers should always inform us as soon as possible about these companies so we can investigate them in full.

To ensure you are protecting yourself, make sure you recognise which numbers will incur a premium charge on your phone, always read the terms and conditions of promotions you are taking part in and if an offer looks too good to be true then it probably is.

For further information, please visit the consumer section of the website where we aim to answer your questions: www.icstis.org.uk/consumers/default.asp

For our leaflet 'Are you protected against premium rate scams?' please click: http://www.icstis.org.uk/pdfs_news/prs_protection_factsheet.pdf.

Sector Alarm Letter

A Neighbourhood Watch member has reported receiving a letter from the Sector Alarm company which he feels is somewhat misleading. The letter offers to install a monitored police response burglar alarm for £1. However, further down the letter it appears that you will be entering into a three year contract with the company with a one off £35 fee for registration and a monthly payment of at least £24.95 for the three years contract.



Church Services at Christmas

Churches in Shirley invite you to join us at our Christmas Services as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and wish all local residents, their families, friends and visitors a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

St George's, Elstan Way, (Anglican):

Sunday 17 December	6pm Nine Lessons & Carols
Sunday 24 December	10am Parish Communion (said)
	4pm Crib Service
	5pm Crib Service
	11pm Carols
	11.30pm Midnight Mass
Monday 25 December	8am Holy Communion
	10am Parish Communion

Shirley Methodist Church, Eldon Avenue:

Sunday 10 December	10.30am Gift Service
Sunday 17 December	10.30am Morning worship with Holy Communion 6.30pm Carol Service
Sunday 24 December	9am Holy Communion 10.30am Morning Worship 4.30pm Children's Crib Service 11.30pm Holy Communion
Monday 25 December	10.30am Christmas worship
Sunday 31 December	10.30am Morning worship 11pm Watchnight Service
Sunday 7 January	10.30am Covenant Service, united with St John's

West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church, Wickham Road/Monks Orchard Road.

Sunday 17 December	10.30am Youth Christmas Celebration
Sunday 24 December	6.30pm Carols by Candlelight
Monday 25 December	10am Family Celebration

Spring Park Table Tennis Club

We meet at 7.30pm every Wednesday from the start of September to the end of June, breaking only for Christmas.



We are at Junior Hall, Spring Park Primary School, Bridle Road, Shirley

Anyone aged 16 to 99 is welcome to join us - whether an experienced player or a bit rusty! We play doubles on the last Wednesday each month and singles all other weeks.

So why not come along and give it a try?

There is a £3 weekly admission fee for visitors, but these payments may be off-set against the annual subscription fee for those who join as full members.

Website: <http://www.spttc.zoomshare.com>

It's fun and very healthy - and you will be in good company at our friendly club.

Christmas Quiz

WIN A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE!

ALL ANSWERS START WITH 'S'

1. The Rhine rises in which Country?
2. The highest point, the top.
3. The world's most expensive spice.
4. Drink stored in a Bodega.
5. Edward Jenner discovered a vaccine against it.
6. Susan who starred in the film 'Dead Man Walking'.
7. Machine that revolutionized the weaving industry.
8. English actress who starred in 'seaQuest DSV'.
9. Play based on football pools winner.
10. Nationality of painter Goya.
11. Became Andrew Lloyd-Webber's second wife.
12. Which underground station is nearest to London's Natural History Museum?
13. Technique used in Weightlifting.
14. 1989 film starring Pauline Collins.
15. A bog or marsh.
16. What is a scapula?
17. Who did Muhammad Ali beat when he became World Champion?
18. Which animal adopts the piglet in Babe?
19. Author of 'The Long Walk' and 'Lisey's Story'.
20. Which Cathedral in Britain has the tallest Spire?

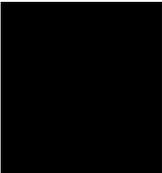
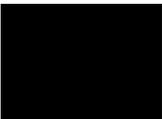
The first correct entry out of the hat on 10th January 2007 at the MORA Committee Meeting will win a bottle of champagne kindly donated by Dave King, Secretary of MORA. (Committee members not eligible)

All entries by post or e-mail to:

Christine Ross-Smith

Email:

MORA COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2006

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Committee Member:	HARRY CROFT	



MONKS ORCHARD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

'I wish to become a member of the Monks Orchard Residents' Association'

Name:	Signature:
Address:	
Post Code:	

Please send this completed form to:

DIANE McINERNEY



Thank you for supporting MORA

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