

# THE ARCHER



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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

## One woman crime wave

People across East Finchley have fallen victim to a one-woman crime wave and been duped into giving money in the belief that they are helping a distraught woman whose daughter is in hospital. The woman, who is described as being in her mid thirties, black, about 5'6" tall, slim, smartly dressed and with a London accent has been operating in the area for the last month, usually with a male accomplice who waits in a car a few hundred yards away.

The Archer has received reports of her duping people in a large number of roads including Abbots Gardens, Church Lane and Leslie Road, usually obtaining between £20 and £50 from each of her victims. One victim, who wished to remain nameless, described her as 'very convincing' and admitted to being shocked and embarrassed when she realised that she had been duped.

### Midnight caller

The woman's method is to call either very early or very

late, usually after midnight or before seven in the morning ask for help. She tends to tell the victim that she is a near neighbour, usually giving a house number and saying that the victim must have seen her or her husband. Explaining that she is a nurse who has just got home after a night shift to find a message that her daughter has been in an accident and is in a hospital a little distance from East Finchley (often Chase Farm in Enfield), that she cannot contact her husband and needs to get there quickly, she asks

the victim for help. Naturally, when faced with someone who is clearly distraught and apparently genuine the victim obliges, generally by offering to lend her the money for a mini-cab. One victim told The Archer that the woman did not ask for money and only mentioned an amount when asked the cost of the cab fare to Chase Farm Hospital. She always promises that either she or her husband will return with the money later in the day and thanks the victim profusely before leaving. When a victim offers to call the cab for her the woman explains that she has to go home first either to collect some things for her daughter or to let her elderly, infirm mother know what is happening. Naturally, she is never seen again.

## No money for road safety

By Daphne Chamberlain

The Archer has discovered why pedestrians crossing the East Finchley end of The Bishop's Avenue still take their lives in their hands.

Last November, an elderly man was knocked down and seriously injured while crossing the junction. When a local resident, who had previously complained about the hazard through MP Rudi Vis, contacted Barnet about the accident, she received this reply:

"When I last wrote to you, in July 1998, it was hoped that some form of traffic scheme could be implemented at this junction. This was to be financed as part of the bus route improvements along the A1000, and was not to be financed directly from Council funds. This finance is no longer available, and the junction improvement scheme has had to be shelved for the moment."

The letter went on to say that last December, the Finchley and Golders Green Environment Sub-Committee considered financing the scheme from a budget to help "vulnerable road users, and to provide benefit to the wider community." It was

decided not to implement it, as other requests "better met the criteria for funding".

Money for the bus-lane came from a different pot, and Barnet's traffic budget is inadequate, but at the moment almost everyone seems to be in the wrong lane.

Barnet Council said they were monitoring the situation, but the police told The Archer that they could not provide accurate accident figures.

"Police Officers do not always record the exact location. A collision recorded on The Bishop's Avenue may have occurred on any part of that road."

### Don't be fooled

Local Neighbourhood Watch groups have circulated warnings to residents and one local organiser said that within hours of the warning notice going out the phone started ringing as people rang in to report either their own or their friends experiences at the hands of this woman. When one victim rang the police the operator told her that they were getting numerous calls every day about this woman and that she had spread across the area 'like a rash'. Although the police have officers looking for her they admit that she is proving hard to find and advise residents not to give her money but to contact them immediately on 020 8209 1212.



Park Lodge, as it was, on the corner of Market Place and East End Road - illustration by Herbert Norman.

**The changing face of East Finchley**  
 The Archer examines the current development boom in East Finchley. See the centre pages.

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