



# The water leak that isn't

By Janet Maitland

Elderly people are being targeted by burglars who get inside their homes by pretending they've been sent to repair a water leak. The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) has warned that this scam is happening right across the borough, with several incidents in East Finchley over the last three months.

The way it works is that a workman calls about a 'water leak'. Once inside, he either leaves the door pushed to or left on the latch. While he keeps the householder occupied, another man comes in and looks through the other rooms for things to steal. The householder often doesn't realise anyone else has been inside until some hours later when they find they've been robbed.

### The no-leak scam

An elderly lady of 82 was burgled in this way on 15 December at 6.20pm. She answered the door to a man saying he'd been asked to fix a leak in her flat. He distracted her by turning on the taps in the kitchen while she emptied out the cupboard underneath to prevent any water damage. The man then left the property with another man and got into a dark coloured vehicle. When the lady walked into her bedroom she realised that money and belongings had been stolen. Both men are described as between 30 and 40 and approximately

175cms tall.

"I would appeal to anyone who remembers seeing either of these men to contact me on 101 quoting reference number 2427890/13," said Detective Constable Kerry Bonomi.

### The real-leak variant

A more elaborate version of this scam happened several times over the summer of 2012. It might resurface. In this version two workmen use the pretence of a water leak to gain entry but they actually cause damage that leads to a real leak. They say they can repair the leak but demand cash upfront to do so.

One 84-year-old resident in Fortis Green fell prey to this trick after one of the men lifted tiles on her roof and then poured water through the hole. She was so alarmed that she went straight to the bank and withdrew the £4,600 the men said they needed.

"We strongly advise not to let anyone into your home unless you know who they are or have booked an appointment," said Jan Lovell of the SNT.

# Someone shot my cat

By Sandra Li

My six-month-old kitten Moonshie went out into the garden of our home in Elmshurst Crescent and came in limping. Thinking that she might have jumped and sprained her leg, the following day we took her to the vet and they kept her in for X-rays.

We were all very shocked to find out she had been shot and the pellet was still in her leg. Since then she has had surgery and metal work inserted to try and repair her bones.

She now is on medication and needs cage rest for the next six weeks. I would like people to be made aware of all the pain and stress associated with the misuse of these guns.



Moonshie the kitten, now confined to a cage until her leg heals



Katie Burnetts, Samantha Baines and Harriet Fisher are Vinegar.

# Three times a comedy star

Who will be the comedy heroes of tomorrow? If all goes well, one of them could be Harriet Fisher.

Harriet, who lives in Lanchester Road, performs with friends Katie Burnetts and Samantha Baines in a sketch group called Vinegar. They describe their comedy as "intelligent, surreal and dark", taking inspiration from Smack the Pony, French and Saunders, and Nighty Night.

The trio, who all have day jobs, have taken their show to the last three Edinburgh Festivals, gig constantly around London and now have a chance to hit the big time after reaching the final of the New Act of the Year competition.

This long-established talent-finding contest has previously

been a route to stardom for Harry Hill, Eddie Izzard and Simon Pegg, and is well-known as an annual event where agents will be scouting for the next generation of comedy performers.

### Vinegar's five minute slot

Harriet, Katie and Samantha's group is one of 15 finalists at the event to be hosted by Arthur Smith at the Bloomsbury Theatre on 26 January, just as we go to press.

They've only got five minutes on stage to make an impact. Harriet says: "We've been through six rounds to get to the final. We're a bit surprised to be here, to be honest. When we came off stage at one of the rounds, all the compere said to us was, 'Bit long, girls, but well done'."

"We hope it will lead to

bigger things for us. Our dream would be to have our own sketch show on TV but mainly we just want to be able to work as actors."

Good luck to all three!

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