



# Stay on the alert for coronavirus con tricks

By Janet Maitland and Daphne Chamberlain

The National Cyber Security Centre has reported a wave of scams that exploit the fear of Covid-19. Cyber criminals may offer to test you for the virus, sell you a mask, give you information about people who are infected, claim they have a cure or ask for coronavirus charity donations. You should be wary of all such offers on the phone, by email or on websites.

"Covid cyber crime is in essence the same as other scams and the advice is the same," said Jan Lovell, of the Safer Neighbourhood Team. "Genuine organisations would not contact you and ask you to give them personal details in an email, online or on the phone. The majority of scam emails can be spotted because they don't mention your name, and will ask you to click on a link for more information, which you should never do."

Not-so-kind offers

Age UK is also warning that people are calling at doors saying they are carrying out coronavirus testing in homes on behalf of the NHS or local GPs, which is not true. A variation on this scam is the 'kindness hoax', when a caller pretends to be offering help.

The charity warns never to accept these offers from strangers and never to let anyone into your home: instead, call the police. Many genuine groups and individuals are helping out, and their details and how

to contact them are listed publicly, including on the Essential Advice and Information page in this newspaper.

The Age UK Barnet website offers extensive advice and information, including guidance on how to set up technology to keep in touch with friends and family. See [www.ageuk.org.uk/barnet](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/barnet), or call 020 8203 5040. Barnet Council has an urgent support helpline at 0808 281 3210 or [COVID19support@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:COVID19support@barnet.gov.uk).



Writing debut: Vicki Bradley with her first novel

## Story built on lies is a very good read

By Daphne Chamberlain

Local writer Vicki Bradley had her first book published last month. *Before I Say I Do* is a psychological thriller, told from the viewpoints of two young women. One is a bride whose prospective husband disappears on their wedding day, and the other is a detective investigating the case. I couldn't put it down!

Vicki herself is a detective constable of 14 years' experience, currently on a 12-month career break. But the book took four years to write, before winning the Write Here, Right Now competition run by publishers Simon & Schuster, Darley Anderson Literary Agency and the Bradford Literature Festival. Her degree in English Literature is backed up by a City University Crime Writing MA and the support of fellow crime writers.

### Truth and lies

"Writing is a kind of therapy for me," she told *The Archer*. "It relieves the stress of seeing so many bad things. In the police you meet people at the worst time of their lives. You develop an intuition as to whether someone is telling the truth. Sex offenders are the best liars in the world, because their whole life is a lie."

Lying is a key part of the book's plot. In fact, the main theme is the gradual revealing

of lies, and what this does to the different characters. We also get a glimpse into police procedure, tensions and problems.

Vicki has worked in rough areas, where violence and drug-taking are all too common. There are horrifying events in the book, but they are told with truth and are not gratuitous.

She has only recently moved to East Finchley, and is loving getting to know the area, appreciating its history, sense of community and feeling of safety. One of her favourite spots is Coldfall Wood, where she has actually done some writing. When I admitted I thought it was rather sinister (sorry, Coldfall Wood!), she said with a laugh, "Maybe that's why I like it".

*Before I Say I Do* is published by Simon & Schuster, ISBN 978-1-4711-8524-3, and is available in Waterstones and Tesco, and from online suppliers.



A chapter each: Reece Shearsmith, left, and Steve Pemberton

## Star names have a story to tell

By David Melsome

Actors Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith, who both live locally, will be reading online to Year 6 children who are due to join The Archer Academy in East Finchley next term.

The *Inside No 9* creators and stars will be joined by actors Katherine Parkinson, Ralf Little and Nicole Stephenson in reading a chapter each of classic children's novel *The Phantom Tollbooth*.

The community literacy project has been running for three years now to ease the transition from primary to

secondary school and to give all Year 7 arrivals a collective starting point.

Usually pupils are handed a pack including the book but this year while schools are disrupted the whole project is going online. The Academy will be hosting the readings on its website for the 11-year-olds to enjoy over the summer.

## Covid-19 95<sup>th</sup>

By Daphne Chamberlain  
Now is not the time to have a birthday,  
Not even if you're 95.  
No parties, hugging, kissing.  
Remember social distancing.  
Thank God you're still alive.

But Eula is a lady of resource.  
So she lets the good times roll,  
And there's laughter in her garden  
As her neighbour shares the birthday cake,  
Each standing at the end of a pole.

## The weather mocks us

By Lottie Millett  
The weather mocks us.  
The worry we held -  
Will we be able to walk on the beach  
Have drinks  
Play games  
Enjoy the sun?

Pointless worries  
And pointless planning

For now we stay inside  
And look out  
Imagining what we would be doing

Celebrating  
Drinking  
And dancing  
Speeches and good food

I imagine myself twirling round  
in the dress that I made  
Just for me

Instead  
I type this poem  
Wishing we were married  
Longing to hug my friends and family  
Itching to drink and to dance  
To eat  
And to laugh  
To celebrate.

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