

Chairman's Introduction

Welcome to the spring edition of our CRS newsletter.

In this edition we have accounts of our most recent social events as well as the current state of play regarding the estate and its managing agents. There is also information about the most recent Police and Community Together (PACT) meeting as well as a CRS meeting with Better Streets for Birmingham

We look forward to seeing many of you at our AGM. Just as a reminder this will be held on Thursday March 12th at Edgbaston High School for Girls on Westbourne Road. Doors open at 7.00pm and proceedings commence at 7.30. Our speaker this year is architect Glenn Howells who will speak on "Houses in Edgbaston". Glenn is a multi-award-winning Birmingham-based architect living on the Calthorpe Estate whose major buildings and projects include Paradise Birmingham, Royal Wharf, London City Island, English National Ballet and the Bramall Music Building.

I hope you enjoy this edition; the next will be in June 2026.

CRS Social Events

CRS has hosted two well-received social events in recent months.



Christmas Poems - Poetry is making a significant comeback according to publishers and trendsetters that we are in Calthorpe Residents Society (!), we thought we'd hold a poetry evening to test the hypothesis. Thus, with a mix of classic and contemporary poems we covered Thomas Hardy's *A Darkling* *Thrush*, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* by W B Yeats and *Facts of Farewell* by Christopher Southgate. Effie Richards gave a marvellous rendition of *King John's Christmas*, complete with crown for the King John parts and David Ashton read from a *Child's Christmas in Wales* by Dylan Thomas. He informed us that he had once met President Jimmy Carter who told him one of the most gratifying successes of his presidency was to persuade Margaret Thatcher to put a memorial to Dylan Thomas in Poets Corner in Westminster Abbey. Delicious snacks were plentiful with just one reprimand for serving cheddar cheese with Christmas cake rather than Wensleydale, but a most convivial evening was had by all.



Visit to Lapworth Museum - A group of CRS members was given an exclusive tour of the University of Birmingham's Lapworth Museum on February 19th. Director Jon Clatworthy and his team not only showed the group around the rich collection of geological and palaeontological specimens, they also offered an experience of "behind the scenes" specimens including the famous "Dudley Bug" and the decidedly odd find of a crocodile's skull in Selly Oak. Included in the extensive archives were lecture notes and drawings from Professor Charles Lapworth showing his groundbreaking discoveries regarding the geology of these islands. This collection is second only to Darwin's work as a collection of scientific papers in the UK. In addition, we were able to see the work of a later Head of the Geology Department, Professor Fred Shotton whose work included the geological mapping of the Normandy landing sites in 1944. Time flew by and many of the group made the decision to return again soon! Finally, CRS made a donation of £50 to the museum which will doubtless be put to good use.



Our **next social event** will be a talk on Shakespeare at Harborne Academy Tuesday 28th April 6.30 pm - 8.00 pm by Calthorpe residents Russell Jackson, Professor Emeritus, University of Birmingham and Patricia Lennox, lecturer, New York University. This will be an informative, but not heavily academic discussion of Shakespeare's presence in Birmingham's history. The story is told through two segments: first the Birmingham Library's extensive collection of Shakespeare material and their "Everything to Everybody" programme that took the library's edition of the First Folio to 16 local sites during 2020-2022; second Shakespeare

on the Birmingham stage in productions by Barry Jackson's Repertory Company (1913-1948) and at the Rep Studio in 1988, with Kenneth Branagh in three plays directed by Derek Jacobi, Judi Dench, and Geraldine McEwan. Booking will open after the AGM on March 12th. Please go [here](#).

Update on issues relating to management of the Calthorpe Estate

CRS continues to co-ordinate the concerns and questions from our communities regarding numerous issues including the performance of our largest Managing Agents, Principle Estates Management (PEM), who is nearing the end of its second year in charge. A growing network of representatives from the 21 service charge areas is being established but the lead, Peter Wall, would be very keen to add more and to broaden the strength of representation across the entire Calthorpe Estate.

Unfortunately, the relationship with PEM is not developing as we would have hoped. There are problems surrounding the transparency of the work undertaken by several suppliers and, clearly, residents are not fully confident that we receive good value for the monies expended on our behalf. Sadly, Calthorpe Estates and their lawyers have still not been able to extract from FirstPort the remaining historic accounts and financial data from the last 3 of the 21 service charge areas is being established. However, Preet Gill MP has been very much involved in putting parliamentary pressure on First Port and The Property Institute (TPI) who are supposed to monitor the performance of their members (such as FirstPort). Calthorpe Estates has agreed that residents representatives will be able to present Calthorpe's Lawyers with a list of items that we consider should be included in the final claim by Calthorpe (on behalf of us) for the chronic breach of contract by First Port in their failure to transfer all our financial data plus accounts as required, on or before 29th June 2024, as well as other failures of their performance during the last 12 months of their contract.

PACT (Police and Community Together)

The meeting on Friday February 20th, 2026, at Edgbaston Golf Club was attended by three representatives of the local neighbourhood policing team, Councillors Deirdre Alden and Matt Bennett plus 20 or so members of the public.

After a brief opening, during which Sgt Woodhall explained that Edgbaston and Harborne are now twinned areas for neighbourhood policing and that "crime has been falling over the past 12 months in the area", the meeting was opened to the floor. Sadly, the statement that crime was falling was not backed up by any figures at all and later in the meeting was contradicted by a couple of statements that petty crime was increasing!

Topics discussed included static and mobile cameras during which two things emerged. One is that the police no longer support or monitor static cameras; these are operated by the Council, although it is not clear if they are actually monitored at all! Secondly, mobile cameras can only be placed at one site for a fixed time before they must be moved! The fixed time was not defined!

Suspicious behaviours were reported in a few different areas including Wellington Road and Richmond Hill Road. It was thought that the behaviours may relate to the intent to break into vehicles and/or to the use of illicit substances. Reporting via 101 was suggested if the issue was "live", 999 if there was a direct threat or via WMNow. The importance of crime reporting was underlined time and again during the meeting.

In answer to concerns about speeding in a variety of locations it was suggested that the current community speedwatch acts as a deterrent but that it could and should be augmented by regular (say once every 8 weeks) deployment of either a trained officer with pro-laser equipment or a speed trap van. Either of these would encompass officers who can issue enforcement notices.

Illicit Drug Use/Dealing and use of gas canisters. Specific concerns were raised regarding possible drug dealing at sites including the top of Richmond Hill Road (near The White Swan). It was agreed that the neighbourhood team (who may have their work hours extended) would try to patrol occasionally but that otherwise live reports of suspicions should be submitted via 101. The widespread disposal of gas canisters across the estate was noted and again it was suggested that reports should be made via 101 or WMNow.

Crime Prevention and Reporting. On this occasion it was suggested that home CCTV systems could be effective as a deterrent to crime although no evidence was presented. There was considerable emphasis on the reporting of crime (although some scepticism was offered from the floor!).

It was suggested that everyone should consider joining [WMNow](#) which is a free email messaging service from WM Police. Members of the public can sign up to receive updates straight into their inbox about crimes, police activity and other local news. In addition, people can let the police know what topics they would wish to hear about including vehicle crime, burglaries, or anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood. People can also choose to receive updates from some of our partners including the fire service, Report Fraud, and the local council.

Otherwise as above, 999 should be called for live incidents that pose a direct threat or 101 for other incidents that are live, such as observation of suspicious behaviours. Finally, it was agreed that the police would host some drop-in sessions at sites such as Morrison's at which members of the public would have the opportunity to speak directly with police and air their concerns.

Traffic

On 2nd February, CRS met with representatives of [Better Streets for Birmingham](#), a community interest company dedicated to promoting road safety and encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling. Better Streets engages with the relevant authorities to respond to consultations and make recommendations on new schemes, and we clearly have common interests in trying to improve road safety. (Mat MacDonald, former chair of Better Streets, is now the West Midlands Road Safety Commissioner.) Of particular interest to CRS is Birmingham City Council's recent commitment to the **Healthy Streets** approach. The geographic focus of the new policy is on neighbourhoods rather than wards and, rather than the traditional "traffic calming" measures, this initiative takes a holistic view of how to improve our streets, considering air pollution, noise etc. as well as risk of accidents. It incorporates mitigations such as trees, street furniture, reduced road widths, etc. It is the intention that residents are closely involved in assessing the health of their own streets and in design of mitigations. The first neighbourhoods to be targeted will be some of the most deprived areas of the city (East Birmingham and Handsworth), which means that Edgbaston is unlikely to be included in the early work, but since transport between the city centre and some of the more problematic areas runs through Edgbaston it is an area which cannot be excluded for long. We will keep you informed! We agreed to work together with Better Streets, to coordinate campaigns and responses to consultations and to share information on problem streets and junctions.

The agreed traffic calming measures at the junctions of Norfolk/Westfield and Carpenter/Wheeleys have still not been started, although they are now promised for this financial year. The Council has also still to make the changes proposed following the fatality at Frederick Road and the subsequent inquest. A similar inquest following the fatality at Augustus/Chad Road has been delayed because the driver involved is to be tried in relation to the incident.

What's On

There is no excuse to forget Mother's Day on March 15th with local restaurants Chapter, The Highfield, and The Physician all offering Mothering Sunday Menus.

March also sees [Chapter](#) continue with their evening special offers (Fish and chips Tuesday, Curry Club Thursdays and Steak and Wine Fridays). Also Friday April 24th sees them hosting a Sporting Lunch with Guest Speaker Stuart Pearce.

March also sees [The Highfield](#) launch its new Spring Menu on the March 18th and at the end of the month, live music will be on at [The Physician](#) with Hokum and Hooch playing there on Friday March 27th.

Spring also sees our three local gardens burst into life with the [Birmingham Botanical Gardens](#) and [Winterbourne House and Gardens](#) both playing host to a packed programme of events and activities, covering yoga, music, arts and talks and walks. At the Botanical Gardens two events in particular caught our eye, the BCU Future Writers Trail which is on from March to mid-May and the British Sign Language Tour on March 14th. Whilst at Winterbourne if you have an interest in printing the following events will be of interest to you – Screenprint and Linocut workshops on the March 31st and April 12th respectively and on April 13th they are hosting a talk headed 'Baskerville 250'.

Meanwhile at [Martineau Gardens](#), Spring sees the reemergence of their bees with the Gardens offering an 'Introduction to Beekeeping' Course over the weekend of April 25th and 26th as well as a 'Beekeeping Safari' in May.

For those members who have been missing out on their Artisan Markets a reminder that the University of Birmingham hosts an Artisan market on the University Square during term time on Tuesdays. The next two being on March 31st and April 28th. In addition, the Edgbaston Artisan Market returns to Greenfield Crescent on Saturday April 11th.

For music enthusiasts, the [University of Birmingham](#) holds weekly informal concerts (miniBEAST) with electronic music curated by staff students and guests to which all are welcome. The next three will be on Wednesdays 11th, 18th and 25th March from 11.30 to 12.30 in the dome at The Bramall Music Building.

And finally,

We hope that you have enjoyed this newsletter and found items of interest. Please let us know what you think and also contact us with your news and events so that we can publicise them to fellow members. The best way for you to contact us is through the [Contact form](#) on our website, or use the [email address](#) where contact form submissions are collated. All communications will be acknowledged, but it should be noted that detailed responses will only be provided to paid up members of CRS.

Our next editions will be published on June 5, September 25 and December 4

We look forward to seeing you at our AGM on March 12th!