



Warning from bag snatch victim

By Janet Maitland

When Lydia Burman drew up at the temporary traffic lights on Squires Lane on 18 March, she was in the middle of a busy day, taking her two children to their after-school swimming lesson. The last thing she expected was to be robbed.

Suddenly the passenger door was wrenched open and a youth snatched her handbag. The thief ran off down a nearby alleyway, chased by Lydia. "I didn't think about it, I just ran after him," said Lydia, "but I didn't catch him." No one has yet been arrested.

Irreplaceable

The bag contained not only Lydia's phone, money, cheque book and cards but also her passport and another cheque book belonging to a charity of which she is the treasurer. "All these items have taken weeks to replace," she said. "I also had

to pay £300 to have my locks changed because my house keys were in the bag. And I've lost completely irreplaceable things like my address book and photos of my children. They were really disturbed by the whole experience.

"The police told me they had been aware of this activity for some time," said Lydia. "But there were no warning signs or cameras and I hadn't seen any publicity which might have acted as a deterrent or helped to catch the thief.

"I'd like my experience to act as a warning to ARCHER readers.

Make sure your car doors are always locked, particularly at traffic lights or in a traffic jam."

A police spokesman said that during February, March and April there were four other similar incidents but none was by the temporary traffic lights. Two were several hundred yards away and two were on the other side of the A1000. The patch is not one of the top 15 crime hotspots.

If you have any information about this crime, please ring police on 0300 123 1212. If you want to remain anonymous, please call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Help children to carry forks, not knives

By Susan Bennett

A request to bring a group of well-behaved young members of Muswell Hill's Hollickwood School Gardening Club, many of whom "have never actually SEEN a garden" to visit our garden led us on a series of unimaginable adventures.



Ready for Action. Photo by Earl Hyde.

Aged four to eleven, they arrived at our garden in Alexandra Park Road, N10, bearing gifts including hand-drawn garden designs and huge bags of spinach they had just harvested. They had so few tools they had to take turns digging.

Recycling tools

After they left, I discovered the Tools Shed, a garden tool recycling project run by the Conservation Foundation, which reclaims unused spades, forks, trowels, shears and hoes for repair in prison workshops,

contributing to prisoners' training and rehabilitation. The spruced-up tools are given to schools and community projects.

Inspirational experience

Brilliant! I registered the school. Next thing, along with Linden Groves, a garden historian and the parent who runs the gardening club, we were invited on a VIP Tour of HMP Wandsworth's workshops. It was an inspirational experience which resulted, after some persuasive networking by Linden, in the prison workshops constructing seating, pergolas and planters for the school playground.

We left with a bundle of tools that have been put to good use. The children have won prizes in all categories entered at the local horticultural shows.

The success of the Gardening Club at Hollickwood has inspired the whole school. Teachers, parents, members of the local community enjoy working together, and the results so far are really original and encouraging. I hope the experience will give the children a passion that will grow throughout their lives, and that they will never be tempted to ruin their chances by carrying knives.

Unwanted, broken, old hand tools can be dropped off at our National Gardens Scheme openings at 5 St Regis Close, Alexandra Park Road, N10, on Sundays 27 June and 25 July from 2-7pm. More details from www.ngs.org.uk and www.conservationfoundation.co.uk

Skylark soars above disability

By Diana Cormack

On Good Friday shoppers at Budgens were greeted with hot cross buns, courtesy of the store, and cup cakes made by Sippy Azizollah to accompany her fund raising efforts. In just four hours customers at the supermarket on Viceroy Parade donated £140 to the charity Skylark.

Skylark provides counselling and psychotherapy for people affected by disability, offering a confidential service available to any disabled person, carer or relative who needs help with their emotional problems. It is not part of Social Services or the NHS but is a service of Disability in Action in the Borough of Barnet. Counsellors familiar with disability issues are trained to listen and understand problems such as depression, isolation, difficulties in relationships and fear of the future.

One client who is having counselling told *THE ARCHER*: "I have felt liberated by facing old issues. I'd become stuck in a circle of old patterns, but with the help of my counsellor I've



Sippy collecting in Budgens. Photo by Diana Cormack

found the chink in that circle and I feel empowered by the sessions I have at Skylark."

After an initial meeting, which is free of charge, clients who wish to continue with the

service are matched to a counsellor for weekly one-to-one private, confidential sessions. For further details call in confidence 020 8343 8001 or email skylark@dabb.inweb.co.uk

Hospice group needs helpers

The Northern Heights Support Group, which promotes the North London Hospice in East Finchley, Muswell Hill and adjacent areas, is looking for more volunteer helpers.

Last year, the Group raised £20,000 for the Hospice. The Group organises events, and meets three to four times a year. Contact Peter Kraushar

on 020 8883 4736 if you are interested.

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