



Safety fears: Pacey's owner Ghazanfar Mehmood. Aftermath: The damage caused to the counter area at Pacey's after the burglar, centre, had stolen cigarettes and the till.

Five businesses targeted in night-time raids

By John Lawrence

Five businesses on the High Road in East Finchley were targeted by burglars in just one week with night-time raiders cutting through security shutters and in one case making off with more than £12,000 worth of cigarettes.

The break-ins and attempted raids are just one more headache for hard-working local traders already under pressure from rising rents and falling customer spending.

Worst-hit was Pacey's newsagents, which was broken into at around 4am on Friday 28 July. *The Archer* was shown CCTV footage of the burglary lasting little more than five minutes. A masked raider wearing a head torch cut a square out of the shop's metal shutters before

smashing a pane of glass in the front door to climb through, setting off the shop's burglar alarm in the process.

He then used a crowbar to prise open the shop's cigarette cabinet and swept the entire contents, worth more than £12,000, into a huge builder's waste bag. On his way out he pulled the till off the counter and took it with him. Luckily it contained no cash. Police alerted by the alarm company arrived shortly afterwards to find the damage.

Traders feel unsafe

Pacey's owner Ghazanfar Mehmood has run the business for 23 years and told us he has never felt as unsafe as he does now. "I was in shock. We should feel safe with metal shutters across the front of the shop but if they can cut through those what more can we do?" he said.

"Our customers are very supportive but a lot of us in the High Road feel insecure and we are all struggling. I just want others like me to be aware

and to take all the precautions they can with cash and valuable items."

Local businesses targeted

On the same night as the Pacey's raid, there were signs of attempted break-ins at three other businesses along the same side of the High Road. A week earlier, front door glass at the Premier convenience store was smashed and a quantity of cigarettes was stolen.

Cigarettes are an obvious target for criminal gangs

because they are high-volume and high-value and can be sold on quickly. East Finchley was last targeted in late July and early August 2021 when Ella Food Centre on the High Road and King Street Food and Wine were broken into within two weeks of each other. Business owners can find Met Police security advice at: www.met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/keeping-business-safe-from-crime/keep-burglars-out-business/

An enchanted garden with its own rooms to enjoy

By Maxine Klein

My friend Rachel, with whom I go to sculpture classes (the significance of which will become apparent) complained that her husband Jeremy spends all his summer evenings in his garden, not coming in until 10pm. Being a gardener myself I was sympathetic to his needs although I don't put in those sort of hours.

He was, of course, preparing for his Open Garden which was in July in Twyford Road. As I was going to be away for the opening I was granted a preview by Rachel and I immediately understood why he had needed to work so hard.

His garden is divided into separate 'rooms', each with a different look and feel. At the front there is a sunny area which is vibrant with flowers of many different colours and shapes. It has a certain wild look to it, as weeding and maintaining a manicured appearance is so last year. This year we are all accommodating a certain amount of 'wild flowers', as we now call



Natural beauty: The glory of Rachel and Jeremy's garden in Twyford Avenue

weeds, in order to attract birds and insects.

Walking through this area there is then a dry garden that is designed to need little or no water with drought-resistant plants. It is covered in gravel and decorated with Rachel's sculptures, various follies and terracotta pots with plants in them. Rachel calls this the Pompeii garden.

Further on is a shaded area with woodland plants and trees and a special bench that is hundreds of years old. There was

even room for a little kitchen garden and a greenhouse used for making cuttings, many of which were on sale.

Visitors welcome

It was a magical experience. Each area is a surprise and delight. Jeremy and Rachel would be happy to show people their garden after the open day if they make an appointment and give a £5 donation to the charities that they are supporting. I would strongly recommend it. Email Rachel, if interested, at averly54@gmail.com.

From summer events to autumn plans

Much of this summer might not have felt very summery, but that hasn't stopped members of North London U3A from getting out and about on city walks, gallery visits, arts courses and more.

North London U3A Chair Michael Johns said: "We've been delighted to meet and connect with many people from the local area during July and August, and we've enjoyed extending an invitation to members of the public, offering retired people a varied assortment of one-off events."

And in September, North London U3A will be extending another invitation, this time to an Open Morning showcas-

ing their regular year-round activities. The event offers the opportunity for visitors to find out what's on offer this autumn, and to chat to existing members and organisers.

Anyone who is semi-retired or retired is very welcome to come along to the event, which takes place on 11 September from 10am to 11.30pm at St Margaret's Church, Victoria Avenue, Central Finchley. Find out more on the website: www.nlu3a.org.uk

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