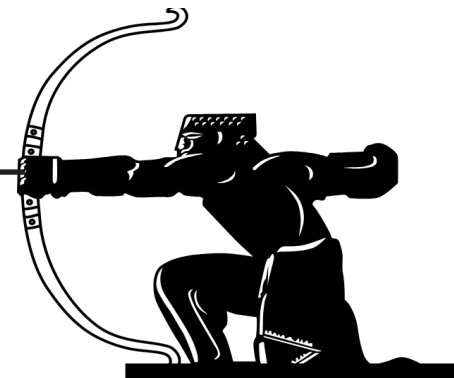


# The Archer

Local News is our Aim



February 2025 No. 370

ISSN 1361-3952

Delivered free to 10,000 homes and businesses across East Finchley

## Stay on your guard against phone snatch bike gangs

By David Melsome

**Commuters and pedestrians in East Finchley are being urged to be on their guard against gangs of thieves who are riding into the area on electric bikes to steal mobile phones from unsuspecting users in the street.**



*Out in the open: Be alert on your phone*

Several real-time alerts were raised on social media last month as people reported seeing robberies taking place or being attempted, two of the incidents being near East Finchley tube station and close to the Iceland store in the High Road. Met Police say there were a total of 20 mobile phone thefts reported to them in the last three months of 2024, four in October, nine in November and seven in December. At the time of going to press, there had been one theft logged in January but there are likely to have been others unreported.

There are locations where phone users are particularly vulnerable: the tube station has had nine incidents, the crossroads at the junction of the High Road and Fortis Green has had four, Market Place has had two and Oak Lane has had two.

### Travelling gangs

Jan Lovell, of the Met's Safer Neighbourhood Team in East Finchley, said the offenders were young males travelling up the A1000 from the Camden area. Often riding electric bikes, dressed in black and hooded, they can arrive, snatch devices from the hands of their victims and disappear before they can be stopped or recognised. One exception was an incident widely reported on social media on Thursday 9 January when two men were seen at around 7pm stealing

phones in and around the car park outside the tube station.

The father of one of the victims was said to have chased one of the thieves and pinned him to the ground, although he suffered a stab wound in the leg in the scuffle that followed. Police were called to the scene and made an arrest.

Jan Lovell urged anyone whose phone is stolen or who sees suspicious activity to report it immediately to police on 101 so that officers can respond if possible and also build up a picture of where the criminal activity is happening.

### Protect yourself

Most importantly, we can all reduce our chances of becoming victims by taking simple precautions. Keep your phone in your bag or pocket while walking, using earbuds or headphones if you want to make a call while walking. Be aware of your surroundings at all times and if you do need to take your phone out try to do so in the security of a shop or an enclosed doorway.

As one Facebook user said: "Please warn others to be aware and keep their phones out of



## Ice to see you, to see you ice

**There was a chance for some impromptu skating in Cherry Tree Wood during one of the cold snaps we had in January when the park's flooded grass turned to a glassy sheet of ice. Walkers and their dogs were seen picking their way across the hard surface, keeping their feet clean for a change where they'd normally be ankle-deep in mud and water.**

Photo by Nadia Savvopoulou

sight!"

Phone snatching itself is not a new phenomenon but numbers seem to be spiking thanks to the availability of fast-moving bikes and a growing market for reselling stolen phones, often after they have been wiped and reset by criminal factories in Asia according to national media reports.

## Call for Archer reporters

Could you be a reporter for The Archer? We are looking for people to join our team to research and write news articles on topics important to people living and working in East Finchley. We aim to be balanced and non-political in all our reporting. We are all volunteers and the

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role can be done in any spare time you have each month. We are happy to offer guidance to new writers. Experience in

writing or journalism would be a bonus. For more details, please email our team: [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk). Thank you.