

## **ALISON'S STORY**

Last year, my friend Christine and I persuaded our respective husbands to babysit our children for a day so that we could have a whole day Christmas shopping – a real girls' day out!

So on that fateful day, up early, children settled, we then set off into town with the objective to “do” all the shops, buy presents, have a good lunch etc. The early start was a good idea as the shops soon became very busy, everyone bustling around, a great atmosphere, everything going well. Lunch was not as leisurely as we had hoped, everyone squeezing past the tables with their carrier bags, staff trying to serve as many people as possible.

Later in the afternoon, laden with bags, a final stop for that last present, then disaster. I discovered my purse gone which included all my credit cards, the family photo, driving licence and all the other very personal items one keeps. I then realised that my bag had been open when I went to find my purse. The sneak thief had struck and although all the shop staff and security people were all very helpful, the day was ruined and also the next few days cancelling all my cards, arranging to get a new driving licence and so on.

Fortunately, little cash was stolen as the thief had struck at the end of the day. Then to crown all, my friend discovered that one of her carrier bags was missing, probably stolen when we put our bags down at lunch.

I wish I had taken my dad's advice to be extra vigilant at this particular time. I learnt the hard way”.

So please be careful when you go shopping. Make sure you are not an easy target.

Here are a few simple rules:

### **Money and Plastic Cards**

Don't make it easy for pickpockets, carry your wallet in an inside pocket, preferably one which can be fastened but not your back pocket.

Never let your handbag out of your sight. Keep hold of it with the clasp or zip shut and the opening facing inwards if possible so that the thief cannot steal your purse.

### **Mobile Phones**

Theft of mobile phones is on the increase. Keep your phone out of sight whether in the street or in a restaurant.

Always be aware of the people around you in a busy area.

## **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

Looking at all the Christmas trees lit up in house windows is a splendid sight that helps to brighten up our lives during the dull winter nights.

However, a little care should be taken as to where you site your tree so that potential thieves cannot see into your room and all the presents around the tree.

It is a great temptation to the burglar if he can see what is available before he breaks in.

Make sure your home is secure when you are out. If you will not be back until after dark it is a good idea to have a light come on and/or the TV or radio. So that your house appears to be occupied. There are now many switches or light sensitive switches that can be plugged into your usual socket. These are readily available and not too expensive – a good investment as they last a long time.

**TO FIND OUT MORE** about Neighbourhood Watch and ways to protect your home and property, visit our website: [www.nwatchharrogate.org.uk](http://www.nwatchharrogate.org.uk) or you can e mail us on: [info@nwatchharrogate.org.uk](mailto:info@nwatchharrogate.org.uk). You can also contact the Police Community Safety Officer during business hours on 01423 539347 or any member of your local Neighbourhood Policing Team.