

Discourses on women and shoplifting:
a critical analysis of why
female crime mythologies past and present
operate to legitimate the incompatibility between
female gender roles and the idea of women
as active agents of crime

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December, 1999

Merchandise is the opium of the people

Situationist graffiti

May 1968

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at what has been said and what can be said about women and shoplifting.

The first section introduces and discusses oral history as a method and includes original oral history material through the testimony of Shirley Pitts, who lived in London between 1934-1992 and who earned her living as a professional thief. The purpose of this oral history material, and discussion of the oral history method, is not to introduce a 'hidden' or 'subjugated' truth about the 'essential' nature of women and shoplifting into the debate. Instead, using a methodology associated with Michel Foucault's I Pierre Riviere¹, this oral history material is discussed in order to understand what insights 'unofficial' discourses can offer about women and shoplifting. This approach attempts to ensure '*through the re-appearance of this disqualified knowledge that criticism performs its work*'.²

The second section takes up discussion raised in response to the oral transcript of Shirley Pitts about wider issues concerning women, shopping, consumerism and identity. It investigates why official knowledge about women and shopping as well as women and shoplifting has often operated to conceal the idea of women as active agents of crime. The source material for this section of the investigation is intentionally diverse and examines a number of discourses - including those that are historical, sociological, psychological, psychoanalytic, criminological, consumerist, anthropological and media led etc. - in order to reveal an incompatibility between narratives of 'femininity' and 'criminality' in both historical and contemporary discourse. It is during these discussions that theoretical ideas about discourse, associated with Michel Foucault, are further mobilised to draw attention to silences, contradictions and other problems of information about shoplifting. Consequently, the critical focus herein leads towards consideration of why female crime mythologies, originally linked to an inappropriate model of human nature, construct women as sad,

mad or bad. Such mythologies have been reiterated in many diverse ways so that even contemporary criminal statistics are not always helpful when trying to refute inappropriate mythologising of the activities of women who shoplift.

Lastly, it is the intention of this thesis to use critical investigations of different types of discourse to consider not only women's relationship to shoplifting, but the relationship of theft to what Guy Debord describes as 'the society of spectacle'³. This is because overall, the thesis argues that issues about consumer tactics and visual seduction connect the behaviour of women shoppers and women shoplifters in ways that have been overlooked by official discourses.

Endnotes.

¹ FOUCAULT, M., I Pierre Riviere, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother...A Case of Patricide in the 19th Century, New York, Pantheon Books (A Division of Random House), 1975.

² FOUCAULT, M., Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writing, 1977-1984, New York, Routledge, 1990, p.29.

³ DEBORD, GUY, Society of the Spectacle, Detroit, Black and Red, 1983, first published in 1967.

INTRODUCTION

What Is Shoplifting?

Why Is The Study Of Shopping Significant To It?

*'An Act of lifting or stealing: in older use, a shift, or trick...'*¹

The word 'lift' originated as slang, and now operates as a euphemism to describe the action of stealing. It has been in common usage since the sixteenth century, although sounds old-fashioned now, except when describing the action of thieving from shops, as in 'to shoplift'. Yet the word 'lift' warrants scrutiny in its own right, not least because it is a rather curious metaphor. The idea of lifting something also connotes the idea of making something rise, raised or levitated, and implies a magical action rather than suggesting a criminal account. When juxtaposed alongside the word 'shop' – as in 'to shoplift' or 'shoplifter' – if taken literally there is almost a surreal semantic implication in the word that conjures up a picture of a person with the ability to levitate whole commercial buildings and the goods in them, rather than of someone who sneaks out of a shop with something that doesn't belong to them. The history of the term, described in detail in Section Two, Chapter One, is worth reviewing because there are reasons underlying why the metaphor of the shoplifter has rather operated to conceal or cushion the role of the thief. Nevertheless, 'shoplifting' is the word most commonly used today to describe 'the action of stealing from a shop'² (or other retail outlets including department stores) and certainly the primary focus of this investigation is the crime of shoplifting and the relationship of women to it. Shoplifting is such an everyday crime, committed by vast numbers of people - men, women and children of all ages and social classes³, the vast majority of whom, it would appear never get prosecuted for it - that it is difficult to know where to start research. Some surveys suggest as many as one in 8.5 'ordinary' shoppers steal things⁴, which leads me to suggest that the study of shopping, rather than crime or deviant behaviour, is of particular relevance to this

thesis. In brief, the study of shopping has as much to tell us about shoplifting as police records. Yet, with a few notable exceptions⁵, very little research on shopping addresses issues about shoplifting. Instead, information about shoplifting is more often found in Home Office statistics, criminological theory, media reportage, dramatic film fictions and occasionally in other sources such as historical or psychoanalytic writing. This emphasis suggests that shoplifting is deemed to concern 'deviance' or 'dysfunction' rather than it being construed as the logic of 'thrifty shopping', what Kraut has described as '*the acquisition of goods at the minimum cost*'.⁶ Shoplifting though illegal can be seen in many ways as a logical response to the discourse of 'have now, pay later' consumerism. The rise of virtual money in the form of credit cards has served to heighten the illusion that no real money need change hands in order to possess material goods. The breakdown of the old fashioned systems of exchange together with the disappearance of personal service has meant that shoplifting may be seen as simply extending the idea of self-service. This location of shoplifting as connected intrinsically to the history, as well as the logic of, shopping presents a problem for academic investigation. The overwhelming criminological focus on the crime of shoplifting often avoids discussion of the consumer context that created space for this specific form of theft to emerge in the first place. Rarely do we see shoplifting discussed in relation to the history of shopping or from a perspective which suggests that profit incentives or accelerated consumer messages as well as individual thieves, bear some responsibility for the steadily rising statistics on shoplifting.

This does not mean that all work on shoplifting is without value. Many sociological and criminological studies have provided incisive critiques of theories of deviance⁷ and these are discussed in Section Two. Some official studies, as this investigation reveals, have gone beyond a narrow focus and have attempted to examine the consumer connection. They have also looked at resistance in the voices of those involved in crime⁸, or in the voices of those who have been in prison specifically for stealing from shops⁹, or of those outside of prison who, with the safety of anonymity, confess to having participated but to never having been caught for 'teenage' or other 'random'

acts of shoplifting. Yet when looking at such material, it quickly becomes clear that to understand the full meaning of shoplifting, as a form and process of contemporary western consumer cultural life, research should address questions about the general level and extent of shoplifting today by all those involved (rather than just the 'criminals'). It should also investigate the study of shopping as well as the sort of discourses we utilise to interpret and measure it. However, the study of 'shopping' is still in its infancy and has been identified as problematic by critics such as Daniel Miller who have argued that current research on shopping is rather too theoretical.¹⁰

Despite Miller's harsh and not always justified criticisms, there are many empirical (rather than theoretical) accounts of shopping. For example, empirical studies about the interior design of the department store are well documented. Books like The Bon Marché : Bourgeois Culture and The Department Store 1869-1920 (1981)¹¹ and many others, written primarily by American scholars, have looked at consumer culture, labour relations and modern business methods as well as at the experience of shopping and the shopper. Studies that directly address the experience of shopping like Allison Adburgham's Shops and Shopping 1800-1914: Where and in What Manner the Well-dressed Englishwoman Bought her Clothes, (1964)¹² appear in the late post-war period. Similarly, newer academic research, specifically on the subject of the experience of shopping, emerged in the late 1980s, including writing by authors such as Daniel Miller (1981, 1997, 1998)¹³, Rosalind Williams (1982)¹⁴, Susan Porter Benson (1986)¹⁵, Elizabeth Wilson (1992)¹⁶ and Frank Mort (1996)¹⁷ among others. This work, which emanated from across the disciplines of the late 1990s rather than coming directly from cultural studies or sociology, offers a genuinely cross-disciplinary approach. Indeed, Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell, who recently edited a collection of essays called The Shopping Experience (1997), note that 'shopping' as a popular research topic is a recent and post modern trend '*not only within sociology but also in other disciplines*'¹⁸. Mica Nava (1997), writing in the same collection, makes a similar point but goes on to add that:

*'Questions raised by feminism and the culture of consumption revealed a surprising paucity of theoretical and historical work - a phenomenon which itself required explanation.'*¹⁹

Arguments such as those referred to above, present an implicit rebuttal of Daniel Miller's position. Certainly the correctness of Mica Nava's observations about 'paucity' is borne out by the criminological studies of women and *shoplifting* in the consumer context, which offer much empirical data but little wide cultural analysis of the implications of such data. The surveys on shopping that are available reveal how shopping has changed to become a leisure pursuit not only for women but for the whole family, an aesthetic activity as well as one of exchange value.²⁰ But very little research has been directed towards the way shopping affects the possibilities for theft, except to make the general argument that self service promotes theft as well as profit. What the existing research does reveal is that women still make up the bulk of consumer purchasers even if, as Frank Mort has identified, more men are shopping than ever before not least because libidinalisation of consumption has meant that shopping is seen as appropriate response to all our desires. Given the centrality of shopping in women's lives, it is no surprise that shoplifting is a crime that is associated with women, even though criminological evidence suggests that nearly as many men as women are convicted of shoplifting each year.

Shoplifting is obviously affected by changes to the form and processes of hunting for a bargain; the idea that *'by shopping the wrong way the shoplifter gets it right'*.²¹ Elaine Abelson's wonderful nineteenth century study When Ladies Go a Thieving (1989), and articles on nineteenth century shoplifters and/or kleptomaniacs by Patricia O'Brien (1983)²², Louise Kaplan (1993)²³ Leslie Camhi (1993)²⁴, Cecilia Fredrickson (1997) and Adela Pinch (1998)²⁵, are discussed in Section Two and are among the few accounts that have documented issues relating to the connections between the history of shopping and the emergence of shoplifting. There is however no one source covering shoplifting where this newer work, which is often historical in focus, is scrutinised with

the same rigour adopted towards criminological writing on shoplifting. Overall, there are very few writers like Cecilia Fredriksson (1997) who make connections between shoplifting and consumerism. Fredriksson argues that:

*'Shoplifting as an institution and a cultural category is extremely important in department store culture. As a step in our training to be a good consumer, we need the counter-image of incorrect consumption. Incorrect consumption also legitimates its opposite - the right way to consume. To become a moral and civilised consumer, you must be aware of the negative counterpart, and shoplifting plays a useful role in this conceptual world.'*²⁶

It seems appropriate to investigate what Cecilia Fredriksson terms 'incorrect consumption', in order to discover whether the study of shoplifting has anything to tell us about consumerism and material culture. In particular, it is necessary to investigate whether or not shoplifting can tell us anything more significant about shopping than the official accounts mentioned.

Methodology

Before research as described above can begin, it is perhaps appropriate to review methodological issues. Difficulties emerge when trying to review official literature about shopping, or what Foucault terms 'discourses' about knowledge²⁷ of incorrect consumption via shoplifting. These difficulties concern questions about interpretation and mediation. The recognition common to post structural analysis, that there is no undistorted, colourless or objective standpoint and that even scientific 'truth' can be analysed to reveal ideology at work, brings with it methodological problems. It raises questions about how best to approach the research of shoplifting as 'incorrect shopping'. Indeed, the behaviour of women has often been misunderstood because of the assumptions about female gender buried within philosophy and other belief systems

that operate to *construct* rather than *represent* behaviour. This point has been demonstrated by Foucault who has presented case studies, of both men and women, who have been virtually *created by discourse*. Indeed, in the book I, Pierre Riviere edited by Foucault,²⁸ there is a memoir by Riviere and a collection of essays edited (but not all written) by Foucault, which use this written confession as a text to analyse the understanding of the historical period in question. The essays also highlight ways in which both the memoir and the other case material included in the book pose questions about definition, interpretation and knowledge. Riviere was sentenced to death in 1835 after having confessed to the multiple murder of his own parental family in the village of Faucterie, France, where he lived in the nineteenth century. The methodology framing this book is useful to anyone engaged in research, particularly feminist scholars who have a vested interest in questioning the partial nature of knowledge. The point made over and over again in the essays in the I, Pierre Riviere collection is that information is not neutral, and that it can only be understood in terms of a historical context which often involves the power relations implicit in the thinking of the period:

*'There is evidence of this over the ages in the archives, where one has to read between the lines to grasp beneath the discourse of the master (overlord, bailiff, notary, doctor, judge, tax collector, policeman and the like) what was being said and what was being carefully obliterated.'*²⁹

Overall the I, Pierre Riviere case material, memoir and essays offer analysis of the different interpretations of the same event by various institutions and individuals of different status who, at the time, came to give evidence or preside over Riviere's case. One writer suggests that 'four sets of discourse' are primarily relevant and these include:

'Pierre Riviere's memoir and the substance of his interrogations by the examining judge, the deposition collected from witnesses by the judicial authorities, the medical opinions by Dr Vastel and his Paris colleagues and the legal documents drawn

*before the end of the proceedings.*³⁰

The different types of discourse referred to above are not conclusive but are mentioned here only to show how I. Pierre Riviere raises contradictory questions, and reveals competition between different forms of power that contest the right to define the behaviour of the self-confessed multiple murderer. Was Riviere a man suffering from the disease of 'monomania', and therefore in need of treatment and understanding as suggested by the medical profession? Or rather, was he an evil and cunning criminal who did not deserve to escape punishment by the act of suicide, as suggested by many witnesses and the judiciary? Overall, these questions cannot be resolved by Foucault and the other essayists who appear to have posed them only to show that Riviere's actions may not be explicable in terms of the available modes of comprehension.

Why Consider Disqualified Knowledge About Women and Shoplifting?

Foucault's method as demonstrated in The History of Sexuality,³¹ of uncovering the conflation in knowledge, unpacking the mythologising process, offers one model of how to resolve the problems associated with official discourse on the subject of shopping and shoplifting. Unfortunately, such a method demands research beyond the scope one PhD. The task is infinite: so many more discourses, beyond those examined, could be identified as informing both the definition and the phenomenon of shoplifting, all of which themselves have been the subject of many complex social and historical shifts. Some of these official discourses are cautiously analysed in Section Two of this investigation which recognises that:

*'traditional theories have been applied in ways that make it difficult to understand women's participation in social life, or to understand man's actions as gendered.'*³²

However, rather than trying to present an exhaustive 'genealogy' on the subject of shoplifting, it seemed more appropriate to start by locating other forms of primary material that would help identify 'traces' in the present rather than reconstruct the past or seek their own definitive 'origin'.

The early work of the Chicago school of criminology, particularly the contribution of Edwin Sutherland (1853-1950) who made the case for looking at 'lived experience' with his classic The Professional Thief (1937)³³, as well as the writing of Raphael Samuel (1934-1996), particularly his oral history in The East End Underworld: The Life and Times of Arthur Harding (1981)³⁴, were great influences on the development of this thesis. Samuel's book, in particular, presented a realistic way of finding out information not directly contained in official discourse. His work offered an opportunity to look at 'memory' and thus identified another methodological approach and source for studying the subject of shoplifting. Indeed, the work of Raphael Samuel, as well as that of Michael Foucault in Power/Knowledge (1976)³⁵ helped in the investigation of the value of discourses that contained 'local' or 'subjugated knowledge'. Raphael Samuel's work also gave this thesis new inspiration because the survey of criminological work on shoplifting, presented in Section Two, whilst thorough and unflinching in its coverage of 'empirical' writing about shoplifting, nearly exhausted the investigation. To summarise: never was so little said by so many criminologists. In fact, the engagement with criminological material produced such alienation in my mind that it very nearly caused the wholesale abandonment of the project. Raphael Samuel's intervention at this moment was strategic because not only was he able to present a crushing historical critique of the whole discourse of criminology, but his curiosity about my own cultural background helped me recognise the value of 'memory' as well as that of 'reverse discourse'³⁶. Foucault makes two main points about such local or subjugated knowledges that are worth noting here:

'on the one hand I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation... Subjugated

knowledges are thus, those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism - which obviously draws upon scholarship - has been able to reveal.

On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, something which in a sense is altogether different, namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. I also believe it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified or even directly disqualified knowledges (such as that of the psychiatric patient, of the ill person, of the nurse, of the doctor - parallel and marginal as they are) and which involve what I would call a popular knowledge (i.e. le savoir des gens) though it is far from being a general common-sense knowledge, but is on the contrary a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it - that it is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work.³⁷

Such analysis seemed to suggest that the oral transcripts of women who shoplift could be just as relevant to critical analysis as sociological or criminological case studies. The latter are formally examined in Section Two but were found not to offer the sort of rich discussion I later became aware was available elsewhere.

I had originally hoped to offer an anthropological study of more than one shoplifting informant. However, locating enough women to participate in the project and the actual systematic compilation of research data would have involved work beyond the scope of this PhD. I therefore decided to adopt the oral history approach, not only because in research terms it was easier for me to do this but also because I recognised

that in finding Shirley Pitts, and getting her to agree to talk to me, I had located a unique informant.

Accordingly, Section One of the thesis presents and discusses extracts (submitted as Appendix 1) from an oral history taken down from Shirley Pitts, a working class woman who lived her life as a professional thief between 1934-1992. Whilst the full extracts of Shirley Pitts story (over 2,500 pages of raw transcript) could not be included with the submission of the other PhD material, I was able to locate and include material I recorded with Shirley Pitts that I felt was relevant to this investigation, in particular a transcript that discusses shoplifting in terms that make the relationship to shopping overt, and which implicitly raises issues that relate to questions about gender identity. (A fuller, but rather different version of this transcript, was published as Gone Shopping: the Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves (1996)³⁸. Shirley Pitts's story gave this investigation access to knowledge about shoplifting that did not construct this activity as a medical disorder or a social problem, but offered the possibility of looking at gender issues and the consumer dimension of shoplifting at the end of the twentieth century. Analysis of the oral history method and the material gathered from Shirley is presented in the next section of this thesis.

ENDNOTES

¹ Prepared by SIMPSON, J.A. and WEINER, E.S. The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, Volume VIII, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2989, p.918.

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³ Definition is difficult. It has been argued by Arboleda-Florez et al that 'the problem may stem from the paradox involved in the very 'ordinariness' of shoplifting. It is such a common offence and it is committed by so many people that no specific characteristic or pattern arises to make typology of an all encompassing classification of the offenders', ARBOLEDA-FLOREZ, J., DURIE, H. and COSTELLO J., 'Shoplifting - An Ordinary Crime?', International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1977., pp. 201-207.

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- ¹⁹ NAVA, M., 'Women, the City and the Department Store' in FALK,P., and CAMPBELL, C., (Ed), The Shopping Experience, London, Sage, 1997, p. 56.
- ²⁰ FALK, P., 'The Scopic Regimes of Shopping' in FALK, P., and CAMPBELL, C., (Ed) The Shopping Experience, London, The Sage Publications, 1997, p. 177.
- ²¹ PINCH, A., 'Stealing Happiness: Shoplifting in Early Nineteenth Century England' article in SPYER, P. Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces, New York, Routledge, 1998, p. 123.
- ²² O'BRIEN, P., 'The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth Century France', Journal of Social History, 1983, Vol. 17, p. 65-77.
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- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 189.
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SECTION ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Reviewing Oral History as Discourse and MethodologyWhat is Oral History ?

Oral history has been described as 'old as history itself'¹. It has been defined as the experience of recalling the past, of transmitting oral traditions and the method of using lived experience and memories of 'ordinary' people. Stephen Caunce explains that:

*'oral history is based on the direct collection (usually by means of a tape recorder) of someone's experiences - potentially of anyone's and everyone's experiences which are then used like any other source to recover a picture of the past, and how and why things happened as they did. It is thus as 'real' a form of historical research as work on documents or statistics. Yet it is both different and special. It involves working directly with people and it opens up areas of human experience that conventional methods do not touch - either because they are too mundane or too intimate to appear in written records..'*²

The project of oral history is to collect subjugated knowledge. This includes personal experience, as well as what used to be called folklore. Oral history puts formal, supposedly objective history into question. It introduces the raw experience of individuals located in time and, particularly, within the context of material culture. Consequently, oral history is primarily associated with the history of ordinary men and women. It is often described as 'alternative history' or 'unofficial history'³. Studs Terkel's technique of collecting memories has even been described as 'guerrilla journalism'. 'The Journal of the Oral History Society describes it as, 'a tool for re-writing history from the bottom up, through the words of the people who experience it.'⁵

Raphael Samuel has described this process as, '*history from below*'⁶ and is in agreement with Paul Thompson, another enthusiastic oral historian, who suggests that oral history is a valid resource for academic historians. Indeed, Paul Thompson has argued that oral history also '*gives history back to the people in their own words*'⁷. He points to the revolutionary potential of the oral history method when he argues that: '*And in giving a past, it also helps them [ordinary people] towards a future of their own making*'.⁸

All three historians mentioned so far - Stephen Caunce, Raphael Samuel, and Paul Thompson - argue that oral history and personal testimonies bring a new dimension to understanding the past. They suggest that evidence from ordinary people (whose testimony is taped and transcribed), offers an important way of understanding our total history. In defence of oral history, Caunce argues that:

*'To use oral history alongside, not instead of, other material merely ... extends the range of history, and the onus is really on those who disapprove to say why huge sections of human experience are not fit subjects for study.'*⁹

Those who question the validity of oral history, tend to refer to the problem of memory, to the self mythologising or self-eulogising that is involved in remembering the past: critics also claim that ordinary testimony lacks rigour and is less relevant than official history. Oral history's relationship to folklore and mythology is usually put forward as the main reason why oral history is not considered appropriate in some quarters.

Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, however, argue against such dismissive accounts. They reject the idea that truth can ever be derived from anyone's methodological approach, no matter how rigorous. Instead, they suggest that it doesn't matter whether or not a story is true. What matters is what is remembered, and how meaning is attributed and understood. Oral history need not replace formal histories but oral history should be valued as information to be understood alongside formal histories.

Gilda O'Neill, in *Pull No More Bines: Hop Picking Memories of a Vanished Way of Life*¹⁰, also sums up the value of the oral history work she undertook by arguing:

*'We need our memories and, at a very basic level, we need a notion of personal history through which we understand our identities. We need to place what we know within a structure which in turn enables us to make sense of our knowledge. But we also need formal histories to provide the wider structure...'*¹¹

The issue of how oral history is compiled is something that even enthusiastic oral historians are aware of and construe as problematic. Like any other approaches to history, and like other methodologies, oral history has its own methodological strengths and weaknesses.

Oral History as Methodology

To some extent the strengths of the oral history method have already been described. It gives the historian access to other informal forms of knowledge and experience that may have been 'hidden from history'. Information is easily accessible once an 'informant' has been located as an appropriate representative of the historical moment or event being reviewed. Tape recording these memories as information is not exactly a high tech skill, and even though the typing of transcripts can be laborious (one hour of tape constitutes approximately five hours of typing), the information gathered via this method can be accessed very quickly by the historian and the conditions that affect the reading of the transcript¹². The weaknesses of the method, of course relates not only to the question of locating the most 'appropriate' subject of the oral history in question. The actual process of turning oral history into a piece of writing can also be a very difficult and dubious one. For it is during the process of 'writing up' that the would-be oral historian is inevitably involved in the process of creating a narrative, one that has connections with the methodologies involved in creating fictional narratives. The lived experience may have unquestionably occurred, but the questions asked, the way the writing is presented and mediated, are all part of a creative process which involves the

restating and reforming of events. As such it shares much in common with fiction. However, unlike the novelist, the oral historian may make rigorous attempts to ensure that the interpretation made is valid. Yet the processes of writing up involves the oral historian in acts of selection, organisation, juxtaposition and silencing in respect of the various pieces of evidence collected via the tape recording, particularly if the project has a political objective e.g. such as a women's studies emphasis which seeks to use the oral testimony to address gaps in knowledge.¹³ Consequently, it is impossible to disconnect the researcher from the process of recording and measuring. Marilyn Porter has made some general observations about this involvement in her own work:

*'As everyone with tape-recorded material knows, transcription and analysis are long and tedious. At times there is the danger of becoming too distant from the field experience. Faces fade and are replaced by colour coded cards. Still analysis must happen. I reorganised my material, imposed categories; I began to write. I was aware of the gaps in my material it was too late to fill. I was also aware that my fieldwork had a beginning and an end. I talked to all the people at specific historical moments, both in their own lives and in the public history of this country... In the end I have written a tribute to the people who talked to me. I could not let them remain silent because of my failure to write.'*¹⁴

Whilst my experience of working with one woman, Shirley Pitts, was quite different from what is described above, similarities should be noted. Indeed, Shirley Pitts died after I took down her story and I certainly felt I *'could not let [her] remain silent because of my failure to write.'*¹⁵ Furthermore, I was keenly aware that the interpretative framing of the oral history narrative is rarely determined by the subject of the transcript. This is because the subject often becomes so involved in the process of speaking and remembering that there can be little consideration as to how such memories will look on the page when written up. Indeed, I was very uncomfortable when writing *Gone Shopping: The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves*¹⁶ and agree with Maithreyi Krishmaraj when she argues that 'there are often problems in

distinguishing between oral history, life history and autobiography'.¹⁷ I was more than mediating the narrative and the material. In fact, I virtually worked as a ghost writer on it. The arguments against oral history often refer precisely to such confusion and/or heavy editing. Despite the fact that raw experience is drawn upon, critics argue that (when the process of editing is not so substantial as the one I have described), the material is mediated by the interpreter who may have their own agenda and concerns.

For all the above reasons I have chosen in this PhD to draw on oral history, but not to interpret the material in any simple way in order to resist inappropriately mediating it. This is because I feel that my journalistic skills used in the book Gone Shopping: The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves, which did involve me invisibly editing and creating Shirley Pitts's transcript into a readable volume, have no place in a PhD. Such a transcript does not constitute oral history. Indeed, the way Shirley Pitts transcript is presented in this academic investigation, is deliberately different from the way the same material had been presented in the commercial context of publishing a mainstream book. Indeed, the material presented here is as raw ('not cooked') to paraphrase Levi Strauss as I can get it.¹⁸ This has been achieved by submitting the material in Appendix 1 simply as unedited transcript which, on one level, stands in its own right.

ENDNOTES

¹ THOMPSON, P., The Voice of the Past, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 19-20.

² CAUNCE, STEPHEN, Oral History and The Local Historian, London and New York Longman, 1994., back cover.

³ Ibid., p. ix.

⁴ TERKEL, Studs, Hard Times: An Oral History of The Great Depression, New York, Pantheon Books, Random House, 1970, p. XIII. Reviewed by SINFIELD, A., p.28-29 of Oral History, The Journal of the Oral History Society, Colchester University of Essex, 1972.

⁵ Oral History: The Journal of the Oral History Society. See O'NEILL, G., Pull No More Bines Hop Picking: Memories of A Vanished Way of Life, London, The Women's Press, 1990, pp. 140 and 158.

⁶ SAMUEL, RAPHAEL, (Ed), Peoples History and Socialist Theory, London, Routledge, 1981, p. xv-xvi.

⁷ THOMPSON, PAUL, The Voice of the Past: Oral History, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 226.

⁸ Ibid., p. 226.

⁹ CAUNCE, STEPHEN, Oral History and The Local Historian, London and New York, Longman, 1994., p. 11.

¹⁰ G., Pull No More Bines Hop Picking: Memories of A Vanished Way of Life, London, The Women's Press, 1990,

¹¹ Ibid., p. 6.

¹² THOMPSON. P.& GIRLING, M., Oral History: An Occasional News Letter, Leicester, University of Leicester, Social Science Research Council, March 1972, p.20-22.

¹³ STREEVANA. P., Oral History in Women's Studies: Concept, Method and Use, Bombay, India, Research Centre for Women's Studies, 1990. See discussion p.9-16, also p.162-227.

¹⁴ PORTER, M., Home, Crime and Class Consciousness, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1983, p. 184.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 184.

¹⁶ GAMMAN L Gone Shopping. The Story of Shirley Pitts. Queen of Thieves, London, Signet/Penguin, 1996

¹⁷ STREEVANA, P., Oral History in Women's Studies: Concept, Method and Use, Bombay, India, Research Centre for Women's Studies, 1990, p.3.

¹⁸ It may well be that the metaphor is problematic because I would argue that it is when a subject enters into language that the 'cooking' begins.

SECTION ONE

CHAPTER TWO

Framing the Transcript of Shirley Pitts

There are many ways of using oral history and the testimony of Shirley Pitts, who lived in London between 1934 and 1992, needs some introduction as her account of shoplifting is not part of any ordinary or typical story of shopping. However, before I offer my own account and analysis of the life of Shirley Pitts, I would urge the reader to read Appendix 1, wherein parts of Shirley's life are explained in her own words. The Appendix should be read before any other interpretation is given of the life and conduct of Shirley Pitts.

Shirley Pitts was known to me as a professional thief. I understood that she was a woman who had successfully made her living from crime for over forty years. It was easy to substantiate her claims about her criminal career, and references to other well known criminals, precisely because I had grown up in the sixties and seventies within what Dick Hebdige has defined as a '*system of closure*' and a '*system with its own internal "logic" and its own exclusive meanings*'. Hebdige uses the idea of '*closure*' to describe a specific East London criminal milieu and subculture that in many ways was a law unto itself, with its own discourse. The idea of criminal 'subculture' to some extent contradicts E.P Thompson's important observation that criminal activity may be part of a wider continuum of deviance, and dependent on who defines it². Certainly, I agree with E.P. Thompson in the sense that I see shoplifting as a continuum of shopping and consumer bargain logic. Yet, I must say, I find Hebdige's definition of criminal subculture as a '*system of closure*'³, more accurately explains *some* aspects of my experience of growing up in my father's house, and I would certainly argue that Shirley Pitts, like my father, was very guarded about who she made friends with and what she let them know.

It should be no surprise that both Shirley Pitts and other criminals felt able to talk to me because my father had come from inside the subculture having been a professional criminal (certainly known to the Kray milieu and their associates). I was therefore already 'one of our own' and so trust was not such a big issue. Indeed, my father, Johnnie Gamman, who died in 1968, had been involved in many criminal ventures including the opening of the night-club, The Regency Club, in Stoke Newington which was eventually purchased by the Krays. Such a background, consequently enabled me to draw upon my own 'lived experience' and contacts for verification. Indeed, I was in a better position than most to confirm that Shirley Pitts was who she said she was. It was possible to further substantiate Shirley Pitts's claims about her past criminal escapades, not only through interviews (called 'chats' at the time) with other criminals, but also with reference to media reportage. The first listing of her escapades as a professional thief appeared in the South London Press in 1954, and featured the headline '*Jail Girl Broke Free to Save Baby*'. In this press story, Shirley Pitts was described as a gangster's moll. The paper was so hell bent on this stereotypical line of representation that it failed to discover or mention, in any significant way, that Shirley Pitts was in big trouble at the time, precisely because she was the first woman ever to escape from Holloway Prison. There were other press cuttings too, of the less substantial criminal escapades Shirley Pitts had been involved in, and then even more sensational headlines. '*Red Haired Bandits Raid England*', was one I particularly enjoyed. Whilst press cuttings could be called upon to substantiate the fact that some events had occurred, newspaper reporting, as discussed in Section Two, is subject to fictionalisation and mythologising too. It therefore took many sessions taping Shirley Pitts and other criminals to get the full picture of her career and her life. Despite my efforts to substantiate what Shirley Pitts told me about her life as a professional thief and criminal, the 'true story', was never what was sought by this investigation. I just wanted to hear the stories Shirley Pitts told herself to make sense of her life and the observations she could bring to bear on the experience of shopping. At the time I was well aware that Shirley Pitts may herself not know the "truth", and have no analysis of

the idea that some of her own behaviour may have had unconscious motivation. Also, I was aware that the process of writing a book and getting Shirley Pitts to remember, involved, as Foucault has put it:

*'all those procedures by which the subject is incited to produce a discourse of truth ... which is capable of having effects on the subject.'*⁴

Of course, as Shirley Pitts's interpreter, my background did make a difference to the way material was gathered. For example, I knew she would never make a 'confession', in the terms of the techniques and the '*savoir*' Foucault describes as common practice from the writing of life stories in prison⁵. I knew from the start that Shirley Pitts would rather tell stories that didn't completely give the game away, or incriminate anyone still making a living from crime, and that she wouldn't be completely 'candid'. Perhaps, my awareness of the constraints of her narrative meant I was more overtly part of the material: I knew many of the people Shirley referred to, and understood the ethics by which she regulated her transcript when speaking of them. For example, she would say to me 'off tape' things like *'I can't say Ronnie was involved in that one'* - referring to Ronnie Knight - *'he's in enough trouble as it is...'*, and I would just accept her rationale. Such logic was very familiar to me having listened to people forced to give statements to the police, explaining how they 'hadn't said anything that really mattered'. This discourse of self-censorship - of nearly telling the truth but avoiding crucial elements - was so familiar: I came from a similar cultural background (in terms of class, crime and geographical belongings, even my spoken English is not so different), so I was intimate with both Shirley Pitts's logic as well as her language. All these connections allowed me to draw on my own lived experience on some occasions, or those of people I had known, in order to verify the testimony of Shirley Pitts. However, it should be made clear, that her testimony and subjugated knowledge is not presented here as some real or authentic truth in opposition to the legal, medical and psychoanalytic models of deviance discussed in Section Two. Instead, it is drawn upon as part of an attempt to examine many sources and to embrace Foucault's method of genealogy by highlighting

the discrepancies, slippages and gaps in Shirley Pitts's memories. It is also used to address information missing in so many of the official or criminological explanations of shoplifting.

In this Chapter, therefore, it is not my intention to offer a full textual analysis. Indeed, any form of textual analysis of someone's life story, and their oral history transcript, is undoubtedly questionable. What is most interesting about Shirley Pitts's story is that she herself is aware of, yet in constant opposition to, the discourses that would explain her own criminal behaviour. What is most fascinating about her account, is that it almost constitutes a 'reverse discourse', which Foucault has defined in the following way:

'Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power: it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it....'

..the formation of a "reverse" discourse: {homosexuality} began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturalness" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations: there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy: they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another opposing strategy....'⁶

The question of strategies of self-definition, and how they change over time is highly pertinent to the conceptualisation of the subject in process as well as to this thesis. Through her imprisonment, Shirley Pitts was subject to the full force of the law as well as to the various attempts to categorise her as mad, bad or sad. Yet, it is clear in own eyes, she was none of these things: nor did she see herself as a 'gangster's moll' or 'bandit', as described by the press. She defined the changes that occurred to her as she went along the way, as it fitted into the story of her life: she appears to have literally either internalised, or rejected, the definitions that seemed most appropriate to her. Reviewing these definitions is one of the purposes of oral history, and using oral history in this way then (also the purpose of drawing upon such subjugated knowledge), is in part to challenge the official discourses about women and shoplifting which have so far proved somewhat limited, particularly in relation to consumerism and shopping. Yet, Shirley Pitts's account, is not included to suggest in any way that she is typical of all female shoplifters: she clearly saw herself as a professional thief and would not have wanted to be discussed in regard to ordinary shoppers (what she would have called 'straight people'). What this investigation does suggest though, through the inclusion of the testimony of Shirley Pitts, is that the constant slippage from one discourse to another, from shopping to shoplifting contained in Shirley's own words, necessitates a more complex understanding of the relationship of women to crime than has been posited by any of the criminological material reviewed here. Such an understanding demands analysis of consumer desire as well as that slippery and contradictory phenomenon Foucault, and psychoanalysts such as Lacan, describe as the speaking 'Subject'. Indeed, in her transcript, Shirley Pitts is constantly the 'subject in process' with no real Self that can be revealed'. Lacan's concept of the 'fragmented subject' is a useful one. The Lacanians suggest that the split in the subject can never be healed. They challenge the concept of an increasing mastery of this 'authentic' self, since for them the 'authentic self' is itself a misrecognition. The Lacanian model would therefore suggest that the sort of 'consciousness raising' Shirley Pitts could have undergone in writing a book, is significant but could never go far enough to reach the unconscious. The changes that arise from 'consciousness raising' come about in the realms of our

conscious awareness of ourselves, whereas the effective remedy lies in affecting the *unconscious*. So Shirley Pitts's testimony reveals a split self with a mass of contradictions at the core: she is constantly reinventing herself as, she anticipates, the situation demands. Her stories are also set against the context of the increasing social fluidity produced by social changes that occurred in the 1960s.

Shirley Pitts may have been a self-proclaimed thief, she was also very serious about her profession and the way she made her living. Yet the way she articulates her subject position, reveals the contradictory status she occupies in regard to the Symbolic Order⁸. Indeed, she uses humour to describe one gang she worked with as, '*the forty thieves like Ali Baba*' (Appendix 1, p. 1). This may suggest that she lacks, or refuses to recognise, conventional morality and it might seem, from the way she made fun of what she did and the behaviour of those she worked with, that Shirley Pitts lacked a strong moral code. However, it is clear from her transcript that Shirley Pitts had developed her own ethics and a very strong code of what was right and wrong. At times, she could be a very responsible person.

In her transcript, there are constant references to her trade. Like other individuals of her generation, who grew up in poor working class South London in the 1930s and 1940s and then, East London in the 1950s, she served an apprenticeship and then progressed on to a trade, albeit one that was unofficially regulated and designated. Yet, like other tradesmen and women, through the distance which skill and experience give her, she holds in contempt those who are amateurs and displays an old-fashioned working class pride in being good at her job (what Paul Willis in Learning to Labour has described as the heroic [manly] pride felt through the 'confrontation of the task'⁹).

When Shirley Pitts says, '*By the time I was twelve I was a fully-fledged shoplifter* (Appendix 1, p. 4)', there is a sense of rites of passage, an initiation into a criminal community. Her references are always to this community of which she feels a part and at one with, even at the end of her life. Such identification may be contrasted with the

breaking down of more traditional and legal forms of community that have occurred in post-war Britain, particularly concerning relocated working class communities who ended up living in Essex, which is where Shirley Pitts herself finally ended up living and dying.

In many instances Shirley Pitts's transcript clearly inverts or subverts conventional morality or thinking about the meaning of theft. She has a sense of commodities as precious, as providing her with her living, but she also has a strong sense that they should not be wasted, perhaps having never forgotten the shortages of the war years and the experiences of both emotional and material deprivation she associated with being evacuated. Yet, given such a contrasting schema, it is difficult perhaps to understand what Shirley means by 'value'. Theft gave her access to all she wanted and thrift persuaded her to ignore the myths of planned obsolescence (and thus she saved goods for scarcer times). Clearly the commodities she steals have value in terms of money but, beyond that, they also have a use value and symbolic value appreciated by all who shop. When she talks of clothes she has taken being ruined by ink, she is genuinely upset, not simply because she will not be able to sell them on, but because, '*You wouldn't ruin clothes by just rippin 'em [the alarms] off*' (Appendix 1 p. 8)'. The real deprivation she suffered as a child, as well as a strong working-class ethic about waste itself being a crime are present in her own understanding of herself. Indeed, at no point does she ever consciously give the impression that commodities are valueless or that they are a substitute for something else, which links her to a formal and appropriate model of consumer behaviour.

The psychoanalytic assumption that even professional shoplifters are '*stealing love*', trying to obtain some illicit thrill or suffering from some compulsion to do something they do not understand (paraphrased by Louise Kaplan as 'I have been deprived, therefore I have a right to steal'¹⁰), has no place in her conscious world view. She appreciates and boasts of the value of the goods she steals, as can be observed at so many points in her transcript. She also refers to her past and the definition of

perversion in her remarks about the criminal justice system: *'Some of the people who sit up on benches are the biggest thieves there is , ain't they ? And perverts, ain't they ?(Appendix 1, p. 9)*'. Here Shirley Pitts is using the language of perversion to describe, not her own activities, but the behaviour of those who literally judge her. Perhaps her discourse offers testimony to the perverse culture that regulates capitalism, often with more respect for property than human life.

This continual inversion of legal and sociological definitions of crime recurs throughout Shirley Pitts's transcript, and her own history. Some of her transcript offers a mocking intelligence and humour about herself as a subject. This may be seen as a rationalisation or even apology, by some, but there is little in the tone to suggest it. Confessional laughter does not only seek understanding, it also offers mockery at the world order it subverts, and is part of her 'reverse' discourse. The other major discourse Shirley Pitts inverts, or indeed understands from 'the other side' as it were, is the one of consumerism itself. Shirley Pitts sees herself, not merely as a thief, but as a consumer par excellence, an arbiter of taste and style with opinions on fashion as valid as those offered by officially recognised fashion pundits and stylists. Indeed, Shirley Pitts has a sophisticated analysis of fashion design in the context of the changing nature of consumption itself. When she speaks of shops becoming *'Americanised* (Appendix 1, p. 9)', she is referring to the move towards self-service. [*'Well, they've gone Americanised, haven't they? Beautiful shops, they've mucked up by making them look like, I don't know. I mean you've got to feel nice, shopping , haven't you? Like I think Fortnum and Masons was the best store in London, do you know? It's got that lovely war air about it'* (Appendix 1, p. 9). She says she prefers the more old-fashioned department store with their connotations of class and wealth, rather than today's more down market shopping mall. For her, the consumer experience is sensory as well as one of exchange; *'I mean you've got to feel nice, shopping haven't you?'* (Appendix 1, p. 9) Shirley Pitts has been appellated as the perfect consumer, despite her 'trade'. She likes Fortnum and Mason and understands implicitly its status in the hierarchy of consumption, *'There isn't another store to come near it, not for its class, its standards*

or anything, is there? (Appendix 1, p. 9)' There are constant references, throughout her transcript, to 'standards' whether they are the standards of the consumer experience or the standards required to be a professional shoplifter. Such references make her logic very clear to understand because it is compatible with the logic of the market place: ignore the contradictions and obtain the maximum goods at the minimum cost and, make a profit if possible. (She appeared, via shoplifting, to do precisely that.)

Without irony, Shirley Pitts talks of the '*perfume girls*' (Appendix 1 p. 10) who give her a free squirt of perfume, '*Giving you a free bag or something, you know they don't have to do that.* (Appendix 1, p. 9)' She is lured into the consumer experience by the promise of something for nothing, yet at the same time what does it mean to be given a bargain of a free gift, when everything she takes from shops is for free anyway?

Again and again, Shirley Pitts surrounds herself with the mask of professionalism and invokes the idea of amateurs or 'robbers', who do not adhere to the standards she has set for herself. Through her discourse, she continually re-defines and re-produces her own sense of self-worth and, in the gaps where she asks for the tape to be turned off, she reveals her professionalism. Unlike Pierre Riviere she did not write or dictate a confession. In giving me her transcript, telling it like it is and was caused her problems. So she used the phone a lot (mid taping), constantly checking with other people, to make sure all those associates she spoke about were really dead, and could not be incriminated by her account. She also told me repeatedly, 'Never Confess to Anything'. She argued that one of the reasons she had stayed out of prison, despite the fact of being caught on a number of occasions, was because she would never admit to anything and lack of evidence always saved her in the end. Her view on the world was that self incrimination via confession, achieved more convictions than any other forms of police work and gave people things to talk about. Even when her serious illness, breast cancer, freed her from such worries and if she had wanted to, she could finally talk about herself, her discourse was still guarded.

Shirley Pitts is most candid about her trade in the moments when she shows little understanding of the people who steal for irrational reasons. *'Some people get tempted don't they?'* (Appendix 1, p. 17), she remarks incredulously. When she sees a wealthy gentleman steal a belt, she is astonished, *'I thought why does he? You know he was standing in two grands worth of clothes'* (Appendix 1, p. 17). She knows he didn't need the money, but she doesn't believe the discourse of the Kleptomaniac at all: she had used that excuse too often (to be let off with a caution in the shops) to have any regard for it.

If anything, Shirley Pitts sees the motivation for shoplifting, as with her own motivation, in material rather than psychological terms. Part of her trade is also to interpret the changes in the shopping experience, and see its economic determinants. The recession, the closing down of smaller shops and the development of new kinds of retailing, have different implications for her own 'work'. She sees these changes as forcing her to engage in aggressive shoplifting, more planned, more organised. Ultimately, she knows what she does is wrong and there is no psychological excuse connected with the idea of unconsciously stealing love. Shirley Pitts, is consciously stealing goods to sell them on for money: perhaps money can be equated with love? Certainly, Shirley Pitts showers her money on her children, who give her unconditional and often unquestioning love.

Like any professional thief Shirley Pitts also sees her own career coming to an end. She talks of retirement. However she understands herself, it is certainly not as driven by the compulsions associated with the so-called "kleptomaniac", but by the need to provide for herself and her children: shoplifting equates with responsible parenting in her eyes. She may laugh about her past and say *'I think we was quite mad wasn't we?'* (Appendix 1, p. 4)' but she is not referring to what she did, merely the risks that she took. Even when put in a straightjacket, Shirley Pitts never defines herself as 'a nutter', but remains remarkably clear-headed about who she is: the professional thief who must suffer if it means the children can have more than they would have living on social security.

Nonetheless, her account of herself makes it impossible to categorise her behaviour within any one of the existing definitions that are offered by official accounts of shoplifting, discussed in Section 2. She is aware of the causes and the consequences of her behaviour, and has made a rational and logical choice to continue. She is an example of how shoplifting becomes, in its own way, the logical conclusion of the whole shopping experience, but Shirley is speaking what Foucault might call a reverse-discourse about it. It is all the more powerful for the fact that it is stated without self-recrimination, self-deprecation or without self-pathologisation. It is located within a consumer context where objects carry and speak the emotions that many working class people are unable, or refuse to, articulate.

ENDNOTES:

¹ In discussing the 'facts' of the Krays' criminal career Dick Hebdige says: '*I have tried to treat these facts as elements within a system of closure – a system that possesses its own informal logic, its own exclusive meanings.*' HEBDIGE, D., 'The Kray Twins: A Study of A System of Closure', Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Occasional Paper, Birmingham, University of Birmingham, May, 1974, p. 1.

² THOMPSON, E.P., The Making of the English Working Class, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1980, pp. 59-60. In Chapter Three 'Satan's Stronghold', Thompson warns against assuming 'Christ's poor' were different from '...murderers, thieves and drunkards'. He quotes Patrick Colquhoun who suggests that huge numbers of criminals emerged in the eighteenth century. Thompson suggests that such descriptions say as much about 'the mentality of the propertied classes as they do about the actual criminal behaviour of the unpropertied!

³ HEBDIGE, D., 'The Kray Twins: A Study of a System of Closure', Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Occasional Paper, Birmingham, University of Birmingham, May 1994. See discussion on p. 1. and on pp. 32-33. It should be noted that when Hebdige discusses the physical transformation of the East End being accompanied by a parallel cultural transformation, he offers as an endnote a paper in the same series by COHEN, P., 'Subcultural Conflicts and Working Class Community', Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Occasional Paper, Birmingham, University of Birmingham, 1994.

⁴ FOUCAULT, M., Power Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, (Ed), Colin Gordon, Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1986, p.85.

⁵ Ibid., p. 85.

⁶ FOUCAULT, M., The History of Sexuality: Volume One: An Introduction, translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1976, pp. 101-102.

⁷ Lacan's concept of the 'fragmented subject' is a useful one and is summarised fully in GAMMAN, L., and MAKINEN, M., Female Fetishism: A New Look, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1994, pp. 100 - 101.

⁸ For Lacan the phallus is a symbol - the ultimate signifier of unity and authority within the patriarchal code, and woman is defined by the absence of any such signifier. Since Shirley Pitts did not possess this genital signifier, she could only 'become' the phallus. Lacan suggests the girl, having no part of the body to construct the phallic signifier onto, is not able to move from 'being' to 'having'; and so cannot move into the Symbolic code, which offers one explanation (not necessarily the definitive one) as to why Shirley Pitts's position within criminal

subculture was contradictory, and why she was always negotiating her position as a more anxious 'subject in process' than most.

⁹ WILLIS, PAUL, Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs, Farnborough, Saxon House, 1977, p. 150.

¹⁰ KAPLAN, LOUISE, Female Perversions: The Temptations of Madame Bovary, London, Pandora, 1991, p. 286.

SECTION ONE

CHAPTER THREE

“Confessional” Narrative - Shirley Pitts:From Survivor To ‘New’ Woman In A Man’s WorldI Will Survive...

The confession has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one’s crimes, one’s sins, one’s thoughts and desires, one’s illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell. One confesses in public and in private, to one’s parents, one’s educators, one’s doctor, to those one loves; one admits to oneself, in pleasure and in pain, things it would be impossible to tell to anyone else, the things people write books about. One confesses-or is forced to confess. When it is not spontaneous or dictated by some internal imperative, the confession is wrung from a person by violence or threat; it is driven from its hiding place in the soul, or extracted from the body. Since the Middle Ages, torture has accompanied it like a shadow, and supported it when it could go no further: the dark twins. The most defenseless tenderness and the bloodiest of powers have a similar need of confession. Western man has become a confessing animal. ¹

Personal life stories, told by celebrities who have survived (such as Tina Turner whose confessions had everything to do with a narrative of survival from domestic violence) are very familiar. Shirley Pitts watched Tina Turner’s pop videos and knew her story. The familiar discourse of survival also articulated by those such as Princess Diana may have implicitly infiltrated Shirley Pitts’s own narrative. At the end of Shirley Pitts’s life, as a consequence of changes brought about by feminism, popular culture had

become saturated with such confessional accounts of female 'survival'. Indeed, Shirley Pitts would have been familiar with its discourse, and with the tune *'I will survive'*, often described as the feminist national anthem. She had certainly encountered female survivors among her acquaintances, as well through engagement with the representations of popular culture.

The popularisation of many psychoanalytic concepts via magazines, tabloids and other forms of popular currency meant that Shirley Pitts inhabited post Freudian culture in which the idea of telling a girl's - or boy's - own story had gained credence. Analysts such as Adam Philips describe the process of analysis itself as simply another form of conversation. In every sphere of culture, ranging from literature to television chat shows, we can find those who speak of nothing but themselves. Shirley Pitts understood the problems attached to such egotistical discourse - particularly the excessive egotistical discourse of male criminals - which is why her life story focused on her work and her achievements, rather than on other parts of her self. Yet, it is possible to see such a plurality of voices in popular culture as liberating, perhaps almost negating the need for 'history from below'. But that would only make sense if historiography itself had really been changed as a result of such conditions which is simply not the case, despite the impact of organisations such as the History Workshop movement. Instead, the popular phenomenon of confession, which troubled Foucault so much (because he believed that it incited the subject to produce a discourse of truth which was capable of having repressive powerful effects on the subject's behaviour), may only make sense with reference to the crisis of confidence and meaning which has accompanied the post modern period.²

Certainly the increasing fragmentation of modern life, the sense of uncertainty about previously held ideologies that bind people together, the collapse of the 'grand narratives' like history itself, may help to explain what philosophers describe as our lack of trust in objective truth. Few philosophers are prepared to make value judgements about truth anymore, so it is no wonder that the 'grand narratives' which presented an

overview of the truth, now appear to have ruptured into a myriad of personalised voices, all telling their own subjective stories. Indeed, such confessions of experience have shown us that the claims of history, science and religion to tell the truth are very precarious. When objectivity is so illusory, when the society of the spectacle becomes evident to so many as simply a constructed form of existence driven by consumerism and profit logic, it is perhaps appropriate that fewer people are prepared to proclaim the truth. Perhaps it is fitting that we should look to the detail of the narrative, rather than to the meaning of narrative itself, to help us understand the historical conditions in which we live.

Looking at the subjugated knowledge of a female criminal may offer a post modern approach to criminology in what Carole Smart has identified as, 'feminist knowledge': this can be introduced into the analysis and therefore become 'part of a multiplicity of resistance'.³ This political stance shares common ground with the History Workshop approach, which has already been mentioned, but is very different to the vogue in the 1990s for 'personal', autobiographical writing and photography that focuses on so called authentic 'experience'. Those who first made the case for oral history were certainly not those who argued for the relative rehabilitation of subjectivity. Whereas oral history, history from below, developed as part of a highly politicised History Workshop project - to find transcripts by working class people, including women, to plug the holes in traditional historical narratives - the new subjectivity of the post modern period is de-politicised, its motives usually personal rather than political. It is here that the objectives of Shirley Pitts, the informant, and the objectives of Lorraine Gamman, the editor and would be historian of shoplifting, may have been extremely contradictory. At one point my ambition had been to use this oral history account of shoplifting alongside several other individual memories of women who worked at shoplifting (associates of Shirley Pitts whose experiences I had also begun to take down) and to include them all in the PhD, in an anthropological or history workshop sort of way.⁴ The intention at the back of my mind, fuelled by the imperatives of oral history, was to try to weave a number of memories together. The purpose: to create a

sense of social organisation and community which form the backdrop to the shoplifting stories, in the way that Raphael Samuel's account of the life of Arthur Harding and his many interviews with Harding's family and associates, had fleshed out ideas about life in the community of the Jago. The relationship that I developed with Shirley Pitts and the circumstances of her illness and death, contributed to the production of a very different transcript. Indeed, the book Gone Shopping - The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves, at first sight may appear to have more to do with the confessional, in maintaining its separateness as a discourse from the stories of other female shoplifters, by focusing on the uniqueness of the individual rather than the collective approach to oral history. Yet I would argue, despite the outwards signs of the confessional that the above book may exhibit, that such signs are contradictory, and require closer scrutiny.

Confession And Historical Discourse

It is the contention of this investigation that the transcripts included in Appendix 1, as well as the book Gone Shopping: The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves, simultaneously reinforce and disrupt the conventions of the confessional narrative. Shirley Pitts's story, after all, is the 'truth' told by a woman who lies and cheats for personal profit, someone whose livelihood depended on their ability to manipulate others. What is fundamental, however, is the fact that despite the confessional culture that surrounded her, including her own relationship to a Roman Catholic priest who took her deathbed confession, that Shirley Pitts did not make a public confession when making tapes about her life. Indeed, Shirley Pitts did not see the telling of her story as something that equated with confession. For her, confession was a legal, not a therapeutic term. If Shirley Pitts had made a full confession, or if I had written up everything she told me, there would have been real consequences of a very serious nature from the police. She made sure that everyone she spoke of candidly was either dead or otherwise out of it, and asked me to do the same. She was very proud of this, proud of never confessing to anything, nor of 'grassing' on anyone, even if her story

told so much about the historical periods in question. But, in her own mind, her refusal to confess to the authorities meant a refusal to submit to the law of the land and also a refusal to submit to some of the formal categorisations she instinctively knew those in the outside world would impose on her and her colleagues.

This point is important, because it demands that conceptualisation of Shirley Pitts's memory is regarded as the memory of an active criminal, not someone who is making a confession about a life lived. This fact would not have stopped her transcript being relevant to the historian for it was clearly, to use a cliché, stamped with the passing of time. However, the distinction about whether or not her transcript constitutes a confession is crucial because nearly all the way through her often disturbing and anarchic life Shirley Pitts refuses to position herself as a victim. Her sense of self came from being able to escape, literally, from the constraints that attempted to bind her. Refusing to confess also means that Shirley Pitts remains a self-defining subject. In detailing her various crimes, Shirley Pitts utilises the discourse of the professional thief and in this account of her life there is little feeling of wrong doing that characterises her statements. Her discussion of much of what she does, by conventional standards, is entirely pragmatic and for that reason has much in common with the stories and self presentations of Arthur Harding and Broadway Jones (known by the alias Chic 'Conwell') who have spoken of their lives as professional thieves for publication. Only momentarily does Shirley Pitts feel the need for reassurance. When she describes, for instance, her whole family being in prison she laughs, '*Bad init, bad?*' (Appendix 1, p. 10) What also becomes apparent from the way she tells her life story, is that she keeps an action packed narrative going by simply summarising the most exciting aspects of her criminal career. She is always rushing through the action. Even in the raw transcript she gets diverted by stories about other people who are insignificant in the scheme of things. The quieter times, the less dramatic times or even the more reflective times, she tends to exclude - perhaps because the format of telling a 'life-story' is like a novel and demands action and dialogue rather than everyday, mundane detail.

Shirley Pitts's Story As Crime Discourse

This focus on action, excluding the everyday mundane experiences in favour of the drama, could locate Shirley Pitts's story in a far more masculine than feminine tradition. The domestic details of her life, including the births of her children, are given less significance than the criminal acts she was involved in. This she shares in common with male informants who have told their crime stories, giving the impression that she had the babies and lovers along the way but her real life, her real self, was her 'work'. There is a certain bravado in all this. But, in turning the male gaze upon herself, Shirley Pitts often projects herself not as a female victim but as good as a man. Yet I got the impression from our discussions that this strategy meant that, before telling me her stories, tales which she had recounted often before, she had never spent much time reflecting upon, or analysing, their meaning. When I asked her about why this was so, she said she had never let herself become one of those women 'who felt sorry for themselves' all the time. This denial of passivity, aligned her with a masculine narrative, meant she treated herself very harshly at times. So when some experiences hurt Shirley Pitts, she made herself get over them quickly, not only to save face, but also to avoid being regarded as a 'girl' and thus hinder her work and reputation. This implicit awareness that gender behaviour was not 'real', and so stereotypical 'female' behaviour should be avoided so as not to compromise her credibility, makes Shirley Pitts's crime story quite different from the way male crime stories are usually told. Yet there are some parallels too with the stories told by Arthur Harding and Chic Conwell, two significant narratives by professional thieves that should be reviewed.

Arthur Harding's account of his life of crime should be mentioned first as it refers to a London criminal subculture at the turn of the century, and therefore chronologically it makes sense to locate it first. Arthur Harding was born in 1886 and, as Raphael Samuel's preface to his life story identifies, grew up in '*the Jago; the most famous*

*criminal slum of late Victorian London.*¹⁵ Arthur Harding's life of crime, like Shirley Pitts started in childhood, and what they share in common is not only poverty - both their crimes started with stealing food - but also a clear sense of location in London in the different periods in question. Both Arthur Harding and Shirley Pitts - although their stories are separated by a forty year period - discuss their families and their friends in a very similar way. Through a colloquial language they exhibit a clear sense of belonging to a particular period and community and a real ability to conjure up a vivid picture of a way of life in London long since gone. Both Arthur Harding and Shirley Pitts speak of their loved ones and they both talk effortlessly not only of access to a criminal community, mainly generated through poverty, but also of institutional 'assistance' in learning their trade. Though born at very different periods (when Shirley Pitts was growing up Arthur Harding was nearly middle aged), both Arthur Harding and Shirley Pitts in their teenage years were sent to the equivalent of a reform school or borstal and both remark that this helped them consolidate their careers. Just as Shirley Pitts learned of rolling men for money (pretending to be a prostitute) from her time in borstal, Arthur Harding says, *'I learned to pickpocket from a man I met in Wormwood Scrubs.'*¹⁶ Yet the way they talk of crime is very different. Arthur Harding's parents were not criminals and therefore the discussion of how he got involved in crime is quite different: he emphasises its deviance and presents a very different language in recounting his criminal history.

Shirley Pitts rarely used violence to aid her criminal career. Her life story describes only two acts of violence. Once, when she accidentally knocked a female store detective through a window in her youth. She describes, but doesn't celebrate, this incident. Instead, she says it was a mistake; it happened inadvertently. Similarly, when she pokes a pen through the prison door into the eye of the prison governor (she was aiming at a particular warden) she stresses the inadvertence of the act (she meant to do it, but to someone else) and in so doing negates the antagonistic, frustrated and violent feelings that her narrative, at first, presents. Arthur Harding, on the other hand,

celebrates his violent youth, he even says, '*Borstal made me fitter, stronger, taller and when I went back to my associates I found I was something of a hero.*'⁷

Much of Harding's crime narrative describes not his skill, but his power as the 'captain' of a group of thieves and an active participant in protection rackets and armed robbery. His narrative in the second half of his book, like those of so many of today's criminals, describe skirmishes between rival gangs, the regular feuds and fights. In contrast, Shirley Pitts's narrative is not characterised by her fights or her violence (although her transcript does feature the violence of other people, including her brother Charlie which is condemned) and this perhaps is the most significant gender difference of the two tales. Shirley Pitts is less concerned with vendettas and how she resolved them. Instead, she focuses on how she came to learn her trade, the skills she acquired to become a criminal, how she got through it all. In brief, how she made it in a man's world. Despite this crucial 'gender' variable, her story has much more in common with Chic Conwell's story as told in Edwin Sutherland's The Professional Thief by a Professional Thief⁸. Chic Conwell, a professional thief, ex drug addict and ex con from Philadelphia and Boston who worked for twenty years, the period between the two great wars, at a range of criminal occupations including pimp, pickpocket, shoplifter and 'confidant'. The story told by Conwell includes discussion of the roles, scams and language of his associates and the technique adopted to avoid being caught.

Perhaps one of the reasons Shirley Pitts's story appears to have more direct connections with Chic Conwell's account of thieving, rather than with that of Arthur Harding is because, despite the geographical and cultural differences, Chic Conwell's narrative, as recorded and analysed by Edwin Sutherland, focuses on the business of theft.⁹ Indeed, Edwin Sutherland's purpose in taking down the life story of Chic Conwell, was to add weight to his concept of 'differential association'¹⁰ which implied that criminals were made and not born, and suggested that the context of criminal association was the determining factor in whether or not individuals got involved in crime in the first place. Additionally, Edwin Sutherland also attempted to substantiate, through the life story of

Chic Conwell, the notion that deviance depends on context and that criminals receive instruction from peers and associates not only in the techniques of crime but also when it comes to the motivational values favourable to committing the crime. It may be that such a focus on the crime business results in the fact that Chic Conwell's story seems less bound up with an account of violence as was the case in Harding's account, or all those post war British crime stories about the Krays etc. which celebrate crime as the profession of violence. When speaking of crime as a business, Conwell doesn't place emphasis on violence but on the routine nature of the work. He remarks, '*there is little thrill about it - it is no more thrilling than the work of a factory slave*' and goes on to discuss how wits, 'front', speaking ability and manual dexterity are crucial to the trade of crime. Both Chic Conwell's and Shirley Pitts's narratives imply that they respect violence, even though they may not personally engage with such violence. Instead, their relationship to thieving is planned, calculated and above all designed to make money. As professional thieves they are rarely out of control, or overwhelmed and visually provoked into crime (as discussed in Section Two), their response is not spontaneous but professionally organised and thought through.

While there are moments where violence is featured, the machismo of the world of crime is reinforced by the notion of the status of the consummate criminal professional, rather than the violent man or woman. It is here that Chic Conwell's story has parallels with Shirley Pitts's account of her criminal escapades. His techniques, dress codes, language, his relationship to associates with criminal specialisation and other abilities are shared by Shirley Pitts and become the obsessive focus of both narratives. Perhaps Shirley Pitts's narrative is more aware of ideas about sexual masquerade than Conwell's account of 'front'¹¹ which involved dressing up and presenting a strong male sexual persona. All incidents of fraud involve some level of masquerade¹² but, perhaps, the crucial difference is that whilst all professional thieves may see themselves as deliberately fraudulent, acting to secure the scam, Chic Conwell does not appear to see his gender identity as also fraudulent (as some gay men have described their experience in common with Shirley Pitts). Using Judith Butler's redefinition that, '*gender is the*

*repeated stylisation of the body ... [it] is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the specific surface of bodies*¹³, Shirley Pitts's in her transcript could appear to have understood another level of her own fraudulence, i.e. what was counterfeit in femininity and her own use of it. Yet she had no choice but to inhabit her identity and repeat her behaviour. The job demanded it and, in common with most women, when Shirley Pitts rummaged through her wardrobe in the morning she was confronted with the task of choosing her identity for the day. As Judith Williamson has commented, getting dressed means one is:

*'not merely faced with a choice of what to wear, I am faced with a choice of images: the difference between a smart suit and a pair of overalls, a leather skirt and a cotton dress, is not just one of fabric and style but one of identity. You know perfectly well that you will be seen differently for the whole day, depending on what you put on: you will appear as a particular kind of woman with one particular identity which excludes others (sic). The black leather skirt, rather rules out girlish innocence, oily overalls tends to exclude sophistication, ditto smart suit and radical feminism. Often I have wished I could put them all on together, or appear simultaneously in every possible outfit, just to say "how dare you think any one of these is me (sic). But also, see, I can be all of them."*¹⁴

Caroline Evans has identified (in her discussion of the fashion designer Schiaparelli) that some women get, *'painfully caught in the role of masquerade, a defensive stratagem in a male world that did not always welcome women as equals'*¹⁵, which may help in describing the difference between Shirley Pitts and the average woman. Evans goes on to discuss Judith Butler's (often misunderstood) concept of performativity and to make an observation that seems pertinent to Shirley Pitts's life story:

*'We cannot pick and mix identities only outfits. But some outfits can make explicit, even pleasurable, the working mechanism of the masquerade, with its potential for both comedy and tragedy.'*¹⁶

A Woman In A Man's World?

The life of a woman in a man's world is complex and Shirley's relationship to her criminal peers was difficult and warrants review. So too does her outsider status which rendered her 'doubly deviant'.¹⁷ How did Shirley Pitts respond to socially constructed definitions of deviance? Perhaps the way to comprehend her understanding of deviance is to look at what she says about men. The only men Shirley Pitts says she actually respects are her father, brother and hard men like the Krays. Once she makes the move into professional shoplifting and rolling, she uses her sexuality, not violence, to earn a living. Perhaps here lies the distinct difference between the discourse of the male criminal when compared to that of the female criminal. Shirley Pitts's account of being a female criminal is so tied up with sexuality, it is often articulated through it, because she sees her sexuality as a commodity to be used in her crimes in the same way many other female 'swindlers' have done so.¹⁸ Yet Shirley Pitts is remarkably detached from her sexuality, seeing herself as men might see her. She describes herself as being sold on the street '*as a virgin*' (Appendix 1, p. 19) but finds this humorous and not insulting.

She does not discuss how this made her feel because her ambivalence is unstated. Instead, she laughs it off as yet another way in which she conned people. In fact this behaviour is almost presented as part of professional practice, and she never talks, as one might expect, about her fear or her distress about what is happening to her. Her laughter, which can be heard, at regular intervals, on many of the tapes she made with me, her defiant laughter speaks more powerfully than the words she actually utters. Yet her humour often turns to cynicism and irony. When she talks of meeting a new girl, '*very young and beautiful*' (Appendix 1, p. 37) and selling her on the street, she says, '*she's a new face and that's how it used to go.*' (Appendix 1, p. 37)

Shirley doesn't discuss the rights or wrongs of selling teenagers or herself for sex, or the brutality of such a lifestyle. She merely accepts that this was one way to make a living in the world she inhabited, and that she needed to be professional about it. Instead, she is more concerned to explain the way she organised her cabs and minders to achieve her goal of extortion, than she is on discussing how she actually *felt* at the time.

Shirley Pitts never fully accepts her unequal relationship to the men around her. She is deeply ambivalent about men at times. On the one hand, she accepts she needs them for protection '*We always had a man, we had to have a man working with us because of the night time... in case...*' (Appendix 1, p. 21) Yet, on the other hand, it is obvious that she surrounds herself with men who were as likely to beat her up as to protect her. Her masquerade of femininity was not therefore simply to hide her own power and anxieties, but she recognised that men are dangerous. Moving within an extremely violent milieu, Shirley is often badly abused by the men in her life. She talks of her love life as a 'disaster' area and openly admits that she went for anyone who reminded her of her own father. Her idealisation of her absent father is striking. Indeed, her father and brother, who both died prematurely, appear to be the only men she trusted and these have the benefit of being more perfect, more vivid, in the unchanging nostalgic memories she holds of them. Even with Chris Hawkins, the father of five of her seven children, she feels that she might as well be on her own. She upturns traditional morality when she says to her long term partner: '*I don't need a bed partner. I can go to bed with anybody. I don't have to go to bed with you, cos the kids are yours.*' (Appendix 1, p. 55)

The financial independence she gains from her crimes means that she experiences problems associated with the sexually independent 'New Woman' of the 1960s, in as much as she was fashionable, sexually and emotionally independent and, as can be seen from the above quotation, actually involved in the process of questioning what men are really for! At times Shirley really does act the part of a financially independent and sexually attractive 'new woman', but at other times she recognises the contradictions of

her position. Her precarious new womanhood was the cause of many fights with Chris Hawkins that she describes so vividly in her transcript and often took her back to older images of woman battling against male aggression.

Caroline Evans, in her article on the fashion designer Shiaparelli, discusses how the new woman can become a source of anxiety in as much as, *'she destabilises the association between appearance and identity.'*¹⁹ Shirley Pitts's relationship with Chris Hawkins can be seen to have destabilised his fantasies and desires in terms of her experience. The way that he made her feel in terms of her own needs and desires is very graphically illustrated especially when she describes their relationship gradually broke down. It is at this point that she is reminded that she is of the weaker sex physically. She almost admires violence and seems thrilled when the Krays offer to bash up her partner if he doesn't stop beating her. She does not only respect violence. She also believes that complex matters can easily be resolved by simple or direct action, which is typical of criminal subculture. Even when she is being badly beaten up, she waits until her husband is asleep to retaliate. This action is not surprising because having grown up in a criminal subculture, Shirley Pitts believed that individuals had to take their chance when they can as well as their punishment and the consequence of their actions. She adopted such attitudes and this persona herself.

Similarly, she calls her brother *'a real man'* (Appendix 1, p. 50) because he won't put up with her partner's behaviour when he takes her away from Chris Hawkins to set up home elsewhere. Despite her exceptional status, then, she is nevertheless still a victim of patriarchal relations, in an almost 'closed' subculture which gives women few options that do not involve the protection of another man. Yet Shirley's deviance in terms of the identity she created for herself is not just against the law, but also against the laws of this subculture. So she even defies the brother she loved the most (although not to the extent of alienating him). She simply refuses to act either as a gangster's moll or a subservient wife. But she is quite careful in the way she presents her new identity - carefree, brave and bold. She sees herself as a girl with a lot of 'bottle' (i.e. courage)

and this courage is what her brother Adgie clearly respects. Shirley, on the other hand, does not respect women who fail to access their own courage. Once more Shirley uses her own inverted morality when judging her mother. While Shirley Pitts pretended to be a whore to take money from men, her mother would sleep with men simply '*for a gin a tonic*' (Appendix 1, p. 46). This infuriates Shirley: she is disgusted by this behaviour because her mother isn't in control of the economic exchange and, in Shirley's opinion, literally gives her Self away. Shirley at times judges her mother as another male criminal would judge her, but there are differences too, and unlike her brothers she does continue to speak to her mother rather than ostracising her with silence. In Shirley's view it would be more honest if her mother simply was a prostitute or showed enough 'courage' to go out stealing, because the way she behaved made her less than a woman, less than a prostitute, less than a person. In fact, Shirley frequently describes her mother as an 'old tramp' (meaning vagrant). Shirley Pitts's feelings of disgust are given more emphasis as her mother gets older and her sexual behaviour becomes less dignified.

In her own life Shirley Pitts is caught in a double bind - resisting the roles offered to her by the dominant culture as well as by her own criminal subculture. It is the way that she negotiates this double bind that gives her both a sense of pride whilst also damaging her. She is proud that she cannot be caught and that she could slither her way out of a straightjacket. Even in her constant house moving, her restlessness appears as a physical incarnation of her desire never to be fixed, never pinned down. All the obstacles of traditional femininity that Shirley ends up with - children to feed, a partner to adore for a brief interlude and then to tolerate, bills to pay - do not stop Shirley. She weaves her way through them. For this reason it is not possible to simply call Shirley a victim of patriarchy. She would never have described herself in this way. She is far more accurately seen as a survivor of a system that was informed by patriarchal relations. She may never have been completely beaten it, but at times felt she was able to con and to cheat her way through it.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ FOUCAULT, M., The History of Sexuality Volume One: An Introduction, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976, p. 59.
- ² See Preface and essays in FOSTER, H. (Ed), Postmodern Culture, London and Sydney, Pluto Press, 1983.
- ³ SMART, C., 'Feminist Approaches to Criminology or Post Modern Woman Meets Atavistic Man' in GELSTHORPE, L., and MORRIS, A., (Eds) Feminist Perspectives in Criminology, Bucks Open University Press, 1990, p. 82. - *'The core element of feminist postmodernism is the rejection of the one reality which arises from "the falsely universalising perspective of the master" (Harding, 1987:188). But unlike standpoint feminism it does not seek to impose a different unitary reality. Rather it refers to subjugated knowledges, which tell different stories and have different specificities. Thus the aim of feminism ceases to be the establishment of the feminist truth and becomes the deconstruction of truth and analysis of the power effects which claims to truth entail. So there is a shift away from treating knowledge as ultimately objective or, at least, the final standard and hence able to reveal the concealed truth, towards recognising that knowledge is part of power and that power is ubiquitous. Feminist knowledge, therefore becomes part of a multiplicity of resistances.'*
- ⁴ Described in SAMUEL, R., 'History Workshop 1966-1980', in SAMUEL, R. (Ed), People's History and Socialist Theory, London, History Workshop Series, Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1981, back cover of book.
- ⁵ SAMUEL, R., East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding, History Workshop Series, London, Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1981.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 75.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 75.
- ⁸ SUTHERLAND, E., The Professional Thief by a Professional Thief, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1937.
- ⁹ SUTHERLAND, E., states in The Professional Thief by a Professional Thief, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1937, p.140; *'Professional stealing as a business is much like any other business. The conversation among thieves, in a police station, prison or hangout is concerned principally with their business, and is no different in that respect from the conversation of monument salesmen in their meetings. Business possibilities, conditions and returns are the foremost subjects of conversation, and just as the salesman learns of fertile territory, new methods, new laws, which affects the business so does the thief. It invokes as much hard work as any other business.'*
- ¹⁰ SUTHERLAND, E., 'Development of a Theory', in COHEN, A., LINDESMITH, A., and CHUESSLER, K., (Ed), The Sutherland Papers, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1942.
- ¹¹ DE GRAVE, K., Swindler, Spy, Rebel. The Confidence Woman in Nineteenth Century America, Columbia and London, University of Missouri Press, 1995, p. 11. Kathleen De Grave suggests: *'In essence, the confidence woman, like the confidence man, uses disguise, deception and manipulation to get what she wants, and as with him, an aura of comedy surrounds her. She, like the confidence man is a storyteller, has a gift for making people believe - whatever she wants. But there the similarity ends and the stories, a confidence woman tells, are substantially different from a confidence man's stories...'*
- ¹² *'Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask. The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I drew the line between "womanliness" and masquerade". My suggestion is not however, that there is any such difference: whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.'* RIVIERE, J., 'Womanliness as Masquerade', reprinted in BURGIN, U., (Ed), Formations of Fantasy, London and New York, Methuen, pp. 35-44.
- ¹³ BUTLER, J., Gender Trouble Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, London and New York, Routledge, 1990, p. 33.
- ¹⁴ WILLIAMSON, J., 'A Piece of the Action: Images of "Woman" in the Photography of Cindy Sherman', Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture, London and New York, Marion Boyars, 1987, pp. 91-92.
- ¹⁵ EVANS, C., 'Masks, Mirrors and Mannequins: Elsa Schiaparelli and the Decentred Subject', Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture, Vol. 3, Issue 1, March 1999, p. 13.
- ¹⁶ EVANS, C., 'Masks, Mirrors and Mannequins: Elsa Schiaparelli and the Decentred Subject', Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture, Vol. 3, Issue 1, March 1999, p. 13.
- ¹⁷ LLOYD, A., Doubly Deviant, Doubly Damned, Society's Treatment of Violent Women, London, Penguin Books, 1995. Ann Lloyd says: *'It is women's reproductive biology which defines them as other than men... women are thus off centre deviant.'* P.XVII. Women are

generally more law-abiding than men so when women break the law they are thus construed as doubly deviant and if violent, Ann Lloyd says they are construed as 'unnatural evil monsters, witch-like and cunning, deadlier than the male.' p.XVIII.

¹⁸ DE GRAVE, K., Swindler, Spy, Rebel, The Confidence Woman in Nineteenth Century America, Columbia and London, University of Missouri Press, 1995, pp. 12-14.

¹⁹ EVANS, C., 'Masks, Mirrors and Mannequins: Elsa Schiaparelli and the Decentred Subject', Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture, Vol. 3, Issue 1, March 1999, p. 15.

SECTION ONE**CHAPTER FOUR****Shirley Pitts And The Criminal Masquerade: Stealing Femininity**

*'Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask. The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I drew the line between "womanliness" and "masquerade". My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference: whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.'*¹

The masquerade of womanliness at the heart of Shirley Pitts's identity was the lie that told the truth. The way she wore her femininity was particularly significant, because it was often articulated through the expensive feminine attire that she shoplifted and dressed in.

Shirley Pitts did not *look* like the outsider she really was to friends and strangers. Perhaps Shirley's biggest accomplishment was that she become a natural at the game of masquerade, precisely because her outsider status forced her to learn how to 'blend' in. Within her own criminal milieu Shirley Pitts was perceived as feminine but a criminal by her male colleagues and 'as one of them' by her other female shoplifting cronies, who also regarded her as different because they saw her as more skilled².

Shirley Pitts used her beauty and 'feminine' appearance to help her create many illusions: conventional girl; conventional shopper; conventional marriage partner - even producing numerous children - to make the illusion look more real than it was. She lived outside the rules of conventional society and conventional marriage, not least because within the context of patriarchal relations her chosen occupation demanded this of her, and also insisted that she should keep her exceptional status partially hidden.

Perhaps this is why Shirley Pitts inhabited her womanliness so forcefully, for she appears to have worn it as a mask, in the sense Joan Riviere means.

Shirley Pitts literally stole femininity from the best shops in town. Her inability to afford the right to own and wear such clothes was masked by the fact that the clothes looked, and were, real and she looked as if she had been born to wear them. Unlike the drag queen in the film Paris is Burning (1990)³, who assured viewers, 'Honey, you just *know* whether its bought or stolen', most people who did not know Shirley Pitts never had cause to register this distinction in respect of her appearance. Becker and Gatti, who write about voguing, comment that voguing involves issues about 'disguise' and 're-negotiation' of reality. At their balls, voguers 'compete for realness' and thus 'deconstruct the concept of authenticity'.⁴

Shirley Pitts was clearly not a drag queen but a homevestite, a term used by Louise Kaplan to describe someone who masquerades as follows:

'Just as not everyone who cross-dresses is a transvestite, not everyone who dresses in the clothes of his or her own sex is, of course, a homevestite...

A woman like Emma Bovary, who acts or dresses exactly like some stereotypical notion of a woman, may be a female homevestite, a woman who is unsure of her femininity, a woman who is afraid to openly acknowledge her masculine strivings...

*Lilian [Zavitzioanos's patient] was a kleptomaniac who also stole books, underwear, stockings, jewellery, dresses and anything that could enhance her appearance as a woman.'*⁵

Shirley Pitts kept her masculine strivings well hidden and so she did not only steal clothes to enhance her own appearance, but also that of other women. She was a professional thief and stole the most expensive items that would get her the most mark

up in hard cash. The majority of her customers were women but she also sold stolen clothes to men for themselves, and for their wives. In order to make sure she was not recognised in the shops, she did engage with strategies of 'dressing up' as a woman, even when she was not on the job or there was no demand for her to play around with her appearance. She simply enjoyed it. Consequently, it could be argued that masquerade became such a central feature of her identity, that it was perverse or 'perversely compliant', a concept that will be looked at again in Section Two.

Shirley was very self aware of her feminine image and appears to have spent a lot of time, when not 'working', thinking about her different 'looks'. She appears to have seen her body as a canvas on which she painted her images of self display.⁶ Caroline Evans, who has written about performativity and theatricality in women suggests that such behaviour:

*'may show an understanding of fashion as performance, or masquerade: the wearer creates herself as spectacle, but the moment she displays herself she also disguises herself: 'the masquerade in flaunting feminine, holds it at a distance [Doane 1982:81']'. By putting a distance between herself and her observers she makes a space within which to manoeuvre and determine the meanings of the show.'*⁸

Shirley Pitts's homeovestism involved these strategies too but, unlike the New York voguers at their balls featured in Paris is Burning, Pitts, however, did not make overt her strategies for competing for 'realness'. In fact, the authenticity of Shirley's presentation was not even compromised by the fact that her clothing and accessories were shoplifted, except in symbolic terms. Yet, when talking about the 'femininity' and feminine attire worn by Shirley, the whole discussion of 'authenticity' - articulated through notions raised by Becker and Gatti about 'realness' - seems highly appropriate. As Stephen Heath points out:

*'In the masquerade the woman mimics an authentic - genuine - womanliness, but then authentic womanliness is such a mimicry, is the masquerade ('they are the same thing') ... the masquerade is a representation of femininity but then femininity is a representation of the representation of the woman.'*⁹

Riviere describes how some of her clients, professional women of exceptional status, put on a masquerade of overemphasised feminine behaviour in order to fend off the charge of masculinity. Shirley Pitts appears to have adopted a similar approach to that when, in the company of other criminals - usually men - she used homeovestism,¹⁰ to make herself plausible to them as a woman, even though her access to them, in the first place, was usually generated by the fact that she was a criminal. Kathleen De Grave makes an important distinction between the criminal and non criminal masquerade when she observes:

'How the [confidence woman's] act differs from the more mundane masquerade becomes quite complicated, but the essential difference - and it's a big one - between any woman playing her socially assigned role and the confidence woman is that the confidence woman writes her own script'.¹¹

Indeed, male criminals recommended her to other male criminals because she was a good professional, but also because her status as a beautiful woman meant she could enter and 'pass' through some arenas where they would have been suspect. Shirley Pitts's femininity then, increasingly became part of her criminality, and reinforced her unusual or 'outsider' status within male criminal subculture.

Despite this outsider status, when telling her story, and in charting her very own tale of survival, Shirley Pitts, nevertheless, did manage implicitly to construct within her narrative a conventional model of personal progress which fits the conventions of 'straight' autobiographical discourse. This is not surprising, for as Carolyn Steedman

identifies, when gazing back at the past *'one often charts that "upward" trajectory whereby one has managed, despite the trials and travails that have come one's way to prevail, to come into being.'*¹²

Conclusion

Ultimately Shirley's story concerns the double helping of deviance¹³ she survived but neither really as one of the 'boys' (as she was not male) nor as one of the 'girls' (as she earned her living from crime and was exceptionally good at it), but as always somewhat ambiguous. To cover up her ambiguity she always looked like she fitted in better than anyone else. This is why it is fitting to suggest the appropriateness of the discussion of the role of the masquerade in the life of the professional female criminal, as defined by Joan Riviere. Indeed, it is interesting to note that in Joan Riviere's original writing on masquerade, she actually uses the metaphor of the thief:

*'womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it - much as a thief [my emphasis] will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not stolen the goods. The reader may now ask how I define womanliness and the "masquerade". My suggestion is not, however, that there is any difference whether radical or superficial, they are the same things...'*¹⁴

What is interesting about Shirley Pitts is that she really is a thief who traded in identity, because she stole the outfits for both men and women, outfits that clothed the identities of her colleagues and associates. Indeed, her knowledge and expertise about how to mould and dress female identity was often what she sold to her punters. She sometimes presented herself to them as a personal stylist: an arbiter of how to mould the feminine. Thus she often advised them about designer outfits, the design of which were sometimes outside the realm of the comprehension of her clientele. She stole the very

commodities that have been designed to create new identities for New Women and sold them back to a social group that had aspirations to consume images and clothes they could not legitimately afford. In this sense then Shirley Pitts's contribution to her criminal community did more than subvert ordinary capitalist relations of trade: she also subverted class relations articulated through taste. It may be true that Shirley Pitts couldn't buy class, and she couldn't buy style, because she could afford neither. However, she certainly knew how to steal and wear both these things and, in her stolen clothes, she lived her counterfeit identity without effort. Her story not only reveals the inauthenticity of female identity at its core but also, perhaps without meaning to, the false reality of class understanding. Shirley Pitts always looked classy but could never be respectable. Perhaps what saved her was that she did not want to be respectable (just rich)! Shirley Pitts disguised herself to aid her shoplifting, but even when she was not working she continued to masquerade among her friends who saw her peel off the layers and put on the new identities without giving a second thought to concerns about 'constancy' (tradition) or 'authenticity' (the real McCoy). In this sense Shirley Pitts was always a 'subject in process', changing her opinions and her identity all the time.

One of Shirley Pitts's skills, lay in her ability to hide her strength, obscuring her cunning underneath an overtly feminine facade. These feminine postures and performances persuaded people who surrounded her that she was authentic, so she got them to *do* things for her as well as accept her as a plausible personality. Perhaps she was forced to learn such skills simply to survive in a world of crime mainly controlled and dominated by men. Certainly, when it suited her, Shirley could become one of the boys, who understood what it was all about, or one of the girls, if she felt she needed to be feminine so as not to threaten the masculinity of the men she worked with.

Ultimately, Shirley Pitts's story is an account of the masquerade lived with knowing consciousness that femininity does not really exist, but conversely with a deep awareness that feminine seduction is often more effective than straightforward confrontation or subversion. Shirley Pitts defined herself as a criminal and a woman. Conversely, male criminals such as Arthur Harding and Chic Conwell, for example,

rarely had to consider the status of their gender in relationship to the crimes they committed. Shirley Pitts used seduction as a strategy of deception to help her avoid being categorised as deviant, even when working at a criminal career traditionally associated with deviance and with men. It was Shirley Pitts's ability to achieve such a seductively feminine self presentation, that ultimately made her such a successful criminal. Yet she certainly was never overtly the drag queen. Shirley was aware of the lie at the heart of a femininity, the secret that gender is a fictional construct and that none of it is real. Yet her ability to keep this secret to herself, which was part of her inherent political conservatism, is one of the reasons why she was so successful in her chosen career as a professional criminal. It should be remembered that she never confessed because she did not seek understanding. She knew seduction worked better than confrontation. Seduction may also be at the heart of the reason why Shirley Pitts, alive now only in print and in memory, continues to remain an enigma to many people who knew and worked with her.

ENDNOTES

¹ RIVIERE, J., 'Womanliness as Masquerade', reprinted in BURGIN, U., (Ed), Formations of Fantasy, London & New York, Methuen, p. 35-44.

² BECKER, H. S., Outsiders, New York, The Free Press, 1963, p. 9. As Becker points out: '*The deviant is one to who the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label*'

³ LIVINGSTON, J., Paris Burning, Paramount, 1990.

⁴ BECQUER, M. & GATTI, J., 'Elements of Vogue' Third Text 16/7, Autumn/Winter, 1991, p. 71.

⁵ KAPLAN, L., Masquerades. Female Perversions, London, Pandora Press, 1991, p. 251.

⁶ This paraphrases Caroline Evans observation about the fashion designer Schiaparelli when she says that 'women's bodies are the canvases upon which she paints her images of self display' in EVANS, C., 'Masks, Mirrors and Mannequins: Elsa Schiaparelli and the Decentred Subject', Fashion theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture, Vol. 3, Issue 1, March 1999, p. 8.

⁷ DOANE, M., 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator', Screen Vol. 23, No. 3-4, Sept-Oct, 1982, p. 74-87.

⁸ EVANS, C., 'Masks, Mirrors and Mannequins: Elsa Schiaparelli and the Decentred Subject', Fashion theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture, Vol. 3, Issue 1, March 1999, p. 15.

⁹ HEATH, S., 'Joan Riviere and the Masquerade', in Burgin et al (Ed), Functions of Fantasy, London and New York, Methuen, 1986, p. 49 and 53.

¹⁰ KAPLAN, L., Masquerades. Female Perversions, London, Pandora Press, 1991, p. 251.

¹¹ DE GRAVE, K., Swindler, Spy, Rebel. The Confidence Woman in Nineteenth Century America, Columbia and London, University of Missouri, 1995, p. 12.

¹² STEEDMAN, C., Past Tenses Essays Writing Autobiography and History, London, Rivers Oram, 1992, p. 47.

¹³ See discussion of female deviance in LLOYD, A., Doubly Deviant, Doubly Damned, London, Penguin, 1985, Chapter 9.

¹⁴ RIVIERE, J., 'Womanliness as Masquerade', reprinted in International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 10, 1929, p. 303-13.

SECTION ONE

CHAPTER FIVE

Memory as Discourse - Reviewing the Memories of Shirley Pitts

In presenting Shirley Pitts's oral history as Appendix 1, this thesis does not attempt to counterpose authentic lived experience against other accounts of deviance. Rather, the thesis supports the understanding that a more sophisticated approach to shoplifting depends upon considering as wide a field of material as possible. Foucault's work is useful because it demonstrates the value of perspectival accounts of historical experience. He suggests that:

*'a genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from that subjection, render them, that is capable of opposition of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse. It is based on a reactivating of local knowledges - of minor knowledges, as Deleuze might call them - in opposition to the scientific hierarchisation of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power: this, then, is the project of this disordered and fragmentary genealogies.'*¹

It is the contention of this investigation that shoplifting is not one type of behaviour but a word constantly used in different discourses to describe many different acts and many different types of behaviour. Foucault's genealogical approach seems to support this. By introducing the oral testimony of Shirley Pitts, which is after all an 'unofficial', personal and subjective account of shoplifting, the investigation deliberately raises questions about the value and significance of subjugated knowledge.

As discussed in Chapter One, there may be methodological problems with oral history. These problems concern the way the editor/interpreter informs the construction of the oral history transcript and the relation to official history. Also, the issue of the informant's self-eulogising or self-aggrandisement could be significant within the context of lapses of memory about less favourable incidents. When dealing with memory we are always dealing with fantasy, with forgetting and with impairment. Memory is not pure or impartial or linear. Inevitably it is fragmentary, contradictory and sometimes inverted and/or invented. Occasionally, the truth it reveals may not always be the 'truth' intended for revelation, or the facts submitted for scrutiny may be overshadowed by the significance of what, to the informant, was minor detail. In other words such memories are a constructed and hierachal text like everything else. For this reason they warrant review as text.

Memory as Historical Discourse

Many psychologists believe that memory is an imperfect 'machine'. Indeed, John Dean's memory of a meeting with President Nixon has been compared by a number of psychologists with an actual tape recording of this Watergate meeting in question. The psychologist Ulric Neisser, who compared the two transcripts, concluded:

*'Comparison with the transcript shows that hardly a word of Dean's account is true. Nixon did not say any of the things attributed to him here: he didn't ask Dean to sit down, he didn't say Haldeman had kept him posted, he didn't say Dean had done a good job (at least not in that part of the conversation): he didn't say anything about Liddy or the indictments. Nor had Dean himself said the things he later describes himself as saying: that he couldn't take the credit, that the matter might unravel some day etc. (Indeed, he said just the opposite later on: 'Nothing is going to come crashing down') His account is plausible but entirely incorrect.'*²

Daniel Goleman, in his review of John Dean's memory goes further than asserting that it was 'incorrect' and suggests that Dean's inaccuracy is not about lying so much as self deception, arising from egoism. He comments:

*'Dean's testimony really describes not the meeting itself, but his fantasy of it: the meeting as it should have been. "In Dean's mind" says Neisser, "Nixon should have been glad that the indictments stopped with Liddy; Haldeman should have told Nixon what a great job Dean was doing: most of all, praising him should have been the first order of business". In addition, Dean should have told Nixon that the cover up might unravel, as it eventually did instead of telling him it was a great success (as Dean actually did). The stitching that holds together such pseudo memories, is in this case wishful thinking... Are we all like this?... Is everyone's memory constructed, staged self-centred? A single case history is scarcely the basis for a scientific answer to that question. Yet, Neisser conjectures there is a bit of John Dean in all of us. His ambition reorganised his recollections: even when he tries to tell the truth, he can't help emphasising his own role in every event. A different man in the same position might have observed more dispassionately, reflected on his experiences more thoughtfully, and reported them more accurately. Unfortunately, such traits of character are rare. Dean may have been knowingly twisting the truth, or he may have believed his own story and misled himself. Whether his dissembling was knowing or not, his reconstruction of events betrays a selective recall in action.'*³

Self-delusion and egoism, resulting in an altered perception of the real conditions of existence, are identified by Goleman in the above quotation as the central failure of memory. The 'history workshop' approach to memory is far more positive and obviously quite different from the psychological account. The idea of 'faulty' memory (based on the machine metaphor) for example, is not part of the history workshop movement's discourse not least because the method looks beyond 'truth-telling' and the connection to autobiography. Indeed, it tries to positively uncover the way memory

slips and reconstructions shape our present day lives and identities. For example, the fact that hop pickers remember the summers as sunny, when weather reports at the same time show a quite different picture, is not seen as distortion of the truth, but something that will allow oral historian Gilda O'Neill to reflect on the way nostalgia has shaped the recordings of memories of the past. She goes on, like so many other oral historians, to uncover nostalgia and to discuss it⁴. Similarly, writers such as Ronald Fraser in In Search of A Past (1985)⁵ as well as Carolyn Steedman in Landscape for A Good Woman (1986)⁶ make positive capital out of looking at the lapses and redefinitions of memory. Their books have synthesised historical, autobiographical and even psychoanalytic formulations in their approach to memory. Treatment of historical memory, which embraces discussion of material culture alongside psychic experience (revealed via discussion of Freudian and Lacanian formulations about symbols and slips) does not seek to uncover the 'truth' of the past. As Elizabeth Wilson has observed:

*'psychoanalysis introduced a whole new dimension to the concept of confession. It did much more than simply unveil the "past" recovering the "truth". It explored the way in which the recollection of the past involves a constant reworking of the notion of "self". The recall of the past, its dredging up from the unconscious and into memory is not a simple process of recall, but is rather the recreation of something new.'*⁷

The treatment of historical memory looks at the epistemological and methodological implications for historiography of bringing into play ideas about the desire, the unconscious and psychic truth. It seeks to illustrate Susan Sontag's rephrasing of Nietzsche's point that, *'there are no facts, only interpretations'*⁸ and seeks to enrich *interpretation* of the past, by uncovering rich layers of meaning. As Carolyn Steedman puts it:

*'We all return to memories and dreams like this again and again: the story we all tell of our own life is reshaped around them. But the point doesn't lie there, back in the past, back in the last time at which they happened: the only point lies in the interpretation. The past is reused through the agency of social information, and that interpretation of it can only be made with what people know of the social world and their place within it.'*⁹

In both Fraser's and Steedman's account of their lives, psychoanalytic formulations are embraced to look at the place of fantasy in history and to emphasise the contradictions of memory in a positive way. Indeed, slips of memory, absences and nostalgic reconstructions are interrogated using concepts and methods from psychoanalysis to analyse, illustrate, explain and interpret personal experience. The point of this psychoanalytic emphasis, incorporated within personal histories and autobiographies, when transcribing and translating memory, has parallels with the approach taken by some critics to photography. For example, Jo Spence and Patricia Holland in Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photographs¹⁰ argue that the complexity of our visual experience is stored not only in the photographic poses we adopt and keep, but also in what the photographs conjure up, perhaps triggering reference to those images we don't take and store in the family album. According to Terence Kilmartin this effect is also described by Proust in the latter's descriptions of, *'memory's conflicting photographs'*¹¹. The strategies underlying the oral histories and autobiographies and the approach to photography mentioned, share a common recognition of the fact that objects - context and experiences, the bricks and mortar of material experiences - are emotion holders of both conscious, preconscious and unconscious memories. In Remembrance of Things Past, Proust discusses the *'advantages of an imperfect memory'*¹² and the *'terrible recreative powers of memory'*¹³. He also goes on, as Walter Benjamin points out, to talk about *'voluntary'* and *'involuntary'* memory (*'memoire involuntaire'*)¹⁴. The latter metaphor is an important one, as Benjamin recognises, when he raises it for attention. Freud suggests in Beyond the Pleasure Principle that memory fragments, *'are often most powerful and most enduring when the incident that left them behind was one that never*

*entered consciousness*¹⁵. Psychoanalytic theory strives to understand the nature of these incidents, particularly shocks and traumas suggesting that a protective aspect of the mind shields against certain incidents and stimuli. Yet, the notion of 'involuntary memory' does not make such strict distinctions as does Freud between preconscious (that which can be made conscious) and unconscious memory (that which can rarely or never be made conscious). Therefore, for the purposes of historical interrogation, the notion of 'involuntary' memory presents a useful metaphor to discuss what Proust described as, '*the vast structures of recollection*'¹⁶. It is not only the taste and smell of Proust's Madeleine, but also dreams which, according to Freud, '*endeavour to master the stimulus retroactively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis*'¹⁷. Indeed, the historian, like the psychoanalyst, may want to trace the underlying structures of experience that provoke memories, but obviously has a different use and purpose for discussion of the detail revealed, which is why Benjamin's less precise metaphor about the sort of consciousness 'involuntary memory' invokes, may be useful.

When offering a succinct and elegant account of the power of visual memory and its relationship to the historical method, Raphael Samuel avoids the negative psychological approach to memory that virtually turns the psychologist into a policeman of the Self, and instead utilises both Benjamin's and Freud's approach to memory as text. Raphael Samuel engages in a critical way with slips, contradictions and absences, to produce a painterly canvas, almost equating it with the landscape of being. He explains his method:

'that memory, so far from being merely a passive receptacle or storage system, an image bank of the past, is rather an active shaping force, that it is dynamic - what it contrives symptomatically to forget is as important as what it remembers - and that it is dialectically related to historical thought, rather than being some kind of negative other to it... It is also my argument that memory is historically conditioned, changing colour and shape according to the emergence of the moment; that so far

*from being handed down in the timeless form of 'tradition', it is progressively altered from generation to generation. It bears the impress of experience, in however mediated a way. It is stamped with the ruling passions of its time. Like history, memory is inherently revisionist and never more chameleon than when it appears to stay the same. On the other side of the divide, history involves a series of erasures, emendations and amalgamations quite similar to those which Freud sets out in his account of 'screen memoir', where the unconscious mind, splitting, telescoping, displacing and projecting, transports incidents from one time register to another and materialises thought in imagery. On the one hand, history splinters and divides what in the original may have presented itself as a whole, abstract, here a nugget of descriptive detail, there a memorable scene. On the other hand, history composites. It integrates what in the original may have been divergent, synthesises different classes of information and plays different order of experience against one another. It brings the half-forgotten back to life, very much in the manner of dream-thoughts. And it creates a consecutive narrative out of fragments, imposing order on chaos, and producing images far clearer than reality ever could be.'*¹⁸

Samuel's account of memory emphasises positive shifts, particularly in the way memory is filled up with the minutiae of history in creating images. His complex analysis of memory offers a way to understand how history shapes subjectivity. He stresses the dynamic personal relationships that remembering historical detail involves and invokes. In brief, he puts back human *experience* so often obscured by official histories of events, into the understanding of history.

Being taped while terminally ill, Shirley Pitts, rendered almost passive by cancer, relished this *dynamic* activity of remembering which, for her, broke up the depressing routine of injections, nurses and all the things sick bed culture brings with it. In the process of remembering and chronicling her life, she was aware of the place her future memoir would have in the lives of her loved ones and the associates she knew she was soon to leave behind. She also understood that her memoir would affect, and keep

alive, her reputation in popular culture. While her illness may have given her the freedom to finally 'tell the truth', it may equally have prevented her from doing so, because of the need to come to some sort of resolution about her life for her children as well as herself. As Carolyn Steedman has remarked:

'Consider the countless distortions and falsifications to which recollections are subject. Consider as well that even in the absence of these, one is inevitably remembering selectively, and perhaps conferring meanings on experience that did not possess these meanings at the time of their occurrence. Consider, finally that one will no doubt be weaving these meanings into a whole pattern, a narrative, perhaps with a plot designed to make sense of the fabric of the past'¹⁹.

Shirley Pitts may not have been aware of the differences between psychological and historical accounts of memory, but she would certainly have been aware of the conventions of narrative found in memoirs of struggle and heroic victory in the face of terrible circumstances. As Vladimir Propp identified in his exhaustive study on myth²⁰, such conventions are familiar, not least because they go right back to our oldest myths and reoccur routinely in people's own account of their lives. Such mythic structures certainly recurred in Shirley Pitts account of her past and probably existed even before Daniel Defoe created Moll Flanders²¹.

It is impossible to know how much Shirley Pitts's 'voice' was a product of her over-determined ego and the various discourses she at times inhabited: 'plucky prisoner', 'resourceful mother', 'good time girl' and, above all, 'survivor'. Clearly, she was a 'subject in process', often contradictory and able to change her moral order from one story to the next. But, perhaps, unlike other subjects in process, the intensity of her experience of being a woman trying to work as an equal in the patriarchal subculture of crime, made her never able to take her status for granted, as discussed later in this thesis. Indeed, her subjectivity was framed by the fact that she was always fighting for her status. The personal consequence of this can often be observed in the gap between

what she did and what she thought, sometimes revealed through her ambivalence about what happens to her. Indeed, it seems as though Shirley Pitts more often experienced herself as a subject in process of becoming (perhaps more so than her male counterparts) because she operated outside the formal laws of the land and the informal laws of subculture of crime.

Upwardly Mobile - Crime As An Escape From Class Positioning

Shirley Pitts's outsider status needs also to be understood in class terms. For her life story, as well as for her own understanding of herself, has to be situated within the changing class structure of the 1960s, Shirley Pitts's salad days of shoplifting.

If Shirley's 'moment' was the late fifties to mid-sixties it occurred in a period when the traditional constructions of class were being contested across society, which consequently impacted upon criminal subculture. One of the chief ways in which this contestation occurred was through the boom in consumerism. The move from post-war austerity to the 'spend, spend, spend' culture which both reflected and unsettled more established relations not only between men and women, but between the young and old and also between classes, was to have profound effects upon criminal subculture. This is because, in the midst of an all-changing and loosening up of class attitudes, there was also change and loosening up of sexual morality, which coincided with the arrival of consumer culture and the new society of instant gratification. In the midst of all these new attitudes a new class was created by ideas about the meritocracy of talent and taste. In the sixties some of the most successful faces on the scene - designers, pop stars, models and photographers - were perceived to have transcended their class origins altogether. The romantic figures of the pop star, the model, the sharp suited business shark, and of course the gangster, appeared to be in a symbiotic relationship with that other pillar of the new aristocracy - the media, who focused upon style and taste as something superior to previous values of the establishment. These

social shifts are reflected in many in films of the period from 'Room at the Top'²² to 'Performance'²³. It is the distance between these two films - they were made ten years apart - and their difference from each other which documents the changing social world order including transformations in notions of masculinity and class that is important.

Arthur Marwick in British Society Since 1945²⁴ gives a clear account of this changing cultural context of the post war years. He describes how the sense of lives being less fixed, of there being a possibility for some sort of social mobility, was also to be found in the literature and theatre of the time. Working class life is seen as constrained, dull and limited - as something that one must escape from. One means of escape is through consumerism, not only of objects but of places, and literally the ability to move around the country or go abroad with package holidays becoming cheaper and accessible to the working class. Yet, because consumerism is still seen as essentially 'feminised', often a tension is revealed in the representations of the period. Many feature pushy and demanding women (who just want to have new electrical appliances) juxtaposed alongside moody young men who are represented as wanting to free themselves from their backgrounds in a much more existentialist sense. What is crucial in terms of all the representation is the question of authenticity. This is being undermined in all directions because social mobility unsettles old ideas of authenticity - and it is on this new wave that Shirley Pitts rides into the sixties.

As the mistress of inauthenticity, Shirley Pitts appears to have identified a social space where the heroic figures of the pop-star and the criminal can come together. The demimonde of sixties London appears as a world free of class, a world in which by virtue of what these people do, they can do and be anything they like. The transcendent figure is invariably male, although the odd woman becomes significant largely through the way she looks. Dick Hebdige's model of such social mobility, in his account of the Krays, and the space they were able to occupy, perhaps gives good indication of the changing social world Shirley Pitts was to embrace:

*'appearing simultaneously in David Bailey's "Box of Pinups" as menacingly attractive incarnations of evil, in the East London Gazette as local boys made good, as "the sporting brothers" supporting charity, and variously in the national press as leading lights in the new night world, as ex-boxers turned "company directors", as the intimate associates of the rich and famous, as villains and victims of injustice, the Krays became a polysemantic symbol, our own White Whale within whom massive contradictions found dark and mysterious resolution.'*²⁵

Dick Hebdige also argues that the Krays *'pursue the goals of a bourgeois society (albeit with the profits of crime)'* and this of course relates to Shirley Pitts's life too. However, Shirley Pitts, as usual, occupies an ambivalent relationship to the world of crime. She simultaneously glamorises and mocks criminal subculture and appears absolutely fixed by where she comes from, and yet is desperate to get away from. She knows but doesn't care that she is not like other people - respectable - but at the same time she often feels superior to them, not only because of her 'insider' knowledge of crime, but because of her perception of the lifestyle of those with money. She compares the pleasures she derives from consumerism with the experience of those who do not spend and cannot make the most out of what they have.

Shirley Pitts always wants the best and the items she steals, to her peers at least, appear to give her 'class'. She considers herself a professional thief, an arbiter of taste more than a pundit, a connoisseur of shops and style. In many ways, despite her trade she has a respect for the hierarchy of taste that consumerism depends upon and yet, at the same time, she disrespects the very basis of this hierarchy because she refuses to see why she should pay to have access. Shirley Pitts defines herself by what she steals in the same way that we are encouraged to define ourselves by what we buy. The objects she steals sometimes are significant, one feels more as signifiers of class than as things in their own right.

As with all acts of consumption, often it is the thrill of the chase that is more satisfying to her than the product itself. Shirley Pitts gives so much away, and this is one of her most attractive, contradictory qualities. She appears to be acquisitive but, in fact, keeps so very little of what she steals for herself. She does not destroy (pot-lash) or 'spoil' the things she desires and steals but she does not keep them either. Instead, she uses the things she steals as gifts for her children and friends, as expressions of love: *'I mean if it had been left up to 'im, my kids woulda been walking about in plastic rubbers, and they always looked lovely and smart because I went and got their clothes. I mean, they was always dressed in the best clothes you could buy, I used to go to France and get their things, and Paris and erm, but if it was up to 'im, well, they would've been walking about from the tot shop, do you know'* (Appendix 1, p. 52). She doesn't feel poor when she is able to lavish the very best products and clothes from London shops such as Harrods and Selfridges, as well as from Paris, on her friends and family.

Shirley Pitts's social life is nevertheless contradictory. She can't eat the things she steals and exchanges some of them for money, often being forced to go out shoplifting simply to have the means to feed herself and her children. Therefore, all through the sixties and seventies, she lives a life both of deprivation and excess, seemingly never achieving the balance between the two. She is always in the process of 'becoming', never stable enough to actually fix herself in one place, or time for very long, always anxiously moving forward to the next scam. It's the next big job that might give her the means to be able to buy the criminal dream, which equates with those dreams from popular culture such as winning the pools.

Caroline Evans has argued that *'the concepts of masquerade and the decentred self may also be set against the context of the increasing social fluidity of the [post]-war years'*²⁶, and certainly Shirley Pitts's experience of social mobility in the sixties and seventies does invite interrogation of her life in the context of ideas about 'masquerade' and the 'decentred self'. Whilst Shirley Pitts could travel between two worlds - the

passage from Harrods to Hoxton - in fact she was acting in both of them. She could therefore not transcend class except in fantasy: just like everyone else. In stealing class though, she is only doing in extreme what all her class were being encouraged to do, to improve themselves through consumerism. Shirley, as always, takes this too far. She takes the signs of material improvements to mean she is improved, and in so doing undermines the whole enterprise. She accidentally subverts notions of class, femininity and social aspiration, because she never fully accepts the authenticity of them in the first place. Her story invites consideration of the criminal masquerade, as already discussed. Few women shoplifters have had such a broad criminal career as Shirley Pitts - which involved her masquerading in order to shoplift and commit other crimes, everything else from jewel theft to bank robbery. Through her criminal career she acquired equal status with criminal men. Yet, because she was a woman such contradictory positioning reinforced her feelings of being an outsider, even within the subculture of crime.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 177.
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- ¹⁵ FREUD, S., Beyond The Pleasure Principle, translated by Hubback, J. M., London & Vienna, International Psycho-Analytical Library No.4, 1922, p. 31.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ¹⁸ SAMUEL, R., Theatres of Memory: Vol. 1: Past and Present In Contemporary Culture,

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¹⁹ STEEDMAN, C., Past Tenses Essays on Writing, Autobiography and History, London, Rivers Oran, 1992, p. 42.

²⁰ PROPP, V.Y., Morphology of the Folktale... translated by L. SCOTT...Second edition revised and edited with a preface by L.A.WAGNER, etc., Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1968.

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²² CLAYTON, J., Dir., Room at the Top, GB, Remus, 1958.

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²⁴ MARWICK, A., British Society Since 1945, London, Penguin Books, 1990.

²⁵ HEBDIGE, D., 'The Krays Twins: A Study of a System of Closure', Occasional Paper for BCCC, Birmingham, Birmingham University, 1974 p. 11.

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SECTION ONE

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION TO SECTION ONE

The aim of the first section of this investigation has been to become familiar with 'oral history' and the methodology central to it. To do this I needed to find an appropriate informant, one whose testimony would reveal information about shopping and shoplifting not easily found elsewhere. As I had access to the testimony of Shirley Pitts who earned her living from professional thieving, it became expedient to use this information as a basis for investigating the link between shopping and shoplifting as well as the gender issues involved in the female crime mythologies that emerge with these discussions. This approach was greatly influenced by Michel Foucault's style and strategy in publishing the original transcript of Pierre Riviere's discourse in the form of a 'raw' memoir followed by essays which analysed both Riviere's discourse and his historically constructed subjectivity. This approach to discourse is perhaps infinite and can be viewed as not as methodologically obvious as the sort of ethnographic research presented in official criminological and sociological studies which are discussed in depth in Section Two. Yet in my opinion such an approach produces far more detailed information about the historical context of shopping and shoplifting than is readily available elsewhere. Indeed, Foucault's idea of 'subjugated knowledge'¹ is understood to mean an appropriate alternative source for seeking information about shoplifting. Foucault suggested that looking at subjugated knowledge is valid and should be understood, in terms of his methodology, with reference to the concept of 'genealogy'. He defines his method as follows:

*'Let's give the term genealogy to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today'*²

Indeed, following Foucault's method, it seemed appropriate to look at Shirley Pitts transcript about shopping as well as shoplifting in order to further substantiate the argument that shoplifting should be located within the consumer context. So the project of Section One has been to interrogate and analyse the testimony of Shirley Pitts on this subject and to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of working with an oral transcript. Indeed, throughout Section One I have been careful to research the fact Shirley Pitts, the subject of transcript, was always, even through the lens of memory, a 'subject in process'. Foucault suggests we are all 'subjects in process', but what this means in the case of Shirley Pitts is that she was living and working within such fixed patriarchal relations that she had to work harder than most at reproducing herself on a daily basis. No wonder her views, when taken together are often contradictory, especially when her opinions are voiced in anxious contexts governed by overt power relations. Remembering these different contexts appeared to force her subject position to regularly shift. When she speaks, her voice should be understood at that moment and in that context of reflection. Within the 2,500 pages of 'raw' transcript I took down from Shirley Pitts (only those thought to be specifically relevant to shopping and consumerism are included in Appendix 1), I found she revealed herself, as history marches on, to be entirely contradictory. Nevertheless, what is most unique about her transcript is that it provides clear evidence of historical continuity as well as historical discontinuity. Indeed, when Shirley Pitts is interviewed about the 'secrets of the trade' her descriptions of her techniques find parallels with the scams Mary McIntosh describes as typical of Elizabethan England³, discussed at length in Section Two. For example, McIntosh says shoplifters in the sixteenth century appeared 'well dressed' and created 'a distraction' in order to palm goods⁴; she also suggests that many criminals took small amounts from a large number (of victims) and these forms of theft involved 'routinized, repetitive and highly skilled techniques', quite distinct from 'the rough and ready bravado of the outlaw's attack'⁵. The similarities between Shirley Pitts's techniques for shoplifting and those referred to in McIntosh's account of sixteenth century pick-pocketing are more surprising since the sixteenth century is designated by

many historians as pre-consumerist. Of course, there are inevitably flaws in Shirley Pitts's stories, and it must also be noted that even though this woman lied, stole and cheated for a living, her voice was not often anarchic in terms of personal philosophy, but rather, incredibly conservative. Implicitly encoded within Shirley Pitts speaking voice are understandings about women's alleged biological inferiority, which frame the way she perceives her own femininity. Shirley Pitts believed she was like and unlike other women, because she had, despite her own contradictory experience, internalised so many myths about women. It is at these moments that Shirley Pitts transcript can helpfully be explained by Foucault when he describes the significance of self surveillance which contains:

'An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he (sic) is his own overseer; each individual thus exercising the surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula, power exercised continuously' ⁶.

In Section Two I will try to indirectly interrogate Shirley Pitts's story in regard to official discourses about women, specifically criminal women. It appears on the surface that criminal women are rarely understood as active agents of their own destiny, perhaps because official accounts of such behaviour have historically culminated in effect to legitimate the incompatibility between female gender roles and the idea of women as active agents of crime.

ENDNOTES

¹ GORDON, C. (Ed), FOUCAULT, M., Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writing 1971 -77, Brighton, Harvester, 1980, p. 82.

² Ibid., p. 83.

³ McINTOSH, M., 'Changes in the Organisation of Thieving', in COHEN, S. (Ed), Images of Deviance, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, pp. 98-129.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 98-129.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 98-129.

⁶ GORDON, C. (Ed), FOUCAULT, M., Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writing 1971 -77, Brighton, Harvester, 1980, p. 155.

Discourses on women and shoplifting:
a critical analysis of why
female crime mythologies past and present
operate to legitimate the incompatibility between
female gender roles and the idea of women
as active agents of crime

APPENDIX ONE

ORAL TESTIMONY OF SHIRLEY PITTS

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Notes about the oral transcript submitted as Appendix 1,

Shirley Pitts lived between 1934-1992. She was born in South London although later lived for many years in Hoxton, East London with Chris Hawkins her long term partner and father of five or her seven children. From the age of seven Shirley Pitts started thieving to survive poverty, and by the age of twelve was earning her living on a regular basis from thieving from shops. A full account of Shirley Pitts life and criminal career, which embraced many types of crime, is contained in the book Gone Shopping - the Story of Shirley of Thieves which I rewrote from oral material for Penguin Books and published in 1996¹. This appendix contains 52 pages of unedited transcript, some of which was rewritten for the book and therefore needs some further contextualisation.

Between 1986 and 1992 I made many tapes of my conversations with Shirley Pitts about her life and the transcripts of this material Peggy Mallon and I originally transcribed on my Amstrad Word Processor (now stored as a future antique) and it typed up to approximately 2500 pages. Many of the pages I have taken down from Shirley Pitts on first viewing would not make sense to the reader. This is because Shirley Pitts, as fascinating as she was, tended to ramble and had little sense or chronology, and often got names muddled, including the names of her own children. Indeed, she often dated events based on which of her seven children she was pregnant with at the time: and then, when using this formula we thought we'd located the right moment it would dawn on her it was a different child altogether that she was carrying

when the event in question occurred. So much of her oral transcript is confusing to say the least, nevertheless interspersed with real gems of information and coherent and intelligent passages of observation. To construct the Penguin book from such muddled material I had to interview many other people, and search for other sources of information to verify dates, geographical locations and to confirm Shirley's account was accurate as. This later part of the investigation, and production of even more material transcript, did involve me heavily rewriting and editing Shirley Pitts's words, after she died and was no longer here to approve the edits. So it became a heavy responsibility and although I rewrote much of her transcript I don't believe I ever compromised the inflection or the life story that she clearly wanted to tell.

The 52 pages of unedited transcript in this PhD reflect the flavour of Shirley Pitts entire testimony, but the crucial difference is that these pages are among the most coherent I could locate. Also they have been chosen because they offer the most intense discussions on the subject of shopping and shoplifting that I could find amongst all the material I gathered, and I should confirm that pages in this Appendix have not been reworked, edited or interfered with by me in any way. Indeed, this material, which constitutes less than 3 per cent of all the material I gathered, has been selected by me precisely because it represents the relevant discussion of shoplifting (as opposed to the many other crimes Shirley was involved with) and/or it represents gender issues that are so polarised they serve to illustrate why female crime mythologies, past and present, even in the testimony of a professional thief, may have

operated to legitimate the incompatibility between female gender roles and the idea of women as active agents of crime.

ENDNOTES:

¹ GAMMAN, L., Gone Shopping - the Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves, London, Signet Penguin, 1996.

SECTION ONE

APPENDIX

ORAL HISTORY - EXTRACT ONEHidden Knowledge: Shirley Pitts On Growing Up And Learning The Trade.

When I first started to know what shoplifting was all about was when my mum was taken into hospital. There was Alice Diamond and a gang of shoplifters from the Elephant and Castle who were nick-named the forty thieves like Ali Baba and his gang. Alice Diamond was one of the gang, I think she was the chief, she was about 6 feet tall the biggest woman you ever did see. She had diamond rings on her fingers and foxes around her neck she looked the business anyway. My dad asked her to get us kids some clothes. I think it was an Easter time or a holiday time and I know he had to pay half a crown for the coupon when they went and hoisted them. So she said 'come on then I'll take you with me down the Cut'. So we went to Pecry's. It used to have all the things hanging up, handkerchiefs hanging up on pins, socks hanging up on pins. They used to have all the suits and I didn't realise it, but when I went in there Alice has got big drawers on and she said to me, 'Will this fit your brother?', and I said, 'Yes', 'Will this fit your other brother?' I said, 'Yes' 'Will this fit your sister, will this fit you?' She was putting loads of stuff down her and filling the bag up you had to get in a queue to pay because the woman used to sit at the end and she would pull a chain down and put the money and the coupon in it and it would go right up to other room and send your change back. Like a railway line in the air. I suppose he was the walker, the man there, anyway she said, 'When I nod to you walk out of the door with this bag that was filled up with all the clothes' and I thought I better do as I am told here anyway because she knows what she's doing of and I knew she stole them all anyway. The man's gone down to the front of the queue and she has sort of nodded and I have just gone with the bag and waits by the Old Vic, that is what she said to me so I just waited in the door

way at the Old Vic in the Waterloo Road and Alice came out. I think she bought a pair of socks and she had all the suits and stuff down her. She bought a pair of socks and a handkerchief for half a coupon, you can get two small things for half of a coupon. When we got back she went, 'I am going to treat you look after you to a nice little few quid'. When we gets outside the shop Alice says to me, 'Here is thirty bob', well thirty bob was a lot of money. We goes home with all the stuff my dad was really pleased he paid Alice; well Alice was on a really good earner because I had walked out with all the stuff. Alice had said to me 'Whatever happens don't say anything to your dad because he'll go mad you know he is old fashioned'. So I've got thirty bob, the next morning I goes to school it was St. George's School a Catholic school at St George's Road. I was buying all the kids ice creams because I have thirty bob. The whole fucking school. The next time it was near Christmas and I go out again with Alice and Laura Nolin I think her name was and Neil Weights these women were like film stars they had furs and everything. They had beautiful make-up and lovely long red hair like Barbara Stanwick and one looked like fucking Rita Hayworth. Then we goes out again on the Christmas and it was the same thing, come in take the bag and disappear out the shop. They had a Chrysler car not a lot of people had cars in that day and the Chrysler was like owning a Merc. People used to go about on a horse and cart. The Royal Mail was on a horse and carriage thing. They used to have this car with a tube going through to the back so you could speak to the driver in the front it was really funny. I used to be told to sit in the front and empty the bag out and go back into the shop again if they didn't come out. I was really rich. I was the richest kid in the in the road. There used to be a silly shop walker who used to hide round and look at you, straight away you knew who the shop walker was. So they used to have two bags I'd walk out with one and in with the other I worked that for years when I got older. When I used to go to really exclusive shops we would buy two bags the same even two Lois Vuitton or Gucci or Sicillian bags really good leather bags enough to put about six suits in or dresses. I worked that scam for years afterwards when I was grown up. I'd go in with the bag empty and fill it up. I'd have somebody else even. Fay she used to do it, Fay, Christine and Tina they would come in and I would take as many liberties as I wanted, really I

did, but I didn't because I didn't want to get caught, but I always wanted to go back and even got nicked for this one in Fortnum and Masons we cleared them out of furs I think. First of all it was a revelation bag when I was working with them, we used revelation bags because revelation bags already look full as you walk in the shop because they are them pucker bags. So you go in with your bag fill it up then someone else comes in who you are working with gives you a empty one and they walk out with your full one. They are walking past you and you get to a corner or behind a rail and swoop over quick so they have just walked round quick and took your bag and you have their empty one and we done that for years, and that was what I was taught then and also about putting them down your knickers. By the time I was twelve I was a fully fledged shoplifter. I knew all the walker's, I knew what to look for in a walker. I was already fitted out with a pair of drawers from the gang. They were really funny but I never wore them though. They were big old bloomers what old girls wear, they were silk because if they were silk you could get more stuff in them because it slipped all around in them. The knickers were bigger than me. They were fucking all tucked up with a skirt with a elastic waist specially made for me because I was skinny as a shrimp I was. My legs were so skinny I couldn't even put them together. I used to walk like a duck where it had all got stuck down there. It would all go in a bundle there and they would tell you how to hold it, how to roll it you know because you can't just go into a shop and plonk stuff down you because it can go anywhere. So you have to fold it a certain way, you can't leave hangers they know something is missing. I'd have twelve dresses down me, two suits, and people that don't know how to fold stuff just put something down there and they have a great big bundle there. You must know how to roll things, otherwise it's no good. They showed me their way, which is rolling it from the bottom to the top of the hanger and take it off but you must always pull another dress up. Say you have rolled three dresses up, you put another dress over the top so no-one can see the hangers coming off because you can't take three hangers. You have to have someone on each side of you because your looking one way, then if there is three of you working you knock it off don't you. Then sometimes when we were desperate, we might of had a Saturday night or Friday night party and got up late the next day, we would just go

down Bond Street and put on smock coats, go to the door, have a hand-full off the door and walk along Bond Street with them. With all the tickets hanging off them and everything. We did that loads of times. By the time I was twelve I was a shoplifter, I didn't need Alice, I am not being big headed but I didn't need to be used any more because I could get more money on my own. Which I did do. I'd go into Pecry's, I knew who to look for and who was the dodgy one, yeh they had already learnt me. They were slaughterers, they would have you out until nine o'clock at night. They would, specially Christmas time, all the shops would be open late down the Walk and the Cut and East Lane. Yeh, they were fucking like fagans. They would get all my mum's clothes, the baby's clothes and the kids clothes and give me twenty quid or thirty quid at a time. They were quite good to me. I didn't need to be out all them hours because I could do it all myself. Say a suit was £7 a boys suit you could go and get £14 for it because of the coupons. I could go and get two boys suits and I have got my money, more than what I get with them and all the bits and pieces. Not that I was not as clever as them or nothing but I would still go out with them at Christmas times because at Christmas times I got everything. They would just nick ornaments and candles. I used to go in pubs with them. I respected them because they were all really like film stars, they were always so glamorous and always smelt lovely of perfume. They used to sit and put lipstick on and laugh and order their gin and tonics and cocktails. At Christmas time, I had never been to the West End, I'd been to the West End at Billard Street where my dad had his ice cream stalls, but I'd never been in posh hotels like Harrods and places like that. When they used to go to Harrods they used to have kids school uniforms on, done up in a navy blue hat, I used to look like a fucking college girl: they used to say, 'Don't open your mouth'. I was cockney and Harrods was so posh. There was Harvey Nicols and Debenhams in Wigmore Street which was the most beautiful store, not Debenhams that we know today. It was the first time I had been to the toilet in there and you had your own suite in the toilet, that's how it used to be. All marble, your own hand basin, powder, comb and hair brush. I think that is what gave me a sort of feeling that I wanted a good life, to go to good hotels, they used to say it was very important but I don't know, they were probably nicking handbags and things

like that. They would always come out with somebody else's raincoat or fur coat from out of the cloakroom. We would go to the tea rooms there was a place they took me, I think it was the Strand Savoy Hotel, for tea and I never knew half of it but I knew that when we came out of the Savoy two of them had mink coats on. One had a big fox, I wasn't stupid they didn't go in there with them, and they didn't buy them. They was good to me, buying me lovely shoes and boots and things. I wanted to dress like a tart, but they used to do me in a green uniform on with a green pleated skirt but where I was so skinny they would say to me to roll up something and put it down me and it would be a dress for about a hundred pound, designer dresses. They would buy all the food for my mum when my dad was away, they were really good, but then I suppose it was because I thought well I don't need to do this like them they were doing it every day, as I say they had cars, diamond rings, fur coats. I never went to school hardly, my mum moved, she moved in every street off London Road, five weeks in this house, she just saw a fucking empty house and moved into it. [Finally] I got approved school then I got Nicky and my little sister a pair of shoes from Bunmarsh at Brixton... that's why I never go there anymore. I got three years but I didn't get the three years for nicking the dress, I had only just come home then from, well I got 3 years for pushing someone through a fucking plate glass window that's what I went away for.

(This tape is very faint, difficult to hear anything in parts)

Shirley on her technique.

You want to know how to do it, yeh? Well, you can get you kitchen foil and layer it a few times, then put it over the buzzers and that will stop them going, then put it down near your bag. You've got to cover the little round pin at the back, as well, of the buzzer, it's got this little round pin as well. Yeah, it's gotta be covered up. Otherwise you can get some kitchen foil, not kitchen foil, that's what you do the meals in, you know the thick foil, make a bag, cover it up and as long as it doesn't split 'em, you know, or the way it's pushed in sometimes, or if it isn't done up at the top and the air's getting in, like the tiniest hole can set it off. Them buzzers are very strong. But they've got a new one out and that's a bastard, because the bag takes it, you know, takes it over

the rays above the bag, but when you open the bag the buzzer starts going off again! Wherever you are, yes, if you're in the car and you open the bag the buzzer goes. I don't know how it happens, no. If you can't pull it off you've got to cut it off. No, these haven't got ink in, but them ones, they're disgusting who fucking invented them, 'cos, I mean, you wouldn't ruin clothes by just ripping 'em off - some people do, they get covered in ink.

I know someone who had some beautiful men's suits that had all them buzzers on, they didn't want hardly any money for 'em. I wish I'd have known, because I think they only wanted ten or twenty quid each, and they was £500 suits.

But, if you'd have messed one suit up, I mean that don't mean nothing, ... but if you mess three or four up No, no, I don't like 'em, 'cos I don't know how to get 'em off; you got to have a special machine for them. I don't like 'em, I don't like anything messy like ink and things, but I know loads of shoplifters that do take them and they get the buggers off. But, everybody's got their own technique, or they know someone who works in a store and who's got a machine to do for them, or know someone who's got a shop and they'll do it for 'em, because, that's how it is, isn't it? It's a whole crooked affair, and it's no good of saying people don't do that or this and that, everybody does it; well, I won't say everybody, there's a few magistrates that wouldn't go out stealing, I know that, or do crooked things, just like a lot would, there's quite a lot that have, you know, some of them people who sit up on benches are the biggest thieves there is, ain't they? And perverts, ain't they? They really are, they are into worse things... and they don't even need to do it; they've been brought up to have a good life. I don't think them people need to do it, Lorraine.

Well, there's the box, we worked with the box. But that was our box, ... Christmas time we worked with the box. This was before the buzzers. They made the box with lead flashing, but that was too heavy, and they tried to make the box with silver foil, but it still didn't work, because it has to be airtight once it goes in, do you know? And the box 'as to work on a little spring engine, so as you open it, it snaps back again. So you go and get some really good wrapping paper from one of the stores - whatever you're

gonna work that week, say Selfridges, ('cos I been nicked in there anyway). Selfridges, Debenhams or whatever - no, not Debenhams, they got a load of old fucking crap in there anyway. (Laughs). They used to have lovely stuff in there, Lorraine.

Well, they've gone Americanised, haven't they? Beautiful shops, they've mucked up by making them look like, I don't know. I mean you've got to feel nice, shopping, haven't you? Like I think Fortnum and Masons was the best store in London, do you know? It's got that lovely warm air about it. Whenever I've got any money I always go in there and buy things, I just like to spend my money in Fortnum and Masons, I like the service (laughs), I like everything about the shop. No, I wouldn't steal from Fortnums. Not now, I wouldn't. I did years ago, because that was just another store ... but, well, it is the quality store. I mean, every other store - Simpsons is quite nice as well - but you look at Fortnum and Masons and there isn't another store to come near it, not for its class, its standards, or anything, is there? They're all commercialised the others aren't they? Girls trying to sell you perfume, squirting you with this, giving you a free gift and a bag or something, you know, they don't have to do that.

Oh, this box. Well, we worked this box: you cover it with whatever store you are going in, you know, like Selfridges' paper or whatever, Harrods' paper. It's just a square box with a flip lid, so it looks like Christmas time everybody's walking about with big presents, ain't they? In that box you could get three mink coats, easy, you know, with no problem, hangers as well, or you could go an get, sort of, six men's suits. They was so terrific. I was working once and the police came in and turned Chrissie over for something, someone's 'phoned up and said something over Haggerston, but they was quite nice these two coppers, though. They 'phoned up an said we had something in there, I can't remember what it was, but I know I'd just finished work and it was Christmas and I had the driver with me and I was carrying Shirley. As I've come in, I've got a big belly anyway, I've got stuff down me, ... the car was absolutely loaded up.

Well, we'd only gone down the road, like come back from - there was a little place in Curtain Road, it was an Italian designer's place, beautiful stuff in there, West End stuff. The car was absolutely loaded and I think I went in there and got three silk suits, they

were still down me and I didn't even bother to pull 'em out. But I was having little Shirley. Now I've got these three silk suits down me, and I walked in with them, didn't I? I didn't take the box that day, the box was in the cupboard, right near the door, where we had this electric thing, this electric box. They was searching the house and as I walked in Chrissie said, 'The police are 'ere'. Tony just said, 'Well, that'll be four pounds fare'. You know, he was the cab driver, we always had 'im, so I've give 'im a fiver and me an Molly's gone in. I've still got an holdall in my hand though, with babies clothes and things in like, I had Patsy, didn't I, and Harry, they was both little. And I had all bits and knickknacks, that I bought ... like fucking draughtboards for the kids to play with, you know, them sort of things.

The copper said to me, 'How are you?' and I went, 'Oh, I'll be glad when I drop this one', and he went, 'What, is this the last one then Shirley?' And he said to me, 'I'm sorry to hear about your brother'. Yes, you know, even the police respected my Adgie, I mean they did respect 'im, I mean they was at' is funeral, because they wanted to fucking see who else was there - but, they did even respect him, you know, for the things he'd done. When'e done a few banks and that, and it come on top, and all the police charged in there, Adgie used to count everybody back in the van, and if one was missing he made 'em all get out again, military, 'e was like, it was the proper thing. And they'd all have to go back and find that man, don't matter what happened.

So, yes, this copper says to me, 'I'm sorry to hear about your brother, he was very well liked'. My Adgie always paid the police and he never ever screamed about everything afterwards, if they played the game, you played the game, didn't you? That is it.

So anyway, this other one's come down and he's started pulling the cupboard, I slung old coats and things in there, you know, and then he's pulled out this box, it's got all wrapping paper on it because we'd used it the day beforehand. And'e went to me 'What is this?' and I went 'I dunno, the kids brought it in from the street'. And he went, 'This looks like equipment to me'. The other policeman could fucking see it was, you know (laughing). He went to the other one, 'What do you think about this?' and this one (the one who said 'he was a nice feller, your brother', before he came down from upstairs) - he went, 'She found it in the street'. He went to me, 'Did you find it in

the street?' and I went, 'No, me little boy brought it in'. He went, 'Oh' and threw it back in the cupboard. He knew, they knew though, and he said to Chrissie 'I'm ever so sorry, but our information on what we come 'ere for ...' (I can't remember what it was they was looking for, but I know it was something that we didn't even 'ave in there). I think that was probably fucking mad-o, my brother again, Charlie, do you know? Yes, there was the box, but, oh yeah, do you know how they first used to do it when buzzers first come out? If you filled your bag up and put it on your shoulder, if it didn't hit that ... (that's why they got those great big ones now) ... as long as you slung your bag on your shoulder, you dodged it. 'cos its only the length of your hand then it was, but now it isn't, because they've even got 'em on the top of the ceiling, so if you put your bag on your shoulder it goes off up there anyway. They've got 'em in the car parks now.

Oh, I know what I was gonna tell you about. You know, they've got a stick on one, they've had this quite a long while, I don't know why they haven't used that more. Well it's not you can't cover it, you can pull it off, Lorraine, you can't find it! They put it in the lining. Well, we was in Harrods, and the next day, I think we had about seven mink coats, in bags, and down us, 'cos this is before they put the buzzers on, you know they made it very hard in the mink department when they did put the buzzers on actually, disgraceful I thought it was, Harrods having buzzers - no this is before they put the buzzers on - we had seven mink coats, this was the first day of the sale, and three mink jackets, and the next day it was on Capital Radio - Cheeky Shoplifters Wheel Rail of Mink Coats out of Store ... you know, which wasn't true at all, because we just filled up so many bags. I mean, the Arabs, you seen the Arabs in there shoplifting, they just got five big bags, they got you know the Harrods big shopping bags, they all put the coats in them. And my friend, C.D. who is very well known, he came up with us and he just walked out with two great big bags with about four coats in, then he came back up again with my friends, and we filled the bags up and we got one each down us and that was our day, but they reckon that robbers walked in, in broad daylight, and took this rail of mink coats.

But then, the next time I went up there they had the buzzers on, a year afterwards. We only used to go up there for the fur department anyway. So, the next year they'd put the buzzers on so it was ever so much harder for us, do you know. What we done was, we pulled some buzzers off and we put 'em in the Arabs' handbags, in their shopping bags, so as they went over the thing the security pulled them and we was with our friend, C.D. who's 'terrible, terrible' and went straight through.

But now, we had two mink coats in that bag and you couldn't do it again, because security was right up there, there was about six of 'em, all on this little ... and you had to walk through, there's two here, two there, one each side, you know. They jump on you!

We got out to the car, and when we got 'ome, we pulled the buzzers off, you know you can get 'em off with special littler clippers and we sold a coat to this girl, a friend of ours and next day or a couple of days after, she went, 'Your never gonna guess what's happened to me'.

She lived in Streatham, this girl did, and she's gone down to Streatham shopping, in her new mink coat, and she's got a shopping trolley - she's probably gone to the supermarket, I don't know. But she's gone Saturday shopping, to get her bits and pieces and she's got this trolley, she gets it out of her car. She takes that so that she don't have to carry bags - she's one of those lazy spoilt brats, you know. She's gone into a shop there and as she's walked out the buzzer's gone, so she's gone into another shop and the buzzer keeps going, she knows her husband (very faint here, not discernible, sorry).

So then she's walked into this boutique - Chic Chic (or Cheep Cheep!) it's called you know, cheap. So she's gone in there to try something on, suppose she's got a bit upset that day, wanted to spend a couple of hundred quid. The woman said to her, 'That's a nice dress you've got on'. She said yes, like, she was trying something on, the woman said could she have a look at it. So the woman looked at her dress and she said, she thought that was funny, her doing that.*

Anyway, she's bought something in there, she goes out and the buzzer's gone again! So

the woman's said, 'Could you please come back into the shop, because do you know what I think happened, you've bought something and you've still got the buzzer on it. So could I have a look in your trolley, because they phoned us from the other shop, down the road, and said that as you walked over their rays the buzzer went'. (Shall I call 'er a name, like Sarah?)

So she said, this Sarah, that the woman in this Chic shop, she said to her, 'Shall I just look in your bag, because I think you must have bought something or would you like to have a look in your bag, because they 'phoned us from the other shop and said if a woman comes in here they've notified the police'. Sarah's cracking up, ain't she. So she said, 'Yes, you can have a look in my bag'. So they've looked all in the bag, you know, she's undone the things then, 'cos she knows she's got nothing - she's not a thief anyway. Then the woman's looked in her dress, there's nothing in her dress. 'What a beautiful mink coat!' she went. Then she (Sarah) was shaking! 'Yes, my husband bought it for Christmas for me'. The woman said 'Perhaps there had been a buzzer left in it'. Anyway, they've looked on the mink coat and there's not a buzzer on there, so they said perhaps it was on her shoes. Because they put buzzers on shoes and all, you know, Joseph's and all them, they stick buzzers on 'em. Anyway, she's took 'er shoes off, there's no buzzers. She's walking out, the buzzer's gone again. So the woman went, 'Well, I think it must be something to do with that trolley. That trolley must be setting it off somehow'. You know, they was all nice, they all apologised, they said, 'We was only thinking about you, madam, if somebody does call the police'. They was going to call the police, but they said they'd phoned up all the shops. Anyway, they've done 'er, they've searched 'er and that she's got nothing.

She went, 'I couldn't get back to my car quick enough, I got in my car, drove 'ome, I knew it was the coat. It was nothing else, everything else I had on was what I bought'. Her husband went all through the coat and couldn't fine it. He's pulled the lining up and it was right inside, at the top, back of the collar, you know, inside the lining and it was a strip, (not clear) you know, what you pull off. So she went, look at this. I thought, well, I don't know why they bother to put the fucking great big clonking ones on, you know. Some people, I wouldn't do it Lorraine, but I've seen some people really

rip the sleeves off a coat, trying to get the buzzer off. Or tearing the cuff, or tearing the bottom of it, you know. I think that's disgusting isn't it? Yes, Sandra can pull 'em off good, she does it. I got a pair of clippers. No, you put the two prongs on them two little holes and you press it and it just releases it.

Some people get tempted don't they? I was in Harrod's once and I saw this wealthy gentleman, he was a gentleman, he wasn't anything else, you could see that. And I saw 'im nick a crocodile belt, and I couldn't believe it, I thought why does he? You know, he was standing in two grand's worth of clothes.

I think Approved School. I tried to go to work, I got paid one pound fifty a week, it was ridiculous. I mean, what could you do with one pound fifty? (Long pause no sound) Well, that's right, there's this big recession on now ain't there, and most of the people I know that used to go out shoplifting don't go out no more because there's no money about for anybody to buy the stuff, and most of the shops that they used to go in, the little couturier shops, are all closing down (long pause) well, it's not worth doing anymore, because there's no money in it. Not like when I was young, when I was twelve, I'd get half-a-crown a suit, if a suit was seven pounds, I'd get fourteen pounds for it, because I'd get double for coupons (sounds like) .. it's not even worth doing now. I'm glad I've retired because there's no money in it anymore.

SECTION ONE

APPENDIX

ORAL HISTORY - EXTRACT TWOHidden Knowledge: Shirley Pitts On Shoplifting as Business And Prison From The Inside.

I gets three years and sent to Aylesbury and then they wanted me to go to court to give witness against ... for Billy Shorter. Billy Shorter hit him on the head with a bar of iron. And I said no I didn't want to know about it and then they subpoenaed me; the police subpoenaed me to go to court while I was in Aylesbury prison, yes. So they takes me up by train and the car's meeting us at the other end, Euston Station I think it was, the station where the cars drive on. While I was waiting for the police car to pick me up I said I wanted to go to the toilet and, although I was three or four months pregnant, I really was only skinny, I was only eight stone, anyway. She said it was all right and to go in and keep the door ajar. Well, I went into the toilet and there was the littlest, tiniest window there and I just skimmed through it and out, and I was on the platform running down the road with them two chasing me and I just jumped into a cab and I was gone, and that was it. No, 'cos you run round the corner and there's the cabs, and I just said quick mate I'm in a hurry, get me to Dulwich. I was right shrewd going straight home, wasn't I? No, not Dulwich, erm*

So I goes up to me Mum's, I knew I'd have a bit of time there before the police got there anyway. Me sister Pat was there, but I couldn't stay there long because I knew the police was coming up, but I'd escaped and I made sure she was all right for money and everything. I went over to my friend's who used to go out rolling, who I'd been in approved school with and Borstal, Joanne. She had a sister Mary as well - and I goes up the West End with them two and they takes me down to Wardour Street, and because I'm new at it, all the men keep coming up to me don't they, they know I'm new

at it - they're selling me on the street, these two. But these two was selling me on the street, wasn't they, saying I was a virgin and there I am three months pregnant and I was new at the game, and they was getting lumps of money. But I think it was sort of, they were really, they didn't have a lot of idea what they was doing, because they was only charging £10 and £5 on the key. But I thought that was good though, because that was still £15 or £20 you take off of a punter. And you'd do as many of them as you could in one night on each corner and run through the alley with their money, and it used to work out at a couple of hundred quid.

Wardour Street one night, Shaftesbury Avenue another night, back of Soho another night - you had to do different streets and just hope you didn't bump into them. Had to get a drink in first to give you Dutch courage! Yeh! We got loads of clumps, we got chased, but we always did have a minder, like someone to come and make out that he was a policeman and say, 'like, well I'll take this lady down the station and give us your name and address and most of the men used to say, 'Well, no, that's all right, I don't want to press charges 'cos I've slapped her one anyway'. Do you know? My mate Mary had a broken nose, she looked like a boxer! Where she used to keep answering them back they'd just punch her right in the fucking eye or the nose, she looked just like a prize fighter!

So, I was shoplifting of a day and rolling of a night, because that was the cash money, and erm, to get all the things for the baby what I had to get and everything, and 'cos no way in the world was I gonna have the baby in prison. Because Aylesbury prison was the same as Holloway, you was locked up with the baby for nine months and then the baby was took away from you. So I wasn't gonna have that, 'cos I've seen girls crack up in there, crack up because their baby's took away from them.

But there was lots of other things we would do, like, if we got too hot in the West End with all the police looking for us and we'd done too many people, we'd just go rolling that night to get our expense money, go somewhere else, nick a car and go up to Manchester or Liverpool or Blackpool and do it up there, shoplifting of a day, rolling of a night and make our way through all the towns and back again. We used to get quite a lot of money. We'd nick a car, go to the West End, roll a few Yanks, or whoever was

about to be rolled - that was the cash, yes, that was when ... loads of Yanks, yeh, and they never argued about the money, you always got what you wanted, some of 'em didn't even know the white ten pound notes from five pound notes and sometimes you'd get a nice little fifty quid off 'em.

Then we'd always nick cars, jump in the car - we was a bit stupid I suppose because we'd just get on the motorway and drive and see where we turned out to, where we was, sometimes we'd be in Manchester, Blackpool, fucking Liverpool! Wherever the motorway took us that's where we'd be - Scotland, Wales ... Then we'd find a nice hotel, dump the car somewhere, we was right shrewd wasn't we? Fucking hell! Driving up there with the same number plates on.

Then they'd go and get a set of number plates made up, nick another car, put them on the car, then we'd use that for work, for shoplifting. I've gone with me, my friend Kitty and Leslie and Tony Bassey. We always had two men with us because of the rolling. No, the fellers, like Leslie or Bassey would steal the car, or whoever was working with us - Mackie - you know, we always had a man, we had to have a man working with us because of the night time, in case

Then we'd go out, we never ever went away with any clothes, we'd get them on the way. We used to have piles and piles of stuff, furs and trays of rings, everything. You know, we'd walk in the shoe shops, best shoe shops, try on the shoes and walk out the door with them, or take the empty boxes and put our old shoes in them and things like that. I think we was quite mad, wasn't we? One time, I can remember that we undressed a statue on the stairs - took her mink coat off and her mink hat and left her completely naked, in one of the big stores in Devon.

The funniest thing was, when we was in Manchester working, we'd really had a good day. There was me, Kitty, Leslie and Bassey and I'm about six months pregnant now, but I didn't even look six months pregnant, you know, I just looked a bit tubby, but I didn't really look big. We asked a cab driver where the best night club was and he said it's over there, the Starlight. He said a couple of blokes from the Smoke are running it now, this is what the cab driver said to us. No way in the world did we think we would know who was running the club, we just wanted to get in there and see a

cabaret and have a nice evening. When we tries to get into the club, the feller said no, you're not a member, I said 'Well, who is running this club up here, some fellers from London?' He said, 'Yeah, we got a couple of blokes from t' Smoke down here'. I said, 'Well, I might know 'em, go and tell them'. Then Charlie Smith come out and I said, 'Oh, Charlie!' and he went, 'Yeah, me and Huggsie are here, we're running the club'. So we went in the club and we was honourable members, sitting with the top lot, silly little doorman couldn't get over it.*

So we stayed in Manchester, stayed for about a month because we found a lot of contacts there and we just went from club to club, from pub to pub, we just knew everything, that was what our life was all about, anyway, just getting money and just enjoying ourselves. Nothing else. You know, Joanne must have been drunk all the time inside me, mustn't she?

Then, I thought I had to come back, because I hadn't seen me mum for a few months, so I comes back to London and then I meets Norman Hall. I think Leslie gets six months and then Norman starts working with us. Seven months pregnant now, then Norman Hall starts working with us, we was really a crazy gang. I mean, we just used to go and clear little shops out of a day and leave them with no stock. Like, they didn't know what they were turning in there, especially if someone said they was only looking after the shop, that really was their lot. Like, they might say, well, I don't know how much that is because I'm only looking after the shop. Well, that was it then, you know, they'd be took in a cubicle with somebody trying something on and we didn't use to use bags, we just used to put 'em all over our arms and walk out of the shop with them, fill the car up and when the car was filled up we'd drive away. My doctor, we had a doctor who was our doctor at the time, our GP and he used to buy all the stones and diamonds off of us. Because then, if you asked to have a look at a ring, they used to bring you out like a chocolate box thing with so many drawers in it, so while they was showing you the top drawer and putting that back, you was taking them out of the bottom, or vice versa. If he turned round you'd just take a couple of drawers out, or you'd have about four trays of rings, you'd just walk out with a tray of rings while he went to get another one. So you know, money - we had so much money and everybody round us was always*

looked after, we always helped everybody, so we never had nobody who was skint around us. Because we looked after them.

Then I started to get ill with the baby and I was took to Lewisham Hospital and they sent me home and said you're not having it. I hadn't booked in anywhere, I made out I'd just come back from Paris, that's where I'd been living, and I wasn't registered with any doctor, because I was frightened they would find out who I was. Lewisham Hospital put me in an ambulance and sent me to St. Thomas's Hospital and that's where Joanne was born, in St. Thomas's Hospital, and she was full time, but she was only three-and-a-half pounds so she was put straight into an incubator and, erm, I stayed in there for about a week, I think. I left there because my mum said the police had kept going up there, and they was following her, and she thought they'd followed her to the hospital, so I left, left Joanne in the hospital 'cos I couldn't get her out anyway, because she was under weight and I think she was in there for about four weeks until she brought her weight up.

So what did I do then? I couldn't go home, because the police kept going up there. So the only time I used to sneak home was of a night time and give her (Shirley's mother?) money and make sure the baby was all right, and erm, or I'd meet her out. But I was staying over in the East End, in Bethnal Green with my friend Mary. We used to go rolling to the West End from there, and it just carried on, near enough. Oh yes, this feller Norman Hall who I started to go out with. We was working with him and then I started going out with him, and he was a spiteful bastard though, because he really bashed me up one night for nothing and broke my jaw and I was took to London Hospital. This is when I gets nicked as well. I don't get nicked then but I had to go back to the hospital, and when I go to my mum, there was ... (can't get next few words, sorry) ... So, I don't know he's broke me jaw, I just stayed in bed and in the morning (I wasn't with him, I was staying at Mary's) and my chin was right down on my neck. I was staying at Burdett Road, it wasn't far from the London Hospital. I was taken in to London Hospital and they had to break me jaw again and wire it, you know, and operate. Then I come out of hospital, and it wasn't long after that I went up to see my mum to see the baby again. The police knocked on the door while I was there and I

went in the other room and got behind the settee and it was Smith and Penney, they was our local coppers who knew us, they'd nicked us loads of times, but they was quite good. They was just ordinary sort of policemen. Penney poked his head over the settee and said: 'Oh! Shirley's here. I won't tell Smith if you let me get behind the settee with you and have a quickie!' I said, 'Oh, piss off!' He went, 'Smith, she's in here'. So they nicks me. I said, 'Can't I give you some money?' and he said, 'No, not now, too many people have seen you'. Because they all knew me round the Elephant. Then the police car come and I was took back to Holloway. While I was in Holloway I was so hungry I undone the wire in my mouth. Winnie Cook, shall I tell you about when I was in the hospital? I was put straight in the hospital wing which was still a cell but with a big panel in the door, you know, not the little round hole. Winnie Cook was a red-band and she used to come round and because I was on a special diet like Complian, she used to do me egg custard as a treat 'cos the Complian was so sickening. Anyway, this night I got so hungry I undone the wire on me mouth to put a bit of bread in it. I said, 'Get me a bit of bread and I'll put it under the tray'. Anyway she went and got me a lump of bread and I ate it and cracked me jaw again and I had to have another operation. I had to go out, have another operation and brought back in again.

Then I had a visiting magistrate and then I'd lost so much time for escaping and being a nuisance and everything else. I was took back to Aylesbury Prison and put in the hospital in Aylesbury. Because I'm Catholic I was put in the Catholic department over there, right next to the church.

I goes back to Aylesbury and I'm put straight in the hospital because of me broken jaw, instead of it only being six weeks wired up. I'm three months wired up now, ain't I? But I was really, really ill. I'd gone down to sort of seven stone, and I was really run down and everything. The doctor was a raving lesbian who always had a cigarette in her mouth with the ash on the end and I don't know how she held it there but she must have had some sort of an art of doing it, 'cos every time she examined your chest the fucking ash fell on your chest from her cigarette in her mouth. She was just disgusting, and she knew what she was doing because she would just blow it like some crank. Anyway, this day I just got so fed up - twice I sort of said 'Do you mind not

having a cigarette in your mouth when you examine me? ' She just ignored me. This time she come round and I'd just about had enough of it, and as the ash dropped on me I thought she was just doing this on purpose, I just spat in her eye. Next thing I know I'm just frog-marched up out of me bed, nice little bed as well there in the hospital, and I'm put in a straitjacket. At that time these straitjackets just had a collar round the neck and it was like a heavy sacking material, with your arms down your sides, you couldn't get your arms out, and I was put in a padded cell and it's along by my own cell because that is the hospital wing where the padded cells are. All the nutters were looking and laughing, this is what they do. Me jaw's undone now, but because I'm underweight I still have to have all this special food from the hospital.

This is where the woman was who was rolling, well not rolling, she doped a man in a West End club, remember? I told you about her, she got life imprisonment because the man had a heart condition and he died. Well, within two years before I came out of there the woman was stone white and a cripple. You know, it was so sad, she just shrivelled up, and she was a well-to-do lady, spoke very well. Anyway, I'm in a padded cell, and erm, you look up and they are just looking at you through the hole. So I thought, well I'll wait until night time comes - and I don't know, but I think it was because I was skinny I could manoeuvre my body up and down like a snake. Anyway, I've got the bottom of this straitjacket up to me mouth and I've nibbled and nibbled and ripped and ripped and in the end I looked like a hula-hula girl, I couldn't get the neck off, because it's on an iron collar, but the rest of it was just all strips.

When the morning come and they come in to feed me my breakfast they couldn't get over it. 'Cos I've got no underclothes or nothing on just this straitjacket! They could not believe it - they said that had never happened because I'd stripped it up all the way round, that was impossible. Yeah! I thought I'd fucking let them see I'm not just a cabbage in here, am I? And erm, then anyway, they takes me out of there. The little girl next door was definitely going off of her head, but I thought she was acting, she was beautiful, this little girl, and she was in there for nothing, I think she was in there for picking up some coal, or nicking a bag of coal, in Yorkshire somewhere. She absolutely done nothing this kid, about nineteen she was, but it was a crime then, wasn't

it, to do them things? Anyway, I think she'd nicked a bag of coal, something minor, but she was beautiful. I thought she was acting, because she used to shout out of the window of a night, talk to the moon and the stars. She was intelligent, she knew all their names and everything - I used to say 'Ain't you clever?' This morning I goes past her cell and she's laying with a white sheet all over her, and I went, 'What are you doing?' She said, 'Oh, I'm dead, I'm in my coffin'. And I thought she was doing it just to get out of there, because a lot of them used to try it on, but they took her into a mental home and she never ever come out. And there was nothing wrong with this girl, all she needed was somebody to really take care of her, do you know? It is fucking disgusting what they do.

Then to top it all off, because the doctor knows I'm not going to let her fondle me about and touch me, she's give me a job. I've never been in a morgue before, and the morgue is right next to the hospital where I'm sleeping and that's where our little church is at the bottom of the yard, the Catholic church.

It was the first time I'd ever, ever seen what a morgue looked like. It was a grey slab with like a drain in the middle of it and a thing like a pig's trough running out the bottom. I said, 'What's this then?' and she said, 'Oh, you've got to scrub that down'. I asked 'Why, what is it?' and she said, 'That's where we lay the bodies'. I was sick everywhere, I couldn't touch that, anyway, I couldn't even fucking wash up. I just wouldn't do it. Then they would give me mailbags to do - no, socks to knit first of all, then I was put on the sewing machine doing mailbags. I didn't like none of these jobs, 'cos I couldn't knit and I wasn't a very good machinist, so they put me out in the garden. I didn't mind though. I've always had a good complexion, I think it was all the fucking carrots I used to eat all day long and onions and things.

On the landing there was this horrible screw with horrible green eyes. She was an old dike; she used to come round every night before the lights and been turned out and I'd just be getting undressed. First of all she offered me cigarettes and I didn't smoke so I didn't want the cigarettes. She'd say was there anything else I wanted and I used to say, yeah, I'll have a bar of chocolate. 'Cos I didn't care, then the other girls used to say to me, no get the cigarettes off of her, 'cos I'd told them she'd been offering

me cigarettes. When she asked me to light the cigarette up I fucking choked on it didn't I? You know, through the hole, the little round hole, and she struck the match and I choked on the cigarette. But I wouldn't have it with her, 'cos I knew she was vile.

I'd be sitting writing me letter home and I used to find that very hard to do, because I can't spell very well at all, and I'd be sort of hours writing a page to me dad who was in Oxford prison. Me and me dad really, was the only two, and Adgie, who really communicated, because Adgie was in Brixton. And she'd just come and stand and spy on me. This went on for about three months and, in the end, it really drove me mental because I used to put up a piece of paper over the hole, I'd put cardboard on it, I'd stick anything up there that I could, stick it up with jelly, treacle, anything just so it stayed there, 'cos I knew she was on duty that night. I'd lay there and I'd feel someone looking at me and I'd look up and see this green eye, watery green eye, looking through the hole. Then after a while, being locked up as well, it just done my brain in. So this night I thought well, I'm gonna wait for you. We had pen and ink then what we had to write our letters with and I dipped me pen in the ink and I thought I'm gonna wait on her and when she comes I'm gonna stick it right in her eye, because that's the only place you could stick it, the eye that was looking through at me. There's a little round thing outside that they lift up and as I heard it lift up I'm ready with me pen and I've gone Plonk! right through, the pen slipped and had gone into the eye and it wasn't her, it was the Governor doing a night check on everybody, and she never ever done that. The next thing I know there was all big screams and I thought, what's going to happen. They opened the door and beat the life out of me. They broke all my fingers, they was treading on me dragging me down the iron stairs, well I was just a battered lump of pulp. Because the hospital was full up they couldn't put me in the hospital, outside in the prison grounds there was a big place where they used to keep the vegetables, a cold storage place, but it had cells underneath, but in the cells you could only see the people's feet walking by.

It had three windows. Well, they really battered me, they battered me to pieces these fucking old lesbians. They wouldn't let me take me clothes off because they had to put me in another straitjacket, they just absolutely ripped my clothes off, scratched my

body and everything. They really enjoyed it, you could see 'em, especially old ginger there mauling me was enjoying it. But I didn't know it was the Governor who was going to poke her silly fucking eye in the door did I? I'd probably have got the same if I'd done it to her anyway, but because it was the Governor they all bounced on me. All the girls was screaming, banging their cups on the wall, shouting out, 'Leave her alone'. Some smashed their cell up 'cos they saw what was happening to me. I had a lot of friends in there from Approved School and some of them was very violent girls who could never be your friends outside. No, you couldn't have 'em as friends, you had them as bodyguards in there, you know. So the doctor comes down to me, they brings the doctor down to me and I had a black eye, a busted mouth and my body was just black and blue where they'd dragged me down the iron stairs, they didn't let me walk, they just dragged me. But they'd broke my fingers, three on one hand and two on the other, the pain was really, really bad, apart from me head throbbing and me face throbbing, it was just the worst pain I'd ever had, worse than having a baby. I couldn't even move, me fingers was going all blue and everything. The doctor come in the next morning, they left me all night like that. By the time the next morning came, me fingers was like bananas they was just puffed right up just like a hand of bananas, both me hands. (Where the pen just caught it she wore a patch for a couple of weeks, but she was all right).

So the doctor comes down the next day and she gets things like lolly sticks, you know, like what you say 'Aaah', you know, like them. I should have been took to hospital with my hands but I wasn't, she done them. She put these splints on them and that was all and a couple of Aspros, they kept giving me a couple of Aspros to take the pain away. They still had to give me special vitamin food because I was still only seven and half stone. Then, this day I was sitting down, I can't remember how many days I was down there because I just forgot. But, this day I was down there and I heard these feet going by, and I heard somebody say - because we used to have parties from Oxford and Cambridge come and visit the prison, I don't know if they was doing subjects for the prison or what but they used to come and visit - and I heard someone in this party say, 'What is this building here?' and she said, 'Oh, this is where we store our

vegetables for the winter.'

I thought and I shouted out, 'I ain't a fucking vegetable, and I don't know how long I've been down here. Come down here you lot!' With that, one of the girls bent down and looked in the window, which was the cell, underneath the floor, on the basement floor. And she said they'd like to go down there. This girl brought all the students, the Governor had to bring them down, had to take them into the vegetables, there was all vegetables in there, because it had its own farm and you had farm work, and all the stuff was stored up I suppose to keep the prison in money.

*Then the students had to come in and see me didn't they? She had to open the door and I said, 'Look, they bashed me up, and this is how I've been, I've been down here for weeks, one of you go and get me some help, "phone somebody up for me", "phone the Home Office up and tell them what's happening to me".' The next morning I was took out of there, I got a visit from they said was the Visiting Magistrates, to say what I had done I'd have another six months put on my time. I done a full two years in Aylesbury, Joanne was two, two and half, when I come home. Yeah, I done my full minimum two years out of three years.**

All the other girls used to get home leave and go home, that was cancelled as well, I didn't get no home leave. Then eventually I come out and I was put back on the wing. Then after my time's finished, I'm released. I goes home to Pollock Road, Leslie was back and me dad was away in Oxford Prison, Adgie and dad's away. When I gets home, I gets a cab from Waterloo Station or Charing Cross (Charing Cross or Euston?)... I goes up to Pollock Road, and then I gets the shock of me life, because in two years my mum has completely deteriorated, you know. She was a drunkard, drunk all day (off record conversation).

I knew I couldn't go straight when I come home, because I couldn't do anything, you know, because there was nothing I could do, I had no trade. But I thought, I'll just stick to rolling, I won't go out shoplifting because I didn't think then, that I would be able to do it again. Rolling was easy anyway. When I got upstairs well, I thought I'd have a bit of home to come home to, because there was a lovely home when I went away. Well, there was just nothing, it was just absolute poverty, the worst poverty that I

can remember going back from when we was even little kids. I don't thing we ever had that poverty. Well, there was one chair, then a table and four old chairs like they'd come off a bomb ruin, she'd had the gas cut off so there was no gas, there was a gas oven in the room and she was boiling a kettle on the fire.

Leslie was sitting on an orange box, it was just poverty, poor and dirty you know. There was Joanne, sitting there with jam all over her fucking face and dirty frock on, dirty shoes. My mum, I just felt sorry for her because she didn't know whether she was coming or going. Her handbag used to rattle ... she just couldn't cope. When I went away my dad had chandeliers in every room, we didn't here 'cos she lost the place and everything, but so as he didn't know she was selling them, she used to unpick them and take so many loads of beads off of them, then sell them to a man in the antique shop at Camberwell. My dad's coming home one night and sees these chandeliers - at the time nobody had them - and he went in and he went, 'How much do you want for them, mate, because I've got some that match them at home?' My dad, silly as arseholes, comes home with the chandelier, I don't know how much he paid, £20, for it. He said, 'Look, the man down Camberwell Green, he's gonna get me some more of these. This woman goes into him and sells him beads at a time.' He ain't looked at ours, to see if she's took any off of them. He was backward, love him, he was backward, wasn't he. He said the man at Camberwell Green's got this woman who goes in and sells him so many rows at a time of beads. I mean, love him, but he must have been backward not to have checked ours, knowing Nell, you know.

Then one night he's sitting down - well, the light as you went past it we used to touch it because it used to sound like Niagara Falls, they were the best crystals - he probably nicked them out of one of these big houses or something, where they'd been bombed - but they were the best crystals you'd ever seen. We just used to go off and touch one light so's we got the sound of Niagara Falls going, they used to hit each other all the way round. Anyway, she done it really cunning an clever though, she'd took them from where they wouldn't be noticed, and the man in Camberwell Green used to make up new chandeliers. Me dad, silly as arseholes is buying them, he's buying his own lights back isn't he! But this night he's sitting down looking, and this is how he

caught my mum, sitting down looking, staring at the light and he went, 'Them fucking things are missing'. Then he's gone and got the light that he's bought, and held that up and it's the same crystal, so he went in to the man and said, 'When's that woman coming in again?' The feller said, 'Well, she usually comes in every Friday'.

Well, we had them in the passage, in the kitchen, even in the toilet, in a council flat, in fucking Dog Kennel Hill, we had the chandeliers. Anyway, she's gone in there with another few beads, I think he give her a few quid for them. I dunno why she done it, but she done it to get her bottle of gin I think, her secret bottle. Me dad caught her and bashed her didn't he, because he waited for her when the man said she'd be there, so he bashed her up, she put her head in the gas oven, locked the kitchen door, tried to commit suicide. Then he took her out and took her to hospital, took her down to Maudsley Hospital and asked them to certify her because she was mad!

Can you imagine leaving that, and Pollock Road was nice when I'd first gone away. So when I comes home that was the scene I'd come home to, me mum boiling a kettle on the fire, breaking up an orange box, Charlie sitting on the chair in a trance - like he didn't know whether he was coming or going, he was in a bad way as well, Leslie. While me mum was getting drunk and disappearing, he was just in a bad way, he wasn't working and he never had anything and well, it was just the worst scene I can really remember.

So straightaway, the first night I'm home my Pat comes round with Fred - no, it was the day time, Pat comes round with Fred and takes me up the West End, takes me and buys me a dress, takes me to have me hair done and buy me clothes. Pat gives me £100, Fred gives me £50 and Norman gave me £50, and that night we all went down the Astor and then I knew I had to be out to work the next night, I had to go and get money, because I couldn't live the way I was living, I couldn't live in that filth or anything.

That was my first night home and I stayed in a hotel with Norman, we went to a hotel and I stayed with him. The next night I was out working and then I knew I couldn't mess about round Bruton Street, just getting £15, I had to go to Park Lane and Bond Street, where there used to be all the French brasses down Bond Street and they worked for the Massini brothers. The were really heavies the Massini brothers. You

couldn't go near any of the pitches because they were bought by the police at that time, they bought their pitches. You know, if it was outside Gucci, a brass would be there and that would be her pitch and no one else could go there. But we didn't even need pitches to stand about and flaunt ourselves, because we'd just get out of a cab and get picked up, you know, that's really how it was. But we used to roll them all round by them and then they'd get questioned by the men. So, then of a night time I was rolling and then it got to the baby needed clothes and I needed clothes, so I got back into the old habit again, it wasn't long - about four or five weeks, and I was out hoisting of a day. At this time we were doing it in gangs.

At this time my sister Pat had been living a nice normal life over in Hackney with Fred and his mother having nice cooked dinners and everything! So now me and Pat goes out rolling. We meets this little girl, Lorraine, sitting in the bar, she had no money, she was a beautiful little girl though. We takes her with us, we sell her, we sell her to everybody now, because she's the new face and that's how it used to go. We're getting a fortune now because the racing season is on, and we're much more wiser and shrewder now to get the money. The car sales were on, you know the Car Exhibition, the Boat Exhibition; we even go to the clubs like the Embassy and the Astor - have a really good time then take somebody out of there and roll them for £100, you know, because they weren't coming back again. The people who owned the clubs like Freddie and Bertie Green, they knew us anyway and they used to say, well I don't know. Some of them were so drunk they didn't even know that we'd took the money off them anyway. So my Pat and Lorraine - my Pat was really beautiful, she used to get took for Sophia Loren she did, people used to say she looked like Sophia Loren - and Lorraine was just like a little dolly, she had big blue eyes and lovely blonde hair and she was just pretty and petite but at that time she was as silly as a box of lights. When I gave her her first white tenner she asked me what it was, how could she spend a bit of paper because she'd never ever seen a ten pound note. Years later she gave me a hundred pound note and asked me did I know what it was!

Anyway Lorraine lived in Bethnal Green, Vallence Road and this is the first time we come to meet the Krays. Violet, their mother, Lorraine said like, she was a smart

woman and she'd like some nice dresses and things. So we started selling stuff to Violet, who was a very nice woman, really, she was a nice woman. She used to love Tricosa, which was a certain name like, and Koochy* it was called. I'd get that from the White House in Bond Street or Harrod's. (No, no, I suppose she might have done earlier on in life, but no, she was a smart woman).

She was a good woman as well because when anyone got in trouble she said, like, there's a room here for you, you can come and stay here because the boys don't live here anymore, they are only round here of a morning. Really I got on well with all of them, Charlie, Ronnie and Reggie. Although they killed my friend's husband, Georgie Cornell. Yeah, Ronnie and Reggie was there, we used to go out and have a drink with them. See, they couldn't drive so Bobby Ramsey used to be their chauffeur, so they used to send Bobby Ramsey round to pick us up in a chauffeur driven car, didn't they, and take us in the Hospital Tavern and all the clubs and pubs and really and truthfully, just used to show us off, because we was different to the girls round there, but there was never anything in it

28
SECTION ONE

APPENDIX

ORAL HISTORY - EXTRACT THREE

Hidden Knowledge: Shirley Pitts on Men

He was quite sweet I suppose. It was me, I was the aggravating one, do you know what I mean? I had a row with 'Bonker' and I couldn't get a cab or anything, so I was walking home from Old Kent Road, cutting across the Elephant this car pulled up and Frank McLintock was in the car - you know the boxer - (footballer). He stopped his car and asked me what I was doing of and I said I was going home, then Bonker pulled up, he was in the car with Del, and I got a lift down to Camberwell Green (I lived at Dulwich, my mum lived at Dog Kennel Hill - Lovers' Lane, wasn't it?).

So we goes to Dog Kennel Hill and he really gave me a bad wallop, Bonker, because I didn't want to know no more about him. (L: He was jealous of the boxer?) - He was jealous of anybody. So that was it.

I used to buy [she means sell] stuff off his mum. She used to give it to me, or I'd take stuff up there and if she didn't have the money, she'd pay me in stuff. He wasn't bad looking, I can remember. If you like them looks, afterwards when I looked at him I thought, 'Ugly ...'

He had fair hair, most fellers I liked was blond, and he had blue eyes and he was tall. He said, 'I gotta tell on you, because I can't have you running about, skating around while I'm inside'. (L: So he deliberately wanted to put you away to stop you going out with anyone else?) Yes and my dad, not that my dad was gonna go out with anyone else, yes. My dad and Mr Maybank. When he was picked up by the police for another charge he need not have mentioned the other, but he said he might as well clear the slate now. And we were gonna have him killed, no seriously; there were different thoughts coming about then, you know, and I had Joanne. He said he'd better

take her with him. And I still can't believe he done what he done.

(L: How did you meet Norman then?)

Oh, fucking hell, another three, disaster after disaster. I met Norman up the West End, when we was all rolling up the West End, he used to go and get our cabs. We were all sort of London people, all wanted by police and he was just one of us. He was good looking, he used to look like Warren Beatty. I know he had this up against me, he used to try and bash me up, burn you, he was spiteful. He never really hurt me until he went in a mood. (TAPE INAUDIBLE - SHIRLEY MOVES ON TO ANOTHER STORY)

'Tell that prat I'm fucking ill, Shirl' - you know, it embarrassed 'im, like 'disgusting letting a little boy ...', like thinking he was ... but 'e was a really, really intelligent little boy, and all the doctors knew 'im, yeah, no, he knew he was gonna die as well. All the doctors knew 'im and the nurses used to say 'Come on John' - 'cos he used to have to twice a week go and have his blood done, and he was on drugs, really on bad drugs no, I went to live with Patsy Hawkins - sister - no, no, his mum was Rose. Patsy lived on the top floor and 'is mum lived on the third floor and - oh! What was the name of that house - Aske House, - Aske House, A-S-K-E, I think. I'll have to 'ave a look, Aske House, yeh, in, er, Pitfield Street.

Chrissie lived round the corner here, he had a nice flat in Sebastian House, you know, on the ground floor right opposite Rose's and erm, (yeh), and anyway, I - Patsy had met Tommy Bill and she started going out with Tommy Ball an' I went over to live with Chrissie. Chrissie's house used to be a party house - though, all the weekend would be parties, Friday, Saturday and Sunday would be parties, and my dad used to come over there, 'cos I couldn't go back over the Elephant and, er, he'd come over, come to the parties, stay the night sometimes, and - oh yeh! - that's right, then it had a big photo of 'me in the paper and it had raiders, bandits, you know, raid Cornwall, Devon and Paignton. Yeah, it was, I think it was the Standard, or the News, you know we used to have the Evening News ... and it had, like, erm .. you know, we was - I was

really in trouble, erm, shall I tell you about when I goes over to our Pat's in Morning Lane, I've writ that down 'ere as well.

Oh, yeah, my dad, like 'e had just come home from doing five years and, er, he'd got thrombosis and TB while 'e was in Oxford Prison, and they let him out on this Section 29 - that means he wasn't allowed to get into any more trouble, but 'e did, he got fitted up with an Hoover and then he got eight years, just after my Pat got her twenty-one months and wait - oh yeah! - no, they let him out after, 'e got five years, I'd got out of Borstal 'adn't I? - I'd been 'ome about eighteen months, my dad had been 'ome - while I was with Chrissie, 'e come home erm, 'e was 'ome about a year, my dad and erm, no, 'e was 'ome about two years and my Charlie went and nicked a Hoover and my mum - er, a tallyman come round the door, the man cried in court, who the Hoover belonged to, he said 'I'd a never done it, I'd never reported it, I'd of paid for the Hoover meself, if I'd known that poor man was gonna get eight years.' Really, really cried, the man.

But I'll tell you what happened. He goes - er, my mum - the tallyman: my dad went up to Maybanks to get a job, and 'cos he was on this Section 29, but before he'd got nicked, there was two policemen come round to my dad to ask him to work for 'em and they said to 'im, you know we'd give you a nice wage-packet each week, put it through the letter box, nobody won't know, 'cos you know a lot of people Harry, and they trust you, we'll even give you money to buy loads with and just let us know, and he said 'Fuck off, you know, and get out of this house, you pair of whore-sons.' And this Mountford said, er not Mountford, Sinclair - he said, my dad said, 'I'll nick you and I'll make sure you go away'.

So the next sentence, in them days, after five years was eight years PD. You know, it was sort of running concurrent, that was your sentence, that was what you 'ad to get, and 'cos he was on this Section 29 and my dad wasn't even there, Lorraine, and er, the man's knocked back on the door to my mum and she said, 'No, no-one's come in here, not to this house.' Anyway, the feller's gone and got the police. My mum's put the Hoover under the bed, you know she's so fucking clever, yeah, she's put the Hoover under the bed. The police - my dad come up the stairs - as my dad's gone in, they'd

seen my dad pull up in the car and go up the stairs, they followed him up and come in and searched the house and nicked 'im for the Hoover. Little flats they lived in off of East Lane then, and er, my Pat's in Holloway now ain't she, doing her twenty-one months, but my Louie was in the flat and my mum, so the police nicked all of them, they nicked my mum, they nicked Louie, they nicked Charlie and they takes them

Er, my Pat was in the kitchen (in Holloway) serving the cocoa on the night time and in Holloway they got a sort of reception, they delouse you and all that in there you know, you're in a cubicle, fucking disinfectant all over - and my Pat was taking the cocoa around 'cos she was working in the kitchen and she nearly fucking died - there was my mum sitting there and Lulu and she said, like, to the woman, 'That is my mother, what you doing 'ere?' and she told 'em, like, what had happened, like they'd been arrested over this Hoover and took to Court and then put away for it on remand, and Louie, I mean, my Louie didn't know nothing about it.

She just went up there, went up to see me dad, 'cos Adgie was away in Brixton at that time, Adgie was on remand. The whole lot of 'em! That is where, you know, I know the Krays was not nice people like from what you've read about 'em now, but they really helped us. You know, they used to make sure I was all right for money and when they was sending parcels in the nick, they would say, like, what one is your dad in, or where's your mum or where's your family. You know, so they done a lot of good things as well, didn't they? Nobody went short if they had no-one outside in there, do you see?

But, erm, so Pat's taking the cocoa round and there's me mum sitting waiting to be deloused, she nearly fainted, my Pat did. My mum's told her what had happened, Charlie nicked the Hoover and - but she nicked the Hoover, Charlie was only sixteen, so she'd best blame Charlie. So my Pat said 'Promise mum, you won't let ('cos she knew my dad would go away then, so we all knew that he'd get eight years, 'cos of this Section he was on) *and, er, my mum promised Pat that she would take the blame for the Hoover, but she didn't - when she got in court she started sobbing and crying and the judge just looked at my dad and called my dad a despicable man who had pulled his poor wife down to his level by dragging her through the courts, all his*

children as well, so they brought up everything about all the kids, families, approved schools, Borstals and everything and it all got blamed on to my dad, and he got eight years, preventive detention. She walked away, got outside, went straight in the pub over the road and got drunk, laughing 'er 'ead off, and the man who the Hoover belonged to just cried.

He said, 'I'd never ...' He said, 'I'd a paid for that Hoover myself, I didn't want that poor man to go away, not for eight years for a Hoover'. And, erm, well it was just a shock to all of us, Lorraine, and that's when I was living with Chrissie then, I had er, little Christopher was born but I was getting married to Chrissie and I thought, well now I might as well wait, my dad's got eight years, I've got to wait 'till he comes home, 'cos I wouldn't get married until no, but I wouldn't, I wouldn't get married, because he never went to nobody's wedding. He was always in prison. He was in prison when Pat got married, he was in prison when Leslie got married - Leslie was in prison, they had to bring Leslie out of prison to marry Brenda, on an escort, (laughs). Fucking joke ain't it? Yeah (pause) I know, it was about when, it was before Christmas this was, thirty years ago, 'cos Christopher's thirty-one, yeah, it was about thirty years ago. Yeah the whole family was in prison then. Yeah, the whole lot of them, I was with my mum, wasn't I. Leslie was in prison, Adgie was in prison, Charlie was out, he was only sixteen. He'd just come out of approved school. Bad, innit bad? (Laughs). It's so bad, innit? Patsy Bond, she was good to me, Arthur, loads of people, you know, they all sort of - they all sort of helped me. Do you know? Like they, I think they probably knew I'd been in so much trouble. Then there was two brothers, they was really heavies, Scruttons, from Liverpool Road. They were bank robbers and they really used to sort of come round, always come round with fifty quid, hundred pound, and erm, I never really went short of anything, do you know?

The only time I went short of anything was when I was really with Chrissie 'cos 'e fucking gambled everything away. But erm ... what was I telling you? Me dad gets eight years at the London Sessions at the Borough and, no, this is approximately 1960, and erm, my Pat's away doing twenty-one months, the others were all away, I was the only one out. Charlie was out, but I didn't have a lot to do with him then. He was only

a kid, yeah. And then my mum, sort of, she was a real drunkard - alcoholic, do you know? She meets this chap and, - oh, he was quite a nice man, from Manchester, - and didn't know nothing about my mum, no, and he just liked a drink and he thought she liked a drink, the way she was sort of smart, nicking everyone else's clothes. He went out with her one night and Charlie must have followed 'em, caught her in the car with him and stabbed him to death nearly, well he did, nearly died - stabbed him about seven or eight times, he was on the operating thing and the police said he was gonna die, 'cos they called the priest in and they said 'Give us the name of the person who done it' an' 'e said, 'No.'

And then Adgie ... 'cos of my mum being with 'im, yeh, I know, I think it was about me dad, he was young, he couldn't accept my mum being with another man ... I don't really know, I know she fucked 'is brain up, she definitely done 'is mind in. 'Cos we didn't take no notice of 'er, she used to just disgust me, anyway, I wouldn't even talk to 'er, I couldn't even call her mum, I used to call her Nell.

But she did used to disgust me, like, you know, I used to say you're a fucking old whore, why don't you go on the game, you know, be decent about it - sell yer body, yeah, sell yer body, don't sleep with any fucking old Tom, Dick and Harry for a gin and tonic, do you know? And, er, she used to turn quite evil as well, you know, and rip your things up and smash the place up and she was just a bastard.

And er, I couldn't, I mean, I told you didn't I?, when I come back from a weekend in Brighton, after I had come out of Aylesbury, after I'd done all the flat beautiful and she'd sold it, sold me baby's cot, pram, toys, everything, just sold it, lock stock and barrel and pissed off, yeah...

I meets Chrissie, anyway, and I'm not out shoplifting or nothing, oh, he was handsome looking, he was really good looking, yeah, like the blond hair and blue eyes, he looked like my dad! I think that's why I fell in love with him. 'Cos my dad had blond hair and blue eyes and I'm sure that there was something there that reminded me of my dad - well, I fell in love with 'im anyway. And, erm, he was never good-hearted though, he was always greedy, but I didn't care, because I always got my own money anyway, so, you know, but, ... I don't know, I suppose he did, but 'e was more sort of

just get in bed, do you know? ... you know at parties, 'Let's go to bed' you know, yeah ... but I don't know, no.. yeah, just have a drink and go to bed, yeah. I left 'im loads of times, anyway, I don't really know, oh yeah, no - then when all my family was away, my Adgie was away, the whole lot of them was away and Leslie, he started bashing me up didn't he?

Yeah, broke my teeth, put my bone right through my nose there, and then the Krays got to hear about this and I had a really big black eye and my Pat was home now, 'cos Christopher was born, and my Pat was home, she had Mitzi, like she 'ad been 'ome about nine months, ten months now, because her baby was born, Mitzi ... and erm, he really, really beat me up and I had - sickly jealous, yeah, you know what I mean? Even if we pulled up in a garage and someone smiled and I smiled back, 'ed just smack me right round the face, do you know? Yeah ... but I think he liked a Sunday fight with me, you know Sundays seemed to be his fighting day! But I think 'is dad was like that as well, his dad was spiteful to old Rose. And, erm, he really beat me up this week and I'd a really big black eye and my nose was all up and he broke my tooth. And a car pulls up, Bobby Ramsey was the driver, 'cos the Krays couldn't drive, and this big sort of limousine car pulled in the flats right up on to the kerb part, you know, and Reggie and Ronnie jumped out didn't they? They came over the wall, jumped our little wall there, jumped over the wall and knocked on the door. Course, I just said, 'Oh, hello Ron, hello Reg, what you doing 'ere?' I didn't know did I? I didn't know people had gone and told 'em I was getting bashed up by him. And, erm, they said, 'We want to see Chrissie.' So I said, 'Have one cup of tea?' and Ronnie was sitting in the kitchen with me, I made the tea, and Reggie went in the bedroom, Chrissie was in bed, - I said, 'Yeh, he's in the bedroom' opened the door and said, 'Reggie's here to see you, Chris.' Ronnie went to me, 'How did you do your eye, Shirl?' 'Oh' I said, 'I fell over with me umbrella, didn't I.'

He went, 'How did you do your nose?', I went, 'I done it altogether, didn't I, I fell over, 'it me eye, got up knocked meself and done me ..'. And he went, he said, 'Ah, I wanna tell you, if anyone takes any liberties with you, you got to come and tell us.'

And I said, 'Yeah, course I will.' After that I just threatened Chrissie with the Krays, didn't I? 'Touch me and that's it ...' ... threatened 'im. No he didn't 'it 'im at all, they just threatened 'im and then come out in the passage and said, (Well, Chrissie shit the bed, I think! (laughing)) ... come out in the passage and said to me, 'Don't let anybody take any liberties with you, if anybody hurts you, you just come to us, and remember, you've always got a room in our house in Ballards Road.

You see, see I couldn't go back to South London, and erm, so I thought that was ever so good of 'em to have offered that, and plus the fact Chrissie never 'it me no more after that. He'd done me neck, I used to have a collar on . oh, yeah, I did frighten 'im, I put him in hospital twice. I waited till no, I waited till he was asleep once and there was this big bottle of Pershana, you remember that Pershana, fucking Indian 'air stuff, yeah, because it was like a big thing, he'd friction 'is 'air, like an Indian like, it was this great heavy bottle, and I waited till 'e was asleep, and I thought, yeah, 'cos he'd really bashed me up, all the back of me ears was all popped out - that was before that time - and I 'it 'im on the head - hit 'im with it, and I, yeah, nearly smashed 'is eye out, yeah, I wanted to really hurt 'im. I thought, well, I'll do it now, and he still ... but I couldn't win, you can't win with a man, they're stronger, ain't they?*

He used to bash me and I used to think, 'I'll wait' - and that was twice I done 'm when he was asleep. Once I threw an 'ole kettle of boiling water over him. Yeah! he was took to hospital with stitches in his eye. Scalded 'im, scalded all his head and his neck, but I put the kettle on to do it! Then I smashed once - I had all mirror in the passage in Haggerston Road, all glass on the staircase, you know, glass mirror and erm, course someone had it all knocked off cheap, so I bought it and had it all put up in the stairs, like to give it a double illusion, you know, like they say? ... and, he started again and I'd got this great big bottle of pickles, from Vallance Road, from the Jewish shop, you know, mixed pickles they have. As I threw that he ducked and it smashed all the fucking glass, all the banisters fell down, it was a scene! (Laughs).

No, we used to have bad fights, but erm, oh no, after the Krays went round to 'im he didn't 'it me no more, till they went away, then he started 'itting me again, didn't 'e? When Adgie was away. Then, when Adgie come home, Adgie just went down the

stall and got 'old of 'im - and picked 'im up and put 'im on top of 'is car - 'cos he was only little, wasn't he, Chrissie, he weren't tall. Yeah, and Adgie said, 'I'll kill you' he said, 'Touch 'er once more and, you know, I'll kill yer. You've got kids there.' And that night Adgie come home and Patsy was born, in Haggerston Road, and he come and he got he mattress off the bed and he went and got a big van and put the mattress in the back of the van, all the other kids clothes, toys and everything and took me down to Brighton. And he said to Chrissie, 'Now, when you're a man, you can come back down there.'

Chrissie went, 'They're my babies.' He went, 'No, they're my fucking babies now.' And he took us all away, there was nothing Chrissie could do about it. I tell you why I stayed with him, 'cos I left 'im about a hundred times. I mean, once after my Adgie got killed, I went to Devon and I happened to be staying in this Manor, where these two ladies - South African ladies - got robbed of about a million pounds of jewellery and diamonds, I happened to be in that Manor though and, erm, I was ... I come back to London 'cos I was having a bit of a nervous breakdown and, erm, and there was another after my Adgie got killed that was though. I had some good times with him, (Chrissie), but I think I had more bad times with him than good because he was just a miserable bastard. I never really saw him a lot, because he'd be out - no, this is the God's honest truth - he'd be out in the morning, wouldn't he, 'cos he'd go to the market for the stalls, he'd com (home) ... finish work - he was a worker though, that's why I really stayed with him as well.

He had some good ways. He wasn't a liar or a cheat. You know, he'd nick your money, though, but he wasn't a liar or a cheat, and he didn't say hello to people he didn't like. You know, he had some really good qualities and erm, but I never really saw a lot of 'im because after he'd finished work of a day, he'd be in the betting shop all day, then he'd come 'ome for his dinner at six o'clock, have a wash, shower or whatever, get dressed, go to the dogs till half-past ten. Every single dog track, Southend, Walthamstow, Romford, Catford, White City, Rayleigh - wherever there was a dog running, he'd be there, every single night - Wembley, yeah, everywhere, all over.

And erm, so I never really saw a lot of 'im. Weekends I saw 'im, didn't I, really? Yeah, we 'ad a row, a fight every Sunday (laughs). I think it was only the kids kept us together, because I mean I didn't need him for money, 'cos he never fucking gimme any, anyway. So it wasn't like I needed 'im and the truth is that when I tried to go straight, he didn't help me. He didn't help me. I mean if it had been left up to 'im, my kids woulda been walking about in plastic rubbers, do you know? He weren't somebody that ... and they always looked lovely and smart because I went and got their clothes. I mean, they was always dressed in the best clothes you could buy, I used to go to France and get their things, and Paris, and erm, but if it was up to 'im, well, they would've been walking about from the tot shop, do you know? 'Cos all 'is money went on gambling, and mine, I used to have some beautiful antiques and ornaments what he sold, or borrowed money on and he'd pull little strokes like that, but they weren't bad enough strokes for me to dislike 'im for, because they was material things wasn't they, anyway? Do you know? So, didn't really bother me.

Once I just 'phoned up a van, I did get pissed off with 'im, my friend Kitty had died, just after my brother Adgie, and she'd had an abortion, and a week after they made abortions legal. She left four little children, and Kitty wasn't yeah, well, she's got, her eldest daughter Lorraine is my Adgie's daughter, and she suffers from epilepsy, and her mum was old, but her mum had the four kids and that, and that was when I went to Devon. Oh, no, ... Louie looked like losing Adgie's house, because after Adgie died I had Louie with me.

I mean, Chrissie was good there, 'e never ever said they weren't allowed there, or nothing like that, he never moaned. Yeah, and Terry would sleep with my Christopher and Annie would sleep with Roseanne and he went an got a camp bed for my Louie, you know, he didn't mind that at all, you know.

Then I became really ill. I got pleurisy. Oh, I know, Charlie shot this feller in Deacon Street. Listen, this feller was following his Mongolian wife around and said like, you know, 'I'd like to take your knickers off' and all that, and she went back and told Charlie. Well, he was the worst person in the world you could tell, 'cos he's fucking shotgun happy. He goes right to the top of the flats in Deacon Street, tells this

feller to see him outside this green door, gets the message to him. The feller's waiting there, he shoots 'im out the window don't he? He missed 'im though, but shot the door right off the hinges, you know, with a big sawn off shotgun. So I'm running about trying to get 'im somewhere to stay, and I got pleurisy, that's when I was having Shirley. I'll sort some photos out of that, erm, 'e was the baby, Harry. Yeah, he was, 'cos I had 'em all baptised Catholics down there, didn't I? Erm, anyway, I got accused of robbing these two South African women, in the Manor House I was staying in, of a million pounds worth of jewellery - erm, I know old Billy Reece was up there around that time, I think 'e might have done it ... he's dead now, anyway, (laughing). He was the best burglar there was, yeah! He was the best cat burglar there was.

The police said that the cat burglar had gone over the roofs 'cos it was like a castle, this inn. They'd gone over the roofs and got into the two old girls' things, into their apartments, and took the ... well, ah, but they had a fortune, they used to come down to dinner with tiaras on, do you know? A fortune they had. And anyway, the police come up to London from Devon and the police at the Borough. It was all sorted out that I didn't do it anyway. Then I got really pissed off with Chrissie, with all the arguing and everything, that one Saturday morning he went out to work, and I was really nice to him, you know.

Like on the Friday he'd gone to the dogs, he'd gone to the dogs all the week and lost all his money, lost his money and on that Sunday he'd come back and I'd got a monkey from my friend Kitty, her mum sold it to me, and I brought this monkey home - yeah, a grass monkey - and I brought this monkey home and I had an Alsation in the passage, a puppy. I didn't want the puppy 'cos of the babies being little. A cab driver told me, a mini-cab driver, that he was gonna get a puppy, because he needed a dog, so the fare was about thirty quid, so I said, 'D' you want this Alsation, pedigree dog?' So he took the dog for the fare. So I goes in with the monkey. Anyway, the kids all loved the monkey, didn't they? But Chrissie had gambled everything away, didn't even have no wages, this week, I didn't. Erm, I 'ad all that stuff to sell and that but I didn't have no money from him, which was - it used to just do my brain in. So I dressed the monkey up and made 'im go down the Lane and sell it and buy food with it on the way back.

So him and Chrissie took the monkey down the Lane, didn't they, sold the monkey and bought, oh, I don't know, about thirty quid's worth of food, or whatever it was. And erm, then on the Tuesday, when he went to work, I 'phoned up a Pickford's van to come and take the kids' beds and see, I didn't need a lot of furniture then, because Brighton was already furnished. But, that's right, my Harry was nine months old.

Where the house hadn't been lived in for nine months, it had all overgrown. It was in Hove at Mill Drive, you know, it's a quite posh area and so the Halifax Building Society was on to my Louie that they wanted to take the house back if... 'cos in that winter that had come, all the shutters had blown off of the outside and the wall had fell down, and it was in a state. So I 'phoned up this removal van and put on all the beds and stuff that I needed, got my Louie and her two kids and went down to Brighton to live there. One of Chrissie's customers, 'cos they all lived around Haggerston Road, went down to the stall to Chrissie. He's working away ain't he? They said 'Oh, we didn't know you was moving, Chris' and he went, 'I'm not fucking moving.' (Laughs). They said 'Yeah, but there's a removal van outside your house and they're putting all the furniture in.' And he said, 'No, it must be next door, it's not us.' He didn't know. When 'e come home 'e said, 'I knew, 'cos it was silence outside.' It always used to be bikes, scooters and prams and loads of kids outside the door, do you know? Dogs and cats and fucking everything, there was nothing, he said it was all silent. He went, 'I looked through the letterbox and I thought, no, then my heart went over, and I went in and you was all gone.' I mean 'e wasn't a thief, Chrissie, erm, it was all over money, he wouldn't never part with anything

And, I just thought that I might as well be living on me own - I don't need a bed-partner do I? So I might as well be living on me own, 'cos he's not keeping us, and after my Adgie died, that really was my attitude. You know, like, why should I put up with this shit, do you know? I can go to bed with anybody, I don't have to go to bed with you, 'cos the kids are yours. That was just how I felt, anyway. So, I moved, we moved to Brighton.

The night we moved into Brighton - this was really funny, Lorraine. This street,

these people 'ated us down this street, the kids wanted to stop and go to the toilet, so I pulls up behind Croydon and took 'em round the back but it was the back entrance to a bank, you know, like them alleyways, next to the shop, and being like all kids they didn't need anything but they wanna pick up fucking waste paper ... they've picked up all these counterfoils from the bank, you know, what was supposed to be in their bins, yeah. And they've come back in the car with 'em. So, as I've moved in, all the neighbours are sort of - 'cos Adgie used to have all cars down the street, on the hills, they was always complaining about it. 'Cos he had a car showroom in Brighton. We could see 'em - 'Oo, look the fucking Clampits are back.' - Do you know?

Anyway, we gets in there and my little Roseanne, she was about five then, and erm, she's always been so lovely, polite and quiet. Where we'd packed all the cases upstairs in the bedroom, there's electric fires in the room and Louie had put the electric on and 'course the fire was switched on and er, oh yeah, the police all come. The police come and wanted to know - there was a bank robbery, and where did we get all these counterfoils from?

I told 'em the kids had got 'em from Streatham and they checked that out. And we got two big black Marias outside and a police car, all the neighbours out at the door, yeah! As the man's unloading us you know, as the lorry's unloading, I'm in my car and the Pickford Lorry's unloading our furniture and two black Marias comes 'Brrrrhh..' all in this quiet street, where the lady opposite grew prize black roses. They said there was a robbery done and they've come down here form London and they've got these counterfoils come out of the car, so they've thought that was the bank - yeh, the neighbours hated us. The milkman hated us, everybody hated us (laughs) - they lived there all their life, ain't they?

We're a fucking big rough London load of pikeys to them aren't we? And the house had fell down, you can imagine it can't you? They didn't know what 'ad 'appened to Adgie, but they didn't like Adgie either, 'cos 'e used to have like, every single gangster from London's been down there, do you know? Adgie bought the 'ouse off of a brass, Dolly, you know, she was a good old brass though and she lived in Cheyne Walk, she 'ad another flat in Cheyne Walk, so when the police come, they

searched the 'ouse. Up in the loft there's 'and cuffs and fucking big whips and things. (Laughs) They went, 'Where have these come from?' I went, 'They was old Dolly the whore's wasn't they?' They knew old Dolly the whore anyway. I said, 'We ain't got no 'and cuffs up there.' And I told them where the counter things 'ad come from and I think they 'phoned through, checked it out, dustbins behind the bank. 'Yes', you know, and erm, well there was nothing they could do, we didn't do no bank, I had all these kids who got out and wanted to go wee, and picked up the papers.

But now, we got the police in the morning, as we arrived there, say two o'clock, three o'clock, oh, then, little Roseanne comes down and says to Louie, 'Louie, the bedroom's on fire.' Louie went, 'Yes, go outside and play.' She said, 'But Louie, the bedroom's on fire.' Louie went, 'OK then.' Didn't take no notice of Roseanne. Next thing we know is the fire engines are coming, the fucking smoke's pouring out the window - neighbours have 'phoned up the fire engines, says 'There's a fire in that house.'

We don't even know nothing about it, we're downstairs, ain't we? Then we got the fire engines there, all fucking running though, hosing upstairs. Well, this is the ironical thing, me and Louie's covered in smoke, and all up our noses and down our throats, we gets outside on to the grass and they're giving us a drink and that, Louie lights a cigarette up. (Laughs) Her lungs is full of fucking smoke and she lit a cigarette up. So we said, now we got the fire engines, we've had two vanloads of police in the morning, yeh! We've 'ad the fire engines. The men are still fucking unpacking the stuff and bringing it down, (because there was a great big garage there) and that. And now they all go and I takes Joanne and the kids down to the beach and I said, 'Now look, you stay here and I'll come and pick you up in an hour's time. Stay 'ere along this beach front where I can find you, 'cos we got to get all the smoke'. Cos as all the cases burnt with all the clothes in - firemen caused more damage than anything you know, they couldn't help it I don't suppose.

But as they was dragging the stuff all down the stairs and throwing it out the window - it was all thick, red pile carpet all the way through - you can imagine it, they was running through with 'ose pipes, well, it was just something ... well..

Anyway, so me and Louie's trying to clear up, ain't we, after the fire, because the whole house there was covered in smoke, and er, it was gone over an hour by the time I went to pick me kids up, it started to get dark then, so I goes down there and I can't find 'em and I start panicking, there's Joanne, Christopher, Terry, Annie, Roseanne and Pasy - I got Harry with me, 'cos he was the baby. And, erm, well, Patsy was only two, Harry was nearly one, do you know? Nine month, ten months, yeh. And erm, I goes to the police and said, 'I've lost five children.' They went - laughs - they went, they said, 'No-one loses five children' and I said, 'And I'm ever so worried 'cos I told them to stay along the beach and they're not there.' Then, back comes all the police again to the 'ouse, this is all in one day, back all the police arrive and I've gone one way, and they've gone another way and anyway, by the time we get back the police are there, they've picked the kids up, found 'em. Joanne's got on a bus to try and get her way back to Hove and went to Worthing. So they got picked up from Worthing and brought back. By the time we got back, all the kids are dancing with the coppers 'ats on and everything, ain't they? The police are amusing them, 'cos we're not there, I've got the baby with us and so that was our first day of moving in. The first day we moved in there! They 'ated us!

Then I 'ad all builders down from London, didn't I, to do the place up, they used to get drunk and have a party. Then, (my friend 'ad a club) .. Yeh, two of Adgie's mates, Harry Pine and ... 'one arm Lou' - he only 'ad one arm. Yes. But 'e wanted the same I had a row with 'im once 'cos 'e asked me for more money and I went, 'We're fucking paying you double, you only got one arm, ain't you.' And 'e went and sulked and laid outside in the garden over it, 'cos I said, 'Well, you're only using one arm, you should get half the money!'

But, they was two nice fellers, though, you know, they really done the place up lovely. And then, my mum comes down, with little Ali, who was a little Indian, I think and erm, I said she could stay there but I wasn't 'aving the Ali to live there, So we gave 'im a few quid to stay in a little boarding 'ouse along the road, you know, down the front, and let me mum stay there. No, she's a bastard, we used to keep - er, the electric

meter was under the stairs and I'd give her money and everything - and I 'ad all those kids baptised Catholics while I was there, 'cos, you know, the Catholic priest loved when I said they was all Church of England and I wasn't married 'cos my father died in prison and my husband insisted that the kids be Church of England, he just wanted to baptise 'em so we 'ad a great big party on this Sunday, er, yeh, probably, yes, it was, like 'Fuck yer, I'll do what I want now, they are my kids'. Yes, they're Catholic, they went to a Catholic convent, as well. And erm, Cottegemore, beautiful school they went to. My mum come down, and when I had 'em all baptised Catholic, I bought 'em all gold St. Christophers, you know, and she nicked all the St. Christophers and broke my electric meter open.*

She knew we'd had lots of trouble with the police there and she filled it up with cotton wool so that when the money fell ... but she went and got another padlock from Woolworths and put that padlock on it and one morning I've got up and all the money was gone, clothes, the kids' little gold things, you know, she just cleared out. But I didn't know she'd done the meter. So I'm still putting money in, ain't I?

Then the man comes round to empty the meter and he can't get the key in the lock, then he realises she'd been and got a lock from Woolworths and put that on. My Adgie 'ad already gone away for twelve months over her doing this in Pollock Road. She'd done the meters up there and he took the blame for it and he went away for it. And do you remember when I told you that they stopped him when he came back from the Orient liners, er, he'd been away for doing the meters, he'd took the blame for it. The whole lot of us, yeh. I don't know, I can't think of her as wicked, at times I didn't like her, I hated her. I hated her sometimes, she used to disgust me, I couldn't let her touch me, or make me tea or anything. I wouldn't let 'er 'ands make a sandwich for me. Do you know, when I found out she was crooked with my dad, when I came home from Borstal, I didn't 'ave no respect for her after that. And it's no good saying, well, that's the way life is, you know, I couldn't understand it. Like, my dad 'ad been good to her, you know, but, I don't know. I think, probably what it was, when she was fifteen when she knew 'im, sixteen when she 'ad me, he had been 'er man all her life, and then she was still a young woman, wasn't she, thirty-eight? I mean, she was the same age

as Joanne, and you ...

She was still a young woman, do you see? And I couldn't realise that, although I was twenty, (how old was my mum, sixteen years older than me, yeh) I was twenty, she was thirty-six. Yeh, do you see, she was still a young woman and this was when Charlie stabbed the feller in the car - she was still young, beautiful and attractive, so now, see, because my dad wasn't there to watch over 'er, men made eyes at her, ... yeh, that was it. Yeh, she was like a silly little girl, Lorraine, yeh ... I mean

Anyway, Chrissie comes down Brighton and once 'e sees the kids are all Catholics and I've really had to change my mind about 'im, after my Adgie getting killed and that, I'm not taking no more shit from anybody, do you know? That is, is exactly what I said to 'im and he can just go and gamble and fucking sleep with an 'orse or a dog if he can find one, because I'm not going to be there just for 'im to go abed with. And 'e really did change, he used to come down - it was like courting again, you know? 'E used to come down every Saturday, with 'is old van, box of shopping, you know, like potatoes and greens and these vegetables as well, and take me out to dinner, ... started courting me again. He was clever, as well, and he did have some nice ways and they was 'is kids. The kids loved their dad and so I went back again with him, yeh ... I went back again and erm, yeh. We're in Haggerston, I live in Haggerston now, from Hoxton and erm, ... what go back to Haggerston Road? Yeah, we goes back to Chrissie, back to Haggerston Road and that. And 'e went and bought some new furniture and ... yes, 'e said he was gonna stop, just go to the dogs twice a week, which was all right.

Because, I was bringing the kids up on me own, anyway, 'cos 'e was never there to discipline 'em, you know, sometimes they did need a bit of discipline, but 'e was never ever there, all 'e seemed to be there was for 'is early morning cuppa tea, and his dinner at six o'clock, then to come 'ome and get in bed with me and annoy me. That is what he used to be like, in the end I used to think like, he's gonna fucking annoy me tonight, do you know? Like, and there was no love or affection there and you can't let nobody even manhandle you can you, if you think you're being used and which I thought I was being used anyway.

SECTION TWO

Discourses on women and shoplifting:

a critical analysis of why

female crime mythologies past and present

operate to legitimate the incompatibility between

female gender roles and the idea of women

as active agents of crime

APPENDIX TWO

NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS 1986-1996

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December, 1999**

1986

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Crime
Shoplifting
13. JAN. 1986

by July

'SECRET' OF SECURITY FOR SHOPS

By IAN HENRY

HIGH STREET stores and shops are being offered an invisible security label to counter the rapidly growing menace of the professional shoplifter.

With shoplifting now Britain's fastest growing crime, store security chiefs are desperate to stem the tide of merchandise being pilfered nationwide.

According to latest Home Office figures of reported crime, shoplifting rose by 16 per cent. last year, the only area of theft which is rising at the rate of double figures.

It is little wonder that one of the initiatives pioneered at the Downing Street summit aimed to develop new measures to reduce crime in shopping centres.

Current estimates show that theft from shops and stores is costing a colossal £1 billion a year, and in Oxford Street alone, £1 million of merchandise is stolen each week.

One innovation already operating in the West End is the electro thread. Most professional thieves have now learned to ignore security coded tagged goods, but the electro thread, a four inch strand of wire is practically invisible so that shoplifters are unable to tell which articles are electronically protected.

Conventional tags

Unlike conventional hard tags, the electro thread can be disguised as a price ticket or label or even sewn unobtrusively into clothing and textiles.

It can be concealed in the packaging of items like cosmetics, confectionery, soft toys, hard goods such as electricals, cameras and DiY tools and even groceries and pre-wrapped fresh foods.

With January sales now in full swing, the shoplifting gangs are out in force taking advantage of the milling crowds to escape detection.

MP seeks softer shoplifting law after woman dies

The Home Secretary, Mr Douglas Hurd, was urged yesterday to review the law on shoplifting after the death of a woman in a burglary. Mr Janner, MP for Leicester, said yesterday: "It is time that police forces everywhere stopped persecuting the elderly and the ill for this offence. Decent societies should take better care of the sick in mind. It is not necessary to put them in the dock. The law should require police forces to investigate all cases of alleged shoplifting by elderly and infirm people, and ensure that prosecution

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ZECH S THELS BLOW FOR FREEDOM

Correspondent ZECHOSLOVAKIAN plan to strike "a blow for dom" for his country's try's next generation of ch by building the biggest tern record collection in East. Marlborough magis- es' court was told ver five years he stole e than £21,000 worth of rds and tapes from the V store in Oxford Street. don, where he worked as neral assistant, hoping to them back home with to help to enange Czecho- akian society, said Mr

Christopher Green, defending. "As far as he is concerned, he was making something of a blow for freedom for the next generation of Czechoslovakian youth by making these records and tapes available to them."

His behaviour goes beyond the obsessed, to almost a messianic belief in the desirability of establishing this very large record collection for transmission to Czechoslovakia to give them the opportunity to see films and hear records to which they are denied access."

The 41-year-old committed Christian, pleaded guilty to two theft charges, but asked not to be named for fear of repercussions from the Czech authorities.

He was given a six-month sentence, suspended for two years, and ordered to pay £10 costs.

After being caught on a security video camera stealing 14 LPs worth £75, the Czech took police to his flat and showed them his haul, including 1,423 LPs and 489 video films, worth £21,624, which were recovered.

Crime Shoplifting
14 JUN 1986

Friday June 20 1986

NEWS IN BRIEF

Life for sex shop killers

TWO brothers were gaoled for life yesterday for murdering Mrs Sandra Phillips, aged 39, the manageress of a sex shop in Dillwyn Street, Swansea, last June. The mother of four had been raped and scalped.

Mr Justice Leonard recommended at Swansea Crown Court that Paul Darvell, aged 26, should not be released for 20 years and his brother, Wayne, aged 24, should serve at least 15 years. They had been found guilty by 10-2 majority verdicts.

Police officer wins shoplifting appeal

A FORMER police sergeant says he will be applying for reinstatement after the Appeal Court in London yesterday ruled that his conviction for stealing a hairdryer was unsafe and unsatisfactory. Mr Martyn Lodge, aged 30, of Wimbourne, Dorset, had been required to resign after the chief constable refused to adjourn disciplinary proceedings until the appeal against the shoplifting conviction. Mr Lodge's marriage to another police officer had foundered.

Shoplifting arrest policy questioned

By Aileen Ballantyne

Stores should look for cost-effective ways of preventing shoplifting rather than placing undue emphasis on arrests, according to the Home Office crime prevention unit.

A report by the unit notes that £1 billion a year is lost through shoplifting, and stresses that the use of store detectives to arrest and deter offenders carries public costs in terms of police time and the extra workload on courts and the probation service.

"The shoplifting problem is exacerbated by stores' sales technique such as self-service displays, which contribute not only to profit but also to criminal opportunity," the Home Office report says. "It is a matter for debate as to whether or not a store has a right to pursue profit without regard to the consequences for public expenditure."

Police record about 250,000 shoplifting offences a year. Each offender dealt with at the shoplifting unit at Marylebone police station, which serves both sides of Oxford

Street in London, costs public £100.

The Home Office crime prevention unit carried out a study of the HMV shop in Oxford Street, between December 1984 and February 1985. Thirty-nine per cent arrests handled by the police during the period came from HMV.

The Home Office points that employing more store lectives is likely to have diminishing returns. The more people store detectives are to guard against the offenders.

The Home Office advised HMV to make big changes store layout and design, add an electronic security system and change from plainclothes store detectives to uniformed security guards. The prevention of shoplifting: an approach for crime analysts, by P. Ekblom. Paper No. 5, from the Home Office crime prevention unit, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW 9AT.

Legal

SHOPLIFT LAW REVIEW URGED AFTER DEATH

By DAVID GRATES

THE DEATH in a blazing car of a vicar's wife, who had been arrested a few hours before for stealing a dress from a boutique, has led to a call for Mr. Home Secretary, to review the law on shoplifting.

The call comes from Greville Janner, Labour MP for Leicester West, who waged a persistent campaign to prevent the "in mind" being prosecuted for the offence.

He has tabled a Commission question to Mr. Hurd after Mary Wilcox, 44, a mother of two, was found dead late Wednesday night in her burnt-out car near her home at Mary's Vicarage, Ware, Herts, where her husband had been a vicar for 10 years.

Just hours before her death she had gone with her husband to a local police station where she had admitted stealing a dress.

'Cry for help'

Her husband, the Rev. Mr. Wilcox, said his wife had suffered from depression most of her adult life, described the shoplifting offence as a "cry for help."

"I was not a delinquent; I was not a thief; I was not a robber. My wife had this sickness for a long time. Five years ago she was put on probation. I thought it was over," he said.

In his Commons question Janner says: "It is time that police forces everywhere stopped prosecuting the elderly and the infirm people who are ill for this offence and the ill for this offence. Decent societies should provide better care of the sick in their homes. It is not necessary to put them in the dock."

"The law should require police forces to investigate cases of alleged shoplifting by elderly and infirm people. It should ensure that prosecutions should go ahead only where it is absolutely essential."

A Home Office spokesman said last night: "Police forces have the option to use their discretion to issue a caution instead of prosecuting in cases where they feel it appropriate."

Having said that, however, there are highly organised gangs of professional shoplifters who deserve to be sentenced severely if they are caught.

No guidelines

Our Legal Correspondent writes: There are no specific guidelines laid down by the Director of Public Prosecutions covering the prosecution of shoplifters. It is for the police to decide whether an offender should be charged with theft, cautioned or referred to medical help.

While there have been suggestions in the past that there might be a separate and less offence of taking goods from a shop without paying, it has attracted little support in the circles.

Daily Mail, Friday, May 23, 1986

CAME: Staff-writer?

Suicide of vicar's wife

accused of

shoplifting

By JOHN HAMSHIRE

A GRIEVING vicar told last night about the secret sickness that drove his wife to suicide only hours after she had been arrested for shoplifting.

Mary Wilcox, 41, had been found dead in a woodland in

30 minute drive from St. Mary's Vicarage at Ware, Herts, where her husband has been minister for the past ten years. Local people saw the names and raised the alarm.

Earlier in the day police called at the vicarage to take away a £100 dress which the mother of two teenage sons was accused of stealing from a shop.

At the modern vicarage overlooking the town, the 49-year-old vicar, the Rev. Hugh Wilcox, said: "It was not a deliberate attempt to rob me."

M & S losing *CRIME:* £1m a week *SHOP-LIFTING* through theft

By John Richards, Industrial Correspondent

MARKS and Spencer has issued a four-page bulletin to all 56,000 staff warning that losses through theft and loss of goods are now running at £50 million a year, or about £1m a week.

The firm has already sacked 50 per cent more staff this year for theft and dishonesty and prosecutions for shop-lifting amount to around 18,000 a year.

A spokesman said: "The majority is external theft, but we do have a sadly increasing number of cases of staff theft and staff collusion in theft."

"The number of non-staff involved in the prosecutions is over 90 per cent, but the total is rising and the loss now amounts to £1 million a week.

Massive losses

"For the first time, in view of the massive proportions of the losses, we are taking the view that we should make the facts known so that honest citizens and staff know what is happening."

It was the honest customers, shareholders and staff who suffered from thefts which have reduced profits over the last year from £115 million to £56.5 million—with money going out of wage packets because the staff profit-sharing scheme is hit.

The bulletin warns: "Whoever the criminals are, M and S is determined to root them out and bring them to justice." Its title "Down the Drain", points out that the losses are the equivalent of the company's 260 stores trading one month a year "just to pay for theft and loss".

A recent exercise to assess the scale of the problem is reported to have recorded 870 incidents over a four-week period. They range from cash

tills and stealing garments and smuggling them out of the shop to collusion between staff and delivery drivers.

The worst instances are reported from large city stores, particularly the 50 biggest shops in places such as London, Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester.

In another bid to stem the flood, the company has issued a training video to staff entitled "It's a matter of time"—this carries the message that the thief will get caught eventually if he or she persists in dishonesty.

In the video, examples include "back-door" theft, collusion at the cash points, and a staff member stealing by putting £5-notes in his shoes.

Woman, 64 dragged to death by bus

A woman aged 64 was dragged to her death on Saturday after her coat was trapped in the folding doors of a bus as she tried to get off.

Mrs Jean Keitch, of Cavendish Road, Patchway, Bristol, was hauled 40 yards along the road before she broke away and collapsed in Gloucester Road, Patchway.

An ambulance took her to nearby Frenchay Hospital but, despite emergency treatment, she died soon after from multiple injuries.

Thrift made easy

says store chief

By JAMIE DETMER - 6 JUL 1986

THE CHAIRMAN of one of Britain's biggest retailers has urged stores and shops to recognise their own responsibility for the massive rise in shoplifting.

"The ever-increasing attractiveness of shop displays and layouts does make it much easier for people to pick up goods without paying for them," Sir Ralph Halpern, chairman of Burton Group, warned last week. Burton Group owns over a thousand stores, including Debenhams, Harvey Nichols and Top Shop.

Sir Ralph, who advised retailers to use electronic surveillance techniques to detect shoplifters, also criticised magistrates for not giving severe enough sentences. "The courts should understand that stealing from shops is as serious as household burglary," he said. The Burton chairman's remarks follow the recent Home Office report on *The Prevention of Shop Theft*, which was discussed last month by a crime prevention seminar at 10, Downing Street.

The report, which also highlighted the responsibility of retailers for shoplifting, was sharply attacked by the British Retailers Association which took exception to the Home Office claim that "the shoplifting problem is exacerbated by stores' sales techniques such as self-service displays."

"This is rather like saying that the young lady who makes herself attractive invites rape," said Mr Tom McNally, the director of the British Retailers

Association. He believes the Home Office and the police are "now downgrading importance of shoplifting."

"Unless the multi-million pound industry of shop theft confronted, then the moves to making shopping very pleasurable experience will be negated," he maintained.

Mr Steve Hunt, a spokesman for W. H. Smith, also warned the implications of the Home Office report. "If shops display goods, they would have to have them behind counters and that would increase staff and prices would rocket," he claimed.

Representatives of the British Retailers Association are to meet MPs this week in an attempt to impress their argument on the House of Commons. The report will point to the 25 per cent jump in shoplifting convictions from 225,000 in 1984 to nearly 300,000 last year.

Crimes

65th
in

By David Hill
Police warrants for people at 15, around 11:15, last night.

A young woman shoplifter shire, had been rebuked by the controversial circuit judge for her "appalling" conduct in involving two teenage girls in her first court appearance, failed yesterday in an Appeal Court plea for freedom to be reunited with her two young children.

Linda Moss, 24, of Victoria Avenue, Elland, West York-

25 JUL 1986
By the Lord Justice Hirst, sitting with Lord Justice Ralph Gibson and Mr Justice Otton, said the prison term was absolutely proper.

Millionaire

shoplifter

A millionaire Arab businessman was caught shoplifting costume jewellery at Marks and Spencer in London, a court was told yesterday. Abdel Anzeleh, a Jordanian, said to earn £160,000 a year, was fined £800 plus £50 costs. He paid in cash.

His solicitor told Marlborough Street magistrates: "He does not know what prompted him to do this." Abu-Anzeleh, 42, pleaded guilty through an interpreter to stealing 15 items of jewellery valued £116.85 while shopping at the Oxford Street with £930 in his wallet.

Judge tells shoplifter 'never shop alone'

A mother-of-three with an "irresistible urge" to shoplift was told by a judge at the Old Bailey yesterday that she should "never go shopping alone again".

Barbara Waltrout Hall, 39, who has three "lively" sons and a sick husband who relies on her, was told by Judge Sir David West Russell that a further offence would bring disaster on her family.

"My own advice is never go shopping again on your own", he told Hall, of Anson Road, Willesden, North London, who has six previous convictions.

Mr Orlando Pownall, defending, said Hall's husband suffered from a heart condition and could not survive without her car. One of her three sons, Adam, 18, told the judge: "If my mother was sentenced to imprisonment my father would die within a month."

Mr Pownall said her continuing shoplifting resulted from "irresistible urges."

Judge West Russell gave her

an eight month sentence, suspended for two years, after she admitted stealing sportswear from John Lewis, Brent Cross, earlier this month, and for stealing sandals and food from Marks and Spencer in Edgware Road, in 1984, for which sentence had been deferred. He also made a supervision order.

The jury cleared Hall of stealing trousers from a Marks and Spencer store in Wembley on May 23 last year but convicted her of causing actual bodily harm by reckless driving to a member of the staff who tried to catch her. She was fined £120 for the reckless driving.

Mr William Boyce, prosecuting, said Hall struck two cars and brushed her pursuer's leg as she made a desperate attempt to escape.

Stone's case

Scotland Yard has shelved an investigation into allegations that Bill Wyman, guitarist of the Rolling Stones, had an affair three years ago with a 15-year-old girl.

22 AUG. 1985

M & S losing *CHUCK:* £1m a week *Shop-LIFTING* through theft

By John Richards, Industrial Correspondent

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"The number of non-staff involved in the prosecutions is over 90 per cent, but the total is rising and the loss now amounts to £1 million a week.

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An ambulance took her to nearby Frenchay Hospital but, despite emergency treatment, she died soon after from multiple injuries.

1987

1967

Shoplifters gaoled

TWO Scotswomen who took a daytrip to London for a £2,000 shopping spree were gaoled for three weeks at Horseferry magistrates court yesterday after admitting theft.

Shoplift discharge over crown failure

A MOTHER and daughter were cleared at Marylebone court, central London, after a magistrate criticised the failure of the Crown Prosecution Service to produce committal papers for the third time in a "simple" case of shoplifting.

Allison Caraska, aged 19, a sales assistant, and Mrs Jean Caraska, aged 38, a housewife, both of Notting Hill, west London, were discharged by Mr Nicholas Crichton after an application by the defence counsel, Miss Sarah Fearnley-Whittemastall. They had been charged with stealing £11.77 worth of goods from a branch of Tesco.

Second transplant for lung youth

SURGEONS worked for nearly 12 hours yesterday on a second heart transplant for Colin Thomas, aged 16, from Neath, West Glamorgan, who suffers from cystic fibrosis.

He was first given a new set of lungs last October but his condition did not improve and the second operation was carried out at Harefield Hospital in Middlesex by a team led by Professor Magdi Yacoub. A spokesman said it was too early to give a condition check after the operation which lasted twice as long as normal.

Shoplifters to get self-help

by Edward Welsh

FIRST there was Alcoholics Anonymous, then Gamblers Anonymous. Now shoplifters are to have self-help groups where nobody has a name.

Shoppers who fall foul of the law through forgetfulness, mental illness or just bad luck will soon be able to talk to others with similar problems in complete anonymity at new support groups.

The idea comes from Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters (CCAS), the London-based voluntary organisation which will this week take the first steps to launch the service. CCAS sees a growing need for such groups to augment counselling it already provides for people distressed by shoplifting experiences.

In some extreme cases, shoplifters have turned to suicide. In 1980, Isobel Barnett, the radio and television personality, took her own life four days after she was convicted of stealing food worth 87p from a shop.

As the law stands, says CCAS, more and more shoplifters are wrongfully ending up in court. Shoplifting is judged to be a criminal offence if it can be proved that the defendant stole with the intention of keeping the stolen property for good. It is the shopper who steals without "intent", or the "non-criminal" shoplifter, that CCAS wishes to help.

In 1985, just over 280,000 offences of shop theft were recorded in England and Wales - up 30,000 on the previous year. Almost 150,000 people were found guilty or cautioned. Although most of those convicted for shoplifting are men, the vast

majority of shoppers who turn to stealing because of mental illness are women.

CCAS wants to bring together people with shoplifting problems under the eye of a counsellor on a weekly basis. The organisation aims to have the first group running by early autumn and ultimately one in every London borough and 30 towns and cities.

Harry Kaufer, its spokesman, said: "We want to help



Isobel Barnett: suicide

shoppers who act out of character or make mistakes. We believe there are many people in this situation who have nobody to talk to."

Robert Adley, Conservative MP for Christchurch, who carried out an independent study on shoplifting with three magistrates, is backing the support groups.

"Self-service shops act as a trap to elderly people with children and the forgetful," he said. "If you encourage people to help themselves, you should not be surprised if they do."

However, Baroness Phillips, director of the Association for the Prevention of Theft in Shops, said: "For every absent-minded person caught shoplifting, there are 500 who are thieves. We spend too much time on offenders and not enough on the victims."

Shoplifter lied about identity

Sheda Salaman, aged 22, the sister of Mr Tally Salaman, the racehorse trainer, posed as her best friend to escape publicity when she was arrested for shoplifting but ended up achieving "nation-wide notoriety". Reading Crown Court was told yesterday. *By Jill Lloyd*

She was found out when her friend, Miss Belinda Coleman, aged 20, read in a local newspaper report that she had been fined £50 by magistrates on a day when she was babysitting for Sheda Salaman's year-old daughter.

Salaman of King's Road, Newbury, Berkshire, pleaded guilty to attempting to pervert the course of justice by giving a false name and address.

The court was told that Salaman had two previous shoplifting convictions.

Mr Neil Timms, for the defence, said: "This lady may have brought upon herself the very thing she set out to avoid, and that is separation from her child. And far from escaping publicity she has achieved nationwide notoriety."

Mr Justice Farquharson told her there was a "nasty element" to the case. Putting her on probation for two years, he said: "I'm persuaded that it won't do anybody any good, especially you, to send you to prison."

Have mercy on 'innocent' shoplifters, JPs are urged

By Jenny Rees

SHOPS HAVE been asked to take a lenient line this Christmas with customers who innocently or absent-mindedly take goods without paying.

An organisation, Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters, yesterday launched a campaign calling on retailers, security officers and magistrates to be more understanding over the festive period.

Mrs Gloria Leighton, the group's counselling officer, said: "We have all been forgetful about where we put things. Honest and innocent people can pick goods up in shops absentmindedly.

"They don't want to do it. They don't do it deliberately, and it can be a very distressing, even suicidal, experience to be prosecuted."

Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters is funded by the London Boroughs Grant Scheme and offers telephone counselling to those who face prosecution.

Emotional stress

The organisation, which is about to apply for charitable status, says it never helps anyone who has stolen deliberately from shops.

Yesterday, Mrs Regina Dollar, the founder chairman, said: "Shopping at Christmas used to

be a pleasure but now, because of the techniques used by security staff, shopping has become hazardous and dangerous. It is easy to be wrongfully arrested.

We know, through our work, that shoplifting can be a symptom of bereavement, unemployment, and financial and emotional stress.

"It can be very difficult shopping with small children, who are not trained in shop behaviour when goods, like sweets, are piled-up on display."

Advisory sheet

The overhanging threat of prosecution could cause some customers, wrongfully accused of shoplifting, "a traumatic and deeply unhappy Christmas".

The organisation has published an advisory sheet for shoppers, explaining the customer's rights if stopped by a store detective, and how to deal with questioning by police.

It warns shoppers to be particularly attentive at sales time, and to be careful about carrying zip-up bags.

The organisation counsels "hundreds" of wrongfully accused shoplifters a year, and provides a legal referral service.

Fuller statistics

The Christmas campaign launch was chaired by the organisation's parliamentary advisor, Mr Greville Janner, QC, MP, who is to submit a written question to Home Office minis-

ters asking for fuller statistics on shoplifting.

Shoplifting costs retailers £1 billion a year and Oxford Street stores alone £1 million a week, but the organisation claims that 60 per cent of thefts are committed by sales staff.

Home Office figures for the 12 months to June, 1987, show that shoplifting figures fell by seven per cent to 250,000 offences, due to increased store security, after a regular four per cent rise every year since 1980.

Mr Harry Shepherd of the Oxford Street Traders Association, who is on the council of the Association for the Prevention of Theft in Shops and sat on a Home Office working party, said: "I will not accept that stores are at fault because goods are on display and that tempts people.

Compassion shown

"Store security now costs customers about £250 million a year, and that has gone some way to preventing shoplifting."

"Shopkeepers have always shown compassion to the elderly, although pensioners account for only three per cent of prosecutions, and people who are genuinely ill, but they do not show compassion to the villains.

"On the whole, the old lady stereotype of the shoplifter does not exist any longer.

"The fastest growing group is the ten to 14-year-olds who have been brought up in the 'I want it, I shall have it' society."

Shoplifting initiative 'leads to a tenfold reduction in re-offending'

Duncan Campbell

A UNIQUE scheme for dealing with first time shoplifters has led to a tenfold reduction in re-offending, according to research to be published today.

Offenders are not arrested, but are required to explain to the police why — rather than just how — the offence was committed.

The research will be published in the presence of the Home Office minister, David Maclean, less than a week after the introduction of a crime bill which advocates punishment not treatment.

The Retail Theft Initiative (RTI) has been running since May 1984 in Milton Keynes. First-time shoplifters are taken to the police station, where they are interviewed at length.

"These one-to-one interviews reveal a great deal more than a typical post-arrest interview, in that the offender is faced with having to

explain why an offence committed," said a Thames Valley police spokesman.

The offender is then required to attend a series of meetings, including one with the manager of the store where the theft took place. The offender is also told that prison officers are the consequence of future stealing. The scheme is backed by staff managers in the Milton Keynes shopping centre.

The research, carried out by the Home Office's Research Group and involving nearly 1,000 offenders, indicates that while the re-offending rate for those on the scheme is 25 per cent, the RTI rate is 3 per cent. On average, police have to spend only half the time dealing with an RTI offender.

Superintendent Peter Ton, of Thames Valley just said: "This scheme is a soft option." He added the scheme showed re-offending could be reduced by allowing officers to get on the beat.

Shoplifting 'fun and really pays' says DIY guidebook

A DO-IT-YOURSELF guide to shoplifting, believed to be published by an anarchist group, is being circulated among shoppers in the run-up to Christmas.

It encourages people to steal from shops as a way of righting the "injustices" of society and advises them on the best techniques to employ.

The guide has come into the hands of Baroness Phillips, director of the Association for the Prevention of Theft in Shops, who has sent duplicates to the security departments of 12,000 affiliated retailing groups.

Oxford Street shops alone expect to lose £25m through shoplifting during Christmas.

Bored to death

According to the guide anything can be stolen from a small shop, supermarket or department store, given enough forward planning, the right timing, appropriate dress and confidence.

It says: "You can pick shoplifting up easily from your own experience and the more you do it, the more you learn and you become increasingly successful. Also, unlike a lot of dull learning, it's fun and it really pays."

The tone of the guide, which contains errors of spelling and

By Jenny Rees

grammar, indicates that it is aimed at the young.

Under the heading Assistant Hassle, the authors advise: "One way of dealing with assistants is to bore them to death with indecision, trying things on, un-ning and ah-ing about the price, etc, until they leave you alone for their next victim."

"You may have to wait for that 10 second or so gap when they're all doing something else, or are looking away, to grab what you're after."

Fever symptoms

Dress and appearance are very important, says the guide. "It's no good looking like a punk in Marks and Spencers, and equally it's no use acting and looking like an upper class twit in a trendy clothes shop."

The student look is recommended. "Glasses can often drastically change your appearance too. They're handy because once you're outside the shop you can remove them straight away."

"Also quite wrongly, people often regard people who wear glasses as being timid etc, not the sort who would steal."

The section on Shoplifting Fever warns of over-excess. "When shoplifting starts to become obsessive, you often become careless and begin to think you are unstoppable."

"Most people seem to get caught when they are either careless or over-confident. If you think it may be becoming a

bit out of hand, give it a rest for a week or so."

In a long section on how to overcome guilt, the guide states: "It is of prime importance that feelings of shame do not deter you, that is precisely what they are designed for. Shoplifting is only taking back that which is ours."

The guide directs shoplifters to concentrate on the "money-grabbing mega-stores who turn over millions of pounds a day."

Shoplifting, it explains, is not a social evil: "We shoplift because we are poor as a deliberate result of the culture we live in and the consumer society is one of its more obvious faces."

"Shoplifting is our way of saying no to enforced poverty."

Lady Phillips said: "As this is an anonymous document, we have no idea where it comes from. Because of the spelling mistakes, we cannot imagine that it might have come from a student source."

"But we have another booklet, from the same people, giving advice on how to get involved in animal liberation, how to squat, and how to support strikes and create riots. This is frightening material."

Cave restaurant

Limestone caves under the town centre at Dudley, West Midlands, where the Earl of Dudley used to throw lavish parties in the last century, may become a restaurant. Plans are being prepared by the Dudley Canal Trust.

Shoplifters poised for

Chaos

£1b snatch

By PAUL WILENIUS

eight to 10 weeks before Christmas is well in excess of £600 million.

This figure is likely to approach £1 billion this year, as the Christmas crimewave builds up steam.

Threat

Chief Superintendent Barrie Henry, of the Marylebone police shoplifting unit, said the threat to shopping centres comes from individual thieves, as well as organised gangs. He said there is a

growing threat from groups of thugs who "steam" through stores pinching everything in sight.

Organised groups from the Continent also pose a major problem, he said.

Scotland Yard said store crime had risen by 3,000 offences since 1983 — with 28,068 cases of shop theft notified to the police last year.

Many young people are involved with the growing crime wave in the High Streets.

The Anti-Theft Association says two "anarchist" groups have produced do-it-yourself guides to stealing from shops and getting away with it.

BRITAIN'S High Streets are today braced for a near £1 billion Christmas rip-off as the nation's shop thieves run riot. Individual shoplifters and organised gangs are set to pounce in towns all over the country. Everything from turkeys to computers will be lifted by the thieves, police have warned. Losses are expected to reach an all-time record despite security measures costing stores £250 million a year. It is estimated that nationally the "shrinkage" through theft in the

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hayward appeal refused

CAPTAIN Simon Hayward, a Life Guards officer convicted and sentenced to five years imprisonment for attempting to smuggle cannabis into Sweden, was yesterday refused leave to appeal to the Swedish Supreme Court, writes David Rose.

Hayward, who has protested his innocence throughout, was convicted by a district court in August after 50 kilos of the drug were discovered by customs officers in the boot of a car he had driven from Ibiza.

Last month the Regional Court of Appeal in Stockholm upheld the conviction, and the Supreme Court's decision leaves no further legal recourse open to Hayward in Sweden. His lawyers have now referred the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

Euro-MP fined for shoplifting

THE Labour Euro-MP for Yorkshire West, Dr Barry Seal, was convicted of shoplifting yesterday and fined £100 with £675 costs. He had denied stealing a hot water cylinder thermostat from a DIY store near his home in Bradford.

Dr Seal, aged 50, told Leeds crown court that he could not recall how he came to put the equipment in his pocket.

Euro-MP to stay on after shoplifting conviction

A LABOUR Euro-MP who was convicted yesterday of shoplifting will not have to resign and insists he is innocent.

Barry Seal, the MEP for Yorkshire West, said last night: "The verdict came as a complete surprise to myself and my lawyers, but irrespective of the jury's verdict I maintain my complete innocence and those who know me well will have no doubt of it."

"I have ascertained that I have still the complete support of the Labour Party at Euro constituency and regional level and that the verdict in no way affects my ability or determination to continue working for the people of Yorkshire West," he added.

Mr Seal, of Wyke, Bradford, was found guilty at Leeds Crown Court of stealing an £8.99 hot water thermostat. He was fined £100 and ordered to pay £675 costs.

The Labour leader in the European Parliament, David Martin, MEP for Lothians, said: "He remains a full and valuable member of the British Labour Group in Strasbourg, and he has the full confidence of his constituents — he was re-selected as a candidate only a week ago with the knowledge that this case was pending."

Mr Seal, a lecturer, who joined the European Parliament in 1979, will not have to resign his seat, and his candidacy for the 1989 Euro elections is not affected by the court decision. He is a senior member of the Socialist group in the European Parliament.

Pickings for snatch ^{crime} squad ^{shoplifting} in stores

-1. DEC. 1987

By Andrew Moncur

LONDON'S Knightsbridge was preparing yesterday for the seasonal crush when so many expensive items are carefully hand-picked.

They include purses, wallets, shopping bags and, by tradition, pockets — including some of the best-lined in London.

With 22 shoplifting days to Christmas and with international gangs of pickpockets known to be at large, police and store security staff yesterday set in operation their equally-traditional crime drive.

The odds are, like the shelves of Belgian chocolates at £8 a pound, heavily stacked. At Harrods alone, up to 200,000 people a day pass through the doors during the frantic days of Christmas and the January sales.

They will include graduates of South American pickpocketing academies, organised professional gangs of thieves, rank amateurs, and opportunists who come to shop but, given the chance, stay to snatch.

Against these are ranged a strengthened force of police including, at the stage, 16 plain-clothes officers somewhere in the crowd, and an unspecified number of extra store detectives. Later, another 50 members of the Metropolitan Police territorial support group will join the coverage.

The public has to take care of itself, and its own possessions, the police stress yesterday.

"Knightsbridge is internationally known as a place for Christmas shopping. It allows that international teams of pickpockets will pick it as a place for rich pickings," said Inspector Phil Wharton, of Chelsea police.

"So much can be done if people take a few basic steps to be a little bit streetwise. That includes keeping a tight hold of bags and purses and not leaving shopping unattended.

Last December and January there were 124 thefts including snatches and picked pockets, in the area. It is not unusual for victims to be carrying £1,000 or more when the thieves strike. An insufficient amount, incidentally, to buy "The Supreme Christmas hamper" at Harrods (£1,375).

Stolen credit cards are frequently used elsewhere in London within 30 minutes of being taken.

A mobile police station towed by a Bedford truck was set up yesterday in front of Harrods and extra vehicle clamping units will be on duty.

The police also have to cope with traffic problems on the pavements. The flow of shoppers can easily get into pedestrian traffic. A computer-controlled system is to be installed on Knightsbridge to flash messages to the crowds.

1988

women, 17 per cent above
normal. *3x 21. Jul. 1988*

Man bit PC

A shoplifter who bit off a policeman's little finger as he was being arrested was gaoled yesterday for four years. Trevor Hendricks, 21, attacked PC Lee Summers when...

Shoplifter bit PC *Crime*

A shoplifter, Trevor Hendricks, aged 21, who bit off a policeman's little finger as he was being arrested was gaoled yesterday for four years by Nottingham Crown Court.

-7 .III 1988

8 HOME NEW Child thieves own up

30. Jul. 1988

Paul Keel

Crime

ALMOST half the youngsters who responded to a survey on shoplifting admitted that they stole, many of them habitually.

The classroom survey, carried out by the police and school children in Northamptonshire, showed motives ranging from "a dare" to peer pressure and boredom. The favoured targets were department stores, newsagents, and corner shops.

The survey, aimed at 11 to 15-year-olds of both sexes and carried out at eight schools in the county, was conducted by the Northampton Junior Crime Prevention Panel, set up last year by the police, with 20 boys and girls aged 13 to 17.

The young researchers sent out 1,200 confidential questionnaires, of which 1,078 were returned for analysis on computer at the Northamptonshire Police headquarters.

Some 46.2 per cent admitted they had stolen something at some time, 52 per cent from shops, 22 per cent from their family, and the rest from school, cars, or elsewhere.

Countering the cause and cost of shoplifting

Stephen Cook on the
motivation behind
store theft and how
it is being tackled

THE pale young woman stood in the dock of a south London magistrates' court as the defence solicitor told how she had taken the clothes as a present for a friend's new baby. She was broke and preferred stealing to having no present, but now regretted it.

Convincing or not, the magistrate accepted the explanation and handed down a conditional discharge and a ticking-off. The woman thanked the court and left to join the statistics of a crime which retailers say costs them £1.5 billion a year.

Although much shoplifting is either noticed nor reported, 47,000 offences were recorded by police last year, making it the fifth most common crime after burglary, theft from cars, car theft and criminal damage.

The recorded statistics have fallen slightly in the last two years, but many traders reckon the real volume is increasing.

It goes up at Christmas and the new year sales. School holidays send it up, and snow and ice send it down. About half of the losses are thefts by shop staff or "sweethearting" — staff under-charging their friends.

Shoplifters vary from professional thieves to confused or overwrought people taking things unintentionally. There has been no research on the proportions, but a Home Office study in 1986 showed that, contrary to popular myth, most shoplifters are not middle-aged housewives and young men. Their ages range evenly between 11 and 59.

Baroness Phillips, chairwoman of the Association for the Prevention of Theft in Shops, is more interested in prevention than motivation.

"In 20 years as a magistrate, I never saw the menopausal lady who's supposed to do so much shoplifting, but I did see a lot of foreign visitors who couldn't be put in the category of need. I think we spend too much time worrying about motivation.

... "There will always be the

thing is deliberate and premeditated."

According to two west London psychiatrists, Dr Gerald Silverman and Dr Neil Brener, about one shoplifter in 200 suffers from a disorder comparable to alcoholism, known as pathological shoplifting.

Their research, shortly to be published, shows that 90 per cent of this group are women caught in a relationship, usually with a husband or children, from which they would like to escape but cannot.

Dr Silverman says: "It's not associated with the menopause, contrary to the myth. They are very desperate and depressed, and the shoplifting is no longer under their voluntary control. It's closely related to eating disorders and agoraphobia.

"We have them in regulated therapeutic groups where they can defuse their frustration and isolation, make their conflict more conscious, and get constructive support. Their reaction to any pressure is to shoplift. Punishment has no effect, and they continue to re-offend."

Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters, which has 18 volunteer counsellors to help accused people, reckons some shop layouts are too tempting.

Mr Harry Kauffer, its deputy chairman, says that of over 2,000 shoplifters seeking help about rights and options each year, about 2 per cent have not taken anything. But about 65 per cent were not properly aware of what they were doing.

"Many accused people are on tranquillisers, or going through divorce, or diabetic, or epileptic, or suffering from claustrophobia, or agoraphobia, or anorexia, or bulimia. Temptation and personal strain sometimes proves too great."

Crisis Counselling wants stores to employ more staff, clip all receipts to bags, and tell security staff to offer help to people seen taking something, rather than following them outside for a citizen's arrest.

Mr Harry Shepherd of the Oxford Street Association in London is sceptical of the latest security devices, arguing: "The most important things are layout — things like not putting the most tempting things near a doorway without a till. Then there's having the right number of staff and training them

1989

Shopkeeper on death charge after head lock on alleged thief

Crime SHOPOWNER accused of killing a suspected shoplifter by holding him in a head lock until police arrived appeared in court yesterday charged with manslaughter. Jabarj Singh-Land, was alleged to have grabbed Peter Edwards, aged 22 and a labourer, around the throat after accusing him of taking some mushrooms. By the time police arrived, Mr Edwards was unconscious and had stopped breathing.

Mr Anthony Glass, prosecuting, said Mr Edwards had gone into the shop in St James Street, Stratford, east London, with a friend, Shane Harvey, in March last year. As Mr Harvey waited to pay, Mr Edwards, of Buxton Road, Stratford, walked out with the mushrooms, he said.

"There is some evidence to show that it was a practical joke, but obviously the defendant did not see it that way. Within a short time, Mr Edwards returned with the mush-

rooms. A fracas ensued outside and Mr Edwards was held firmly on the ground in a head lock," Mr Glass said.

Mr Glass said: "The Crown does not suggest that the defendant intended that the defendant intended to cause serious injury to Mr Edwards."

Mr Harvey, a plasterer, of Manor Park, told the court Singh-Land and his brothers stopped him leaving the shop after Mr Edwards. "Within a minute Peter had come back and he said the mushrooms were outside under a car and that we were just mucking about. We used to have a laugh with the previous owner who was also Indian."

"Outside the shop, Peter was struggling with two Asians. One of them had an iron bar. I asked one of the men to get off Peter but he refused saying he was holding him until the police came."

Singh-Land, aged 27, of Atherton Road, Forest Gate, denies unlawful killing. The hearing continues today.

1 JAN 1980

face £20,000 bill

Crime shoplifting

TWO sisters who were wrongly accused of cheating the Tesco supermarket chain out of £2 by switching price labels were each awarded £800 damages yesterday but must pay more than £20,000 in legal costs.

Mrs Frances Warby, of Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, and Mrs Ann Chastell, of nearby Hoddesdon, were awarded the damages by a High Court jury in London, but they are liable to pay most of the estimated £30,000 legal costs because they turned down a settlement offer by Tesco of £1,500 each before the hearing began.

The damages were awarded for wrongful arrest, false imprisonment, and libel and slander against Tesco and its former store detective, Mrs Virginia Cascarino.

During the three-day hearing the sisters claimed that Mrs Cascarino had fabricated evidence against them which led to their arrest at Tesco's store in Harlow, Essex, on December 18, 1984, and to their prosecution. The women were acquitted.

ted seven months later when the prosecution offered no evidence against them at Chelmsford crown court.

Their solicitor, Mr Raschid Desai, said after the High Court hearing: "They have achieved the victory they wanted — they have cleared their names. That was worth far more than money to them. The jury came to the right verdict on the evidence."

Under the court's order the women will have to pay legal costs incurred after January 27 — including the cost of the jury hearing — when the money offered them by Tesco was paid into court.

During the hearing the sisters told the jury they brought their damages action to establish their innocence and restore their reputations. Their ordeal had left them feeling "belittled and embarrassed". They had never been able to prove their innocence.

The jury awarded the sisters £500 each for wrongful arrest and false imprisonment, and £300 each for libel and slander.

COMMENT

Trouble in Store and Court

MS: SHOPLIFTING

-4. Nov. 1982

supermarkets are, increasingly, good at public relations: which makes the pit that Tesco's chairman plunged into yesterday all the more bizarre. Ian MacLaurin stuck to the letter of the law. His excuses were brushed aside. He refused to make any concession to a legal bill of £20,000 which two sisters, accused by the store of a £2 theft, now face as the result of clearing their name.

The two sisters, on a Christmas spending spree at Tesco, bought goods worth £70. They were accused by a store detective of shifting a £9.99 price label from an toaster worth £11.99. They were arrested, taken to a police station, held in a cell for three hours, searched, fingerprinted and photographed, and had to wait a seven-month wait for a crown court trial (with several intervening appearances before magistrates). The case itself was finally abandoned when the prosecution failed to produce any evidence. Forensic tests had shown the sticker on the toaster could not have come from the store.

The two women, both in their forties, decided to sue for damages for arrest, false imprisonment and libel. They expect to go to a civil court trial this week, that their ordeal has left them distressed and humiliated. The jury upholds their claims and awarded each sister £800 in damages. The judge was congratulatory: "You have done what the ladies wished you to do. You have cleared their names. He had earlier explained that the women were not diggers; and if the jury found in their favour, the award should be "not too little, not too much."

It is known to the judge or jury, however, Tesco had to pay the court the sum of £1,500 for each woman before the start of the trial. Under present procedure, where the plaintiffs are awarded less than a defendant has paid out, then the plaintiffs have to pay defendant's costs as well as their own. Hence the £20,000 bill. There is a noble purpose behind the rule. It was designed to deter vexatious litigants and greedy claimants. But it has too little flexibility or commonsense in the way the legal system operates.

The rule has been examined by two separate committees, both of whom wanted changes. The Winn Committee in 1968 concluded it was much too blunt an instrument. A decade later, a Justice committee noted the unfair way it operated against needy plaintiffs. It turns a civil justice system, which already has a casino element, into something much more like a roulette game. A rich defendant is able to pay under the odds and put all the onus on to the plaintiff to settle. The solution — absolutely clearly — is to give judges much more discretion on whether defendants should have to pay their costs.

A subtle supermarket boss, yesterday, would have been quick to see the injustice. But not, apparently, Sir Ian. In a statement, Tesco said they would insist on the sisters paying the store's legal costs. The company, the second biggest supermarket chain in the country, has a turnover of almost £4 billion and is expecting profits to exceed £200 million this year. The legal bill is the equivalent of about one hour's profitable trading. The cost in bad publicity may be assessed over the next few days. As the Mirror noted yesterday, on its front page: "Shop With US and End Up Owing £20,000." If Lord Sainsbury is feeling fast on his feet, he may sense a PR window of opportunity at a bargain price.

Shopping

Hints (A.M.F.):

JANE ELLISON'S article
 (Watching the detectives, March 16) is the same old tired clichéd argument about shoplifting despite her attempt to convince us that she is casting new and sensitive light on it.

SHOPLIFTING
 She spurns the stereotyped image of the "confused middle-aged housewife" by quoting Home Office studies yet, conveniently, does not produce similar statistics for her theory that many shoplifters are "confused mentally and emotionally."

... may be taking tranquillisers... have eating disorders... suffering from depression."
 Where does Jane Ellison shop? Trimpleton Town perhaps?

Shops are not only there to relieve customers of their money but to provide a service to the consumer and to the economy (or does Jane Ellison think it revolves on the recycling of marshmallows?).

They are not, however, there to provide a service of a medical nature, but a service to the majority of consumers who pay for all the stock losses retailers bear.

We are all customers in the world of economics which is why "customers are the reason shops make a profit". How else does Jane Ellison suggest the economy runs?

There are many reasons why crimes of all kinds are committed by Jane I-am-a-do-gooder Ellison is not suitably qualified intellectually or emotionally to comment on them. Let alone give snips of advice for people who find themselves with a "tendency to absent-mindedness".

Mackay looks at shoplift cases

Crime: Shoplifting

THE Lord Chancellor will look into the case of two sisters who were cleared of shoplifting but ordered to pay the legal costs of the supermarket chain involved, Tesco.

Attorney-General Sir Patrick Mayhew, although refusing to comment on the issue, told the Commons yesterday he would pass on MPs' concern to the Lord Chancellor, Mackay of Clashfern, who is responsible for civil justice.

The Government came under pressure from both sides of the Commons to intervene or call off the dogs. Mrs Fry and Mrs Ann Chastell, of Vauxhall, who now face £10,000 legal costs each.

1.3.69

Letters to the Editor

Shoplifting case could cost Tesco dear

8.3.89

THE High Court case in which two Hertfordshire sisters ended up with a £20,000 bill after being falsely accused of shoplifting demonstrates just what a shambles the law is in.

These remarks do not apply to real shoplifting cases; just to the "borderline cases," in which there is real doubt as to whether or not there was intent to steal.

The two sisters presented at the checkout a toaster with a price tag for £9.99, when it should have been £11.99. Tag dispensers have feather-light action. They can deposit tags on items at an accidental touch, without the operator even being aware of it. If the price on this tag is more than the value of the item, it will probably be the shopper's loss; if it's the other way, he/she is likely to be marched off by the police.

Home Office policy is that, if there is 50 per cent likelihood of a conviction, accused persons should be prosecuted "to give them an opportunity to clear their name." What it means is that half of those accused of borderline shoplifting are actually innocent, but that doesn't matter either.

The stores, the police, the Crown Prosecutor, are all going to do their professional best to secure a conviction and you'll be on your own against them unless you can afford a solicitor or qualify for legal aid. No one has any liking for loose threads.

The police lock you alone in a cell (though it may be the first time in your life you've been

arrested) in the hope that you'll soften up and admit guilt. (This happened to the two sisters.) They have other persuasion techniques, too.

Tesco insisted that the sisters had been seen switching tags. But forensic evidence showed that the sticker on the toaster could not have come from an iron. It was a miracle for the sisters, for without this proof, they would have had only their own words of denial — and no court is going to give much credence to the words of suspected thieves.

There are perhaps a thousand false convictions every year. The Portia Trust has at least 2,000 such cases on file, the majority of which have resulted in convictions which I'm practically certain are untrue. We also have evidence that there are around 50 suicides every year attributable to false allegations of theft.

In these "borderline" cases, the shopper has usually been in a rush, or on tranquillisers, or suffering menopause or illness, or facing overwhelming personal problems, or is elderly or harassed. Any of these things can result in lack of concentration while shopping — and an honest mistake brings arrest.

These victims had just one hope: that a sensational High Court action against one of the major stores, and hefty damages for false arrest, could bring about a rethink of the policy of trigger-happy prosecution. Instead the worst has happened.

Tesco's made a derisory offer

of compensation. The jury made an even more derisory assessment of damages. (If it had been a well-known personality claiming damages for an absurd item in a newspaper the assessment might have been £1,000,000. (Instead, for infinitely more devastating injury, it was £800.)

And as a result the sisters finish up with their names cleared, but with an order to pay £20,000 court costs to Tesco's for having falsely accused them.

The consequence is obvious, and all the stores benefit. If you have the pluck to claim damages, a negligible offer can be made, in the knowledge that under our present law, it has got to be accepted, and settled in secret, unless you are an idiot or a millionaire.

There's only one hope for justice: that Tesco will be scared off, either by damaging publicity in the newspapers, or by loss of trade. My family will never shop at their stores again unless they agree to waive the two sisters' £20,000 bill.

Ken Norman.

Portia Trust Organiser,
Maryport,
Cumbria.

LIKE many Guardian readers we spent large sums in our local Tesco's. It will cost only slight inconvenience to transfer £1,000 of these purchases over the next year to their major competitor (where we already do most of our shopping). We shall do this unless Ian MacLaurin changes his mind about paying the costs in full of the two sisters.

You should forward a copy of your leader "Trouble in store and court" (March 4) to him.

It would also help if he and Tesco made a full apology.

L. J. Torrance.
The Old Orchard,
24 Manor Road,
Teddington,
Middlesex.

Mackay studies

Case of Tesco and sisters
Crime: Shoplifting
5.3.59

Ken Ezard 2

THE LORD Chancellor, Lord Mackay, is to review the issues raised by the case of two sisters facing substantial costs after clearing their names of a charge of cheating Tesco out of £2.

Tesco said yesterday it is paying half the legal costs incurred by Mrs Frances Warby and Mrs Ann Chastell who became liable for costs because the High Court judge awarded £800 each for libel, slander and false imprisonment was less than the amount paid into court by the supermarket. They were accused of swapping the label on a toaster.

Mrs Thatcher told Mrs Marion Roe, the Conservative MP for Broxbourne, in the Commons: "The Lord Chancellor, in fact, will be considering the issues raised in this case."

Tesco criticised inaccurate reports of the case: "The total legal costs are likely to amount to between £12,000 and £16,000, some half of which Tesco will be paying in any event."

News in brief

Crime: Shoplifting
Mackay studies

Tesco case 5.3.59

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, is to review the issues raised by the case of Mrs Frances Warby and Mrs Ann Chastell, the Hertfordshire sisters facing heavy costs after being cleared of cheating Tesco out of £2. Tesco said yesterday it was paying half the legal costs incurred.

Guildford witness plea

Mrs Marion Hill, aged 32, the American who last year married Paul Hill, one of the four men serving life for the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings, appealed for new witnesses, particularly among the Surrey police force of 1974, to help in their appeal. The case has been referred back to the Court of

Letters to the Editor

..... 15.3.59
Legal cost of righting a wrong
Crime: Shoplifting

COMMENTING on the Tesco "shoplifting" case Ken Norman (Letters, March 8) rightly calls the present state of the law "a shambles". However, he failed to mention one basic flaw in the law of torts on which some of us have been campaigning for years, ie the desirability of making the losing party automatically liable for repayment of all legal costs connected with the case.

One of the fundamental principles of the award of damages is that the victim of a tort should be placed in the same position as that which he/she enjoyed before the damage was inflicted. Without the shoplifting allegation, the two wrongly accused sisters would not have been compelled to bring the

civil action in order to clear their name. Therefore it should be made statutory for all material legal costs, including legal fees, to be automatically added to the damages award. The same principle should apply in unfair dismissal cases.

Walter Cairns,
759 Oldham Road,
Newton Heath,
Manchester.

WOULD someone from Tesco please tell me what guarantee they can give that goods have been priced correctly and who I should check with before approaching the checkout?

S. Wharton,
3 York Villas,
Brighton, E. Sussex.

The system, says Regina Dollar, is heavily weighted against those accused of stealing from shops. "You're immediately treated as if you are guilty." So how do you avoid trouble?

Watching the detectives

Crime: Shop-lifting

16. MAR. 1989

Shoplifting



Jane Ellison

MY NEIGHBOUR, discussing his 11-year-old son, said the other day: "Daniel's got into a bit of trouble. I had to go and get him from the police station — he'd been caught shoplifting in Woolworth's. They were changing the price tickets on the sports bags. Well, what can you say? We've all nicked stuff from Woollic's when we were kids, haven't we?"

Well, have we? Some of our friends do steal from shops, praising "social injustice" or simple greed as worthwhile motives. We have all had friends

between 11 and 59. "We are contacted by all kinds of people, from parents worried about their children who have been shoplifting in gangs, to professional people, like JPs and solicitors and the elderly."

Regina Dollar is highly critical of the manner in which store detectives work. Customers suspected of stealing are followed outside the store, stopped and often frogmarched in front of a crowd of boggling shoppers back to the manager's office, where they are interrogated. CCAS has proposed that store detectives should avoid a confrontation, initially approaching shoppers while they are still in the shop and asking if they may help them to pay for a suspect item. Some shoplifters, of course, are professional thieves; CCAS advises them to get a good lawyer. But many more are confused mentally and emotionally; some may be taking tranquillisers, some may have eating disorders, some may be suffering from depression.

According to Regina Dollar, absentmindedness is the most common factor in those who contact her. "Shops are to blame to a certain extent. You may have a harassed mother with young children who has put something into the pram and forgotten about it as she goes through the check-out; someone else may find most of the check-out items and pay



who tell their children that stealing from multi-million pound stores is not really stealing because "they can afford it". But most of the people who get in touch with Regina Dollar have certainly never taken as much as a tin of baked beans from a shop in their lives. Most of them have never been inside a police station until they are suddenly confronted by a store detective and the compulsory march to the manager's office.

For them, being accused of shoplifting is a horrifying, humiliating experience which leaves them feeling permanently branded a thief, a conspicuous example of feckless dishonesty.

Regina Dollar is chairman of Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters, a voluntary group of about 18 counsellors who take about 2,000 calls a year from people accused of stealing from a shop. Together with her co-founded, Harry Kauffer, she maintains a 24-hour counselling service on the telephone, often advising bewildered and distressed people in the early hours of the morning. They both agree, that for most people, being accused of shoplifting is the most humiliating of experiences. It was sufficiently traumatic for Frances Warby and Ann Chastell to prompt them to seek damages from Tesco after being accused of changing the label on a toaster to save £2. Although the sisters were acquitted in 1985 when forensic evidence proved the label could not have been changed, they want an apology to clear their names; they have each won £800 damages but are left the responsibility for paying Tesco's costs of £20,000. "I felt absolutely awful," Mrs Chastell said in court. "A mistake had been made and nobody seemed to accept it. I felt very belittled and embarrassed. It was one of the worst experiences of my life."

Regina Dollar says those feelings of pain and embarrassment are common. "Shopping today is hazardous, uncomfortable and it is good for people to remember that you can set out one morning and an incident could occur that may end in suicide. That may sound sensational, but it has to be said."

tries out an item over her arm by mistake. After all, shops encourage us to walk from one end of the shop to the other trying to match one item with another. An elderly person may put something in her own shopping bag by mistake."

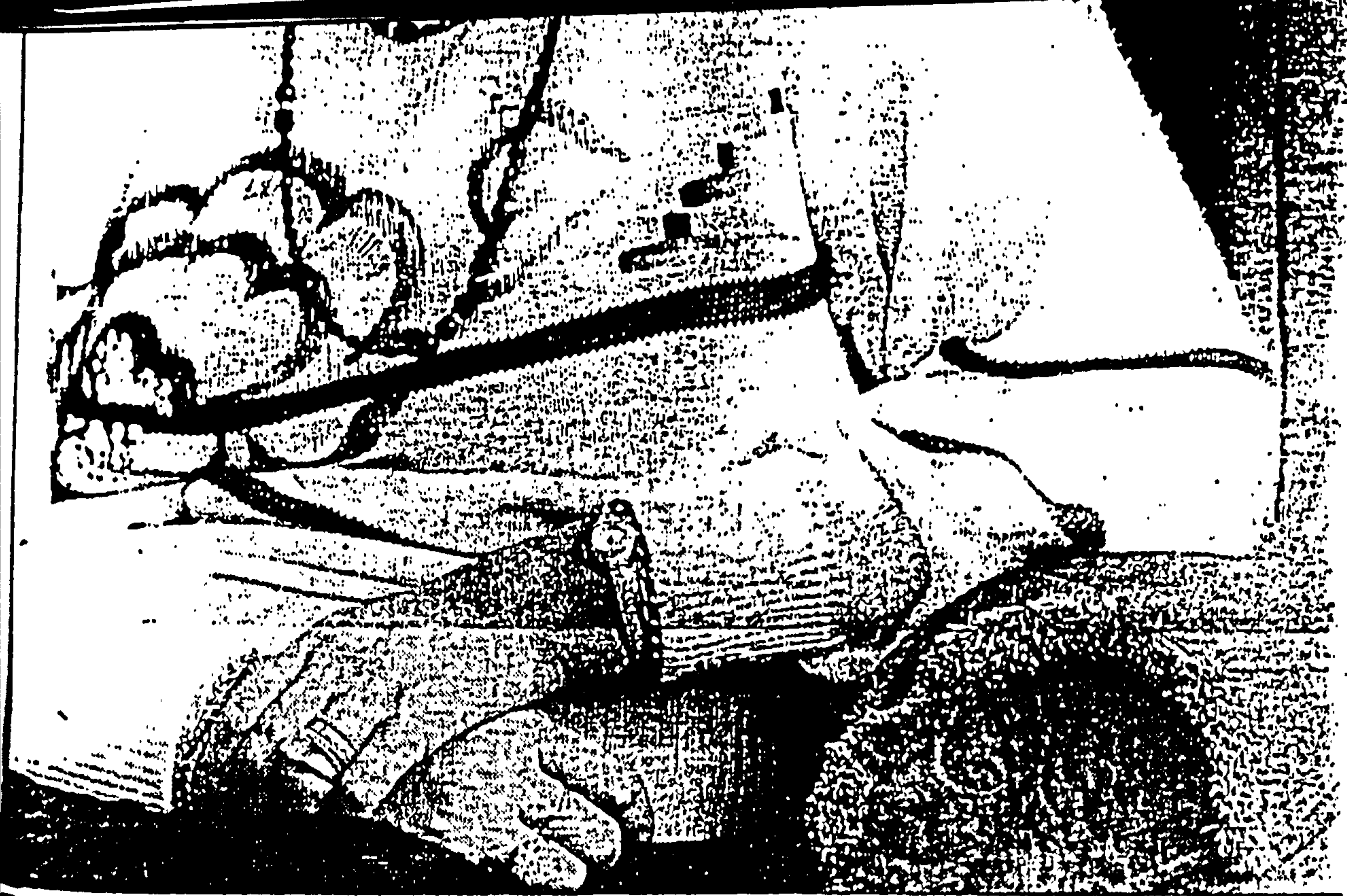
The system, she says, is heavily weighted against the accused shoplifter. "You're immediately treated as if you are guilty. You can be locked in a cell and have your fingerprints taken. If you have made a genuine mistake, you can't make an apology and offer to pay without it being taken as an admission of guilt. If the shop has made a mistake you never get an apology. We had a case of one woman who proved her innocence by producing receipts; the shop's response was to say: "Well, you can go but don't come back again."

The most common fear of those accused of shoplifting is that their name will get into the newspapers. Harry Kauffer is

Nearly half of surveyed 11-15 year-olds admitted shoplifting

often contacted by those who are on the verge of suicide. He has set off in his pyjamas to drive to Lewisham, in London, at three in the morning to sit with a highly distressed woman until help could be found for her. He will take people on a visit to court before their case comes up so that they are not intimidated by the experience. "People get to court and they can't speak. They stand in a chasm of misery. All they can think of is what their family will say. They feel dirty. No one realises the hell these people go through."

Parents often telephone him in great distress fearing that their child will end in a juvenile court. There is some evidence that children, aged 10 to 14, are among the fastest-growing group of shoplifters. In a classroom survey of 11-to-15-year-olds conducted by the Northamptonshire Police, nearly



Regina Dollar: the stereotype of the shoplifter as a confused housewife is far from true

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SIL



Tesco two: Ann Chastell, left, and Frances Warby

ence. We all go in and out of shops in haste, confusion, excitement or bad temper. The sheer ordinariness of the experience should make us reflect how close we all come to being stopped, grabbed by the arm, and interrogated. The CCAS gives some sensible advice for anyone with a tendency to absentmindedness. They urge us to take only zip-up shopping bags and keep them zipped; to make sure we keep our receipts. We should never take goods back for exchange or refund without a receipt. We should never go to the door to look at an item in daylight without permission, or remove goods from their bags until at the counter. We should never exchange an item without asking an assistant, and finally, we should be hurried.

We should not allow ourselves to be tempted either. But

thing we do not need. Eye-catching displays offer attractive goods teasingly near entrance. Supermarkets load up sweet racks at check-outs where children are encouraged to reach out and grab what they want. Stealing from shops is wrong and stores must act reasonably to prevent shoplifting. But on the shop floor, an attitude prevails that would not be generated outside in the street. As customers, we are the reason the shop makes a profit. Shops are anxious to relieve us of our money should not be so anxious to relieve us of our innocence until proved guilty.

● CCAS telephone: 01-202 5 (after 7 pm: 01-958 8859).

● Advice booklet, 50p, from Kauffer, 39 Brookley Avenue Stanmore, Middlesex, whom inter counsellors should a contact.

'KEEP OUT OF STORES'

Clothes she stole filled her house

SHOPLIFTER Felicity Wappler was banned from all fashion stores yesterday after she admitted going on a seven-month stealing spree.

She stole an amazing £15,000 worth of goods on her mini crime wave, magistrates were told.

Stunned police found every room of her house crammed with clothes she had taken from top stores.

By MIRROR REPORTER

psychiatric and social inquiry reports.

They allowed her bail with two conditions that she stay away from all clothes shops unless accompanied by an adult.

Most of them still had tags on them. She was finally trapped when she set off an alarm at Laura Ashley's in Reading, Berks.

Hours

Wappler fled but staff recognised her because she had once been interviewed for a job at the shop.

Police traced her through her application form.

The police search at her terraced house lasted for five hours.

Jobless Wappler, 29, of George Street, Reading, pleaded guilty to four charges of theft.

But she asked for 597 other shoplifting offences between August and March to be considered.

Relief

Wappler's lawyer claimed it was a "highly unusual case" with all the stolen property recovered.

And she added: "It is a relief for her to have been caught."

The court called for

SHOPLIFTER ORDERED:

DAILY MIRROR, Tuesday, May 16, 1989

PAGE 5

OX

The blues that make them turn to crime

THE PLIGHT of the women who cannot stop stealing was revealed in the tragic case of shoplifter Felicity Wappler yesterday.

For more than seven months she pinched and hoarded £15,000-worth of clothes she never wore.

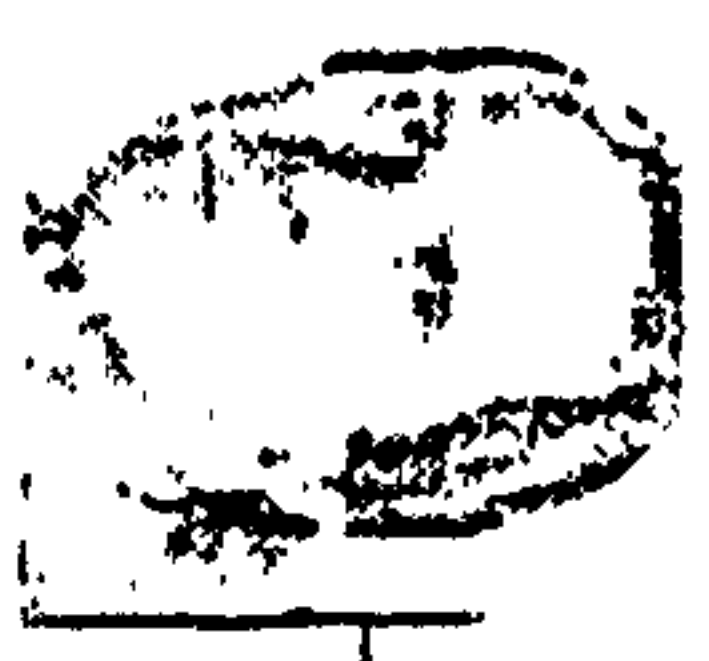
It is easy to think she is just one of more than a million thieves who cost retailers over £2 billion a year.

But psychiatrists now believe one in every 200 shoplifters suffers from a pathological desire to steal.

And it is more likely that Felicity is one of the lonely, depressed, possibly pre-menstrual women who go in for "comfort stealing".

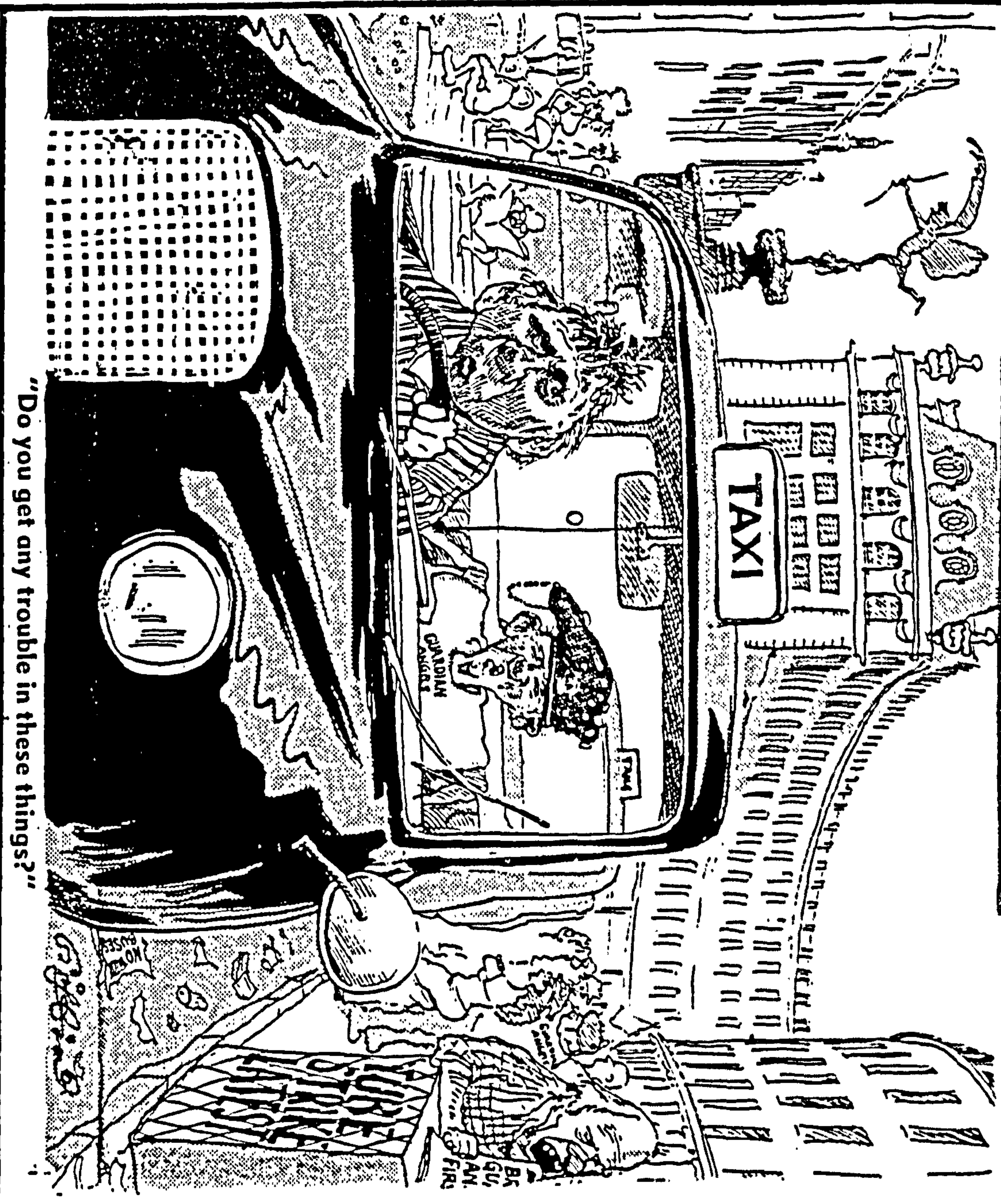
Like many people with ready cash who go and spend their way out of feeling low, there are women who make them selves feel better by stealing what they can not afford.

Of these are those who have very bad periods.



BY ROGER TODD

GRIFFIN'S EYE



"Do you get any trouble in these things?"

Women who...

Urge

Consultant psychiatrist Dr John Bonn, from St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, said last night: "This young woman's case was extreme and extraordinary."

"But she is far from alone in this kind of behaviour. Most psychiatrists will see about three such cases a year."

So it's not simply a case of stores tempting people with goods they can't afford.

And it's not a matter of the professional gangs of shoplifters who justify the theft rate up by 15 per cent a year while the rest of us pay for it through increased prices.

"Some young women have a cyclical urge, to steal — just when they are coming up for a period," said Dr Bonn.

"Women who engage in crime are very much more likely to do so in the pre-menstrual phase. Courts are aware of this now. They tend to

STOP SHOPPING

Most take items they will never use . . .

So easy provided the woman receives psychiatric help which will probably include hormonal treatment.

Dr Bonn said many women suffering from depression, emptiness and loneliness will shoplift to fill themselves up in the psychological sense.

"With those who used to be known as kleptomaniacs — compulsive thieves — there may be a compulsive urge to be

found out. They may be seeking attention. Many don't take the precautions a professional shoplifter would.

Emotion

"Most of those steal items they will never use. It is more a case of feeling better to have the items around them."

Dr Bonn claimed the need to do this may be caused by emotional

problems they cannot express any other way. It is a comfort behaviour, like overeating.

He said: "For them it starts with a feeling of emptiness, of loss and lack caused by depression, lack of self-esteem, problems in the family or at work."

"Hearing what they obviously don't need is the biggest clue to their problem."

But there are others, like the Association for the Prevention of Theft

In Shops, who harbour a tougher attitude to shoplifting.

Association chairwoman Baroness Phillips said: "In 20 years as a magistrate I never saw the menopausal lady who's supposed to do so much shoplifting."

"But I did see a lot of foreign visitors who couldn't be put in the category of need."

"There will always be the needy and distressed, but not in large numbers. Most shoplifting is deliberate and premeditated."

That is an old-fashioned attitude.

And one that will give little comfort to women like Felicity Wappier.



IN DISTRESS: The pathological shoplifter.

Ben Laurance

THE WORD shrinkage is seen as a euphemism. It is put on a par with other ideas like rationalisation and streamlining — a way of giving a clean and sanitised description of something which is really rather unpleasant.

For rationalisation, read cutting jobs, closing factories, putting people on the dole. For streamlining, read much the same. Another classic, "we had to let him go" is simply translated: he got the sack.

Similarly, shrinkage for retailers is a way of providing some spurious scientific-sounding description for shoplifting. When a retailing chain moans about the rising level of shrinkage in its stores, we read the hidden message: more kids have been nicking more Mars bars from more tempting sweet counters; more old ladies have been tucking more tins of corned beef into their shopping bags and shuffling past the check-out; the thieves are winning.

We know what shrinkage really means, don't we? Answer: no, our prejudices are utterly wrong. And even more significantly, shopkeepers themselves make wild, unfounded and incorrect assumptions about the reasons for their stock disappearing.

Go back to basics. Shrinkage means stock loss. On Monday morning, a shopkeeper has 200 widgets on his shelves. By Monday evening, the till shows that 50 have been sold. There should be 150 left on the shelf, but in fact there are 147. Three out of the original 200 are missing: shrinkage is running at 1.5 per cent.

And what accounts for that 1.5 per cent? All shopkeepers would include shoplifting and theft by dishonest staff. Others add in clerical and computer errors (in fact there were only 198 widgets on the shelf in the morning, but the shop assistant miscounted), burglary, damaged stock and goods whose sell-by date expire before they are bought.

Now 1.5 per cent doesn't sound like much. But as a survey by Touche Ross Management Consultants and the Association for the Prevention of Theft in Shops pointed out yesterday, 1.5 per cent of British retail sales adds up to a meaty £1.8 billion a year. Roll it around your tongue: one thousand eight hundred million pounds; that's £70 per household.

Shocking, isn't it? Yes of course we find it shocking. So do the shopkeepers — after all, it's their profits which take a dent. But where both they and we are wrong is in assuming that it is the shoplifters and crooked assistants who are costing us our £70 a year.

The Touche Ross/APTS survey found that shopkeepers — the vast majority of whom keep

and shoplifting — between them account for three-quarters of the disappearing £1.8 billion: the figures are 35 per cent customer theft and 41 per cent staff theft with most of the remainder bundled into the vague catch-all category of "administrative error".

But the handful of shopkeepers who take the trouble to monitor the problem, the ones who really know what's going on, find a completely different pattern: half of all losses are put down to breakages and damaged stock with staff theft accounting for 20 per cent, shoplifting 17 per cent and burglary 13 per cent.

So the real problem is people being butterfingers rather than stickyfingers. The shock horror headlines about professional teams of shoplifters ripping off vast amounts of merchandise from West End stores (and there will be plenty today following this report) are misleading: most of the shops' losses are the result of mistake rather than mischief.

We should not be surprised that stores choose to focus on theft rather than error in explaining away their losses: how many company executives want to stand up at a meeting and tell shareholders that shrinkage has wiped out a fifth of profits and that of the total half was caused by cackhandedness? Anyway, theft is illegal and wrong whereas damage something by accident is not.

But there is a wider point. Can retailers run their businesses efficiently if they need to know not only how much they are losing to shrinkage (which they generally do) but also how shrinkage breaks down (which they do not). In terms of cash, the shopkeeper need know, for example, whether it is worth putting goods on more open display: will increased losses from pilferage be fully offset by the profit from increased sales? While she is so woefully ill-informed about the real causes of shrinkage, no economically sound choice can be made.

Yesterday's survey threw up one or two surprises. One retailer who answered the Ross/APTS questionnaire admitted that shrinkage accounted for a staggering 1.5 per cent of sales. If that applied to a Sainsbury's, it would be enough to eat up all but a sliver of their profits.

More predictable is the finding that chemists, book department stores and electronics retailers suffer worst: they are around 2 per cent. Supermarkets do better at about 1 per cent. So do electrical goods stores (Have you ever tried to return a microwave without noticing?)

And surprise, surprise: the shops' stock losses are less than 0.5 per cent. An assistant can't take shoes in the stock causing great damage by taking only one shoe on display at a time. Thieves: there are legged shoplifters

FINANCIAL NEWS 9

ing stock on mystery of the sing widgets

Crime shoplifting

26. 1. 1991

Keep careful watch on what

Inside-out weeks of reluctant free man

CRIME. SHOP-LIFTING. 12 JUL. 1989

Maev Kennedy

DESPITE his protests, Mr Alec Walker was turned away from the gates of Rudgate prison in Yorkshire, a free man. Well, free-ish. A fortnight later he was back in prison when the authorities discovered that, as he insisted, he had another six months to serve. Plus, they told him, they would be adding on the two weeks he had just spent at home with his family in Rotherham.

His solicitor, Mr Stephen Smith, yesterday revealed that his client was returned to jail so swiftly, he was still carrying a take-away for his invalid mother's dinner.

In his brief stretch of liberty Mr Walker got a job, but unfortunately also got drunk and was arrested for shoplifting. Mr Stephen Smith, his solicitor, was startled to be asked to act for him, since he thought his client was safely tucked up in Rudgate. They met outside the court.

"I said to him, 'I'll go in and get an adjournment.' When I

came out he'd disappeared. I eventually discovered he'd been sent back to prison. It was very serious for him, because he had his mother's dinner with him, and he was due back at work in the afternoon."

Mr Walker got a letter from the Home Office expressing "regret" over the affair and the authorities agreed not to add on the fortnight.

Mr Walker was convicted at Rotherham magistrates' court last March of nine offences and sentenced to three months concurrently on eight of the charges, and six months consecutive on the ninth.

He was only accompanied by the documentation for one three-month sentence when he arrived in prison and with remission and the time he had spent on remand taken into consideration, had already been freed by the time the documentation finally arrived.

Mr Walker is now out of prison and looking for work, and came into Mr Smith's office in Rotherham yesterday to say thanks. Mr Smith was much touched: "You don't get a lot of gratitude in my line of work."

about his chosen mener. I haven't heard of any writs flying around, so I assume the hero's Chambers (always with a capital C) is not too closely based on Francis Taylor Building, Michael's set.

I fear, though, that the non-lawyer reader will get a pretty rum idea of what goes on in Chambers, including a near rape of the pretty young barristers' clerkette by the oldest member, an elaborate anti-semitic plot to stop the election of a new head of Chambers and choose instead a chap who will sack the sole Jewish barrister, and some intense nookies between the said barrister's wife and almost the entire Chambers population.

Crime
STORIES of delays in the courts are hardly scarce, but this one, I think take some beating. At Barnet magistrates' court last week, a defendant pleading not guilty to a simple charge of shoplifting — the trial was estimated to last two hours — was told that the earliest date his case could be heard was July 1990. 29.9.89

Sisters win higher damages against Tesco

Two sisters who won a libel action against Tesco after they were wrongly accused of switching price labels had their damages increased yesterday to £15,000 by the Court of Appeal.

A High Court jury last March awarded Frances Warby and Ann Hastell £800 each for libel, slander and false imprisonment.

Their claims followed accusations by a store detective that they tried to cheat the supermarket out of £2 by switching labels. The charges were eventually dropped. But three appeal judges, headed by the Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson, ruled

that the awards were not enough. Mrs Warby, of Altra Lodge, Highfield Drive, Braintree, Hertfordshire, and Mrs Hastell, of Woodside, Wooten Bassett, near Huddersfield, Hertfordshire, will each receive £7,500.

The effect of the ruling is that the women will escape the legal costs they faced after the March verdict. Because they had earlier turned down offers from Tesco of £1,500 each to settle the action before it reached court and the jury's awards were less than this, they faced a bill estimated by their solicitor at £10,000. If they had failed yesterday, the

costs in the Court of Appeal would have added a further £10,000. But because yesterday's award was more than the pre-trial offer, they do not have to pay the costs.

In a rare move for the Court of Appeal — made by agreement of the sisters and Tesco — the judges substituted a figure for that of the jury.

The two women also received for the first time a public admission from Tesco that the charges had been brought wrongly. The sisters were detained as they left Tesco's at Harlow in December 1984 after spending £70

on some Christmas shopping. They were arrested by a store detective and accused of swapping labels to save £2 on a toaster.

The case was finally dropped with no evidence brought against the women, but the charges had "blighted" their lives and their Christmas, said Lord Donaldson, sitting with Lords Justices Woolf and Beldam.

He said the sisters, who spent five hours in custody after their arrest, felt that the case against them "fizzled out" after being dropped, without their having a chance to clear themselves. "Police decided to offer no evi-

dence following certain forensic tests they had made on the articles concerned," Lord Donaldson said.

The judge said the High Court judge's directions to the jury on what were complicated matters undoubtedly gave rise to some complaint. The jury may not have fully understood what they were awarding compensation for. There was a case for looking at the award again.

The store detective, Virginia Cascardino, who was also a defendant in the original proceedings, was not in court yesterday. She now lives in Italy.

Tesco must pay sisters £15,000

24 OCT 1989

The Shoplifting

Harrock

The sisters accused of switching a Tesco store out two pounds by switching on a toaster have had a High Court award of £15,000 for libel, slander and imprisonment increased

to £15,000. Lord Donaldson, Master of the Rolls, said the lives of Mrs Warby and her sister Mrs Hastell had been ruined for the past five years. That Mr Edwin Glascock, who had said the charges were not true, was no longer persisted in. It makes it clear beyond doubt that Tesco fully accepted a very serious error was made.

Lord Donaldson stressed that the increased award should be taken as setting a precedent for future libel cases which were normally decided in the hands of juries. All the sisters had independently agreed precisely the same figure of £3,000 each.

The sisters are entitled to substantial damages — greater, we all think, than the jury awarded them — and they are entitled to a figure to which they can add and say: 'Not only were we cleared, but we were awarded £15,000 damages to fully compensate us for the wrong which should never have been brought against us,' Lord Donaldson said.

In addition to the £15,000 the sisters will not now

have to pay the costs of the original High Court action in March, estimated at £40,000, and yesterday's Appeal Court hearing, estimated at a further £10,000.

After the hearing Mrs Warby said she believed in British justice again. "It was not the money that really mattered. What really matters is that at last we have got a public apology from Tesco and an admission that the charges should never have been brought against us."

The sisters said they had been humiliated by their ordeal at Tesco's outlet in Harlow, Essex, in December 1984, which had ruined their Christmas and left them nervous about shopping. They were arrested by a store detective who accused them of swapping labels to save £2 on a toaster.

The women were searched and locked in a police cell for several hours. Later they had to appear before magistrates but when the case came for trial in July 1985 no evidence was offered and they were acquitted.

The sisters later declined an offer from Tesco of £1,500 each, electing to clear their names in court. The High Court awarded them £800 each, but they were left to pick up the bill for the court proceedings. Tesco later agreed to pay half the costs, up to the time of the settlement offer of £3,000.

Mr Mike Boxall, Tesco's company secretary, said afterwards: "We are just pleased that the anguish is over for everyone concerned."

GUILTY NOT WORTHY

STOP THE BROTHERS

**Stigma
that will
never
go away**



IT took sisters Frances Warby and Ann Chastell FIVE years to win justice

after they were falsely accused of shoplifting from a Tesco store at Harlow, Essex.

They were arrested in Dec...

price tag on an electric toaster... allegedly swindling the store of just £2.

At their trial the prosecution offered no evidence, but by then the sisters felt their reputations were in tatters.

So they fought through the...

which lifted the millstone of a £50,000 legal bill - and Tesco apologised publicly.

The sisters' fight left its marks on both but, in the end, they won. Some, though, are not so fortunate...

... or so strong.



WHEN Frances Warby and her sister Ann Chastell walked out of court this week, they walked with their heads high.

The Tesco superstore that had branded them shoplifters had stood up in court and offered a full apology. But it wasn't only a victory in the sisters' personal five-year battle for justice.

It was also an exorcism of their own inexplicable pangs of guilt and the final removal of a stigma that has haunted them since the day they were accused in December 1981.

It's a similar sort of stigma that plagues victims in the horrific crime of rape. Neither Frances nor Ann understand the part the stigma had to play in their nightmare.

"It had a traumatic effect," said Ann. "We didn't like to go out so much. You feel people are talking behind your back, even if they aren't, and the pressures can be enormous."

"You start to lose faith in yourself and that's very destructive. Sometimes you almost believe you are guilty."

For Frances the allegations also meant the break-up of her marriage. For Ann there was a miscarriage in her fifth month.

Said Ann: "The worry

You feel
Sally Versey

people are
talking
Dive

behind your back?

26. OCT. 1989

JUBILANT: Ann and Frances have cleared their names



By Jean Disley

of it and the feelings of paranoia almost sent me mad. If I had had to put up with what my husband put up with I wouldn't have stayed."

"Now that everything is over it has really been brought home to us how many people have faced similar traumas. "Because our battle for justice was so public we have managed to get

rid of the stigma. We were totally vindicated. "The champagne celebrations the other night allowed us to overcome them. We were lucky. Most people never get that chance."

Frances and Ann in the end had the

strength to clear their names. But some are less able to fight. An 85-year-old woman wrote to the sisters last year, telling her own sad story.

But she never fought for justice. She didn't have the strength or the money. Before Monday's appeal court ruling the best she could have hoped for was an £800 compensation cheque and a hefty bill for legal costs. So she took the only

option open to her and paid the fine. *Now she lives with the consequences... and the stigma.*

The multi-billion pound corporation that gets it wrong. Like Tesco in the sisters' case may suffer a brief financial backlash, but it's the individual who is left to cope with the long-term effects. Shoplifting is not a glamorous crime. Nobody writes books or makes films about its

victims or its perpetrators. Petty and pathetic. It promotes the worst kind of spiteful gossip and arrogance in the rest of us.

When steal from shops, too, but women seem to suffer most.

Why? Perhaps it's true that women are more sensitive to gossip and innuendo. A housewife without a solid career to occupy her mind might be a victim as much of her own imagination as of reality. Either way the effects can be devastatingly far-reaching, not only for the woman herself, but for her family and friends. And they can be physical as well as emotional.

The same kind of stigma applies to rape victims. Rape horrifies us, yet there is a commonly-held belief that there's no smoke without fire. Frances said: "We had to clear our names."

"Even though we won in principle the first time people don't understand the law. They thought that because we were ordered to pay

THEY WALKED OUT OF COURT THIS WEEK, THEY WALKED WITH THEIR HEADS HIGH.

THREE from shops cost British retailers £1.8 billion last year - 13 per cent of it believed to be from shoplifting.

THE Home Office says that in 1988 there were 216,012 recorded shoplifting offences, but the British Retailers' Association says the figure is at least five

profile of a typical shoplifter is false. The most common picture is of a middle-aged woman, but shoplifters are most likely to be young men, aged between 18 and 21.

PSYCHIATRIST Dr John Bonn says, though, that many women suffering from depression, emptiness

to suicide by shame when they're caught. In 1980 TV personality Lady Isabel Barnett killed herself - leaving nearly half a million pounds in her will - after being convicted of stealing a tin of tuna and a carton of cream worth 87p from her village store.

THE Polka Trust, the

Crises Concern for the Alleged Shoplifter has a helpline on 01-202 5787 or you

Cell ordeal of the family mistaken for shoplift gang

by
FRANK WELSBY

A COUNCIL chief's wife is demanding an apology from police for the humiliation of being locked in a cell after she was wrongly accused of shoplifting.

Shirley Robinson and three members of her family were arrested on a Christmas shopping trip to Llandudno, North Wales, after being tailed by detectives for two hours.

They were held at a police station where all their possessions and even their car were searched and receipts demanded for every purchase.

Shocked and frightened, the four were eventually released two hours later after police claimed they had wrongly identified them as members of a shoplifting gang.

"If we don't receive a full apology for this disgraceful behaviour we will instruct solicitors to sue," said Mrs Robinson, 44, whose husband Geoffrey is chief environmental health officer for Arfon Council, Gwynedd.

"It was a terrifying trauma. I would not like to live through it again."

The ordeal began when Mrs Robinson, daughters Jane, 23, Sarah, 21, and Jane's fiancé Glyn Williams, 22, called at Marks and Spencer in Llandudno. A store detective, believing them to be members of the wanted gang, alerted police who followed them to six other shops. They were finally arrested at a sports shop.

"A detective sergeant told us we were all being arrested on suspicion of theft," said Mrs Robinson.

"We were flabbergasted. We offered to show the receipts for the gifts we had bought but the police

insisted on taking us to Llandudno police station.

"There we were put into separate interviewing rooms and told to put our shopping items on tables, covering them with receipts which totalled more than £100.

"They must have thought I was the leader of the 'gang'. They asked me where the rest of my accomplices were. Suddenly they carted me off to a cell, locking me in after searching my handbag and purse and reading my documents, letters and even my diary."

Half an hour later the family was freed.

Mrs Robinson, of Red Wharf Bay, Anglesey, added: "When I asked about recompense, meaning an apology, I was lectured on how grateful I would be if police acted quickly when I reported anything suspicious to them.

"The whole affair was embarrassing, frightening and unnecessary. We all deserve a full apology."

Her husband protested to police after the family arrived home but again they refused to apologise.

Eric Evans, deputy chief constable of North Wales, confirmed the arrests but could not comment because a complaint was pending.

Mrs Robinson is considering action against Marks and Spencer. Llandudno manager Roger Penwill said his store detective followed "company procedures".

Last month sisters Ann Chastell and Frances Warby from Hertfordshire each won damages of £7,500 from supermarket giant Tesco after they had been falsely branded as shoplifters.

● More than 216,000 cases of shoplifting were reported in England and Wales last year. Fewer than 100,000 were cautioned or convicted.

Mother banned over crisps slip

Crime: Shoplifting 42.12.87.

Xpress.

A MOTHER has been banned for life from a county's 49 Co-op stores after forgetting to pay 34p for two bags of crisps.

Corinne Webb took her 19-month-old son Matthew and two-year-old nephew, Joel Gray, on a shopping trip to a store in Walderslade, Kent, and bought food worth £61.

When the toddlers started to play up, Mrs Webb gave them a packet of crisps each to keep them quiet.

She put the empty packets in her handbag, intending to pay for them at the counter.

Mrs Webb, 34, of

By ROBERT MCGOWAN

Chatham, said last night: "I forgot to have something weighed, so the assistant went to get that done."

She took the empty packets out of her bag. But when the boys started being noisy again, she put them in her pocket and forget they were there.

Tapped

She said: "With having to watch the children all the time, it slipped my mind once I had put the shopping into the bags."

"Then the store detective tapped me on the shoulder as I came out."

Mrs Webb said police

were called. But although she was taken to Chatham police station, she was not charged with any offence. She was later driven back to the store to hand over the 34p.

James Smethurst, chief executive of Invicta Co-op, which has 11 food and eight non-food stores in Kent, refused to discuss the case. His secretary said: "His instructions are that we are not to make any comment."

But the Co-op's security manager, Joan Youens, said: "It is company policy to ban people in these circumstances. It is true to say Mrs Webb is now banned for life at all our stores."

1990

Pickles is criticized for jailing mother

By Quentin Cowdry and Peter Davenport

Penal reformers joined Labour MPs yesterday in criticizing as "heavy handed" a judge's decision jail a teenage mother for six months for helping shoplifters.

Tracey Scott, aged 19, of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, was reunited yesterday with her 10-week-old daughter, Anisha, in Stryal Prison, Cheshire, which has a unit for mothers with babies.

Miss Vivien Stern, director of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, said she was appalled by the sentence, passed by Judge Pickles at Wakefield Crown Court on Tuesday. She said the affair highlighted the problem of British courts over-using penitentiary sanctions.

She said: "For a first offender like this, I would have thought the whole experience of being convicted would have been salutary enough. The judge should have opted for a non-custodial sentence, perhaps with some element of reparation to the community."

The decision was also criticized by the Prison Reform Trust and Mr Barry Sheerman, a Labour home affairs spokesman, who is pressing the Lord Chancellor to examine the record of Judge Pickles, who has been involved in numerous controversies.

Scott's mother, Mrs Marjorie Sylvester, said: "Judge Pickles can have no compassion."

The judge was refusing to comment on the case yesterday, but his wife, Sheila, said her husband had given it the closest consideration.

She said: "I know he did everything he could to help her and if it had been another judge the case would not have got all this attention."

Scott's solicitor, Mr Kenneth Green, said she was appealing and he had asked for bail pending the hearing.

Scott was sent to prison after admitting 10 charges of theft at the store where she worked as a check-out operator.

Leading article, page 13

Mother jailed 'as deterrent'

Crime Shoplifting

Joanna Coles

JUDGE James Pickles stirred up fresh controversy yesterday after he sentenced a teenager with a 10-week-old baby to six months in jail for aiding shoplifters, claiming that it would deter female offenders from getting pregnant to avoid prison.

Sentencing Tracey Scott, 19, at Wakefield Crown Court, the judge said he had to consider whether it would be right "to let young women know that one way of possibly or probably avoiding custody would be to deliberately become pregnant between the time they have been de-

TECTED committing a crime and the time they were being sentenced."

Stressing that no case had caused him greater concern, Judge Pickles said he had received assurances that mother and baby would not be separated.

Scott, of Longhill Road, Huddersfield, pleaded guilty last November to charges of theft from a supermarket. A checkout girl, she admitted turning a blind eye to customers helping themselves. Her baby was apparently conceived after police interviewed her. "I am not saying she became pregnant in order to evade custody but I do not know whether she deliberately became pregnant

with any motive or not — and I am not going to ask her," Judge Pickles said.

Mrs Chris Tchalkovsky, for Women in Prison, said yesterday that there is no evidence of women getting pregnant to avoid prison. "This is a typical piece of male rubbish, a male fiction," she added.

Mr Barry Sheerman, Labour MP for Huddersfield, said it was a scandal that the judge had ignored all the non-custodial punishments.

Judge Pickles caused a furore last March when he jailed Michelle Kershaw for six days after she claimed she was too frightened to give evidence against a former boyfriend.

7 JAN 1990

Mackay's office asks to see papers on jailed mother

Crime Shoplifting - 1. JAN 1990

Joanna Coles

THE Lord Chancellor's office yesterday demanded to see papers referring to the case of jailed teenage mother Tracey Scott, who was imprisoned by Judge James Pickles for a first theft offence, was joined by her 10-week-old baby in jail yesterday.

A 19-year-old checkout girl, she was sentenced to six months by Judge Pickles on Tuesday for aiding shoplifters at the supermarket where she worked. He said it would deter female offenders from getting pregnant to avoid jail.

His comments angered MPs

who demanded his immediate resignation. Scott's solicitor, Mr Ken Green, said he will appeal later this week. He was confident the sentence will be overruled.

"Tracey obviously denies in any shape or form giving birth to avoid prison and was most upset by his comments," Mr Green said yesterday. "Her jail sentence is for six months but her baby is for life." He expects a decision later this week.

Last year he successfully appealed against the three-month and six-week sentences of two of Scott's co-accused.

Scott spent Tuesday night in New Hall prison, Wakefield, and was reunited with her baby, Anisha, yesterday at

Styal prison, near Manchester, which has several of the county's 39 mother and baby places. Her mother, Mrs Marjorie Sylvester, was in tears as she handed over the baby for the 50 mile journey.

"If the judge was going to jail Tracey, he should have done it a long time ago. The wailing has been the worst thing," she said.

Judge Pickles's wife, Sheila, said yesterday her husband had deliberated about passing the sentence over the Christmas period.

"It caused him some worry. He was thinking about it over Christmas and had spoken about it. He's done everything he can to help her."

Although the sentence is in line with usual policy — reflecting the gravity with which thefts in breach of trust are viewed — prison reform groups yesterday said it was too harsh.

Mr Paul Cavadino, a spokesman for the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, said: "It is indefensible. Prison is the harshest penalty we have available. It should be reserved for offences involving damage to other people, violent and sexual offences or for situations in which alternative sentences have failed."

The range of options includes probation, community service, a fine or compensation orders.

Judge Pickles said he had

received assurances from the Home Office that mother and baby would not be separated.

But yesterday the Prison Reform Trust said such assurances were worthless and that mother and baby units were not always suitable.

Mr Adam Sampson, a researcher for the trust, said: "The mother could be found unsuitable and the child handed to another member of the family or taken into care."

"Development of the baby can be retarded, and very often the mother and baby units force a particular way of caring on to a mother which they can be reluctant to take."

However, a judge cannot be dismissed for making mistakes.

Judge Pickles has admitted he has made several.

Last year he sentenced Miss Michelle Renshaw to a week in jail for refusing to give evidence against her former boyfriend. He was chastened by the Court of Appeal which immediately overturned the decision.

"I was wrong and I should have kept my mouth shut," he has since said.

He is inclined to compound his mistakes by explaining himself to the press. He justified a decision to free a child molester one month after the Renshaw case, and announced on television that he liked looking at pictures of naked women. He also said that "women are made to attract men".

Appeal Court frees jailed mother

Crime Shoplifting

case for probation — it stands out a mile," he added. If Miss Scott had been in court, he would have freed her on probation immediately.

But this was not possible because she had to consent in person to the two year probation order.

Miss Scott, aged 19, decided against appearing in court because it would have meant a significant disruption to her baby's routine.

After the judgment, her solicitor, Mr Ken Green, said he would be telephoning her at Styal prison, near Manchester, to give her the news.

She was later transferred with her baby, Anisha, to

Holloway prison, north London, to enable her to appear in court this morning.

Miss Scott's mother, Mrs Marjorie Sylvester, said that yesterday was "the happiest day of my life."

Sentencing Miss Scott at Wakefield two weeks ago, Judge Pickles said it would deter female offenders from getting pregnant to avoid prison.

Yesterday Lord Lane, who sat with Justices Leggatt and Hutchison, said these comments were clearly not applicable in this case.

"Unfortunately the judge also sought fit to unburden himself on the subject of young women who might become muddled to

invite pregnancy to escape sentence.

"The impression was left that the judge was using the case to illustrate the unwisdom of young women embarking on pregnancy, which was, to say the least, most unfortunate."

He added that Miss Scott's offences were not so serious that a custodial sentence was unavoidable.

The Appeal Court's decision was described as "a victory for compassion and commonsense" by Mr Paul Cavadino, a spokesman for the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders.

Miss Scott, a checkout girl, of Longhill Road, Huddersfield,

pleaded guilty last November to allowing customers to steal £4,000 worth of goods from a Poundstretcher supermarket where she worked.

Judge Pickles delayed sentencing her for five weeks to ensure a mother and baby place could be found. Two of her 11 co-accused, also given similar jail sentences, appealed successfully against them. Judge Pickles was told of the outcome of the appeals before he sentenced Miss Scott.

Judge Pickles, aged 63, was criticised by Lord Lane last year after he jailed a woman for refusing to give evidence against a former boyfriend because she was scared.

The case woman only told of imminent release on way to Appeal Court despite solicitor's message to prison.

'Surprise' of freed mother

By Joanna Coles

MISS Tracey Scott, jailed for theft with her baby two weeks ago by Judge James Pickles and yesterday freed on probation by the Appeal Court, only realised she was to be released when a prison officer told her on the way to court yesterday morning.

Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, rescinded her six-month prison sentence on Monday on condition that she appeared in court yesterday and consent to a substitute probation order.

Her solicitor, Mr Ken Green, said he telephoned Syal prison, near Manchester, with the news but the message was not passed on to his client.

Miss Scott, aged 19, was transferred to Holloway with her baby, Alesha, on Monday night but was not told why. She did not see or hear the television news or read a newspaper.

Miss Scott, of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, pleaded guilty last November to allowing customers to steal £1,000 worth of goods from the supermarket where she worked at the checkout.

After yesterday's one minute hearing before Lord Lane, she was reunited with her baby. Miss Scott said she was "relieved and very happy to be

free". She added that she had been continually harassed by her fellow prisoners.

"One of them threatened me over breakfast this morning and said 'don't let me catch you alone,'" she said. "Holloway was much worse than Syal."

Mr Green said she found prison harrowing and she had become sullen. Allocated a job as a cleaner, Miss Scott said she and the baby had been poorly and that she had been unable to take her daily iron tablets.

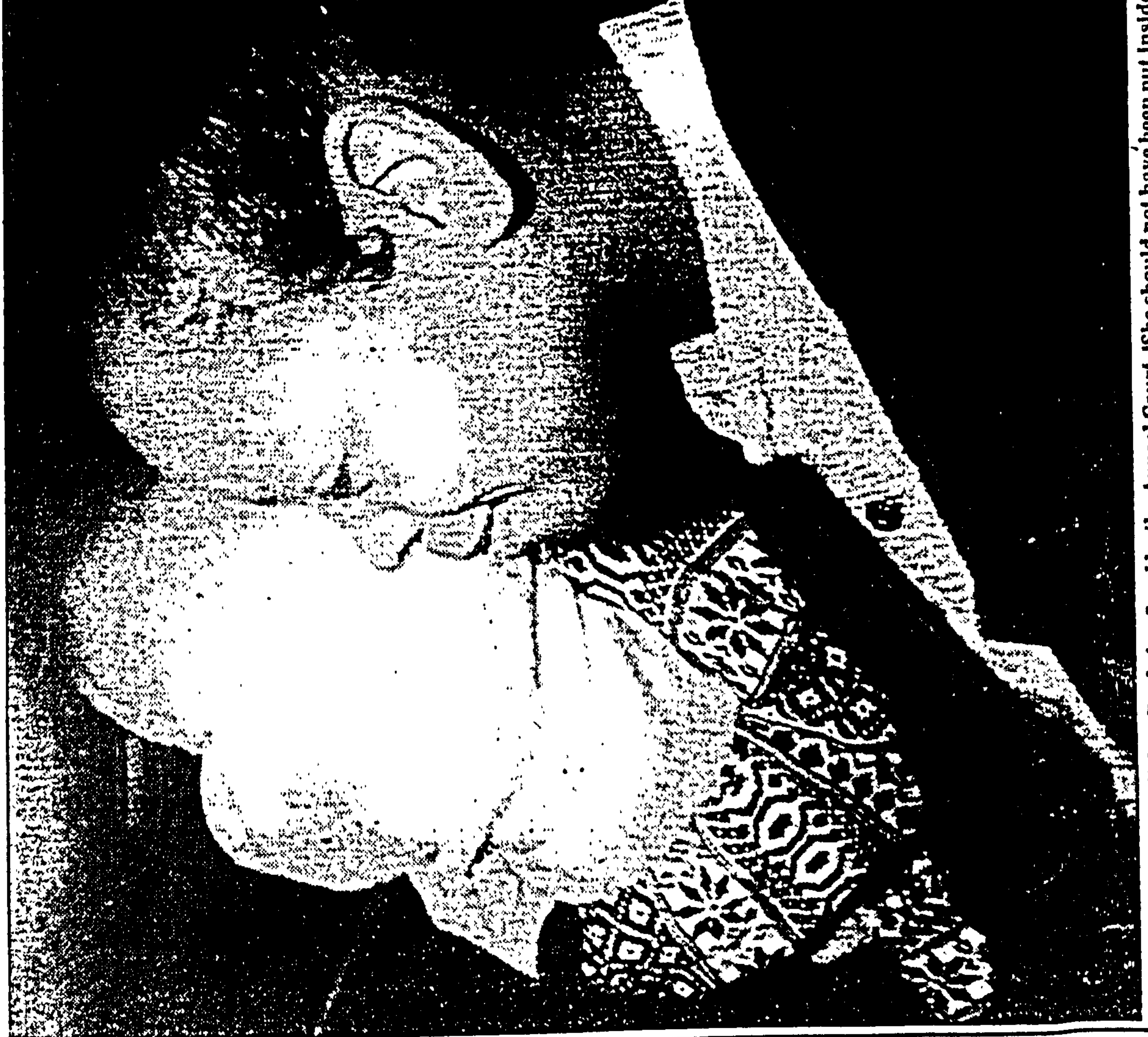
"We got up at 7.15 and then bathed and fed the baby and then we had breakfast at 8.30," she said. "Then we started work at 8.45. I just want to get home and have a bath."

Tracey and Alesha lost weight while in prison, said Mr Green. "She also suffered from other prisoners aware of the publicity."

"They kept asking what was so special about her. Perhaps they were jealous."

Carrying her daughter's overnight case into a first class train carriage home, Mrs Syvester said new year had been a terrible time for her family, and that celebrations were planned for the homecoming.

Lord Lane told Miss Scott, who pleaded guilty last November to nine charges of theft, that she "should not have been put inside" and that it was obvious she should have been placed on probation.



Tracey Scott and baby Alisha after being freed by the Appeal Court. 'She should not have been put inside,' said Lord Lane.

Mother in shoplifting case freed

TRACEY SCOTT, the 19-year-old single mother found guilty of allowing friends to shoplift and sent to prison by Judge James Pickles, was freed yesterday after serving two weeks of a six-month sentence.

Her sentence was quashed by the Court of Appeal on Monday. When Scott appeared before the Court of Appeal yesterday morning to consent to a two-year probation order, Lord Lane told her: "We came to the conclusion that the sentence the judge passed upon you was not correct, and that we considered that you should not have been sent to custody as the learned judge thought to be right."

Two weeks ago, when Judge Pickles passed sentence at Wakefield, he said that he would jail Scott to deter other women from believing that they could avoid prison by becoming pregnant. He did not suggest that Scott had deliberately conceived after the thefts were discovered. She is considering a claim for compensation.

Scott was convicted of nine charges of theft. She admitted that she turned a blind eye to friends and acquaintances who took goods through her supermarket checkout.

After the hearing she left for her home in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. Asked how Scott felt about Judge Pickles, Ken Green, her solicitor, said: "She says her faith in British justice has been restored. But she is bitter towards him. Very bitter."

17 JAN 1990

17

Jailed mother and baby set free

Handwritten: Jailed mother and baby set free

JAILED mother Tracey Scott and her baby daughter were freed yesterday amid more controversy.

No one had told Miss Scott, 19, of Monday's Court of Appeal decision to release her.

Her solicitor, Mr Ken Green, who broke the news to her yesterday morning, said he rang Styal Prison in Cheshire, but staff kept it from her.

"She must have been the only person in the country who did not know," he said. "It was shocking treatment. It seems the authorities were unhappy with the publicity given to the case. I shall be complaining."

Claim

Mr Green is also considering a compensation claim for the two weeks she spent in prison with three-month-old Alisha.

He said both mother and child had lost weight during their prison stay. "Only time will tell the long-term effect be on them."

Miss Scott, jailed for six months by Judge Pickles for theft, was brought to London yesterday to agree to be put on probation. Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, told her the sentence passed by Judge Pickles was "not correct".

Last night the family were celebrating after travelling back to their home in Longhill Road, Sheepridge, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.

'Insult' payout for Irishman

17 JAN 1990

Pickles dubs Lord Lane a 'dinosaur'

PAUL: SUFFLITING

Joanna Coles

JUDGE James Pickles, fresh from holiday in Tenerife, yesterday used a Yorkshire pub to dismiss Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, as an "ancient dinosaur".

Lord Lane criticised Judge Pickles at an appeal hearing for jailing Tracey Scott, aged 19, with her 10-week-old baby, for theft. Judge Pickles had said he hoped to deter offenders from getting pregnant.

Yesterday Judge Pickles held court in a Wakefield pub, with press and TV present, to answer Lord Lane. "He is like one of those ancient dinosaurs who is living in the wrong age, in my respectful view. I like him but he doesn't like me, and

I don't blame him. I have no doubt that he and others in the senior judiciary resent the fact that I and others, including the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, are trying to reform the judiciary and the legal system."

He said he did not regret the remarks about Tracey Scott. "If they are properly understood, there was nothing wrong with them. I think they have been misconstrued." Judge Pickles said later on Channel 4 News that his comments on Lord Lane referred to "the needle which enters into the work of some of the members of the Court of Appeal when dealing with cases involving me, following his 1987 book, which criticised the system of appointing judges."

Lord Lane declined comment.

20. JAN. 1990

Olympics boost

The Olympic Games will bring 50,000 jobs and £2 billion extra income to the North-West, if Manchester is chosen as the host city for 1996, according to a report published yesterday.

Suspect drowns

An unidentified man drowned yesterday after diving into the River Medway in Maidstone to escape a store detective who suspected him of being a shoplifter. **THE BODY WAS RECOVERED**

ims: to promote healthy living. A pack of five booklets is available free in exchange for an A4 sae (12p). Also provides general advice on the telephone. **CRISIS COUNSELLING FOR ALLEGED SHOPLIFTERS, PO BOX 1892, LONDON NW4 4NX. Tel: 01-202 5787, 01-722-3685. (after 7 pm, 01-958 8859.**

Aims: to counsel, refer or advise people accused of alleged shoplifting offences.

■ Crossroads Care Attention Schemes, Crossroads, 10 Regent Place, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 2PN. Tel: 0788 73653.

Aims: to give practical help to allow carers of the disabled to stay in their own homes. Operates in more than 150 areas.

■ Cruse Bereavement Care, Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR. Tel: 01-940 4818.

Aims: to provide counselling, advice, and social contacts through 130 branches.

Crimewatch

Police watching a video of a shoplifter recognised him as PC Raymond Bate, a crime prevention officer at Smethwick police station. Mr Bate, aged 35, who has since resigned from the force, was fined £200 at Wolverhampton yesterday for theft.

'Baby snatch' remand

Janet Griffiths, of Burford, Oxfordshire, charged with abducting baby Alexandra Griffiths from her mother's bedside at St Thomas's Hospital, London, on January 11, was again too ill to appear at Horseferry Road court, London, yesterday, and was further remanded.

Driving ban on mayor

Christopher Mason, mayor of

Albanians snatch at freedo

crime: shoplifting

29.5.90.

Andrew Culf

DUTY-FREE signs at Heathrow were translated a shade too literally by the Albanian national football team as they killed weekend time in the airport's transit lounge shops. Before airport police intervened, 30 members of the national team and under-21 side had cleared £2,000 worth of goods from the shelves.

After spending a night in police cells, they were shown the collective red card yesterday and escorted out of the country.

No charges were pressed and a charitable linguistic explanation was offered for the players' transgressions.

A Heathrow spokesman said: "When the Albanians saw the words duty-free they thought they could take anything they wanted free of charge."

In Albania the word "duty" has such strong overtones that the footballers may have felt the signs were an order, compelling them to help themselves.

Why they hid some of the items in the airport toilets was less easy to explain.

Police were called to

Heathrow on Sunday noon after stores reported the shoplifting spree. They rounded up a 37-strong squad, waiting a plane to Iceland for an international fixture after arriving on a flight from London. Officers found stolen goods including jewellery, watches, some taken from duty-free shops at an airport.

The manager, team captain and five others were released, but the rest of the Albanian squad were held in cells overnight while police attempted to find an interpreter.

NOW STORES ARE ASKING SCHOOLCHILDREN TO TUNE INTO A MASSIVE CAMPAIGN

Operation Theftbusters

A HUGE campaign is being launched to prevent youngsters becoming shoplifters.

High Street retail giants are backing a nationwide 'theftbusters' song competition for eight to eleven-year-olds. More than 24,000 primary schools in nine regions will ask their pupils to compose a song based loosely on the Ghostbusters cult films and cartoon characters.

But behind the light-hearted contest is the grim message that

War on young shoplifters to curb £1bn high street spree

EXCLUSIVE

By CHRISTOPHER LEAKE
Consumer Affairs Editor

more than 700 youngsters appear in court each year charged with stealing from shops.

And shoplifting accounts for 41 per cent of all crimes

committed by eight to eleven-year-olds.

Latest Home Office figures for England and Wales show that 743 children, aged ten to 14, were charged in 1988 and 600 found guilty.

No figures are given for those under ten, but they run into hundreds more.

Former teacher Baroness Phillips, who runs the Associa-

tion for the Prevention of Theft in Shops, said there was growing concern that some young children were being sent out on shoplifting sprees by older 'ragins'.

Shoplifting is often the first step up the ladder to serious crimes.

Armed

Latest Home Office figures for England and Wales show that 743 children, aged ten to 14, were charged in 1988 and 606 found guilty.

'We need to tell children from an early age the difference between right and wrong.'

The contest, which will start next month, is backed by security experts ATI and major High Street retailers like the Dixons electrical chain.

Shoplifting costs Britain's retailers an estimated £1 billion a year, so there is a major incentive for the big retailing names to support the competition.

Prizes for the best songs will range from £100 for the school and £40 for the entrant in the regions to national awards of £500 and £200.

And teachers will be encouraged to make children think about theft and realise the shame it brings.

7.9.9.
T.
crime: shoplifting

for day curfew order

By FRANCIS GIBB, LEGAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

MAGISTRATES were criticised by Liberty, formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties, yesterday for imposing a daytime curfew order on a compulsive shoplifter that made her a prisoner in her own home for seven months.

The curfew was imposed by magistrates in Basingstoke, Hampshire, on Ann Hemmings, who has a shoplifting record dating back 15 years, because they were concerned that she would reoffend. The order lasted until her case came up at Winchester crown court.

Shani Barnes, Hemmings' defence counsel, said: "An 8am to 8pm curfew has been imposed since February. This woman has served seven months confined to her own home. She has been unable to shop, to take a walk in the sunshine, or even visit the dentist.

"It is a draconian measure which has had a serious effect on this inadequate and disorganised woman. All she can talk about is

the case." Hemmings, aged 38, of Bracknell, Berkshire, had admitted stealing goods worth nearly £3,000 from department stores, and also pleaded guilty to assaulting a security guard.

Miss Barnes said that Hemmings had never worn the clothes or used the goods that she had stolen, but had stored them in unopened bags. She was not a threat to society, just a nuisance to department stores, the court was told.

Recorder Roger Henderson, QC, said: "I agree that the curfew which restricted you had really become a form of imprisonment in your own home." He said that could not accept, however, that Hemmings was entirely harmless. He jailed her for one year, with three months for the assault, to run consecutively.

Yesterday, the curfew was also criticised by Liberty, who described it as "inhuman." Andy Puddephatt, general secretary of the organisation, said: "I have never heard of anything like this before. This woman was innocent when the curfew was imposed. But she was imprisoned at her own home for seven months.

"It is ludicrous and borders on the insane. The magistrates should be censured." He added that it was irrelevant that the woman pleaded guilty when she came to court.

Bryan Gibson, clerk to the justices at Basingstoke, said yesterday that courts did not make orders of this kind unless it had been suggested by prosecution or defence. "Rather than remand the woman in custody, because she was a repeated offender, the bench would have been asked whether it was not possible to construct bail conditions which meant she could be at home rather than in prison," he said.

28 SEP 1990

Shops ban for accused man

Crime: Shoplifting **3d**

A MAN accused of shoplifting was yesterday banned from all stores in England and Wales as a condition of his bail.

Flint magistrates, Clwyd, imposed the restriction on Robert Ieelin Edwards, aged 41, of Bro Alun, Mold.

He is charged with shoplifting at Mold and Flint, Clwyd, and will appear again before

the court next month. After the hearing, Mr Edwards's solicitor, Dion Williams, said: "It is unusual, but the bench is of course within its rights."

"We often see people banned from licensed premises after trouble at a pub and I suppose this is the same sort of thing."

The ban was sought by the prosecution.

Crime: Shoplifting
TV presenter charged
Richard Madeley, 34, a Granada Television presenter on the This Morning programme, faced a second charge at Manchester magistrates court yesterday of shoplifting at Tesco in Didsbury. He was remanded on bail to November 8. **28 Sep 1990**

crime: shoplifting

Daily Mail, Friday, September 28, 1990



Madeley yesterday

TV host to
face jury
on theft
charges

TV PRESENTER Richard Madeley chose yesterday to be tried by a jury on shoplifting charges. The host of Granada television's This Morning faced a second charge when he appeared before magistrates in Manchester. Both alleged offences, involving wines and spirits, took place at a Tesco store in Didsbury, Manchester, last month. Madeley, 34, of Old Broadway, Didsbury, was remanded on bail until November 8 when he is expected to be committed for trial.

1991

Keeping faith with a special day

Crime: Shoplifting

NICOLAS WALTER misinterprets my letter on Sunday opening (Guardian, December 21). I did not suggest that opening a shop on a Sunday was as serious as shoplifting. I merely pointed out that both classes of people were choosing which laws to obey. However, some might think that the managing director of a major public company who states in advance, and takes half pages in newspapers to announce his intention to break the law, shows more contempt for our society's rules than an impulsive shoplifter.

Whether or not the law is a product of an alliance of religious and trade union interests is not relevant. In fact bans on Sunday trading enjoy support way beyond these bodies, which is why I suspect Parliament has not repealed or modified the

laws. Had the motivation for Sunday opening come from the shopworkers' unions rather than the owners they would doubtless have been bombarded with vitriolic ministerial condemnation.

Most people in most countries like to keep one day different from other days. I have spent recent holidays in Romania, Uganda, France and Canada. These countries with widely differing forms of government seem to think the same way.

Incidentally I have yet to meet any family who has failed to buy as many goods as they need or want through lack of opportunity to visit the appropriate shops.

Brian P. Moss,
92 Mill Crescent,
Kingsbury,
Warwickshire.

12
11
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1991

25 APR 1991

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

SHEEP rustling may be a familiar enough crime in rural Wales, but in Northumbria people are currently more concerned with ram raids — that is, raids in which cars are rammed at high speed into a shop which is then riddled with goods.

In his annual report, published this week, the Chief Constable of Northumbria, Sir Stanley Bailey, draws attention to a rash of ram raids

which inflict "severe damage" on

before someone is killed. More than 200 ramming had taken place in his police district in the last year, he said.

Ramming is hard to prevent or detect. "Offenders are often masked, armed with baseball bats or similar, and willing to drive the stolen vehicle recklessly with no regard for the safety of others." The raiders attack anyone who confronts them, he warns. "The uniformed patrolling officer is of little deterrence and at some considerable risk." Gangs sometimes use as

Crime: Shoplifting

not severe enough and hopes that the Home Office will consider instituting a new offence; currently offenders are charged mainly with burglary.

Shops selling clothes and electrical goods are the main target. One newsagent in East Boldon, Northumbria, suffered two raids in three weeks, with men in ski masks ramming the shop in a red Golf GTI and escaping with hundreds of pounds worth of cigarettes.

Ramming is a phenomenon almost as old as the car itself.

In the 1930s, as immortalised

most popular targets. Grappling irons were hooked to the grilles covering the shopfront, and attached to the rear of the car, which was driven off at speed. Hatton Garden in London was a prime spot. But jewelers have now stepped up their security, and their premises are more difficult to smash into.

The current ramming raids often cost more in damage to premises than in goods stolen. As banks, building societies and post offices become more difficult to penetrate, shop fronts will win

trials, shop fronts will win

Richard Pendry on the lows that follow the highs of shoplifting

Shoppin' around for kicks

22 MAR. 1991

Crime: Shoplifting

AT 16, Anthony fancies himself as a hardened wiseboy shoplifter. Tooled up with cutters to deal with security tags, he shops with his mates when they should be in school. He glories in his reputation. He stashes his loot — marker pens, records, CDs, "anything I can sell at school" — in a left-luggage locker in Victoria station. "I remember I stole a stereo from the Army Navy. It was bloody huge," he boasts. "I was walking down the stairs with it and someone stepped up behind me. I was saying, 'Shit, I've been caught.' The shop assistant opened the door and helped me get into a cab. I couldn't believe my eyes. I brought it home to my mother, and she was just awfully proud of me." Claire, now 25, used to swipe designer clothes on the King's Road when she was at college. "It was a real kick out of the ass," she says. "It's kind of like when you're just about to sleep with someone for the first time, and you've got a knot of fear in your stomach in case you're rejected. You're afraid, but once you've done it you obviously feel happy." "Because it's so easy, many people do it at some stage. It is to be known as a good thief. The trouble is that although it has a certain social status, being caught can be a humiliating experience. Agony Aunt Claire Rayner says: "I'm sorry to hear that your mother is getting frantic mothers' meetings. Oh my God, my

son's done a terrible thing. The police came and I can't look at him. The shame, the disgust, the horror. What am I going to tell the neighbours?" "They stand there in a chasm of misery," says Harry Krauser of Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters. "They have never seen the inside of a court before. Inarticulate and mostly traumatised, they try to understand the proceedings. The greatest fear is not the fine, but 'Will my name be in the papers?'" The nightmare begins with the store detective. "Personally I always try to make them cry," says the manager of one of Oxford Street's biggest stores. Then you are led out of the store and into a squad car by uniformed police. At the station, your pockets are emp-

ty, tied and the contents listed. You wonder whether you will be held overnight; if the police will phone your school or work. Does it mean you'll have a criminal record? Occasionally this crime-which-seems-almost-acceptable is born of poverty. More often, though, it is the sheer thrill of it, or peer group pressure. John is 30, a successful barrister working in London. What he must hide from his colleagues, however, is that at the age of 16, as a schoolboy celebrity, a rebel, he was one of a gang which would nick records, then put them back, "for the sheer exuberance of getting away with it". After a scandal which hit the local headlines, 24 pupils, including John, were suspended or expelled. He looks back on

the shoplifting as as self-punishment, a hopeless attempt to cope with the stresses of an unhappy life. Five thousand people are arrested for shoplifting each year in Oxford Street alone. But the great majority are never caught, and most of those who are will be cautioned by the store manager. When I visited the shoplifting unit in Marylebone police station, Damien, a 16-year-old from Essex, had been arrested in John Lewis for taking a £22 sweat-shirt, his first offence. When he arrived, he was rigid with fear and very, very humble. Though the evidence was overwhelming, he denied the charge (police procedure in TV dramas had convinced him this was best). Thus he must wait six weeks to learn whether he is to go to court, and his school will be involved. Ironically, if he had been more streetwise, he might have pleaded guilty: first-time shoplifters who admit the guilt are now cautioned by police, partly through reluctance to involve children in the legal system, and partly because the procedure is expensive and time-consuming. Some policemen are angry that West End stores make shoplifting so easy. "To my mind, the lack of security at HMV or Virgin should be jointly shared with the juveniles who are here, because the store makes it so easy for them," says Sgt Paul Rigler, of the West End Shoplifting Unit.

The YG guide to shoplifting

- SHOPLIFTER'S MOTTOS**
Property is theft; who dares wins; a bird in the pocket is worth two in the hand
- HEROES**
Robin Hood; Oliver Twist; John McVicar; Ronald Biggs
- TOP 10 ITEMS TO SHOPLIFT**
Ribbed condoms, Obsession perfume, Desert Orchid, magnum of Bollinger, exercise bike, Janet Reger lingerie, water bed, Alfa Romeo Spider, TV licence, handcuffs
- THINGS YOU WISH YOU HADN'T BOTHERED TO STEAL**
Three identical Phil Collins CDs; clear mascara; Michael

- Ignatieff's first novel; a copy of the Daily Telegraph; recycled toilet paper; tropical fish; Bernard Matthews Chicken Kiev; bullworker; Do the Bartman single
- FAVOURITE SONGS**
Shoplifting (the Slits)
I Shot the Sheriff (Bob Marley)
- LEAST FAVOURITE SONGS**
You Can't Always Get What You Want (Rolling Stones)
Working on the Chain Gang (Sam Cooke)
Jailhouse Rock (Elvis)
- WARNING**
Shoplifting can seriously damage your life

is to go to court, and his school will be involved. Ironically, if he had been more streetwise, he might have pleaded guilty: first-time shoplifters who admit the guilt are now cautioned by police, partly through reluctance to involve children in the legal system, and partly because the procedure is expensive and time-consuming. Some policemen are angry that West End stores make shoplifting so easy. "To my mind, the lack of security at HMV or Virgin should be jointly shared with the juveniles who are here, because the store makes it so easy for them," says Sgt Paul Rigler, of the West End Shoplifting Unit.

All shoplifters in this article have been changed.

Stores ban shoppers

Criminal Shoplifters

With a guilty past

10.10.1991

THE big stores have found a new way to cut crime.

They are serving banning orders on known shoplifters.

Anyone breaking the 'exclusion notice' will be trespassing on private property — and if caught stealing could, it is claimed, face a charge of burglary which carries a maximum of 14 years jail.

Normally police charge shoplifters with theft which carries a ten year maximum sentence.

The scheme has yet to be tested in the courts — but so far the 'no go zone' threat alone has proved a major deterrent, say store detectives

By JAMES GOLDEN

who are pooling their information to pinpoint the thieves.

They say many formerly active shoplifters have disappeared from shop video screens since their notices were served.

The scheme is the brainchild of a retired detective inspector, Jim Poin-ton, who heads a Birmingham traders' anti-theft group. And it has won the backing of police and 300 shops in Birmingham city centre, including big names like Rackhams and Marks & Spencer.

Now traders' organisations in other areas are taking an interest.

The exclusion orders, which lists all the shops taking part in the scheme,

are served personally — and the recipient must have at least two shoplifting convictions. The number served 'runs into dozens' said Mr Poin-ton.

He said the threat was effective partly because 'it disturbs them to know we know who they are'.

'No-one is tried and convicted by us. Everyone served with an exclusion notice is a convicted and persistent shoplifter. Shoplifting costs millions of pounds and our aim is to deter as much as convict.'

Police say the cases that come to court are the tip of the iceberg and that store detectives are best equipped to identify the most active thieves.

Superintendent Mike Doyle of West Midlands police said the scheme was having a 'significant impact'.

We're all to blame — Page 33

TV man denies sausage theft

Crime shoplifting.

TV presenter Stuart Hall yesterday denied stealing a packet of sausages and a jar of coffee worth £3.94 from a supermarket near his home in Wilmslow, Cheshire.

He left the Safeway store with the goods in a plastic bag after paying for £50 worth of other items, Mr David Hale, prosecuting, told Knutsford crown court.

Mr Hall, aged 61, who works for Granada Television, was seen by a store detective pushing his trolley towards a till where he paid £35 for two cartons of 200 cigarettes and for eggs, canned milk and orange juice already in his trolley. The sausages and coffee were in the carrier bag containing items for which he had already paid.

When stopped outside the store, Mr Hall allegedly said that it was all a dreadful mistake but later told police that it was stretching credibility to

say he had forgotten the items. "How I came not to pay for them I will ask myself for a long, long time."

Mr Hale said a store detective, Mrs Celia Jones-Parry, saw Mr Hall knot the top of the carrier bag with the coffee and



Stuart Hall... allegedly said he was confused

sausages inside before going to the tills to pay for the other items.

PC Andrew Oldfield said when he arrested Mr Hall and cautioned him the TV presenter said: "Do you have to arrest me? This can be sorted out. I am personal friends with the MD of Safeway."

PC Oldfield said that Mr Hall said: "When I spend £50 in the store am I deliberately going to steal?" But the officer said he admitted the items were there and not paid for. Mr Hall allegedly said: "I took the two items and didn't pay. I am virtually guilty of shoplifting."

The officer said that when Mr Hall was asked what the two items were for he replied: "God knows. A friend of mine is quite ill and I was going to cook a dinner for him. I bought turkey and one thousand and one things. I was confused."

The trial continues today.

169 887 11

Cell fear 'forced theft admission'

Crime Shoplifting. (2x)

STUART Hall, the television presenter, yesterday denied he was a thief and said he had only made admissions to police to get out of the "hell hole" of a cell.

He told Knutsford crown court, Cheshire: "Of course I'm not a thief. I have given all my life to charity. To attempt to steal £3.94 is a total nonsense."

Mr Hall, aged 61, has denied stealing sausages and coffee from a supermarket near his home in Wilmslow.

He said he only made admissions so that he could get away from Wilmslow police station, where he was in a cell across the corridor from overflow prisoners from Strangeways jail.

"The noise was incessant. Various unspeakable things were happening in those cells. It was a terrifying experience. I was completely disorientated... and in severe distress."

He added that during the police interview "I would have agreed to anything because I was totally distracted and consumed with anxiety."

He added: "The world had gone sour on me and this was the last straw and I simply wanted to get out. If I had been asked to confess to arson, rape or murder, I would have done, just to get out of that hell hole."

Mr Hall said he had consulted a psychotherapist since his arrest, but had discontinued after two visits. He had realised that gaining control of his life "came from my own mind and not from a second party." He decided "to be positive and reconstruct my life away from

1990, to turn a corner and start again."

He said he now worked for Granada Television on a new programme and a travel show.

Earlier Mr Hall said that just before the alleged theft last October, he had learned that a doomed business venture was about to lose him £500,000.

It was the latest incident during a year in which "the sky fell in" on his life.

He said he suffered a burglary last year in which his £90,000 collection of antiques and watches was stolen, his chronically invalid mother also suffered two burglaries and he was told his 25-year contract presenting the BBC TV regional news programme North West Tonight was to be ended.

Professor Gary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, told the court that when he saw Mr Hall the day after his arrest, he found him "absolutely depressed, a little bit dishevelled, confused and troubled."

He said Mr Hall did not talk about what happened at Safeway, but about a range of other events.

"Put these things together and what you have is a man under a great deal of stress," said Mr Cooper.

The judge, Recorder Mr Alec Carline QC, in his summing up said the jury had to decide whether it accepted that Mr Hall had been under stress, and whether that had, or may have had, any effect on what he

is. Dad and over from the / owned the number 100000

TV presenter says 'hellhole' forced store theft admission

Crime Shoplifting
STUART Hall, the television presenter, said yesterday he had admitted to being a thief only to get out of the "hellhole" of a cell.

He told Knutsford crown court, Cheshire: "Of course I am not a thief. I have given all my life to charity. To attempt to steal £3.94 is a total nonsense."

Mr Hall, aged 61, has denied stealing sausages and coffee from a supermarket near his home in Wilmslow.

He said that in Wilmslow police station the cell was across the corridor from overflow prisoners from Strangeways jail. "The noise was incessant... Various unspeakable things were happening in those cells. It was a terrifying experience. I was

12 APR. 19
completely disorientated and in severe distress."

Earlier Mr Hall said that before the alleged theft to be he had learned of a doomed business venture about to lose him £600,000. The latest incident in year in "the sky fell in" on his 1990 year his £90,000 collection of antique watches was stolen. His chronic invalid mother suffered two burglaries, and he was told his 25-year-old son presenting the BBC programme North West Tonight was ended.

The judge, Recorder Carlisle, QC, said the judge will decide whether Mr Hall has been under stress and whether it was a fair summing up continuing

'Shoplifter' gets £40,000 Met payout

24. APR. 1991 *Crime: Shoplifting*

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

AN Inland Revenue officer yesterday received a £40,000 settlement from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in an action for malicious prosecution and wrongful imprisonment in connection with an incident that occurred in 1982.

Vijay Kumar Janardanan, aged 35, was arrested in August 1982 in a shopping precinct in Croydon for alleged shoplifting and pickpocketing. He was detained overnight and eventually appeared in June 1983 at Croydon crown court charged with theft and attempted theft.

A detective sergeant and a police constable gave evidence which Mr Janardanan strenuously disputed, claiming the officers were lying. He was acquitted of stealing two combs and two hair brushes from Woolworths but found guilty of attempted theft in Woolworths and Littlewoods. He was fined £50 on each charge and ordered to pay £150 costs.

Mr Janardanan, who was then working for the Post Office, appealed and in 1985, nearly two years later, his conviction was quashed. The Court of Appeal stated in its judgment on the conviction that they had "a lurking doubt as to the justice of it".

In the meantime, however, he had been sacked by the Post Office because of his convictions for dishonesty and what his lawyers describe as a "promising career" was ended. He was unemployed for a period before finding work at lower wages than he had been receiving in the Post Office. He became extremely depressed and introverted. He was reluctant to enter any stores or shops for fear of being arrested.

In the agreed statement in court yesterday it was said that Mr Janardanan found the experience "humiliating, embarrassing, frightening and oppressive".

He took an action for wrongful arrest and false imprisonment, claiming exemplary damages and aggravated damages against the commissioner. This was finally settled yesterday at Croydon county court. The sum of £40,000 in damages and the award of costs, which were described as "considerable", were agreed.

The Metropolitan Police deny the serious allegations of dishonesty made by Mr Janardanan against the two police officers. No liability has been admitted.

Mr Janardanan's solicitor, Raju Bhatt, of Birnberg and Co, said last night: "It has taken Mr Janardanan almost nine years to be fully vindicated in his effort to clear his name and obtain compensation.

"The fact that this day of vindication has arrived is due to the extraordinary courage, determination and persistence of Mr Janardanan, who refused to allow a grave injustice to stand."

This settlement comes on the eve of the Police Complaints Authority triennial report which will show an increase in complaints received.

It is the latest in a series of large financial settlements made by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police after allegations of wrongful arrest and false imprisonment, often involving members of ethnic minorities.

In November, former world boxing champion Maurice Hope received £50,000 in damages for alleged wrongful arrest and false imprisonment. Earlier last year, the athlete, Linford Christie, received a £50,000 settlement for wrongful arrest.

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'Shoplifter' gets £40,000 payout from Met

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

Crime: Shoplifting

24 APR 1991

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SUN

Crime: Shoplifting

1 JUL 1991

TV MADELEY SOBS: I'M NO SHOPLIFTER

Star breaks down in court

By CHARLES YATES

TV HOST Richard Madeley broke down in the dock yesterday and insisted "I'm no thief."

Choking with emotion he told the jury at his shoplifting trial: "I have integrity and I am honest. It has never crossed my mind to steal anything from a shop."

"To put at risk my career, the opinion of friends, family and three million viewers would be absolute madness."

Madeley, 35, told of the "desperately humiliating moments" after he was

accused of stealing £55 worth of wine and spirits from Tesco near his home in Didsbury, Manchester.

He said: "Theft is one of the tackiest things you can be accused of."

"I felt like my world had fallen in."

He and wife Judy Finnigan had £28,000 in savings when he was arrested — some earmarked for the taxman.

Madeley denies two charges of theft, saying he forgot to pay.

He said: "I simply forgot the bottles existed."

Judy — who co-hosts ITV's This Morning show with Madeley — told how



Madeley... forgetful

his absent-mindedness is a family joke.

She said he once paid for two bags of shopping and left them behind.

And she insisted he regularly tried to leave his corner shop without picking up his change.

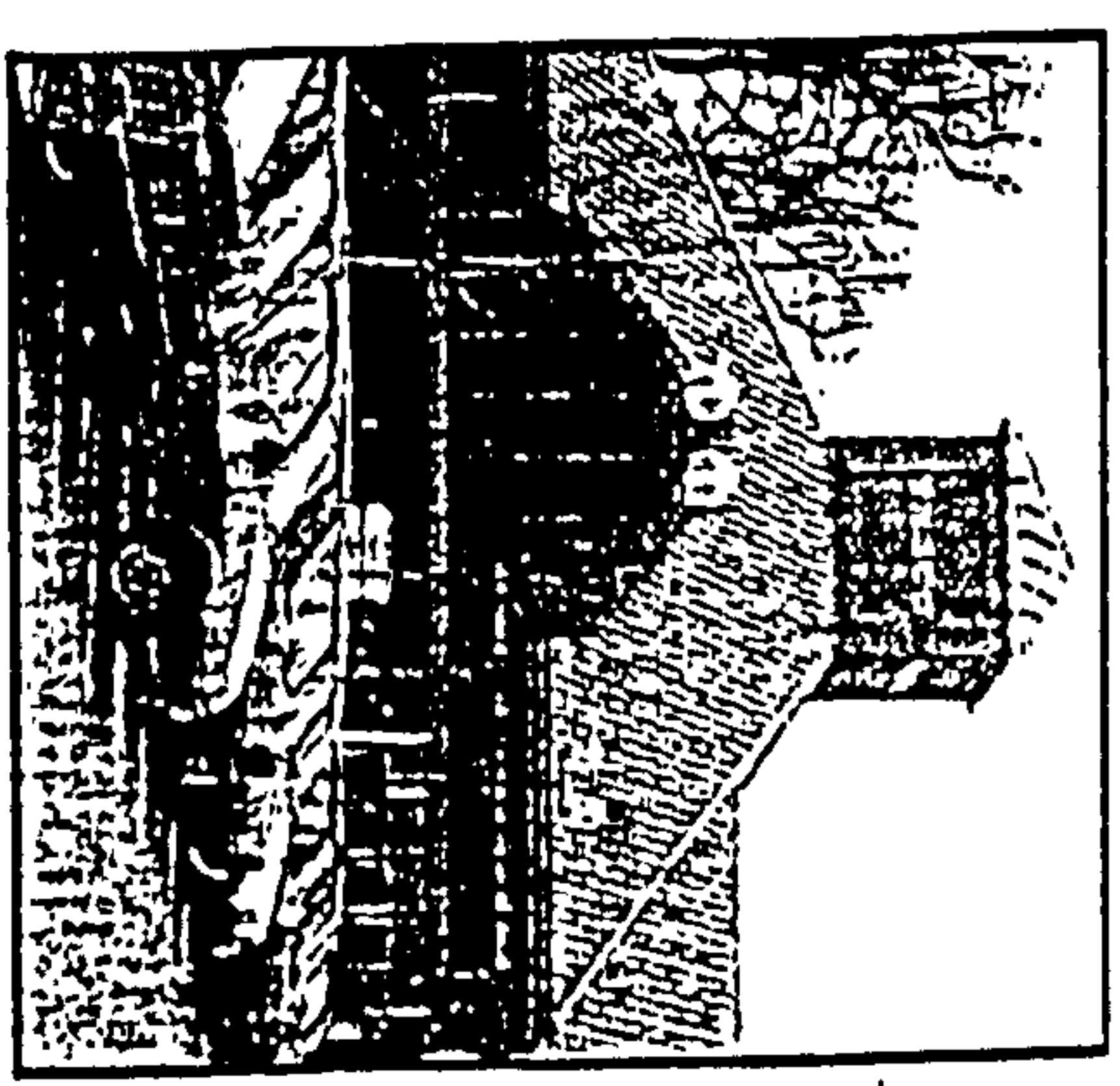
Quivering with emotion Judy said: "He has a reputation for being sincere and for having great honour."

The trial at Manchester Crown Court continues.

Crime: Shoplifters

THE SUN, Tuesday, July 2, 1991 5

TV MADDELEY 'CAUGHT' STEALING BY VIDEO'



THE SHOP

THEIR HOME

TOSO'S store in Didsbury, Manchester. The TV couple's luxury semi nearby



Wife's love

... she clutched his hand in court

It was the second time in a week the star of *ITV's This Morning* had stolen a load of booze from his local Tesco branch, it was said.

The first time a lill girl alerted a supervisor after Madeley walked off with £80 worth of wines and a packet of soap powder. Bosses decided to watch him. Six days later he was filmed trying the same stunt again, said Mr Anthony Gee, QC, prosecuting. The lawyer claimed Madeley had spotted a loophole in the store security and "took advantage of it."

He realised a check-out shelf where customers wrote cheques obscured the cashier's view of trolleys being pushed through.

Mr Gee said the jury would see a shot from the video showing Madeley putting groceries on a checkout conveyor belt, but making no attempt to pay for wines and spirits left in the trolley's front compartment.

Income

He said they would see a photograph showing Madeley with the bottles "literally under his nose" as he unloaded the other goods.

Mr Gee said: "Richard Madeley is a man of 35 years of age, a man of good character who is also a television pre-

Telly pals take over

TV reporters Ross Kelly and Gilly Bowman stood in for Madeley and wife Judy on yesterday's *This Morning* show.

The pair, who presented the programme earlier this year when Madeley and Judy went on holiday, seemed totally at ease.

There was no mention of Madeley's shoplifting trial during the 1½-hour show.

sentier with no doubt a substantial income.

"The prosecution allege that on two separate occasions within a space of one week Richard Madeley deliberately and dishonestly took a substantial quantity of wines and spirits from the store."

Madeley, who co-hosts *This Morning* with his wife Judy Finnigan, denies them.

Before the trial at Manchester Crown Court started, Judy leaned into the dock to hold his hand.

She had to leave the court when the case opened because she will be called as a defence witness.

Recorded

The jury heard Madeley was a regular customer at the Tesco branch at Parris Wood near his home in Didsbury, Manchester.

The first theft happened on Saturday, August 18, said Mr Gee.

Madeley went to a checkout with a trolley loaded with groceries and—in the front section—bottles of drink.

There were an estimated three bottles of champagne, seven or

eight of wine and a large bottle of gin.

There was also a £5 soap powder pack "hooked" on the trolley handle.

Mr Gee said Madeley put the groceries on the conveyor, but made no attempt to tell the cashier about the bottles and soap powder.

Watch

He paid £108.37 for groceries but by the time it was discovered the bottles and soap had not been paid for he had left the store.

Cashier Ann Butcher, who had been standing nearby waiting to take over, told the court she alerted her boss about the soap powder. She also noticed the bottles.

It was later found these were not recorded on the till, the jury heard.

Mr Stephen Solley QC, defending, asked her why she did not speak to Madeley.

Miss Butcher said: "I don't think I was 100 per cent sure."

When Madeley returned on August 24 a security officer was there to watch him, and video was taken.

The case continues today.

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TV MIAUCHEW hits out as he's cleared of shoplifting

THE SCO

TV host Richard Madeley was cleared of shoplifting yesterday — then walked from court to blast store bosses and police over his 11-month ordeal.

Madeley hugged and kissed wife Judy Finnigan, his co-presenter on ITV's 'This Morning' show, as he left the dock.

Last night he said: "It was an outrageous charge to bring. It is time the system was overhauled in the interests of fairness, decency and justice."

Madeley, 35, had told Manchester Crown Court he simply forgot about the wine and spirits he was accused of stealing from his local Tesco supermarket.

Flow

The case spotlighted a flaw in supermarket design: Checkout staff cannot see into customers' trolleys.

And on Page 12 today a Daily Mirror investigation reveals how the same trap awaits unwary shoppers throughout the country. Madeley said: "We

By PATRICK MURPHY

will never shop again at Tesco. The treatment I had from them was a disgrace."

The jury cleared Madeley of one charge of shoplifting, but failed to reach a verdict on the second.

Judge Michael Sachs then ordered a "not guilty" verdict and Madeley was awarded costs of the four day trial, estimated at £3,000.

Madeley never denied walking through the checkout of the store at East Didsbury, Manchester, with champagne, wine



HUG OF JOY: Cleared Richard Madeley and his TV star wife Judy after a jury ended their long ordeal yesterday. Picture: DENNIS HUSSEY

● Turn to Page 12

Humor

From Page One

and gin in the front compartment of his trolley. He told the court: "They just didn't register. It was an oversight."

Yesterday Professor James Reason, of Manchester University, who is one Europe's leading experts in human error and forgetfulness, spoke in Madeley's defence.

Tests

He told the court of the questions he put to the TV presenter - including how often he forgot the names of close friends and family or forgot to do something. The tests showed, said the professor, that only 11.5 more

absent-minded than 95 per cent of the population."

Last night Madeley revealed that he and 42-year-old Judy have received hundreds of letters of support from viewers - many of them protesting that they were wrongly accused of shoplifting.

The couple, who have an estimated joint income of £30,000 a year, may now launch a TV campaign to show the dangers for shoppers.

Madeley said: "It is a disgrace that people who are arrested leaving a store having forgotten to pay for goods should on so many occasions be accused by the stores, police and then the Crown Prosecution Service of theft." Judy said: "It has been



ORDEAL OVER: Madeley

absolutely horrible for us, but you have to put on a brave face."

Asked when they might return to the morning magazine show seen by three million daily, she added: "Probably tomorrow if Richard has anything to do with

It. But probably Monday."

The couple were planning an emotional reunion with their four children at their £30,000 home in Pidsbury.

A Tesco spokesman said it was not their policy to comment on court decisions.

But he added: "When theft is suspected it is reported to the police and if, after their own investigation, they feel it merits further action it is dealt with by the Crown Prosecution Service."

Earlier this year TV presenter Stuart Hall, 61, was cleared of stealing food worth £3.91 from his local Safeway supermarket in Wilmslow, Cheshire.

Housewives' favourite Madeley breaks down at shoplift trial

I'M JUST FORGETFUL

-4. JUL 1991

Crime
By PATRICK MULCRONE

SOBS TV'S MR GOOL

TELLY host Richard Madeley broke down in court yesterday as he begged a jury to believe he is innocent of shoplifting.

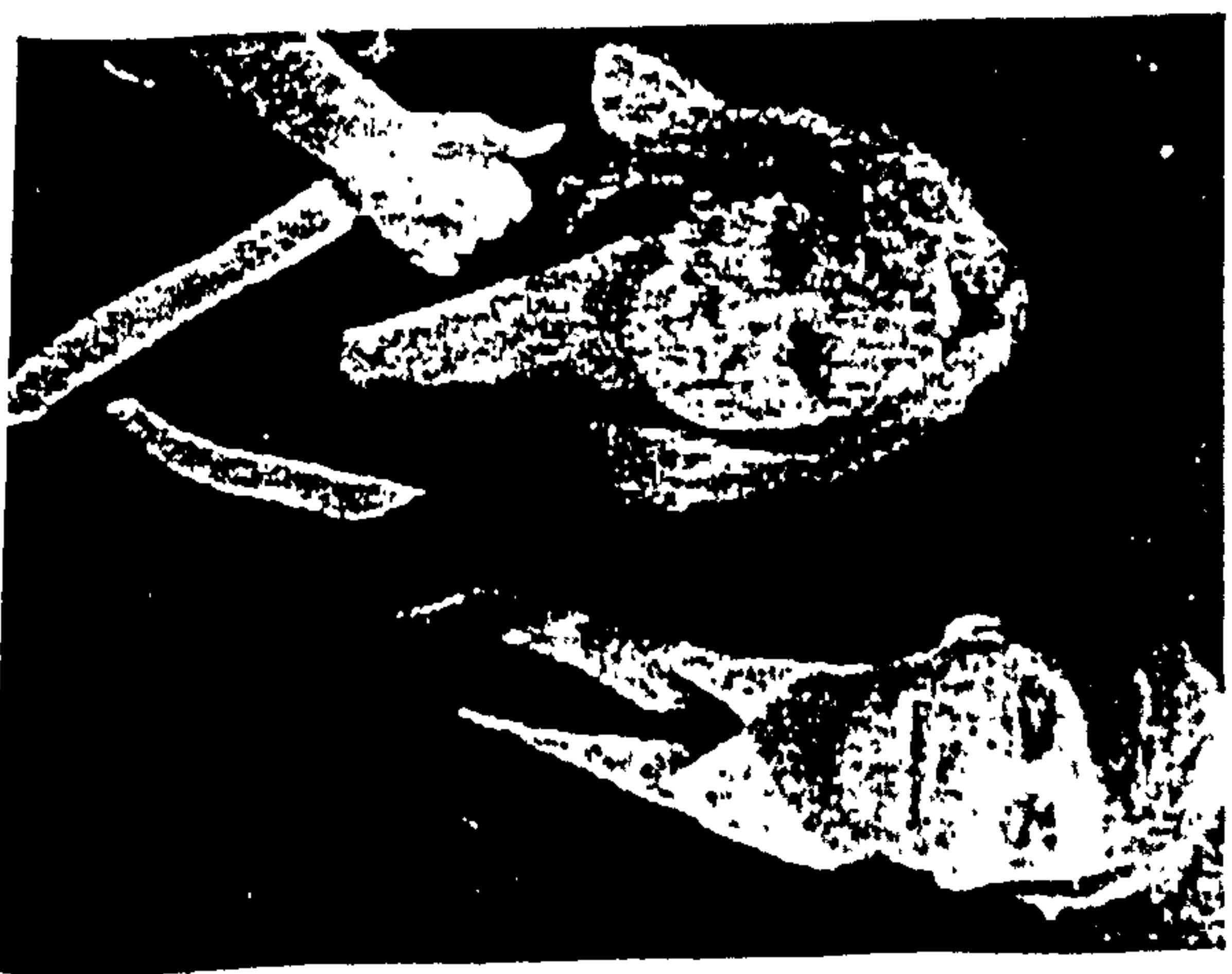
He said an expert had calculated his forgetfulness as "well above average". And blonde wife Judy Finnigan, his co-star on ITV's 'This Morning' show, told the jury: "He has forgotten it has become a family joke."

Madeley, 35, choked up as he denied covering bottles of drink worth £55 in his trolley and deliberately wheeling it through the checkout at his local Tesco's. He said: "I just didn't register...

I didn't... Then he faltered and fell silent.

He put his hand to his mouth, said "sorry" to the judge, waited a few moments to recover - then went on giving evidence at Manchester Crown Court.

Slipped



Daily Mirror
July 4, 1991

Wife Judy, 42, told the court her husband, the cool TV charmer for 10 minutes every morning, is actually an absent-minded family man.

Judy, 42, said their four children joked about it. He promises them sweets - and eight times out of ten forgets to buy them. "He is forgetful... extremely forgetful," said Judy.

The court was told the celebrity couple of Didsbury, Manchester, had £23,000 in a savings account.

But Anthony Gee, prosecuting, said: "We aren't suggesting you stole out of need, but greed."

Madeley told defending counsel Stephen Solley QC: "I had forgotten the bottles existed - there was absolutely no question of hiding them."

The jury has seen a video tape of him bending over the trolley lifting other goods out.

But he insisted: "If it had registered I would have taken them out."

The jury are expected to retire today to consider their verdict.

Television presenter cleared of theft from supermarket

Crime: shoplifting

THE TV presenter Richard Madeley was acquitted of shoplifting yesterday after a jury cleared him on one charge and failed to reach a verdict on a second.

The judge entered a not guilty verdict on the second charge after the prosecution said it would not be in the public interest to hold a retrial.

The jury at Manchester crown court took two hours 20 minutes to acquit 35-year-old Mr Madeley, host of ITV's This Morning show, of stealing wines, spirits, and a box of soap powder from a Tesco supermarket on August 18. They were unable to reach a verdict on a charge alleging he stole £55 worth of wines and spirits from the same supermarket in Parris Wood, East Didsbury, six days later.

After they had told Judge Michael Sachs there was no prospect of them reaching a majority verdict within a reasonable time the prosecutor, Anthony Gee QC, said the Crown would offer no evidence and the judge directed that a not guilty verdict be recorded. Mr Madeley, who lives at Didsbury, Manchester, was awarded costs, estimated at £40,000.

As the judge left court, Mr Madeley leaned over the dock rail to kiss his wife, the This Morning co-host Judy Finnigan, aged 42.

Mr Gee said that in deciding

not to press for a second trial the Crown had considered the nature of the charge, the character of the defendant, "and perhaps particularly whether a fair retrial ... would be possible having regard to the press coverage of this trial".

The prosecution had claimed that Mr Madeley had left nine bottles of champagne, wine, and gin in a front compartment of his trolley as he loaded £88 worth of groceries on to the checkout conveyor belt on August 24.

He wheeled the trolley out of the store after going to look at the cafeteria menu.

The presenter said it was a psychological oversight that caused him to overlook the bottles, which "simply did not register".

He said it would have been "absolute madness" for him to jeopardise his integrity and his career by stealing.

On the final day of the four-day trial a psychologist, Professor James Reason, told the court he had carried out tests that showed Mr Madeley was more absent minded than 95 per cent of the population.

Tesco said last night it had a duty to protect its property and deter and detect shoplifting. "When theft is suspected ... the only proper course of action is for the courts to decide whether the accused is guilty or not guilty, and we accept the decision."

Teachers admit theft

Soviet teachers Ellena Haxanen, aged 38, and Natalia Wolinska, 35, were given conditional discharges by York magistrates after admitting

stealing chocolate, cosmetics and clothing during a night-seeing trip.

TV presenter cleared of theft from supermarket

Crime: Shopping & S.F. 91

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Anthony Gee QC, said the Crown would offer no evidence and the judge directed that a not guilty verdict be recorded. Mr Madeley, aged 35, of Didsbury, Manchester, was awarded costs, estimated at £10,000.

As the judge left court, Mr Madeley leaned over the dock rail to kiss his wife, the *This Morning* co-host Judy Finnigan, aged 42, before falling into her arms as he left the dock.

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Richard Madeley outside Manchester crown court with his wife Judy Finnigan before yesterday's verdict

TEC 'HIT OUT AFTER THEFT OF 79p AERO'

SUN
-9. JUL. 1991

Crime: Shoplifting

By RUKI BAYID

A DETECTIVE stole a 79p Aero bar and punched and kicked two youngsters who tried to catch him, a court heard yesterday.

He was finally captured by Jonathan Mole, 22, who grappled him to the ground, and bluffed: "I am a karate black belt so why

don't you come quietly?"

Detective Constable Graham Self, an officer for 17 years, had £80 in his pocket when he walked off with the chocolate from a Woolworth's branch at Twickenham, West London.

When a store detective tried to stop him, he ran off, it was said. Woolies assistant Stuart Frost gave chase and was kicked in the shins and punched.

The desperate cop scaled a 12ft wall then trainee off-licence manager Jonathan wrestled him to the ground.

Jonathan told Kingston Crown Court: "I made a citizen's arrest." Self denies theft and assault. The case continues.

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21. AUG. 1991

Shoplifter jailed

A woman who was freed by the Court of Appeal after being jailed by former judge James Pickles for shoplifting was jailed again yesterday after she took her children on a stealing spree. **SHOPLIFTING**

Lewis crown court heard that Wendy Hull, aged 24, of Batley, West Yorkshire, had breached a probation order imposed by the appeal court. She was jailed for nine months.

Mother and girl reunited

Vida Fenton, aged two, has been reunited with her mother, Melissa Fenton, in the US after being snatched from her home in London by her father six weeks ago. The father, Bernard Downes, aged 28, now faces an extradition hearing.

Questioning on murder

A man was being questioned by detectives in London last night about the murder of prostitute Sharon Hoare, aged 19, at her flat in Fulham, west London, on August 12. The man was arrested in Bristol on Monday by officers from London.

Law change that could stem the shoppers' tears

THE trial of TV presenter Richard Madeley for alleged shoplifting raises some issues of public importance.

Home Office guidelines to the police are that if there is a 50.50 chance of conviction prosecution should go ahead. The intention is "to allow the person the right to clear his/her name by public lawing".

Richard Madeley's case must have cost the public purse about £10,000.

In this type of case, launched with a 50.50 chance of a finding of guilt, even the police, who are not exactly impartial, are only half convinced that a crime has been committed.

In court the magistrates are presented with people, all of previously good character, who admit that they have walked

chased. Each claims that "I was just a mistake... a spur-of-the-moment memory lapse". Each was under pressure, or had severe personal problems, and their thoughts had not been on what they were doing.

The question for the court is just what was in the defendant's mind at that precise moment, now perhaps several months into the past? The magistrate is forced to guess. The answer, for him, lies in body language.

In thousands of cases which have come to my knowledge, the wrong verdict can shatter a lifetime's belief in the law. And if appearance before a magistrate has been terrifying, who wants to carry on and appeal against a verdict to a judge? There is an answer. These

right to ask for a hearing before magistrates sitting in camera. This would be informal, with press and public excluded. The body language would be different. The defendant could explain better. Believe that with this change to the law, there could be a situation in which a guilty verdict did occur, most times, that an offence had been committed. And the innocent would not have their names dragged through the mud.

It is these non-criminals who change side rather than face the shame of trial and, as Portia Trust records show, there are more than 50 such deaths per year with perhaps 5,000 to 10,000 brought to tears, deep depression or breakdown. Ken Norman, Police Trial.

1691
1691

Crime:
Record damages

Shops throughout the Irish Republic were yesterday studying the implications of a court's award of a record £345,000 damages to Thomas McEntee and his son, wrongly accused of shoplifting in Dundalk, County Louth.

£8m safety move

The European Community is to spend £8 million to help improve safety at the Kozloduy nuclear power site in Bulgaria following serious deficiencies found by a team of international energy experts, *writes Julie Wolf in Brussels.*

Why steal a pie you don't want?

NOBODY in their right mind, you would think, would risk reputation and career for the price of a frozen blade or a meat pie. But a growing number of middle class people are being caught shoplifting items worth only a few pounds, and finding themselves charged with theft.

A typical case is that of Jason Hawley, a 47 year-old accountant with a wife, three children and money in the bank. In February, he stole a shaving brush and razor worth £12 from a chemist near his home in north London. He was caught, pleaded guilty to theft and was fined £75 plus costs at Wand Green magistrates' court.

Five days before the theft, Mr Hawley had been made redundant from his £60,000-a-year job with a West End firm. He was so shocked that he did not tell his wife. Each morning he set off as if going to work, but instead wandered in and out of the shops in the high street. Eventually he picked up a shaving kit and walked out without paying.

Nationally, 200,000 alleged shoplifters are reported to the police each year. One in 10 offenders dealt

Middle-class shoplifting is an apparently pointless crime,

but it is on the increase. Simon Denison investigates



fairly and shrewdly have been cautioned rather than charged. But at present the police are allowed to caution only those who admit the offence.

"We must legislate to change the rules. The police must understand the psychology of a certain type of shoplifter, who isn't a criminal," Mr Kauler says.

There are indications that the police and the Crown Prosecution Service are beginning to understand this type of offender. Ten years ago, according to Christopher Wright, a solicitor, it was more common for absent-minded or stressed shoplifters to be hauled before the courts because shops were able to conduct private prosecutions, and usually did. But since the founding of the CPS in 1986 many of these cases have been filtered out.

CPS guidelines state that if a shoplifter has no previous conviction and is unlikely to offend again, he or she may be let off with a caution -- the police at Marylebone's shoplifting unit caution a third of the shoplifters they see.

The national probation service is

Each day he set off as if for work but instead wandered round the shops. At last he picked up a razor and walked out without paying

with by the shoplifting unit at Marylebone police station, near Oxford Street in London, is middle-class

The apparent pointlessness of middle class shoplifting makes it unique among crimes, according to Christopher Wright, a partner in a north London criminal law firm, Cummins. "There is no other crime where you see large numbers of people who you wouldn't expect to be in trouble with the police, who haven't committed any other offence, and who often have no real motive," he says.

Harry Kauffer, chairman of the charity Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters, attributes the large number of middle-class shoplifters — who make up about a third of the 1,000 people a year counselled by his organisation — to the increase in white-collar redundancy, marital breakdown and high levels of stress in professional jobs.

Many middle-class shoplifters are not in their normal state of mind when they offend, Mr Kauffer says. Most of the people he sees are suffering stress from a recent trauma.

At the end of last year, Barbara Taylor, a 65-year-old partner in a firm of solicitors, stole a meal pie worth £1.80



from Marks & Spencer. Mrs Taylor was taking drugs for depression caused by caring for a husband with multiple sclerosis and the recent discovery that her daughter had an incurable brain tumour. She maintained that she had not intended to steal the pie. None the less, she was charged with theft and had to wait six months for her case to be heard.

Mrs Taylor pleaded not guilty and the court, accepting that she had no intent to steal, gave her a conditional dis-

charge. But she was brought so low by anxiety and shame that the night before her case came to court she threatened suicide.

Short-term stress is not the only explanation for middle-class shoplifting, according to Dr Neil Brener, a psychologist at Charing Cross Hospital, London. In some cases, he says, the cause is just greed; in others it is a compulsive drive, often founded where there is matrimonial unhappiness. Such people shoplift, he says, either to

communicate or to gain compensation for miserable lives at home. "Many shoplifters, middle-class or not, have no intention to steal, but walk out of the shop without paying, in a daze," Mr Kauffer says. Others steal deliberately when under severe pressure, to reassert themselves. "What nearly all middle-class shoplifters say, though, is that they have no idea what came over them."

Mr Kauffer believes that Mr Hawley and Mrs Taylor — like many other middle-class shoplifters — were treated un-

Many shoplifters have no intention to steal... Nearly all middle-class offenders say that they have no idea what came over them

running a pilot scheme to gather information about alleged offenders. The aim is to help the CPS identify those whom it is wary in the "public interest" in trying to convict.

The scheme was set up in London last year and extended to Newcastle, Oldham and Coventry in October. In London, letters are sent to everyone due to appear before three magistrates' courts accused of petty theft (mainly shoplifting), criminal damage and public order offences. Half the alleged offenders contacted so far have responded with information about their personal circumstances. The CPS has subsequently discontinued a third of the respondents' cases.

Few middle-class shoplifters offend a second time once they have been cautioned, according to the Marylebone unit. For most, the humiliation of a criminal record is enough to stop them doing it again. And a caution at least keeps names out of the papers and people out of the dock.

The names of offenders have been changed.

Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters can be contacted on 071-722 3685 or 081-958 8859.

1992

The one-boy crime wave

By Paul Stokes

Crime: Shoplifting

(Drex)

11/3/92

Confession to 3,000 thefts

boosts police clear-up rate

A 1991 shoplifter's confession to 3,000 thefts over several years has accounted for almost a quarter of the rise in his local area crime figures.

Mark Starr, 19, owner of the single-handed tinware after being sentenced to four years' youth custody for robbery and other offences.

His admissions alone were responsible for seven per cent of Gloucestershire's 57 per cent rise in crime last year compared to 1990.

Miss Hilary Allison, spokeswoman for the county's police force, said Starr's offences were committed over a period of years, but had to be included in the 1991 figures because he had confessed to them last July.

She said: "They came to light when he decided to make a clean breast of things to a prison visitor."

"It is not unusual for a criminal to admit to more offences in jail, but our offi-

cers were amazed when he admitted thousands of crimes.

Chief Home Office underlines covering confessions by counts, his crimes will be written off as self-defence.

Starr's confession to the catalogue of shoplifting offences also helped boost the clearance rate for police departments.

The number of offences reported rose to 19,775 (55 per cent) in 1991 compared to 15,814 (57 per cent) the previous year.

It means that Starr's shoplifting accounted for about half the year-uprise.

Although the 3,000 offences are classed as solved, police may not have known of them before he confessed.

A police source said 99 per cent of shoplifting was not reported unless an offender

was actually spotted in the act. Traders often become aware of theft only during stock taking and police would not always be notified.

Starr, of Underhill Road, Alston, Gloucester, was jailed in April for robbery and an escape, reckless driving, and other theft and motoring offences.

Police had not previously convicted him with any shoplifting offences.

The court heard he was on bail for a daylight robbery when he took a car and led police on a 100mph chase.

While on remand for those offences, he helped a fellow prisoner escape from Cheltenham magistrates' court by holding a police guard in a headlock.

Judge Gabriel Hutton told him: "You have been given opportunities in the past, but



Starr at the age of 14

you wasted them. The time has come for you to be punished."

Mr Albert Pacey, Chief Constable of Gloucestershire, said: "This one man's backlog of crimes has distorted the county statistics."

Jury to hear call for damages

Crime: Shoplifting

Crime Dyer Legal Correspondent

31

THE bulk of her claim for injuries sustained when she was whiplash injured in a rare example of a personal injury case to go before a jury.

Fleanor Robinson, aged 47, is claiming damages for injuries suffered when she was wrongly accused of trying to pass a counterfeit note at the Dorothy Perkins store, Wood Green, north London, in July 1983. The case, which starts today, is expected to last three days.

Since 1983, juries have been allowed to hear personal injury cases only with the court's permission, which is rarely given. Plaintiffs have a right to a jury trial in the civil courts only in cases of libel, slander, false imprisonment or malicious prosecution, or where there are allegations of fraud.

Ms Robinson's case will be heard by a jury because she is also alleging false imprisonment by the store manager. But

the bulk of her claim for injuries sustained when she was whiplash injured in a rare example of a personal injury case to go before a jury.

She claims she sustained a permanent shoulder whiplash injury now healed, in an office where she was after trying to make a withdrawal with an old style building society few days before.

Ms Robinson, 47, north London, works at the Royal National Central Bank in the incident. She lost her substantial salary when she moved to a job at a hospital, south London, which required her to work with patients.

Part of her claim is for loss of earnings because she sustained a permanent whiplash injury.

The last case to be heard by a jury was in 1965, when a man who had been injured in a work accident

Stores back on-the-spot fines for shoplifters

1.7.92
Tel

By Colln Randall

SHOPLIFTERS could face on-the-spot fines instead of prosecution under proposals aimed at cutting thefts, estimated to cost shops £2.5 billion annually.

The measure was suggested by Mr Donald Williams, Tesco's head of security, who has studied experiments in instant justice in 40 American states.

Mr Williams made his proposals, which also include banning known shoplifters from Tesco's 398 stores, at the security committee of the British Retail Consortium.

The committee identified practical difficulties of enforcement but agreed to submit the scheme for consideration by Viscount Runciman's Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

Mr Williams, a former police officer, said: "I think it is an excellent idea and puts the money back where it belongs."

A Tesco spokeswoman said: "It is a new way of trying to solve an age-old problem, one of a number of options considered by the British Retail Consortium as possible reforms of the law on shoplifting."

She could not confirm a report that fines of up to £100 might be levied for offences as trivial as stealing a bar of chocolate.

On-the-spot cash penalties would be an extension of the system of "fiscal fines" in Scotland, where certain offenders — including first-time shoplifters admitting relatively minor thefts — can

avoid court appearances by paying fixed £25 fines.

Mr Tim McGough, security executive for the British Retail Consortium, said one of the scheme's attractions was that it would offer redress to stores facing serious losses through theft.

But misgivings had been voiced by smaller retailers, especially those with branches where store detectives or management staff were not readily available.

Other chain stores reacted coolly to the idea. The Co-operative Wholesale Society, which has 700 shops and supplies about 3,000 others, said big changes in criminal and civil law might be necessary.

Sainsbury's said it did not regard such sanctions as a matter for consideration. Its shoplifting policy was designed to exercise concern for the individual, where appropriate and to involve the police "only when the situation merits it".

Mr Andrew Puddphatt, general secretary of Liberty (formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties), said he found the prospect of "warranted justice" by retailers disturbing. "Shops are there to dispense consumer goods, not justice," he said.

"My main concern is that shoplifting is a crime with fines as punishment and anyone accused of committing crime has the right to the due process of law."

The Home Office said on-the-spot fines could not be introduced without a change in the law.

Brush with the law

Case:
An antiques dealer in Edinburgh recently reported the theft of a clock. When asked whether any of his fellow traders had also suffered walk-in theft, the dealer was amazed to discover that four similar thefts from nearby shops had not been reported. *See p. 4*

One of the dealers, who had also lost a fine clock, argued that it made more sense to write it off than risk becoming involved in a trial. If called as a witness he would have to close his shop during the trial, in which case he might lose a £5,000 sale — far more than the value of the clock. So he would not press charges even if the alleged thief was caught.

This attitude does not help in the battle to defeat crime. Are the chances of prosecuting a shoplifter of antiques going to become so remote that there will be an epidemic of such thefts?

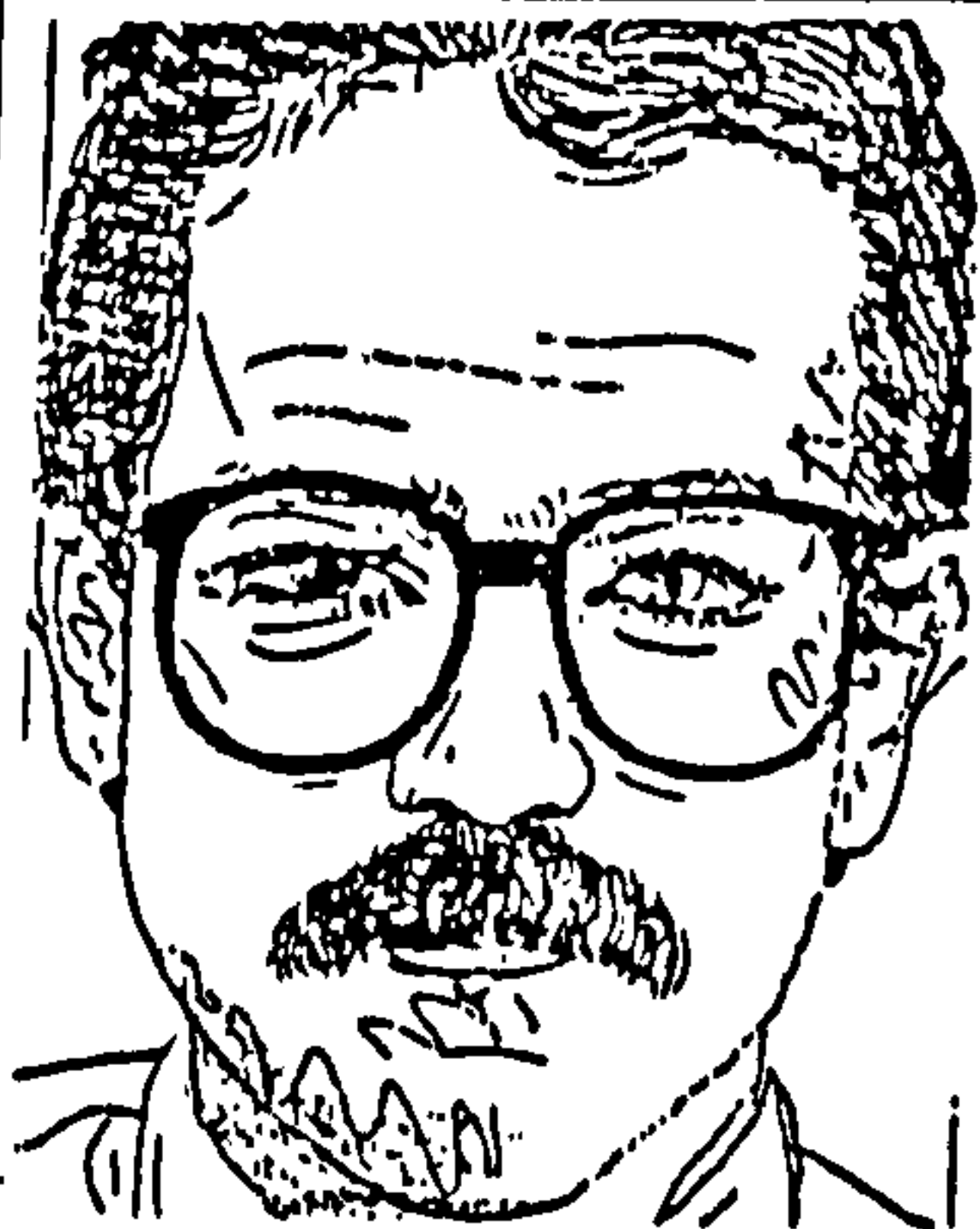
Philip Saunders

-9 APR 1972

tail shrinkage and the law of diminishing returns

CLARE: SHOP: LIFTING

Notebook



Ben Laurance

SAY IT quickly, and the total doesn't sound too daunting: "shrinkage" — the retailers' word for losses through things such as shoplifting, theft by staff and simple, straightforward breakages caused by cack-handedness — cost the British retailing industry about £1.4 billion last year.

And here's a cheery thought: the total losses through shrinkage have actually gone down over the last few years. Touche Ross Management Consultants, the people who have come up with the new estimate for losses through shrinkage, carried out a similar study in 1989 and found that losses then were running around £1.8 billion. So people — shoppers and shop staff — are pinching less. They are breaking less. They are making fewer stock-taking errors. Shrinkage has shrunk.

But look a little closer. True, £1.4 billion doesn't seem too worrying a total: after all, it's not much more than 1 per cent of retail sales. On the other hand, £1.4 billion is equivalent to £70 for every household in the country. It is money that is well worth saving.

And from the point of view of

staff, being aware of how close a check is kept on stocks feel less inclined to filch goods than was hitherto the case.

There is a second good reason why shoplifting should get a larger share of the blame for shrinkage. Theft generally has increased vastly. Look at burglary: insurers say that last year alone, their pay-outs as a result of domestic theft increased by more than 62 per cent; policy-holders claimed nearly £600 million.

Part of this was probably because householders were feeling rather broke; so if they did suffer a burglary, they were tempted to add on a few pounds here and there to their losses. Yes, they lost a telly and a video machine. But who was to know that the thieves didn't also take a transistor radio and a CD player?

Nevertheless, there is no escaping it, theft *has* increased. (Insurers' pay-outs for theft from companies rose 37 per cent last year. They reached £6 million a week.)

So it seems fair to guess that shoplifting, too is up. Recession makes us a dishonest lot.

But look again at exactly what Touche Ross is saying: "The most significant cause of shrinkage is now *perceived* by retailers to be customer theft." And bear in mind that two-thirds of retailers don't actually know how their shrinkage losses are accounted for.

Now look at a key discovery of the 1989 survey of retailers. Shopkeepers as a whole said then that they believed that staff theft and shoplifting between them accounted for three-quarters of the disappearing merchandise. They guessed (and it was only guessing) that 35 per cent of shrinkage was due to customer theft and 71 per cent was due to sticky-fingered staff. The remainder was bundled into the vague, catch-all category of "administrative error".

13. APR 1992

the retailers, it is a chunky sum to have to swallow. The cash total of losses through shrinkage may have fallen over the past three years. But retailing profits have fallen by even more: hence shrinkage is now taking a greater share of the profits. For every £100 that the retailer earns, a further £24 goes missing.

According to Touche, nearly all the retailers who responded to its inquiries could put a total value on how much was lost through shrinkage. But only a third could say with any accuracy why goods were going missing. Were losses the fault of shoplifters? Or were sticky-fingered staff to blame? Or, perhaps, goods never went walk-about at all: perhaps they were never there in the first place, and had been miscounted during stocktaking. Two-thirds of retailers did not know.

Bear this in mind, when considering the next finding of the survey. Touche Ross is quite firm: "The most significant cause of shrinkage is now perceived by retailers to be customer theft. In our 1989 survey, staff theft was perceived as the most important source of loss." This change may be a consequence of the reported increased investment by retailers in information and security systems, resulting in greater internal control of stock throughout the supply chain. These measures would have had little impact on losses due to customer theft."

Now, this needs to be examined carefully: is it really true that shoplifting is accounting for a bigger share of losses?

The point, made by Touche Ross, about information and security systems is a fair one. The clever use of computers should indeed be able to reduce the amount of stock that gets lost through simple carelessness. And perhaps it is true, too, that

but when the same question about the breakdown of shrinkage was put to those shopkeepers who took the trouble to monitor what caused shrinkage, the picture was completely different: half of all losses were caused by breakages and damaged stock; staff theft accounted for 20 per cent, shoplifting for 17 per cent and burglary for 13 per cent of total shrinkage.

In other words, retailers who *knew* why their merchandise was disappearing realised that shoplifting was only a small part of the problem. Those who were merely *guessing* pinned the blame for a large proportion of the losses on villainous hordes of thieves.

There is absolutely no reason to think that this has changed: in trying to explain shrinkage, the majority of shopkeepers get it wrong. Contrary to their common belief, most losses are caused by mistake rather than by mischief.

The latest Touche Ross study also throws some light on the types of shops which lose a lot through shrinkage and those which lose little. Booksellers, DIY shops and newsagents reckon to suffer worst.

Intriguingly, off-licences' reported losses through shrinkage are relatively low. This confounds one's prejudice that they would lose a lot because they are selling a high-value, eminently portable product which comes in containers which are easily smashed.

But more in line with one's expectations, furniture shops report a low level of shrinkage. Hardly surprising this. You just try sneaking out of a shop carrying a bed. Not easy to do without being noticed.

Retail Shrinkage and Other Stock Losses. Results of the Second UK Retail Survey. Touche Ross Management Consultants

18 April 1992

Store detective's 27.8.92 account 'differe crime: shoplifting Ind. ' from videotape'

A HARRODS store detective admitted to a jury at Southwark Crown Court yesterday that there were differences between his account of an alleged shoplifting incident and the store's own videotaped record.

Michael Ward, the store detective, denied suggestions by lawyers for John Gomez and Angela Hurst, both accused of shoplifting, that he had "selected and bagged" a bunch of asparagus which he claimed had been returned to the vegetable counter by Mrs Hurst after she realised she was under surveillance.

Mr Gomez and Mrs Hurst, both of north London, deny the theft of two boxes of liqueur chocolates and a bottle of cognac in Harrods in December last year. Mr Gomez also denies charges of assaulting two store detectives and a uniformed security guard during a scuffle.

Alan Jackson, for the prosecution, said Mrs Hurst had taken the chocolates from a display and put them in a Harrods bag while standing in a till queue. After seeing Mr Ward watching them, she had returned them to the display and then placed a bag containing a bunch of asparagus on the vegetable counter. Another detective allegedly saw Mr Gomez return a bottle of cognac to a display.

Defence lawyers argued that the store detectives were mistaken in detaining the couple but had been forced to make the allegations once they discovered that the couple had receipts for the goods in their possession; the chocolates had been returned because they had been too expensive

By Terry Kirby
Crime Correspondent

and Mr Gomez had no contact with any brandy.

The video, played in court, shows Mr Ward leaning across vegetable counter, while other staff are struggling with Mr Gomez, grabbing vegetables and placing them in a white bag.

Mr Ward initially told the court the asparagus was in the bag when returned to the counter. But as the film was shown, and under cross-examination by Nicholas Fridd, for Mr Gomez, he said it was placed separately from the bag and the film recorded putting it in the bag.

Denying that he had selected the asparagus himself, he said "I am wrong, but I am not lying." He accepted suggestions that the incident had got "out of control".

David Gibson-Lee, for Mrs Hurst, asked why the film shows two bottles of brandy being handed to Mr Ward by two other store detectives although only one bottle featured in the charge.

Mr Ward said he could not remember which bottle formed the basis of the charge. Alan Cartwright, another store detective, told court that he could not remember what he had done with the brandy after he saw Mr Gomez return it to the display.

A bottle of brandy in a Harrods bag was produced in court by the Crown, but the judge, Assistant Recorder Peter Leaver, refused to allow it as an exhibit after it was disclosed that it had no evidence tag.

CRIME: SHOPLIFTING

NEWS

DAILY EXPRESS Monday 14 September 1992 13



Customers branded shoplifters without chance to prove their innocence

Stores begin 50000

TV PRESENTERS 11 MONTHS OF HELL



SPECIAL INVESTIGATION BY PAUL CROSBIE

And they do not even get the chance to prove their innocence in court.

The stores admit that many may be unjustly accused but defend the practice as a way of countering an increase in thefts.

Police say they are powerless to intervene despite complaints from the public.

If the shops does not press charges there can be no investigation.

The scale of the practice has been uncovered by the title's consumer pro campaigner, Watchdog, which reveals that well over 50,000 people a year are being blacklisted by large chains.

After checking out indi-

vidual names, Tesco and Safeway admitted they may have been hasty in banning some people.

Watchdog presenter Lynn Faulds Wood said the practice meant stores did not have to prove cases in court.

That High Court of the British Retail Consortium, which represents most major stores, defended the right of shops to ban whoever they wanted.

"It's not a question of implying guilt," he said. "It's a question of using the facilities of the store. If shoppers are abusing that right the stores have the right to stop them entering that store."

"The last thing we want to do is ban people from

our store. The only time I would ban them is where we think we would be better off without that person in that shop."

Latest figures show shops losing £2.5 billion worth of goods a year through theft.

Legally, the public has no automatic right of entry to a store, if customers are there by invitation.

Shoplifters are charged under the Theft Act and it must be proved that the goods were being deliberately taken.

Marks and Spencer recently started issuing "hespess" notices to customers if it thinks are behaving suspiciously.

This means anyone caught stealing as a trespasser can be prosecuted for burglary, which carries more serious penalties of up to 14 years jail.

CASE OF SUE

HOUSEWIFE Sue King was stopped by two store detectives after putting a tin she didn't want back on the shelves.

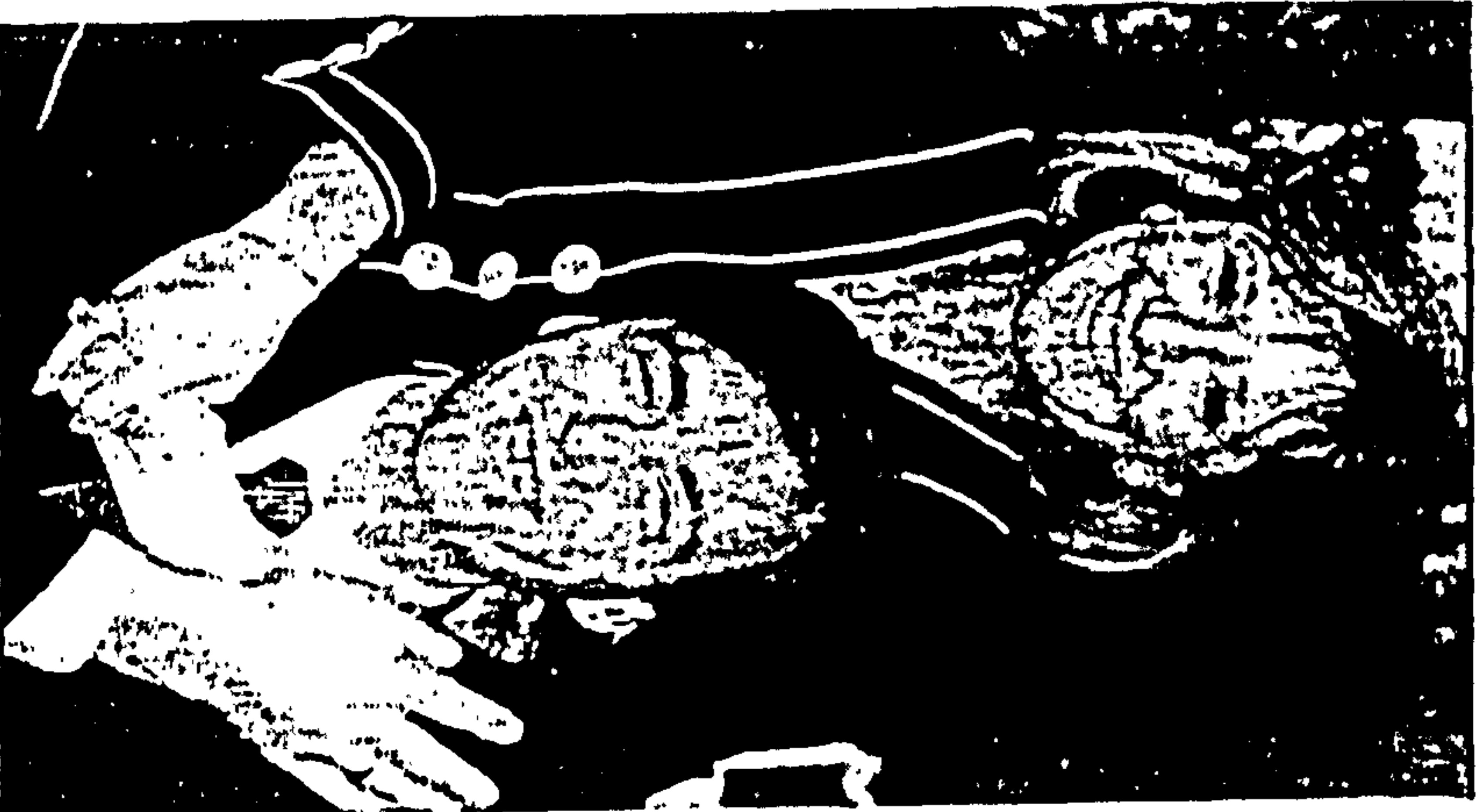
She was accused of behaving in a suspicious manner and banned by Tesco. The store later admitted: "There was an error of judgment."

But Mrs King, of Rugby, said: "I now feel paranoid about walking into a shop. I am uneasy about it."

CASE OF HAROLD

PENSIONER Harold Pearson was stopped by a Gateway store detective and accused of not paying for a bunch of bananas. Police established the fruit was bought from a local greengrocer but the shop still banned the 85 year-old.

"I was shocked and annoyed. I had never faced a charge in my life," said Mr Pearson, of Carshalton, Surrey. "I was branded a criminal."



SUFFERED: Madeley and wife Judy

TV presenter Richard Madeley suffered "eleven months of hell" after being falsely accused of shoplifting. When he was finally cleared by a court, he and his wife Judy set out to champion the cause of others wrongly accused who did not have the chance to prove their innocence.

It was a living nightmare. It was with me every morning when I wakened. Madeley, 35, said at the time. Madeley, who runs ITV's This Morning programme with Judy, said he became a figure of fun at work and the victim of a whispering campaign after he was wrongly accused of stealing £100 worth of drink from a Tesco supermarket.

BBC TV presenter Stuart Hall was also cleared in court of shoplifting. He had faced a charge of stealing sausages and coffee worth £3.91. After his ordeal Hall said the whole system of arresting people on suspicion needed an overhaul.

Madeley also called for a review and said that many innocent victims had been driven to suicide. "Statistics show that every week in the country one person commits suicide because they have been accused — not convicted — of shoplifting," he said.

Court bans shoplifter from all major stores

BY A STAFF REPORTER 4. DEC. 1992

WOMAN was yesterday ~~sent to prison~~ ~~for shoplifting~~ ~~from a department store and supermarket~~ ~~after a rash of shoplifting offences.~~ Magistrate Roy Sanderson imposed a blanket ban on Sally Sparks, 22, as a condition of bail at London's Marlborough Street court.

~~Sparks, unemployed,~~ of ~~east London,~~ had appeared in court on a shoplifting charge for the second successive day. She had several previous convictions and ~~was found to be in breach of a conditional discharge and a court order,~~ both for ~~shoplifting.~~

Yesterday, Sparks admitted stealing two T-shirts from British Home Stores in Oxford Street in October and failing to appear in court on November 17. She was kept in custody overnight after being granted bail by Thames magistrates on Wednesday on charge of stealing food from a branch of Tesco in east London, which she also admitted. Mr Sanderson remanded Sparks to appear at

Thames court on December 30 for sentence.

□ An animal-rights activist who carried out a smokebomb attack on McDonald's in High Street, Kensington, southwest London, has been barred from all the company's branches as a condition of bail after a jury at Southwark Crown Court, south London, convicted him of affray.

The assistant recorder, Timothy Workman, warned Christopher Tucker, 29, that although he was being allowed bail for the four weeks it would take to prepare pre-sentence reports, there was a real prospect of him being sent to jail.

Geoffrey Gelbart, for the prosecution, said Tucker, who has a previous conviction for a paint-spray attack on McDonald's, threw across the counter what staff first thought was a bomb. An Iraqi politician's son who worked part-time in the restaurant snatched the smoking device and hurled it into the street. Staff then chased and caught Tucker.

Children 'still being held in custody'

14 DEC 1992

COURT JUSTICE

David Rowan

CHILDREN as young as 13 may be spending time in "the suicide-inducing conditions of prisons and remand centres," according to a report published today.

By law, untried girls aged under 17 cannot be remanded in custody, and boys can be held only if they are 15 or over.

Yet in the six months to October, six young people thought to be under 15 — five of them in Greater London — were remanded in custody without a trial, says the report, published jointly by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the Association of Chief Officers of Probation.

Two were girls believed to be aged 14, remanded by Marlborough Street magistrates to Holloway Prison for a week each in June.

The girls, said by probation staff to be ~~black~~ ~~British~~, had been accused of shoplifting in London. They initially told the

court they were 17, but once they realised that this meant they could be held in custody they gave their true ages.

Probation officers said the matter of their ages had been debated in court, but the girls had nonetheless been remanded, even though birth certificates had been made available to magistrates.

In another court in the London region a boy thought to be aged 13 was remanded in custody, again even though his date of birth had been contested.

The cases emerged in a six-month survey of juveniles in England and Wales remanded while awaiting trial. According to Nacro, the unlawful remands mostly resulted from court disputes about ages.

Vivien Stern, Nacro's director, said yesterday that even a few days in custody with adults can have a devastating effect on a young person. "Bullying and intimidation are often rife."

Awaiting Trial, Interim Report: Survey of Juveniles remanded to custody, April 1992. March 1993. Acopi/Nacro.

Boys questioned on torture claim

Crime: Police are questioning two 13-year-old boys in Leeds about the alleged torturing of an eight-year-old who refused to join a shoplifting foray. The younger boy is now in St James's hospital. 13.12.92.

1993

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AAA

DAILY EXP

XPR

Crime: Shoplifting

NEWS

Woman let off with warning over £60,000 wall-to-wall haul

17-year shoplift spree by Grabber Granmy



HATS GALORE: A policeman guards some of the stolen goods yesterday

Widow's hoard piled to ceiling

CAUSE: SHIP-LIFTERS

By Judith Keeling

21 JAN 1993

A 79-YEAR-OLD widow hoarded 6,941 items worth £60,000 during a 17-year shopping spree.

Every room apart from the kitchen in her three-bedroom detached house in Southend-on-Sea, Essex, was crammed from floor to ceiling with stolen goods.

It took seven police officers more than 12 hours to load the haul into six vans and 12 special constables were drafted in to help with the inventory.

She had stolen:

111,370 scarves, 813 jumpers, 799 blouses, 711 dresses and skirts, 678 items of underwear, 448 pairs of shoes, 421 pairs of earrings, 418 hats, 391 coats and jackets, 368 pairs of tights and stockings, 332 necklaces, 274 items of bedding, 236 pairs of gloves, 203 belts, 169 handbags, 153 gift sets, 112 bracelets, 47 suitcases, 45 towels, 33 brooches, 32 sets of curtains, 27 purses and wallets, 25 umbrellas, 20 carpets and rugs, 10 wigs, 10 tablecloths, 10 balls of wool, eight pairs of trousers, eight fur coats, four bath sets, three rotary clothes lines, two sets of nylon seat covers, two lampshades, a fire extinguisher and a child's wheelchair.

The property, still in its original packaging plus price tags, took up the best part of a bedroom and a police

found she had more than 20 items of clothing she had not paid for. He said: "In 17 years, I have never seen anything like her house. We could not get through the front door because of all the stuff piled up in the hall.

"Her family visited her regularly but they had no idea.

They were as shocked as we were when they saw the property. She always made visitors use the back door and never let anyone go any further than the kitchen so no one knew what she was up to.

"She was a pensioner when she started shoplifting and no one ever suspected her because of her age. A lot of the items she could never really use although the clothing was all her size but had never been worn.

"She is an eminently respectable woman and had never been in trouble before. She is a grey-haired little old lady — everybody's idea of a typical granny.

"She has been cautioned but none of the stores wants to press charges — in fact many of them have gone out of business. We have left the matter in the hands of relatives. It is likely they will seek medical help and try to get her moved into a warden controlled flat."

A police spokesman said: "I think she has a medical problem caused through loneliness." Local shopkeepers have agreed that the property

A GRIM VINCI granny embarked on an amazing 17 year shopping spree after her husband died.

When police eventually raided her home, they found hoards neatly stacked wall to wall, floor to ceiling.

It took seven police men and six Transit vans to remove it all — and 15 special constables spent the whole night listing the stolen items.

Yet, remarkably, the sprightly 79-year-old silver-haired lady will face NO charges.

Police decided to let her off with a stern warning.

She had looted shops and stores of thousands of items ranging from fur coats and jewellery to table-lamps.

Dubbed by police as the "Granny Criminal", she was finally caught as she tried to leave a department store in Southend, Essex, with another 21 stolen articles.

Officers then found the astonishing cache of stolen goods crammed into her three-bedroomed detached home in an upmarket part of the seaside town.

The goods, still in their original bags and wrapped, were piled from the floor to the ceiling in every room except the kitchen.

The haul included 17 suitcases, 148 pairs of shoes, 118 hats, 201 belts, 210 pairs of gloves, 811 jumpers, 103 handbags, 391 coats and jackets, 711 scarves, and

BY ROBERT MCGOWAN

10 wigs, 312 necklaces, 44 brooches, 112 handbags, 121 pairs of earrings, 153 gift sets and 25 umbrellas.

There were dozens of towels, quilts, bedding, sheets, table-linens, bath sets, carpets and rugs — and even a six foot tall clothes drier, a fire extinguisher and a wheelchair.

He Dave Clark said: "The police station looked like a Bosnian relief centre when all the stuff was assembled.

"It almost filled our gymnasium.

Wrapped

"Luckily it was all still neatly wrapped in its original packaging otherwise we would have needed an aircraft hangar.

"The old lady told us she had been collecting things since her husband died 17 years ago.

"She didn't mean any harm but she just couldn't help herself.

"She was obviously a bit lonely but like many elderly ladies prized her independence.

"She has a family who visited her regularly but she always insisted on seeing visitors in the kitchen — the one room that wasn't stacked up.

Police have valued the pensioner's hoard, which will be given to the Salvation Army for distribution to third world charities, at around £60,000.

Mr Clark added: "In view of her age and her special circumstances she has been cautioned but will not have to

Hub McAlister, armed with his pager in Covent Garden. He is co-ordinating the Business Watch anti theft scheme

of the silver-lined professional shoplifters

Police have picked on a hi-tech system to beat the pilferers. Duncan Campbell reports

PROFESSIONAL shoplifters are changing their tactics to beat increasingly sophisticated security systems.

They are using carrier-bags lined with silver foil to beat electronic security and organising cars to pick up their loot on the hour, every hour.

Teams of shoplifters have been focusing on Covent Garden in central London because stores there are open

the West End is closed on Sunday.

The presence of a large number of prestige clothes shops selling expensive designer items has also attracted teams that steal to order, selecting the size and colour of an item requested by clients, even returning to steal again if the colour is wrong.

PC Hub McAlister of Charging Cross police station, who co-ordinates an anti-shoplift

arrangement to meet a car at a given point on the hour and the half hour.

"The shoplifters will unload everything they have stolen into the car and go back to work. If they fail to make a rendezvous, the car drives off so the shoplifter will only be charged with what they have taken in the previous half hour.

"The major teams make an awful lot of money, at least £300 a day (for each team member). They select only very high value goods. There are lots of 'shop-to-order' thieves who go for silk goods,

One recent development has been the use of silver foil inside carrier bags or suitcases, which prevents security tags on stolen goods triggering alarms.

One group of two men and two women, one of them sometimes with a pushchair, works as a team, with three of the adults distracting shopkeepers' attention and if necessary blocking any pursuit, while the fourth carries out the theft.

To counter the thieves, a Business Watch paging scheme has been launched. Stores tap in details of sus-

pect to catch the shoplifters red-handed.

More than 80 people have been arrested by the squad since the paging system was introduced earlier this year.

The police team also concentrates on credit card thieves who aim to use stolen cards within half an hour of the theft, before the card company has been alerted to the theft.

The thief will pop into a public toilet, practise the signature for a minute or two and then seek to cash money at bureau de change as speedily as possible.

Thai jail ordeal 'is warning to others'

Crime: Shoplifting 29/7/93

Louise Jury

PATRICIA CAHILL said yesterday that her three-year imprisonment in a Thai jail for heroin smuggling should act as a deterrent to others.

Ms Cahill, aged 20, told BRMB radio in her home city, Birmingham, that she was pleased the King of Thailand had pardoned her and given her a second chance by showing mercy.

She had been stupid to get involved in carrying the drugs. "It wasn't until I was sentenced and went to the women's prison that I realised 'this is for real'."

"I got 18 years and nine months, and the people who are really to blame for it are outside probably recruiting someone else to do a similar journey," she said.

"It really is not worth it." Ms Cahill dismissed reports that she and fellow captive Karyn Smith, aged 21, fell out in prison. "I was overjoyed to be with someone I could relate with. We would give each other hugs. I have never blamed her for anything, and I would not believe that she would blame me for anything."

Despite huge press interest in their story, she said that she wanted no money, but sought to highlight the plight of other prisoners abroad and deter

asked for any money. I am just so happy to be back home with my family. I have lived for so long without maternal possessions I don't need them."

Ms Cahill said she had found her identity in prison. "I went in as a child and have come out as a woman... Now I look back and think, 'how could I be so stupid?' I now have an appreciation of life."

Deprived in prison of everything she thought was life — "drink, men, nightclubs, cigarettes, everything that made me feel good" — she had turned to food and became overweight. "I was a ten-ton Tess. I broke out in spots. I was fat. All the emotional trauma made it worse."

She had slept in a room with 126 other women, with just enough space to lie down on a mat on the floor. Sewing and literature were her pastimes.

"My books were my stimulation and my way of escaping while I was in prison," she said. "Since I have been in prison I have developed an appreciation for the better stuff, Jane Austen, George Eliot."

Back in Britain, she was having difficulty adjusting to a bed. "Mum thinks I have already got up in the morning because my bed is empty, and then she sees me asleep lying on the floor next to the bed."

● A shoplifting charge dating from 1990 against Ms Smith and Ms Cahill has been dropped. West Midlands police said

16/9/93

Crime: Shoplifting

D. Mail

Daily Mail, T1

Boy killed by thief

Teenage supermarket worker dies as he tackles shoplifter

He fell to the ground and the man fled. Onlookers rushed to help the youth outside the Somerfield store in Plymouth and he was taken by ambulance to hospital. He died two hours later.

Bystanders and shoppers tried to

resuscitate him,' said an ambulance spokesman. 'Four paramedics and a doctor also tried to revive him until he reached the casualty department.'

The teenager is thought to have died from internal injuries or cardiac problems. One ambulance man said: 'It

makes you wonder if it's ever worth having a go as this lad did.'

Chris Wigdon, duty manager at Derriford Hospital, said no weapon appeared to have been used in the assault. 'He seems to have been punched, perhaps several times.'

The supermarket — part of the Gateway chain — is in the Broadway shopping complex at Plymstock, a Plymouth suburb, and is 200 yards from a police station. The centre was largely deserted when the attack happened at 6.30pm, but Somerfield stays open until 8pm. Late last night, the teenager's name had not been released.

News in brief *Crime: Shoplifting* Teenager kicked to death after chasing suspected shoplifter

A YOUTH died after he was punched and kicked for 10 minutes by a suspected shoplifter he had chased from a supermarket, police said yesterday.

After the attacker fled, bystanders gave first aid to Jonathan Roberts, aged 17, who was working as a part-time trolley-boy at the store.

Ambulance paramedics gave emergency treatment at the scene, but Jonathan died in hospital from his injuries.

Jonathan, a student at Lipson College in Plymouth, was "trying to have a go to stop a person who he believed to be involved in crime," Detective Chief Superintendent Malcolm Corp

said yesterday. He added: "It's a sad state of affairs that a type of thing happens in this country. He was an innocent boy doing part-time work."

A 24-year-old man is being questioned by detectives in connection with the incident.

Jonathan was attacked on Wednesday evening after he and another youngster pursued a suspected shoplifter from the Somerfield supermarket at the Broadway shopping centre in Plymstock, Devon. He confronted the man in a car park 200 yards from the shop.

Jonathan had worked at the store for 18 months.

The results of a post mortem will be known today.

1994

Megan has no shame. To her, shoplifting's just a job

Crime:

By LISA SEWARDS

SHE WANTS to go back to work but the job that Megan Thomas is seeking is not of the usual anti-social. She is a full-time shoplifter, a woman who steals not out of some sad compulsion, but for hard pocket money. She now, after appearing in the face in a television documentary, Megan looks the contented and carefree young woman who is the country's most infamous shoplifter.

STEARLING IN STYLE: Megan employed a driver on some shoplifting sprees



TARGET: Marks & Spencer is her favourite store



Boys questioned on torture claim

26.2.81

Two boys are questioned on the alleged torturing of an eight-year-old who refused to name a shoplifting gang in a hospital, told police by a younger boy, now in St James's hospital, told police he was naked, bitten and burnt with cigarettes before an attempt

by: jph: s: 20000

Daily Express
6/12/94

Her use involves putting up bills at a department store owned by her partner, Mrs. Marks & Spencer, and making up bills to the public, pulling off the billions and ways being the side-line of her demanding a credit refusal from customer servers.

"Everyone is entitled to their money back for faulty goods. The more you act in some cases the easier it is."

"But if there's a problem, you get annoyed because you say you've had to come back to the shop," she tells. "I haven't's hard-hitting, cutting edge documentary on Friday at 5pm, in a repeat of the programme shown on Monday."

Megan's typical patter is: "I bought this a few weeks ago but had my handbag stolen so I haven't got a receipt. I've worn it six or seven times and look, it's coming to pieces. I'm disgusted with the quality and I want my money back."

MEGAN can even quote the Sale of Goods Act 1979 which states that cash must be refunded for goods of poor quality. "Most of them are obliging because at the end of the day they've got to give you your money back."

"You can tell by a shop assistant's body language if they're going to get difficult then I start to kick up a stink."

"I even tell them to call in the police because I'm in the right. I beat the system. I'm not nervous. I just take. The quicker you take the better you are. And I know what I'm going to say if I get taken to the police station."

Megan was released from Holloway Prison last week after a three-and-a-

Smartly-dressed swindler 'earns' £1,200 a day in High-Street raids

half year prison sentence not for shoplifting but for offences relating to cheque card fraud picked up by fingerprints.

Her major shoplifting spree took place between 1989 and 1990 when she would make up to £1,200 on a good day, and £500 on a bad one.

She absconded from Holloway for five months last summer and went back to the department store sprees — or "work" as she prefers to call it.

Now Megan, a qualified hairdresser, is trying hard to go straight, and has not shoplifted since she left prison.

But she confesses: "I will always steal from the big department stores and I will never stop. Going back to work to me is going shopping."

"It's my way of life. I do what I'm good at and this is what I'm good at."

Megan would "work" from 8am to 8pm, and sometimes do a shift foray into a motorway service centre if she was on a high.

"I can travel as far as York to London and sometimes 700 miles a day. I used to employ a driver. He would always watch my back when I came out of a shop."

"He earned £150 a day off me, plus I used to get him nice suits worth

around £200 each and that's for his wife and kids. We used to go for weekend runs and overnight runs and would even go for a meal with a bottle of wine. I used to go every day except Sundays when I'd give it a rest."

Megan is confident in her cunning to beat the law. As she doesn't always take stolen goods out of the shop, her risk is down to being spotted damaging the goods, which she does walking around or in the changing rooms where there are no closed circuit cameras.

She knows the layouts of most department stores throughout Britain. In the cubicle she will, for example, put dirty tissues and sweet wrappers in the pockets, and take off the electronic tag with a detacher she bought for £15.

"I always go for expensive items around the £100 mark. I make a lot of money from shoplifting and I always get the full amount back. M&S are generous and are always as good as gold handing the money back. I tell them the standards of their goods have dropped."

"I avoid the cameras and can spot a store detective a mile off. I am just what retail stores want to see. I'm well-dressed, well-spoken and blend

into a crowd. I love Marks & Spencer but I don't think they're too keen on me."

Megan plans her trips carefully, wearing blonde and brunette wig, smart clothes, ages her face and cultivates different accents.

She takes out a map, chooses five or six towns then telephones directory inquiries to see if they have Marks & Spencer, a M&S and Fry's.

"I will pick one town in a 200-mile radius and do about four shops in each town. I won't go back until a month later. Some days I'll have so much stuff in the car there's hardly room for me."

Marks & Spencer spent £20 million on better security in 1992 but lost £30 million to thieves.

IT ADMITS it is powerless to stop Britain's most famous shoplifter. "This woman knows the law and we can't stop her unless we see her doing it," said a spokesman.

"We can't arrest her under suspicion of shoplifting, that would be terribly unfair."

"Our policy is designed for the vast majority of our customers who are honest and we can't change this for the minority of the abusers."

"It is galling for all our honest customers and annoying for us. But there's nothing we can do until we have proof."

"Obviously, now she has been on the programme we will be watching for her and our staff will be very aware."

Harry Hyman, head of corporate affairs at M&S, insists: "She is not the genius she thinks she is. We will be vigilant and do our best to deter her and other would-be thieves."

GI will always steal from department stores.

Megan would like to do what Linwood does

Lenient sentence on thief who killed youth to go unchallenged

THE Attorney-General has decided not to ask the Court of Appeal to increase the five-year sentence imposed on shoplifter Andrew Bray for the manslaughter of schoolboy Jonathan Roberts, writes *Clare Dyer*.

The case provoked an outcry last month when Mr Justice Drake said appeal court guidelines prevented him from imposing the tougher sentence he thought the killing deserved.

Jonathan, aged 17, a part-time supermarket assistant, tackled Mr Bray in the car park of the store at Plymstock, near Plymouth, to try to stop the 25-year-old former soldier from

leaving with £120 worth of stolen shopping. When Mr Bray punched him, he fell and choked on his own vomit.

Kevin McGinty, a spokesman for the Attorney-General, Sir Nicholas Lyell, said yesterday the appeal court had ruled that a sentence could be held unduly lenient and increased only if it was outside the range a judge could reasonably consider appropriate. The Attorney-General was unable to say that Mr Bray's sentence fell outside the range.

The sentence was passed on the basis that Mr Bray had not intended Jonathan "really serious injury".

Bodies sought in second field

An inquest into the deaths of nine women whose bodies were found in a Gloucester ho opens today as police search a field at Stonehouse Copp near the city for more bodies. A 10th body was discovered in a field at Much Marcle, Bull. Frederick West, 52, has been charged with the murder of nine women.

Bland case fails

Consultant physician J Howe, who withdrew food and drugs from Hillsborough dis

Police chief's pension plea fails

Wyn Jones, the Metropolitan Police assistant commissioner who quit amid allegations of misconduct, failed at Knightsbridge crown court yesterday to have his £50,000 a year pension paid 10 years early.

Hot pursuit

Leicestershire Chief Constable Keith Povey, 51, was banned for driving for seven days yesterday by Loughborough magistrates after admitting driving at 80mph in a 50mph roadworks area on the M1. He was caught by one of his own officers.

Baby left in escape

An 11-month-old boy was in care last night after a woman.

Crime
Shoplifter fined £2,000
A shoplifter was fined £2,000 yesterday after a magistrate demanded to see her passport and discovered she had travelled 20.4.94

Crime
the world Club Class
Sabharwal on holiday from India, tried to steal £219 of clothes from a London store, Marlborough Street court heard yesterday. She had done a

Crime
Manslaughter term stays
The Attorney-General has decided not to ask the Court of Appeal to increase the five-year sentence imposed on shoplifter Andrew Bray for the manslaughter of Plymouth supermarket assistant Jonathan Roberts, 17.

Thief advised to stand for Parliament

Crime: Shoplifting
A MAN who stole two violent videos in a crusade to save lives was yesterday advised by a judge to stand for Parliament. David White, who had previous convictions for ideologically motivated theft, was told that being an MP was better than breaking the law.

"At least you will be able to air your views where there will

be a proper debate." Judge Robin Laune told him at Southwark crown court after he was convicted of shoplifting.

The 49-year-old decorator from Catford, south London, was seen leaving an HMV store last December with Basic Instinct and Henry Portrait of a Serial Killer under his jacket. Sentencing was deferred.

A new scheme doesn't prosecute first-time shoplifters — it makes them apologise

Sorry often is the hardest word

Law enforcement

Laurence Pollock

SERGEANT Laurie Yearly cuts a traditional figure as he moves sedately between the pushchairs and potted plants in Milton Keynes shopping centre. From helmet to boots, he could be straight from Dixon's Dock Green. But Sgt Yearly is key to a bold, original experiment in dealing with shoplifters. Dixon's electrical store is his natural habitat.

Shop theft costs retailers in the half-mile mall £12 million a year. The time and resources spent in detection by Milton Keynes police equals £250,000. Yet the recovery of property is a paltry £130,000.

The paperwork in dealing with one offender, however trivial, takes up to five hours under the present system. Not all cases were forwarded for prosecution, while those that reached it nearly always resulted in a conditional or absolute discharge.

Now the city's senior officer, Chief Superintendent Caroline Nicholl, has given the go-ahead for a pilot "retail theft initiative". All first-time offenders except professional teams and those using violence will be given a

"caution-plus". Assuming the offence is admitted, Sgt Yearly or one of his team will spend 20 minutes taking details about the offender, who will then be bailed to come to the police station a couple of weeks later.

Extensive background information will be gathered and a diversion programme proposed. Offenders will be asked to confront their actions — perhaps through a meeting with a shop manager or preparing an apology. The police want to challenge the concept of victimless crime against commercial property.

But agencies such as social services, youth service or education could be brought in if other factors are behind the infringement. Previously, there was little follow-up after a caution. There will now be a build-up of information about the cause of crime among first-time and minor offenders and a more extensive pro-



Moving away from tradition...

gramme for dealing with them. The desired benefits will include a release of police time to concentrate on more serious theft.

Caroline Nicholl insists shop theft is not being "decriminalised". "We are simply taking it out of the criminal justice system. We have the option at any time to proceed towards prosecution."

Ms Nicholl is a tough police officer, a veteran of drug and vice work with the Met. But she has a near evangelical belief in crime prevention and intervention to handle law-breaking.

"I'm not conducting a soft option. What we have here will be tougher than anything the current system offers. Many people find it difficult to talk about their offending and to acknowledge there is a problem."

One of the youngest divisional commanders nationally, in her late 30s, she has brought a new broom to the Milton Keynes division of the

Thames Valley force. An experiment in sector policing has broken down the territory into local areas which inspectors tailor their methods to meet local needs. A performance review unit monitors effectiveness.

"When I first came here [three years ago] and argued that law enforcement was not the be all and end all, there was tremendous resistance," she says. That atmosphere has now changed.

The local retailers' association backs the project but Ms Nicholl is clear that if it shows flaws, there is willingness to abandon or rethink. She wants to proceed cautiously.

The long-term goal, though, is to avoid "the sausage machine" approach — putting people through a system to notch up good performance indicators but altering very little on the ground.

"After doing a raid in the Met I could feel good about putting half a dozen drug pushers in the pokey," she said. "But the following day there were another six on the street. Nothing was changing."

The desire to change deeply set patterns seems at the heart of this move away from traditional law enforcement. It risks being labelled as gooding liberalism, but if it works, will release more police to chase serious criminals — just what the traditionalists are calling for.

10 per cent of home insurance claims fraudulent, study says

C.A.M.E.: Shoplifters 21.9.84

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

AT LEAST one in 10 people fiddle their home insurance claims, according to a study published today. The research also shows that robbers are motivated more by a desire for excitement than for money to buy drugs, that shoplifting is often a family business and that some ram-raids are inspired by media coverage.

The study, entitled Crime At Work, is based on research carried out at Leicester University's Centre for the Study of Public Order. It looked at 14 categories including insurance frauds, commercial burglary, armed robbery and defrauding hotels. Perpetrators and victims were interviewed and while clearly not all tell the whole truth, many of the results are surprising.

Armed robbery. The most common motivation was a need for money (80 per cent), followed by unemployment (42 per cent). But excitement (36 per cent) was a greater motivator than drugs (29 per cent), which are seen at present as an important factor. More than 80 per cent of the robbers interviewed had received their first convictions by the time they were 21.

Sixty two per cent of robbers felt the risk of being caught on a bank raid was very low, with 17 per cent saying they did not even think about the risk. Asked what they were thinking about during robberies, one said: "Extreme paranoia. I thought the manager knew it wasn't a real gun." Another said he felt as though "I'm not really doing this, it's too easy. I felt unreal." But a third said: "To be perfectly honest, I was shutting myself."

Commercial burglary. Asked about their favourite targets, some burglars nominated

superstores on the outskirts of towns between 11pm and midnight on Friday and Saturday nights, because the police would be busy dealing with drunks in the town centre.

Only 19 per cent were deterred by burglar alarms, but security guards scared off 67 per cent. Burglars suggested that the ideal duration for a raid was three to five minutes, although in practice they tended to take 10 to 20 minutes.

Ram raiding. Although the study points out that ram raids have been happening since the 1930s, it suggests that media coverage has contributed to the recent wave. "All the stuff in the papers and on the news...

The extent of frauds is confirmed by another study, published yesterday, which suggests that 40 per cent of travel insurance claims are inflated and up to 20 per cent could be entirely bogus. Home & Overseas Insurance says that fraudulent travel insurance claims cost £50 million a year.

One woman claimed for the loss of sight in her left eye on five separate occasions, ranging from a swimmer landing on top of her in a pool to a street attack in Tehran. She received £100,000 but was caught and jailed for nine months.

Fiddling in hotels. Fraud by bar staff was seen as endemic. Methods included "bar padding," when staff sell their own liquor instead of the company's, and "under ringing", when the right amount is charged but a lesser amount rung up on the till.

The study suggests: "Within certain perimeters, allowing employees to fiddle might actually be of potential benefit to both business and staff. Employers would not need to pay high wages... and employees benefit from a more challenging role."

Crime at Work studies in security and crime prevention, edited by Martin Gill. Perpetuity Press, PO Box 376, Leicester LE2 3ZZ. £25 plus £3.95 p&p

'Allowing employees to fiddle might be of benefit to the business'

I thought it seemed a good thing to do," said one offender. Another said excitement was not a factor, but ram raiding was an easy way of obtaining money. Areas which do not want shutters on shops or bollards in the street for environmental reasons are becoming more vulnerable, the study says. In one police area containing old market towns, 33 per cent of all commercial burglaries were ram raids.

Shoplifting. "Career" shoplifters who stole to order said that they took goods every day. One woman said that she shoplifted because she had been taught the tricks of the trade by her mother, who had been brought in by her grandmother.

Insurance fraud. One in 10 people could be classified as having committed fraud in their last home insurance

Wardle gen.

When John Major declared war on our yob culture, it's unlikely he had women in mind. But with violent crimes by girl gangs in the States and the increase, yob woman is looming large on the streets of Britain

Deadlier than the male

Anita Chaudhuri

SATURDAY AFTERNOON on the Bakerloo line. I am indulging in my fantasy of choice, that the makers of Star Trek are going to choose me to be first lady of the Starship Voyager now Genevieve Rujold has decided to drop out...

Suddenly the girl sitting opposite leaned towards me, her face contorted into a hideous grimace. "Fuck off, bitch," she snarled. I was on the verge of hitting back at this unprovoked insult with a suitably witty riposte when I noticed her three companions, all aged around 16 and dressed in thigh-length black socks, mini skirts and over-sized baseball jackets. Two of them were built like heavyweight champions, and in an instant they changed seats to sit on either side of me. I thought about getting off the train, but then reasoned that this was ridiculous. These were only GIRLS, after all.

I yawned, affecting a bored pose. "Bored, are we?" snapped the one on my left, and to remedy the situation made a snatch at my Walkman. Unwisely, I clung to it until we pulled into the next station, the gadget still in my possession but the headphones in need of repair. I was not afraid, I was terrified.

"But they were only girls," male friends mocked, for they were yet to meet this new phenomenon, the yob woman. Women, on the other hand, admitted that they had met yob women or offered tales of friends and colleagues who had been mugged, taunted or intimidated by young women in pubs, on Tube trains, on the rampage.

When John Major declared war on our so-called yob culture, he condemned loutishness, vandalism and crime. "Just because you are poor, you are not likely to become a criminal. And just because you are rich, doesn't mean you will lead a life of virtue." He forgot to add: "Just because you are a woman, doesn't mean you can't be terrifyingly violent."

Suddenly yob woman is everywhere, spanning the whole lout spectrum, from Birds of a Feather to cartoon-yobs Tank Girl and the Bitch, to sporting yobs such as Tonya Harding and cruel, violent yobs like the two females who received life sentences for their part in the torture and murder of Suzanne Capper nine months ago. Meanwhile, the rise of girl gangs in America has reached such epic proportions that gangs have their own magazine, Teen Angels, and a Hollywood film about LA gang women, Mi Vida Loca, by director Allison Anders, is soon to be released.

Home Office statistics show that crimes of violence among women are rising. Between 1982 and 1992, there was a 73 per cent increase in

the number of women found guilty of violent crimes. Last month, South London police appealed for witnesses to a horrific attack on a 14-year-old girl. She was allegedly set upon by three girls aged between 11 and 14, stripped, beaten, her skin drawn on, her hair pulled out and, it is claimed, offered to a gang of boys as a rape victim. In July, a 12-year-old Grimsby girl was sent to a young offenders institution after stealing £500 from a 68-year-old man. She told police she spent the proceeds on drink, drugs and clothes.

Why are young women being allured by violent crime? Anne Campbell, a psychologist at Durham University, has studied delinquent behaviour in adolescent girls, both here and in America, where she wrote the book The Girls in The Gang. She claims women often resort to aggressive behaviour and fighting as an unconscious strategy

'I have detected a pattern in female yob behaviour: they target other women for abuse'

to gain some power over their circumstances. By behaving aggressively, they feel that they are gaining equality, gaining respect among their peer groups, they are no longer perceived as victims — and when they are getting more attention."

Peter West manages the Diverston Project in south-east London, a youth centre funded by the probation service to treat young offenders involved in car crimes such as joy-riding. "Women aren't just tagging along with their boyfriends anymore," he says. "They're more likely to steal cars because car manufacturers are treating female consumers." Privately, West also believes that women are far less likely to be apprehended by the police for car crimes.

Hackney, in East London, has seen a spate of similar incidents in the past six months, including a series of knife-point raids on shops by groups of women and the sentencing in August of four girls who stripped and tortured a 16-year-old girl in the area's Victoria Park. It was to Hackney's main thoroughfare, Mare Street, that I went in search of the yob in its natural habitat. Not far from the town hall, sitting on a wall, are three likely contenders for the title Scariest Facial Expression of the Year. I'm thinking it would be foolhardy to approach, particularly as one seems to have a crowddiver hanging from

her belt, when one of them shouts "What you lookin' at, shitface?"

"You die, motherfucker," invades another. Their leader announces that her name is Vic.

"What's that for?" I ask, eyeing her crowddiver.

"Fixing things," she says flatly.

"Oh, are you a mechanic, then?"

"Nah, I'm a hairdresser."

I wonder why these girls loiter around on the streets when, at this age, one would have expected to find them in the pub. Vic explains that they can rarely afford going to a pub and that meeting men is not a priority. None of the standard professions of working-class teenage girls is in evidence here: yearning for a husband, a nice house, a more glamorous life, children. What do they want? They look genuinely baffled by the question.

The three are not averse to "nicing stuff". "I once stole a car but haven't passed my test, so I didn't get very far," hoots Vic. I notice another is carrying a chisel. "I'm a DIY queen."

"I'll fix yer face for ya if you don't watch it," she snaps.

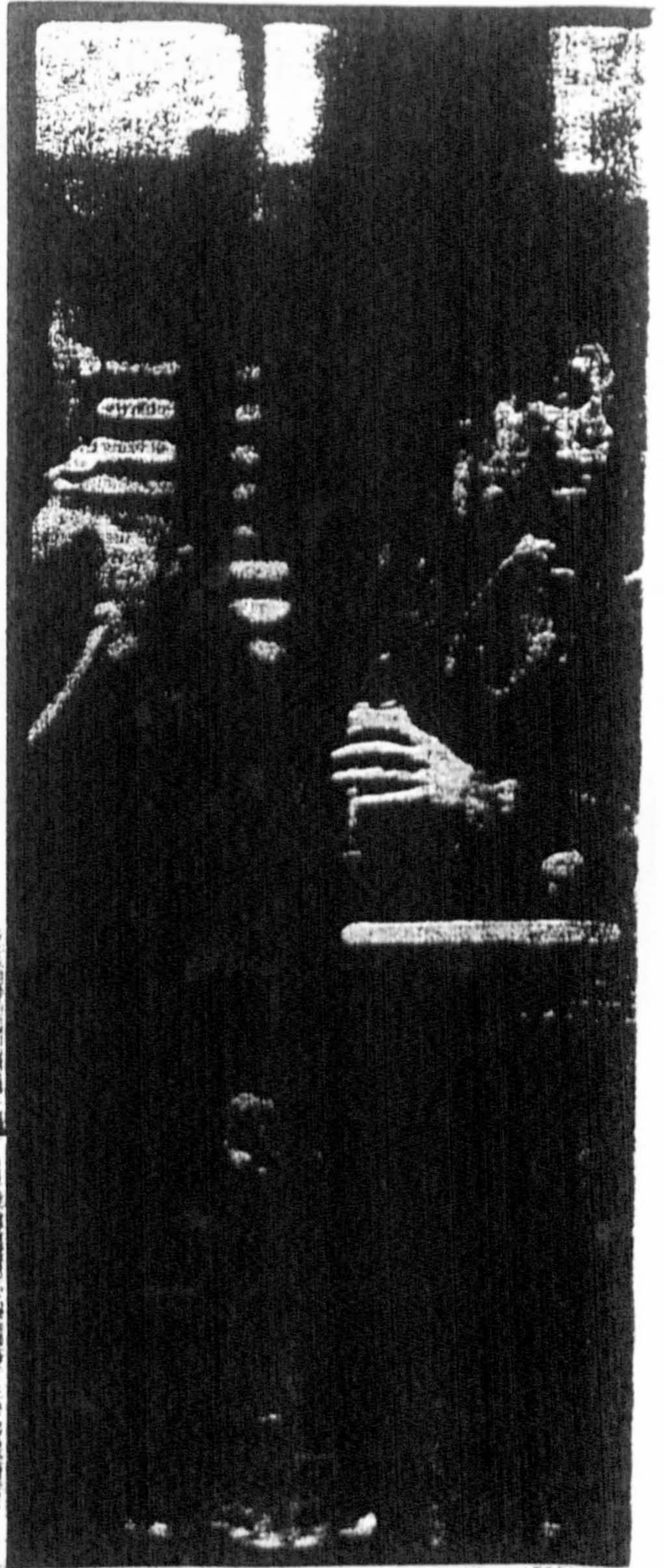
Two nights later, I find myself back in Hackney, in a different brand of yob. Since their formation in June the Lesbian Avengers have established a fearsome reputation through their demonstrations which feature a mixture of radical polemics, songs and circus stunts. Their anti-establishment have involved storming a statue of Queen Victoria outside Buckingham Palace, taking over shop windows on Oxford Street to protest at "lesbian chic" being purloined by the high street and staging a "snog in" at Heathrow's Terminal 3 to highlight the anomalies in the law concerning immigration and lesbian partners.

The evening's protest centres on Hackney Council's equal opportunities policy. Some 70 Avengers converge on the steps of the town hall while two women perform a skit entitled Julia And Juliet, and the worshipful mayor of Hackney looks utterly bewildered.

In the women's bar at the back of the Wellington Arms pub on Essex Road, the women outline their aims. "We don't set limits on how far we're prepared to go," explains member Roz Hopkins. "We are prepared to break the law because many of our members are breaking the law every day, with regards to immigration policy and other lesbian issues."

"Are people intimidated by us?" asks another. "Maybe, I don't care."

Another area in which the yob world now looms large is sport, with more women participating in and attending matches for football, rugby, snooker, darts and, of course, that yob arena held close to the Government's exuberant heart, boxing. One woman who has a vintage print on the occasion of



job culture in all its forms is Tania Follett, the first British woman to gain her licence as a boxing second. Her job involves working every aspect of the boxer's corner — polishing gumshields, wiping blood off the canvas and administering the spit bucket.

Follett lives on an estate in Martin's Heron, outside Bracknell, with her two fearsome dogs, Nipper and Wazzer. "It was tough being taken seriously as a woman when I started my training as a second. I remember once I couldn't get this boxer's attention and out of sheer frustration I smacked him one in the face." Follett, who has twice had her nose broken "from messing around fighting", has seen the error of her

ways. "I used to get into a lot of trouble but that was before I started a bird sanctuary for endangered birds of prey and I had some purpose to my life."

Back on the railway platform at Martin's Heron, my heart sinks. More yobettes, 10 of them, lounging around on an unmanned station. I know they are going to make a beeline for me because I have detected a pattern in female yob behaviour: they target other women for abuse. Fortunately my train pulls in and they are going nowhere, so I am spared further abuse.

"If you look at evolutionary theory," says Anne Campbell, "it tells us that men use aggression to gain status and dominance, and thus

THREE YEARS FOR COMPUTER EXPERT DRI

Father held up shop with a bottle of Toilet Duck



TERRIFIED: Shopkeeper Sadie

By ROBERT MCGOWAN

A DEBT-RIDDEN computer expert tried to rob his village shop armed with a Toilet Duck.

Paul Somerville held his baby son in one arm as he pointed the bottle at shopkeeper Sadie Elder.

He told her to get on the floor but she tackled him. He squirted lavatory cleaner over her but, with the help of two customers who came in, Mrs Elder bundled him out empty-handed.

Somerville calmly strapped son Joshua into his car and drove the three miles home, but witnesses noted his registration number.

Yesterday, as the would-be robber began a three-year jail sentence, Mrs Elder said he had looked and behaved just like TV's bungling Mr Bean.

"He came into the shop twice to have a look and then a third time, all within 15 minutes. He grabbed the Toilet Duck off the shelf and pointed it in my face. I think he was surprised when I refused to get on the ground.

Joke

"The cleaner went all over my clothes and hair when he squirted it at me. It was terrifying."

Norwich Crown Court heard that mother-of-two Mrs Elder had thought Somerville, 33, was playing a practical joke.

The £17,000-a-year Norfolk County Council computer analyst was in "financial despair" at the time of the incident in June, said John Harwood-Stevenson, defending. He had £8,000 debts.

The devoted family man had not told wife Josephine of his problems — even though he had four County court judgements against him and the bank had frozen his account.

She had asked him to get some cash and he was driving past the Spar shop at South Walsham, Norfolk, with only 32p in his pocket when he realised he needed petrol.



WEAPON: Toilet Duck

"In complete despair he had the crazy impulse to try and get some cash from the till," said Mr Harwood-Stevenson. "He was having an acute anxiety attack."

Somerville, of Blissett Heath, admitted attempted robbery. Josephine, 30, was stunned in court as Judge Peter Langan jailed him, adding it was sad to see a man of his "impeccable character" in the dock.

Last night she, Joshua, 10 months, and his sister Nicole, three were being comforted by friends.

"How the judge arrived at this decision I will never know," she said. "People have received less for knife attacks."

"It was my worst nightmare come true. If he'd been sentenced to a few months, as I expected, we'd have been able to cope."

"Paul is such a devoted father and Nicole is a real daddy's girl. Now he won't be there when she starts school."

"Probation reports and psychiatric reports all showed that this incident was completely out of character. I no longer have any faith in the system of justice."

DRIVEN TO DESPAIR BY SECRET £8,000 DEBTS



FAMILY MAN: Somerville with Nicole, Joshua and Josephine

Robin McKie
Science Editor

They are watching you from above. At least, one is about to. Michael, once the patron of shoplifters, is planning to bring mounted video cameras to computers, to compare shoppers' pictures with known thieves. The & Spencer shoppers are screened and, once an accurate mugshot match is made, store detectives will be alerted to the presence of shoplifters. Their progress through the store can then be monitored. This technique, developed by

BT researchers working with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) scientists, is state of the art face-recognition computer technology, and will be introduced for trial at one M&S store next year. The day of the Big Brother snapshot is at hand. Comparing images of faces taken in different positions, angles, lighting and other conditions has proved to be extremely difficult. 'We have been working for the past three years on face recognition,' said Mike Whybray, of BT's Martlesham laboratories. 'It has been a tricky business.' However, MIT scientists have recently developed software that

allows computers to match a variety of different video shots of individuals with stored mugshots, with an accuracy of greater than 90 per cent. 'We are now ready to use this technique in a store where lighting, crowd movement, atmospheric conditions, and countless other variables fluctuate all the time. That will be the real test,' said Mr Whybray. BT believes the power to scan thousands of images against a database of photographs in a few seconds will bring new business for telecommunications companies. For example, all commercial outlets in a town could be

linked and alarm bells set off the moment a person who has been seen shoplifting in one store enters another. It will also speed up police identification procedures by cutting the mug shots witnesses have to examine from thousands to a few dozen. That is the good news. In other circles, however, it is likely to go down like a baton charge at a civil liberties rally. 'Technology is being used to monitor people's movements and will certainly do more damage than it will do good. Such techniques could, after all, be used to trace the movements of a person across the nation. I am a camera, Life magazine



Crime

Patient under police guard after shop worker stabbed to death

Shoplifting 12-11-94

Sally Weale

DETECTIVES were today waiting to interview a 19-year-old youth under police guard in hospital following the fatal stabbing of a Cardiff city centre shop manager who tried to tackle suspected shoplifters.

Duncan Clarke, aged 34, was attacked when he blocked the escape of one of the two suspects at the top of an escalator as he fled from security guards who saw them allegedly stealing a £6.99 pack of video cassettes from a Littlewoods store. He was stabbed in the chest in front of hundreds of shoppers.

Surgeons at Cardiff University hospital operated on him but he died early yesterday, 10 hours after the incident.

A youth of 13 detained by security staff seconds before the stabbing was yesterday released on police bail.

The murder of Mr Clarke, manager of the Baggage Centre department in the Littlewoods store, has raised fresh worries about the safety of shop workers facing increasingly violent attacks from thieves. His death comes a week after that of Woolworths trainee assistant manager John Penfold, aged 21, who was stabbed with a kitchen

knife as he manned a checkout at the branch in Teddington, south-west London.

Yesterday police commended Mr Clarke's actions. 'His bravery deserves the highest praise,' said Detective Superintendent Colin Jones of South Wales police, who is leading the inquiry. 'We must remind shop assistants and staff they must always be aware that lethal weapons could be produced in a situation like this. But those who carry weapons should also realise it will not stop people of Mr Clarke's calibre showing courage and public spiritedness.'

Bob Willett, Littlewoods' UK managing director, paid tribute to Mr Clarke, who lived in Cardiff but came from Manchester, and called for tougher measures against knife-wielding criminals. 'It is clear that the penalties for carrying offensive weapons are not enough,' he said.

Police are hoping to interview the 19-year-old in hospital this weekend once he has recovered from an operation on his ankle. He was arrested at Queen Station, Cardiff, after he fell nearly 40ft and broke his ankle while scaling a wall half a mile from the Littlewoods store. A knife was recovered.

No videos cleared after knife attack

Police were last night studying security videos of a Cardiff shoplifting attack in an effort to identify a young woman they believe who stabbed a security guard in front of a Littlewoods store, writes Althea Bell (Bertham). (Jane Stephens, 40, was stable after emergency surgery in hospital following the attack on Friday. He was stabbed in the stomach by a young woman, possibly a teenager, when he challenged her for stealing clothes. The woman ran off. Technical experts were brought in by South Wales police to study shop and arcade videos from the Oxford Arcade area of the city. 'We have called in all the videos which might throw up a picture of the girl. Until we have studied them we do not know if we have a shot of the culprit,' police said.

No charges over jail break

No disciplinary charges are to be laid against staff over the break-out last September by five IRA prisoners from Whitemoor Prison, Cambridgeshire, the Home Office said. But 'appropriate management action will be taken against individuals who are considered to be guilty of serious performance shortcomings', a spokesman said.

Internet freeze

Trouble is brewing in Cyberia. Cyberia Internet cafe were cut off and tried to open a second branch in Rosen. Cyberia, together with its Microprism, was disconnected from the network for alleged non-payment charges. Visitors to the Cyberia cafe but until a complex series of computer Internet cannot see them.

Mum kills herself over bag of crisps

A DISTRAUGHT mum gassed herself to death - because she was falsely suspected of stealing a bag of crisps.

Jenny Tennant, 48, was quizzed by police after being videoed eating the snack at the petrol station where she worked, and apparently removing cash from the till.

Although she was innocent of all theft she was terrified at the thought of being prosecuted. So, fearing she would bring shame on her husband Trevor and two children, she scribbled a desperate note to her family.

Then - clutching a copy of the Bible, a photograph and her marriage certificate - she gassed herself in her car in the garage of her home at Bury, Greater Manchester.

Distressed

A policewoman who had interviewed her was so distressed to hear of her death she has been on sick leave all week.

And last night Jenny's grieving brother in law, Ray Tennant, said: "Jenny had been a loyal employee for 18 years, working five nights a week."

"She insisted to us that she'd done nothing wrong. But she was frightened at being suspected."

"We're very upset. Her bosses haven't even sent a message of sympathy. Just an envelope contain-

Cashier was devastated by theft slur

By PATRICK MULCHRONE

ink her pay cheque." An inquest at Rochdale heard that Jenny was shown a video of herself eating crisps behind the petrol station counter.

She was also shown film of her removing cash from the till, and apparently putting the money in her handbag.

Jenny was held by police for three hours before being released on bail.

She said she'd paid for the crisps, and was using her own money at the till to sort out change for customers.

She was later cleared of all blame.

Recording a verdict of suicide in the "very distressing case," coroner Dennis Everett said: "It seems clear these matters were preying on her mind."

Last night the Radcliffe Road Group, owners of the petrol

station where Jenny worked, confirmed cash and property had been stolen and steps were taken to identify those responsible.

A spokesman said: "As a result, video tapes were handed to the police and the matter rested in their hands."

"It would be inappropriate for us to comment further."

Interview

"But we offer our sincere condolences to Jenny's family."

Police said: "Mrs Tennant was interviewed."

"At that stage, the evidence was insufficient to prefer charges and further inquiries were needed, so she was released on bail."

"We are all distressed by what has happened and our sympathy goes out to her family."



PROBE: Jenny's garage where bosses asked police to investigate thefts

News in brief

3*

Stolen bag of crisps claim led to mother of two killing herself

Crime: Shoplifting

JENNY Tennant, a 40-year-old mother of two from Bury, Greater Manchester, killed herself after she was questioned about the theft of a bag of crisps.

She was shown a video of herself eating the snack behind the counter of a petrol station where she had worked for 18 years, a Rochdale inquest heard.

The spy cameras also filmed her removing cash from the till and apparently putting the money in her handbag. She was held by police for three hours

and questioned about whether she had paid for the crisps or stolen money. She denied she was a thief and was released on police bail.

She left notes for her husband saying she feared the investigation would bring shame on their family. She died in her fumed-filled car in the garage of her home. She was found by her husband Trevor.

The couple had been planning a long weekend break to celebrate their anniversary.

The coroner Dennis Everett recorded a verdict of suicide

cheating in his university theology paper. He turned to religion while in jail for the manslaughter of his wife, and his fate now rests with his congregation in Portsmouth, Hampshire, which has the final say on whether he should stay or go.

Shop assistant stabbed

A shop assistant was critically ill last night after being stabbed tackling shoplifters at Littlewoods store in Cardiff city centre. The man, aged 34, was stabbed on an escalator.

Souper sale 11-11-94

A pair of 18th-century English silver soup tureens was sold for a record £1,013,500 at Sotheby's in London yesterday, almost doubling the previous highest price of £522,000 for such a pair.

Tumour boy discharged

Ashley Fowle, aged four, who flew to New York last month for

1995

Customers 'are paying £120 a year each to compensate for losses'

Staff steal almost as much as shoplifters, survey finds

19/1/95

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

SHOPPERS pay an extra £120 a year each to compensate for theft by shoplifters and staff, says a survey published yesterday.

Staff steal almost as much as shoplifters, and a third of the customers caught are not reported to the police, according to the report.

The figures are contained in the second annual Retail Crime Costs survey compiled by the British Retail Consortium (BRC).

They show that crime against retailers cost the industry £2.15 billion in 1993/94 and there were 5.4 million crimes committed with retail outlets.

The cost of shoplifting rose by 40 per cent and the value of the goods stolen to £748.4 million.

Arson in retail outlets has risen by 216 per cent, the study said.

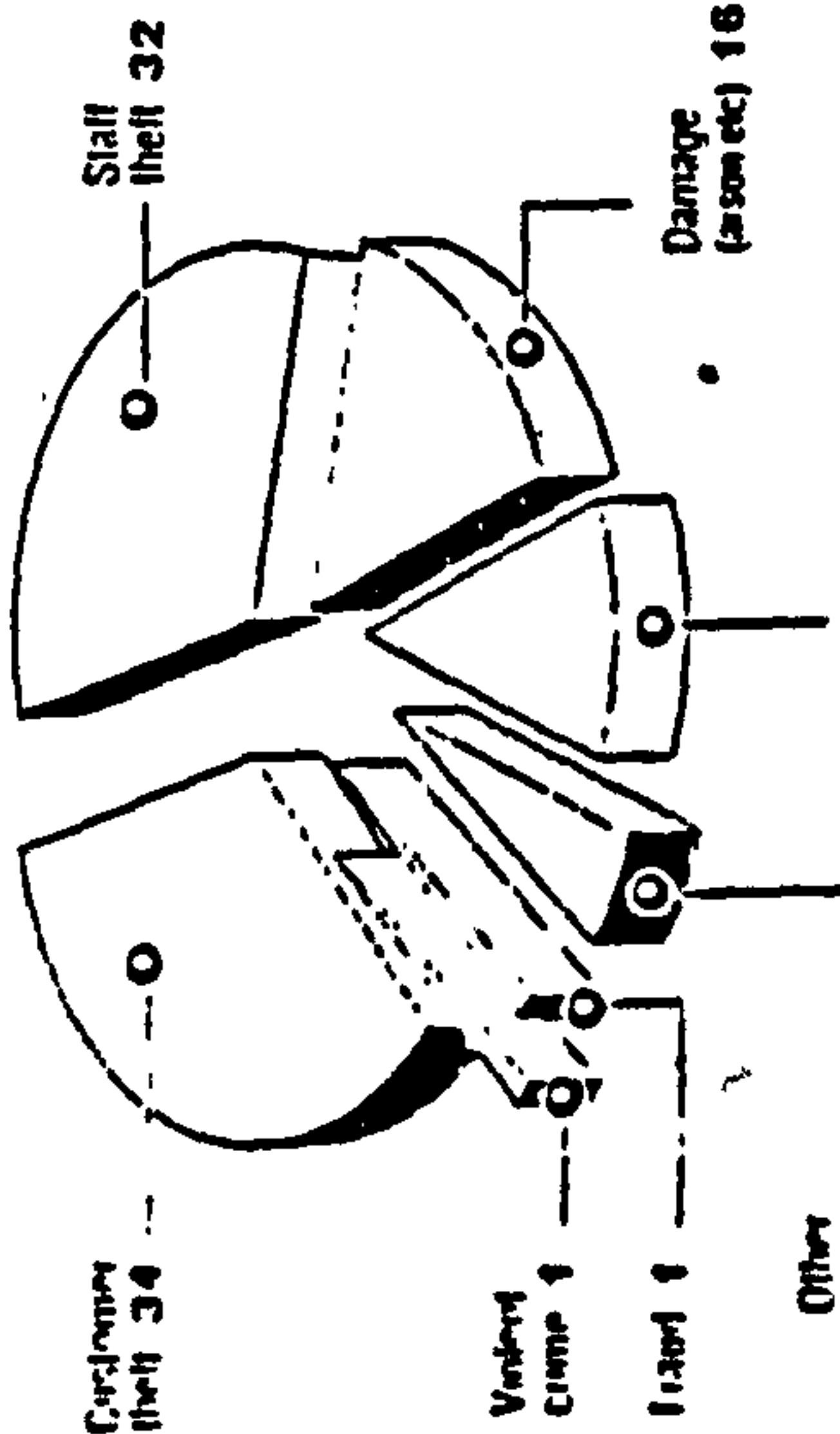
Retailers reported 12,055 incidents of violence to staff, a drop of 11 per cent on the previous year, but three shop assistants were killed.

Almost half the violent incidents arose when staff even fringed shoplifters.

James Blair, BRC director general, said there was evidence that crime against retailers in public shopping areas

Hitting the shops

Percentage rise in retail outlets of various crimes. Total £2.15 bn. 1993/94.



had resulted in greater detection of crime and increased confidence among shoppers.

"Crime is bad for business," Mr Mackean said. "It is an unacceptable burden for all of us, retailers, insurers and the public."

Of those customers caught, 68 per cent were referred to the police. The reasons for not contacting police were usually to do with the age of the offender — very old or very young — their mental and physical state and whether they had threatened violence.

Mr Mackean said he was disappointed that crime against retailers in public shopping areas

turked that some violent offenders escaped arrest. Everyone had a duty to report crime, he said.

Retailers believed that many of the incidents not reported to the police involved late-night stores with only one member of staff present.

Staff theft accounted for £679 million, and 46 per cent of those involved were referred to the police. Most lost their jobs, said retailers present at the launch. Previous research has shown that some staff regard small scale theft from their employer as a perk, particularly if they are low paid.

A total of £72 million was lost to arson last year, an increase on the previous year's figure of £26 million. There was no evidence as to what proportion of this might result from insurance fraud.

Half of retail outlets were burgled and almost half the burglaries were repeat attacks on the same premises. Burglaries of shops were five to six times that of homes.

Rama raids are said to be on the decline, accounting for only 3 per cent of 161,000 burglaries. Only a third of stores had security staff.

Retail Crime Costs 1993/94 survey, price £25, from BRC, Bedford House, 69-79 Fulfham High Street, London SW6 3JW.

Tesco chain shuts up shop to Buy None Get 189 Free thief

Crime: Shoplifting 2/2

Alex Bellis

BRTAIN'S most prolific shoplifter — who once stole 189 bottles of drink from a single store in a few hours — was banned yesterday from all Tesco supermarkets. A resigned Jim Heritage, aged 37, said after the High Court hearing in London: "Where can I go now? Shoplifting is the one thing I know."

The divorced father-of-two from Coventry, who was barred in 1994 from the Sainsbury's chain and is not allowed in his local shops, has been imprisoned 10 times in 22 years for stealing bottles of spirits, which he then sells.

Tesco had tried to get Heritage on its side two years ago by paying him to advise security staff. But he carried on shoplifting regardless.

Heritage, who is unemployed,

played and was represented at yesterday's brief hearing by the Citizens' Advice Bureau, consented to the injunction. He said there was no point challenging the supermarket chain. Afterwards he said he would try and give up altogether. He wanted to avoid going to jail. He has been prosecuted 40 times but claims to have got away with countless more thefts.

He said: "I know every individual suffers from it through their pocket but, in my eyes, I'm not hurting anyone individually. Boredom starts it off but then adrenaline keeps me going. Adrenalin is the worst drug in the world."

A Tesco spokesman said: "At the end of the day we have no other way of protecting our property. Stealing is stealing."

Shoplifter under house arrest with experimental electronic tag

session of cannabis worth 98 and Manchester four weeks ago. The start of the nine months experiment had to be delayed when three Home Office officials tried the equipment in Manchester. One went to the pub, a second went shopping while the third just wandered the streets. However, in none of the cases did the monitoring equipment register that the official had left premises.

Week for the next three months, the sentence means if he breaches the terms of his bail, a 24-hour curfew order which had been imposed on him will break a circuit and send an automatic message through his telephone to the monitoring company indicating that he has breached the terms of his curfew. Barratt was sentenced yesterday by King's Lynn magistrates to wear the tag from next day by King's Lynn magistrates. Barratt was sentenced yesterday by King's Lynn magistrates to wear the tag from next day by King's Lynn magistrates.

LIVE BARRATT, aged 29 or thereabouts, was arrested in King's Lynn, Norfolk yesterday because the first of his electronic tags was broken. He is to be monitored by a Home Office official who will be in contact with the Home Office via a telephone to the monitoring company indicating that he has breached the terms of his curfew. Barratt was sentenced yesterday by King's Lynn magistrates to wear the tag from next day by King's Lynn magistrates.

Uproar as queen of shoplifters beats theft case

JULIE FREESTONE, Britain's most notorious shoplifter, who claimed to steal £1,500 worth of clothes a day, has beaten her first theft charge after a shop detective failed to turn up for a court hearing.

The revelation has outraged the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and leading stores, which have been infuriated by Freestone's ability to evade jail while cultivating an image as a cunning anti-hero.

The detective, employed by British Home Stores (BHS) in Cheltenham, was attending a funeral when, after 13 adjournments of the hearing, Freestone finally turned up to face a charge of stealing a coat worth £56.64 from the Gloucestershire store. She denied the charge.

BHS was incensed by the magistrate's ruling and said the store detective, who had attended all previous hearings, had given advance warning that she would be unable to attend that day. "We are very disappointed with the decision and concerned about the reasons for dismissing the case," a spokesman said. The prosecution claimed the store detective was on holiday.

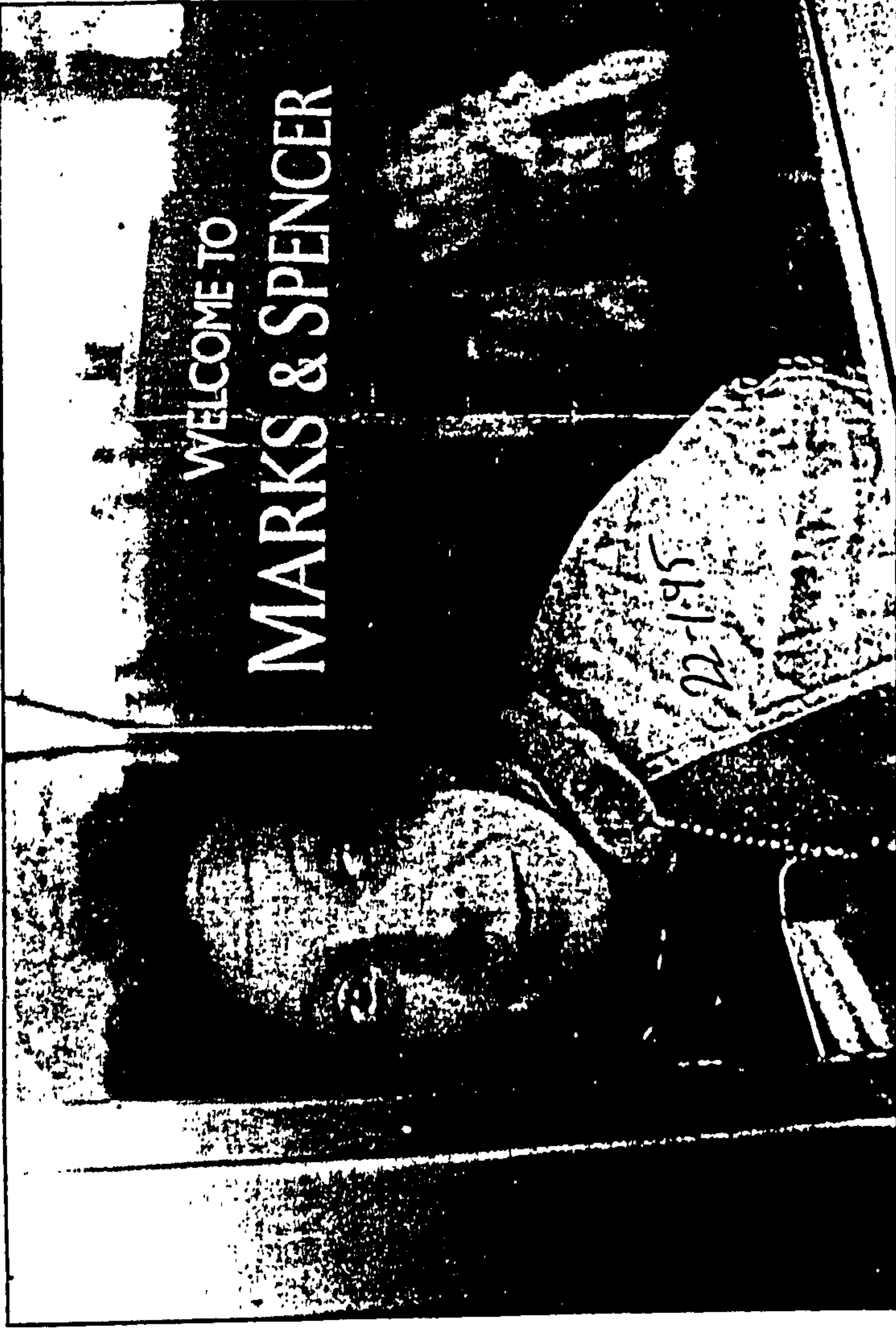
by Andrew Alderson and Ciaran Byrne

The magistrate's decision dismayed other retailers, some of whom have resorted to desperate measures to stop Freestone thieving. Marks & Spencer (M&S) took out a High Court injunction to prevent her visiting its stores after spending thousands of pounds on private detectives to trace her and serve court papers on her.

Freestone, 39, won infamy last year when she boasted on a television documentary about the ease with which she made money from stealing clothes. Most came from "refunds" on goods stolen within a shop minutes earlier.

The ploy meant she did not have to take items out of shops — the ploy at which store detectives stop a thief. Instead, she damaged a new item of clothing, often in the changing room, and immediately claimed her "refund" from customer services, claiming she had lost her receipt.

Freestone, from Highbury, north London, was branded "public enemy number one" by leading stores. M&S



High street enemy number one: Julie Freestone admitted publicly: 'I will never stop stealing from the big department stores'

shareholders were angry that taken against Freestone. In April, the company went to court to seek an injunction banning her from "trespassing" in any of its stores. However, when it came to serving the papers, the company's legal department found she had vanished.

By her own admission, Freestone, who had at least three aliases, used disguises and fake

accents whenever she was at "work". Private detectives finally traced her to a house in north London and the papers were served. This weekend Freestone, who used to run her own escort agency and is a self-confessed former crack addict, denied she had stolen the coat.

"Believe me, if you publish anything about me, I will have the solicitors on to you," she said.

Freestone, who demanded £450 for a full interview (the request was turned down), insisted that she had retired from shoplifting and was planning a book on her life. "I have been the biggest conwoman all my life, so don't try to con a conwoman," she said.

barred from every store in England

DMail



Kate Logan yesterday: The judge warned that she could be facing a jail sentence

Daily Mail Reporter

EVERY store in England has been declared a no-go area for a Scottish shoplifter.

Kate Logan must keep away from all the country's retail outlets, from the smallest to the largest.

She has also been banned from entering the city of York after stealing hundreds of pounds worth of women's clothing there.

The 39-year-old bus stewardess from Glasgow, who has a string of theft convictions throughout England and Scotland, was allowed bail at York Crown Court yesterday on condition that she complies with the ban.

Her barrister David Bradshaw told Judge Jonathan Crabtree that the blanket prohibition order was 'unworkable and impracticable' and the most unusual bail condition he had ever encountered in his long experience of the law.

It was originally imposed by magistrates in York when Logan was brought before them last year.

Judge Crabtree, adjourning sentence for reports to be prepared, asked amid laughter: 'Why is Wales left unprotected?'

But, warning Logan she could be facing a prison sentence, he said he would not alter the ban and she

would be brought back to court if she broke the order.

He said she had convictions for shoplifting in every part of the country, so the blanket prohibition was appropriate 'even though it might not work'.

Logan, of Emerson Road, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow, was told to report to police in Bishopbriggs every Friday to make sure she remains in Scotland.

She admitted stealing £1,000 worth of Mondri skirts, jackets and shirts from the Fenwick store in York, and £250 worth of Windsmoor jackets from Brown's of York last April.

Her previous 25 shoplifting offences took place in Carlisle, Coventry, London, Blackpool, Warrington, the Isle of Man, Falkirk, Stirling, Kilmarnock, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

As a grim-faced Logan left court yesterday she refused to say anything. But a court official confirmed that the ban meant exactly what it said — every store in England.

Members of the Chaucer Building Society rejected directors at a special meeting in Cheltenham in protest at plans for the £1.8 billion takeover by Lloyds Bank.

The rebel group C&G Alternatives, which claims to represent about 5,000 of the society's 1.4 million savers and borrowers, discussed four alternatives to the proposed method of acquisition but all were rejected.

Paul Rivlin, leader of the rebels, said: 'We still managed to hold 35 per cent of the vote, and the society needs 75 per cent of the membership to agree before it can go ahead.'

Security guards at a Cardiff shopping centre as an effort to deter a young woman shoplifter who stabbed a security guard in front of horrified shoppers, writes Michael Durham.

Chris Stephens, 40, was stable after emergency surgery yesterday following the attack on Friday in the Oxford Arcade. He was stabbed in the stomach when he challenged the young woman, possibly a teenager, over stealing clothes.

Orientalist dies
Scientist Joseph Needham, who made an international reputation in the Thirties as an embryologist and who came a world authority on China, has died at 71.

The Guardian Thursday February 15 1996

News in brief

Blair 'soft on shoplifters'

TONY BLAIR was last night accused of defending shoplifting after he contrasted hardened criminal gangs and "the hard-pressed single mum or pensioner pulling a 'trest' in their pocket rather than their shopping bag". The Labour leader's remark came in a speech in the British Retail Consortium like said burglary and shoplifting had not been taken seriously enough. It was not a victimless crime, he added, since retailers lost up to £1.5 billion a year that was recouped through higher prices — costing every family £30 a year. But he laid out emphasis on "gangs who chose to make a living from theft of crime", rather than poor people who stole for "bread". Last night Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, said: "There is theft. It should be condemned. That is a lesson Labour still has to learn." — Michael White

Foreword

● Home Front: Susie Orbach

Crime: shoplifting
13/3/95

From shoplifter to drug addict



THE news that women enter prisons as shoplifters and exit as heroin addicts has a certain logic. In forensic or criminal terms, the offender switches mode to take advantage of what is illicit inside the system. Their criminality is what is defining. The meaning of the acts can be attributed to essential badness, it can be seen as situational, it can be regarded as evidence of a propensity to criminality.

Although the fact of its unlawfulness undoubtedly has a bearing on its meaning, the potency of the act for the shoplifter is fuelled not so much by its unlawfulness as by other emotional factors which, once explored, suggest responses other than custodial care.

While many people routinely supplement their weekly budget by shoplifting, for the person who can't prevent herself from helping herself to what she hasn't purchased, something beyond mitigating the effects of poverty is in play. Involuntary shoplifting can be a compulsion. The person finds herself in the shop compelled to take what is on offer. The marketplace becomes synonymous with plenty and hope. With its emptying displays and seductive invitations, it concretises longing and desire. Although the average consumer may be well aware that she is being manipulated, made to feel that her life will improve if she purchases x or y, the space for the shoplifter between such pressure and the capacity for thinking may become compressed, producing an irresistible psychological plunge to the embrace of the goods. This embrace is accompa-

nied by a certain excitement and hope — the hope that private experiences of deprivation can be countered and the emptiness inside filled. In the anticipation of satisfaction, the person feels soothed and calmed. The screaming interior experience of hunger is stilled by the momentary perception that the individual can meet her own longing.

She is buoyed up on two counts: firstly, that there is something external (the goods) that will appease her desire and, secondly, that she has the power to transform the experience of emptiness and privation by her actions. This latter sense, that by one's own hand one can mutate inner experience of emptiness and powerlessness, is an important feature of shoplifting. For it is not simply the imagined capacity to fill the hole that compels the person to lift the goods. The act is sustained by the sense that they are in charge of rewriting their emotional destiny. I am deprived. That is not just. I take. I deny my deprivation.

It is in this sequence that we have the essence of the emotional dimensions of shoplifting. For it is in the attempt simultaneously to deny and make good the deprivation by stealth that the complex psychological edifice of shoplifting stands. Shoplifting is the attempt to repair and restore to the self what has been denied.

But many who engage in shoplifting are unable to use it to meet and transmute their inner experience of privation. A curious and intriguing aspect of shoplifting for some is that the goods, once selected and carefully brought home, lie unopened. Their magical powers to metamorphose the empty soul can't be accessed. They are kept unpacked, holding two functions. They are at once a

tangible expression of having, of not being deprived, and a tantalising sign of the inability to use what has been garnered.

This painful conjunction tells us much about what is at the heart of this kind of stealing.

The shoplifter is driven to steal, both by a wish to ameliorate emptiness and to set herself in the middle of an emotional drama in which she actively confronts and attempts to transform her deprivation. But linked with the attempt to change the experience of deprivation is the guilt that arises from trying to get. For in the psyche, deprivation is not understood simply as injustice but also as confirmation of low self-worth. One is deprived because one is awful and worthless. Thus one is deprived because one deserves to be so. Attempts to reverse this sense by giving to oneself can feel illegitimate or as if one is stealing what one isn't supposed to have. Stolen goods which are not freely given then fail to satisfy. Tragically the pain and humiliation of wanting is reinforced. The shoplifter is confronted by her helplessness. Even as she goes towards filling herself up, she is undercut. Her efforts are rendered useless as the goods cannot meet but only amplify her deprivation.

It is here in the confrontation with emptiness that we can see the links to heroin use in prison. For heroin, above all, is a drug of oblivion. Its soothing, calming, quietening properties are well known. In prison the pain, external and internal, cannot be denied, but neither can it be explored, engaged with and accepted. It demands to be obliterated so that it is rendered unimportant and manageable.

The shoplifter, denied other known channels in which to enact the drama and attempted repair of her deprivation is

confronted with the starkness of her emptiness, an emptiness that feels like a reflection of her worthlessness and essential badness. Prison confirms and externalises this inner sense of self, propelling her once again towards psychological solutions that are transgressive, lawless and dangerous.

Heroin, with its dance-of-death imperative, matches her interior state. Where shoplifting implied within it a hope, a link with life, production and the market-place in which we all engage, heroin represents a smaller world, a withdrawal both from relationships and from hope. It is an attempt to make a life by encountering the threat of death. With the boundary of death as one possible implication of heroin use, the person can surrender to the consoling comforts of the narcotic. Soothing can be allowed, even embraced.

COMPLEX psychological motivations at the heart of shoplifting make a nonsense of custodial care as a response. The underlying problems get retranslated into the culture of the prison while the original deprivation and emptiness lies unaddressed. Psychological programmes originating in the probation service, in forensic psychiatry and departments of psychotherapy are shown to be considerably more effective in addressing the problems of the shoplifter, helping her to engage with her problems rather than transposing them in a custodial environment. G

A unique service based at Charing Cross Hospital, London, has offered therapy groups to shoplifters. Psychotherapist Adelle Shapiro, who claims a degree of success with women who shoplift, sees five

Ex-police chief denies shoplifting^{Crime}

A FORMER senior policeman told Southwark crown court yesterday of his shock, humiliation and shame at being accused of shoplifting.

Graham Wyn Jones, who had been assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police, said the "absolute nightmare" worsened when he was manhandled across the store, with one arm twisted behind his back, to the manager's office.

Minutes later, when a store detective and a security guard at Marks & Spencer in Chelsea, west London, thought he was trying to flee he was again grabbed, and in a struggle his trousers came undone.

"I was absolutely distraught. I was shocked. I was horrified. I didn't know what was happening," he told the court.

Jones, aged 50, who left his £67,000-a-year police post in December 1993, said he was shopping for a dinner party at home that evening. He denies stealing two bottles of wine, two pieces of cheese and a packet of chicken breasts worth £24 in March last year.

Richard McGregor-Johnson, prosecuting, had told the court that when Jones, of Belgravia, central London, was arrested he had £1,700 on him. He was spotted wheeling a trolley with a couple of Marks & Spencer carrier bags through the store.

A store detective allegedly saw him putting the wine, cheese and chicken into one of the bags before leaving the store without paying for them.

But in evidence Jones said: "I have never stolen anything in my life." He complained that no one explained what was happening until he had been escorted to the manager's office.

Jones was asked why, when he was first interviewed, he said he had paid for everything he had, but on a second occasion suggested he may have made his purchases at three Marks & Spencer stores. He said he had put forward the multiple store scenario only as a "possibility not a probability" when he later recalled he had visited other stores that day.

Although he could not remember his movements with certainty, it was most likely all the grocery purchases had been

made in the Chelsea store. Jones told the jury that he was shopping with different meals, later saying: "I am such an organised shopper." As he could remember, he bought some items and took them through the checkout and possibly a third or more purchases.

There could have been a fourth tour of the store. Jones checked whether the items had been precisely weighed and believed that was when the store detective mistakenly thought he was stealing.

He told his counsel, Mr. Donne, that in the manager's office he was "very agitated". He had wanted to speak to the manager but was attempting to see his wife. The store staff believed he was about to make a run for it and restrained him again.

When he was later interviewed at Chelsea police station, Jones told police that he was in a "worse state of shock" than he was experiencing humiliation and was particularly concerned about public opinion. He told the court his feelings were justified when one newspaper published an account of his arrest with the headline: "Top cop held in theft".

Jones told Mr. McGregor-Johnson that he had mentioned his visits to other Marks & Spencer stores when he was first questioned by police because he was specifically asked to answer the store detective's allegations.

The barrister said: "You took the store without paying for those goods." Jones replied: "I did not. All the goods in my possession I had paid for."

A character witness, Mrs. Gifford, described Jones as an honest man who was not impulsive nor ill-disciplined in his personal life, but when Mr. Donne asked her if she had ever seen Jones shopping with her, she replied: "Certainly not."

The trial continues to



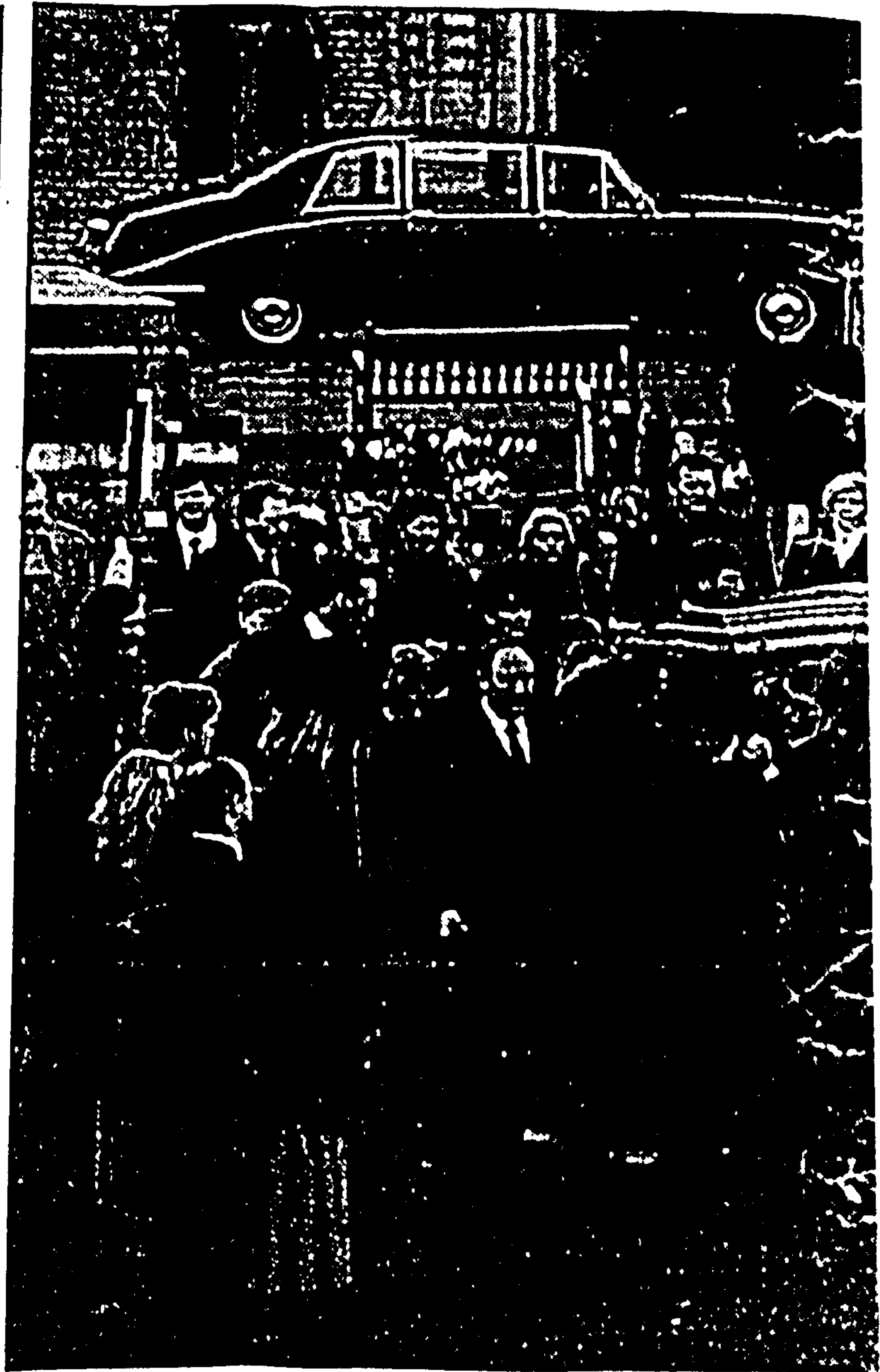
Queen of shoplifters goes to ground with fame in the bag and a fitting epitaph in flowers

Report: Duncan Campbell □ Main photograph: Graham Turner

THERE was a Royal funeral in the capital yesterday. The woman who won a reputation as the Queen of the shoplifters, Shirley Pitts, was buried with great style after the sort of life that was as much Dickens as Dickens and Jones.

Fifteen Daimlers, each as black as a Marlborough Street magistrate's expression, led the funeral procession more than 20 miles from her home in Chigwell, Essex, to the Lambeth cemetery in south London, where a trumpeter and guitarist in velvet bow ties played the "Heaven, I'm in heaven ..." lines from Irving Berlin's *Cheek to Cheek*, as the body was lowered into the grave.

Born on the Lambeth Walk, in south London, 57 years ago and evacuated to Yorkshire during the war, Shirley Pitts started thieving at the age of seven. By the time she was in her twenties, she had won a



Fifteen Daimlers escorted Shirley Pitts (above), scourge of the top shops, to her grave.

reputation for being one of the most skilful and enterprising shoplifters in the land.

The handsome Ms Pitts would operate teams of "holsters", who travelled the land pursuing their trade. Harrods was a favourite shop, a fact recalled yesterday by an elegantly designed floral Harrods carrier bag and a large bunch of lilies still in their Harrods wrapping. Fashionable to the end, she was buried in a blue

£5,000 Zandra Rhodes creation. She did not always escape the attentions of the shopwalkers and she had three spells in prison. She was one of the few women to escape from a British jail, slipping out of Holloway when pregnant with one of her seven children.

Something of a pioneer, she was carrying out "shopping expeditions" all over the continent long before Ted Heath was urging active British participa-

tion in Europe with teams in Paris," said a friend, an architect.

She contracted cancer in the last years of her life. She started to dictate her memoirs with the help of a friend, a writer and a publisher. After a blessing from the Catholic Church in Chigwell, a priest asked for her judgment" and

Ex-Met chief 'stole food from M&S'

Crime. Shoplifting @x

A FORMER assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police had £1,700 on him when he was allegedly caught shoplifting goods worth £26, Southwark crown court heard yesterday.

Graham Wyn Jones, aged 54, was said to have been seen stealing a packet of chicken breasts, two bottles of wine and two pieces of cheese from Marks and Spencer's store in Chelsea, west London, in March last year.

Jones, of Belgravia, central London, pleaded not guilty to theft.

Richard McGregor-Johnson, prosecuting, said that a store detective saw Jones looking at a shopping list as he put various items into bags of food he had already paid for, then followed him outside after he left without paying.

He said that Jones was stopped and brought back inside.

Mr McGregor-Johnson told the court that when Jones's bags were searched, a receipt was found in one of them timed shortly before he was first spotted. "That receipt covered everything in the two carrier bags, with the exception of the two pieces of cheese, the chicken breasts and the two bottles of wine."

Jones asked if he could visit the toilet, "but on the way gave the impression that he was going to make off and was brought back".

When police arrived shortly afterwards, Jones was said to have told them: "I paid for the goods in a different checkout."

The court heard that in the charge room at the police station he was seen tearing up a piece of paper, which he claimed was a note for his wife. But it was found to be the shopping list he had looked at earlier.

When interviewed he said he and his wife had been planning a dinner party and he had gone to shop for it.

He had bought some of the items he needed before realising he could get everything at the store. He returned to the grocery section and it was only after going through a different till that he realised he had for-

gotten something. He again returned, and although he could not find what he wanted, took the opportunity to check his earlier chicken, cheese and wine purchases were exactly what he needed.

Mr McGregor-Johnson went on: "Mr Jones was found to have £1,700 on him, so he was certainly able to pay for what was in his possession."

He told the jury that the following day somebody acting on Jones's behalf visited the officer in the case, who later went to the Chelsea store to retrieve its till rolls for the day of the alleged offence.

"Unfortunately it seems a mistake was made and he only got 10 of the 12 rolls," he said. All those that had been retrieved were examined, but none of the disputed items appeared on them.

The officer tried, without success, to get similar rolls from Marks and Spencer stores at Marble Arch and Kensington.

The barrister said the reason these rolls were wanted became clear when Jones was interviewed a second time and said he recalled all three Marks and Spencer stores while shopping, but could not remember what he bought where. Jones said he had at first assumed he had bought everything in one place, only realising later that may not have been the case.

The barrister added: "The crown says, whatever the reason, he took the items mentioned dishonestly without paying for them."

Store detective Patrick Reilly said in evidence that as they returned to the store, Jones indicated he had once been a police officer, and after reaching an office, he asked if he could use the toilet.

Mr Reilly continued: "Then he attempted to run towards the stockroom ... and was restrained by myself and the security guard." In the struggle, Jones's trousers came down and he had to be put in an arm lock by the guard.

The case continues.



Graham Wyn Jones ... said he paid at different checkout



Age shoplifter

23/5/95

Crime: shoplifting

MOST SATURDAY mornings, as teenagers, my friends and I could be found roaming the city centre. We weren't actually shopping. We were shoplifting — or nicking, as we preferred to call it. We took small, shiny, fairly useless things, such as trashed make-up and stationery. The booty was hidden or dumped to avoid awkward questions from parents. Later, some of the

other girls progressed to clothes. Suddenly it seemed like proper stealing and I didn't have the stomach for it.

It seems I am fairly typical. I never got caught. My parents didn't tumble and I stopped as suddenly as I'd started, about six months later.

It is hard to know the extent of teenage stealing — statistics cover only those who are prosecuted and most are not — but it is most

common among 10 1/2-year-olds and experts are largely agreed on the reasons. It's a way of testing boundaries and rebelling against authority; it's about the act of pinching, not the having of the goods; and high street stores are ideal because they represent the enemy — institutional authority.

Children from all classes and backgrounds steal, but those from secure and happy homes are likely to stop, while those who are unhappy are more likely to continue. If this happens, parents might look for the underlying causes. Dr Nick Elmer, a psychologist specialising in delinquency, believes that serious shoplifting is an indicator of a cause to be taken seriously.

He points to the significance of peer pressure. In self-report surveys, children say they do it to impress mates, because they are bored and because doing something risky and carrying it off is seen as both cool and tough.

It is also a question of opportunity. In early adolescence, supervisory restraints are loosened and at the same time school provides a ready supply of accomplices — pinching is usually done in groups.

THIS IS the crime girls choose to commit but, unlike boys who often go on to other crimes, it is usually the limit of girls' law-breaking. Clinical psychologist Jackie Craissate describes the phase as "social shoplifting". Girls shop in groups and look at make-up together, she says; shopping is a familiar situation and a big part of "girl culture". Boys, she believes, are more likely to be out kicking a ball around and the equivalent progression is to chuck a brick through a window, vandalise property, use graffiti or ultimately take up joyriding.

Elmer disagrees: "If girls are involved with petty theft, it's likely they are also involved with aggression and vandalism, the same as boys."

His research shows that while many children may boast of such exploits without a glimmer of guilt, they fear their parents finding out and being upset and disappointed in them. They are right to worry; the experience is invariably very upsetting for parents. Frederick's daughter Rachel was 10 when he discovered a stash of sweets under her bed. "My daughter was always very strong-willed. She didn't seem sorry or at all upset about it, which was difficult for us."

After enquiring at school but making no headway, Frederick took what many parents see as their only course of action. "I put her in the car and took her back to the newsagent's with the stuff she'd stolen. I

wanted her to confront the person she'd stolen from in person but I couldn't get her to apologise.

"Back at home, she still didn't crack. It was a terrible time. She was confined to the house after school and forfeited her pocket money until she had paid for the things. A week went by — she'd come in from school, go straight to her room, come down for tea and go straight back again. I was in such a state. Eventually I tackled her again and in the end we collapsed together. She was terribly upset. She never did it again."

Olivia Montuschi, a counsellor with Exploring Parenthood, believes stealing is such a classic phase that it may not be possible to pre-empt it. "There is no point in giving lectures — children just switch off. You are better off making sure your children know where you stand as parents, what you consider acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and do this within a loving framework."

If a parent suspects something is amiss, Montuschi recommends the subject be broached "in a way that allows the child to tell what he's been doing without a great feeling of anger and retribution in the air". Once a child has been caught, a parent can only make it clear that what was done was wrong and reinforce their expectations for future behaviour; it is vital that children feel they will be trusted again.

Parents also need to ask themselves some questions, Montuschi says. "Am I giving this child too much freedom too soon because it suits me? Would it be better if this child had a clearer framework for action? Is there something else going on at home or in school? This is also an age at which bullying is common and peer pressure to join gangs is at its peak."

If they are caught, it will be many children's first and last brush with the law. "Contrary to popular belief, we're not there to be draconian," says Inspector Derek Millar, head of Youth Affairs for the Metropolitan Police. "We understand that young people will experiment and that, for many, offending is part of growing up. That's why we've got the cautioning system."

Even less serious than a caution is a formal warning, a telling-off that is not citeable in court. "We don't want to reduce a child to tears," Millar says, "but we don't want them to go out laughing, so it has to be pitched at the right level."

I asked my mum last week if the same thing happened in her adolescence. "Oh yes," she giggled. "Jean and I used to go to Woolworths on the way home from ballet." Clearly some social mores do pass from generation to generation.

MY desperate hours

BY LUKE HARDING

I thought
they'd kill
me, says
shattered
victim
of the
teenage
girl thugs



Slow healing: The girl and her mother, who has left work to help her recovery

15/E/95
-Daily Mail-

1517/95
Daily Mail

THE bruises are long gone and her hair, hacked off with a breadknife, has grown back into a boyish crop.

But the teenager recovering from a brutal attack by a gang of girls is still struggling to rebuild her shattered confidence.

Four months on, the memories of her ordeal at the hands of young women jealous of her beauty and friendship with a boy refuses to fade.

'I kept on thinking, "How on earth am I going to get out of here alive?"' she said yesterday. 'I was convinced they were going to kill me.'

She was invited into the home of one

Teenager tortured by gang of girls for being too pretty

From yesterday's Mail

of the girls as she visited a friend in the village of Abercwmboi, Mid Glamorgan.

For the next three hours she was kicked in the face, hit with a hammer and forced to sniff glue.

~~Her hair was cut off and a beauty mark on her face burned with a cigarette. Then she was made to mop up her blood on the kitchen floor with disinfectant. She was then forced to drink from the bucket his dad used to clean the car, by taking heads, played constantly in the background.~~

'They kept asking me about this boy who fancied me,' the 16-year-old said. 'They didn't like it. They said they would cut my hair and take away my chances of chatting up the boys.'

'I was frightened, absolutely terrified.'

Sentencing the girls and a 14-year-old boy earlier this week, a judge likened the attack to a scene from a 'video nasty'.

Skinhead Lisa Davies, 19, was jailed for five years at Merthyr Tydfil Crown Court, and two 16-year-old girls received 21 and 18 months in youth custody. The boy was placed on a two-year supervision order.

Their victim, who cannot be named, believes the sentences should have been harsher. Her father, outraged at the way his daughter was treated, agrees.

'This kind of violence is a major social disease at the moment,' said the 59-year-old factory manager.

'What they did to my daughter was horrendous. They didn't know whether she was alive or dead.'

'At one stage they were going to cut her ears off. They locked her inside a cupboard. If we don't do something about it people will be afraid to speak out, which is unacceptable.'

Until March, his daughter was outgoing and happy at school and home. She went to a large comprehensive two miles from the family's modern semi near the Welsh valley town of Pontypridd.

In the evenings she practised,



Jailed: Lisa Davies

her flute, played the piano — she is grade seven standard — or worked on her French.

After the attack she lost her edge at school, stopped playing in her local orchestra because she felt 'too ugly' and feels unable to trust in the friendship of other girls.

'The most distressing thing was having to wait four days before I could go back to school,' she said.

'The teachers would not let me back because of the way I looked. Now I try to keep away from as many girls as possible. Most of my friends are now boys. My boyfriend, who is at a school

in Cardiff, has also suffered as I have taken it out on him a bit.'

Her parents still recall the horror of the lam call that told them their daughter had been hurt.

Confused, battered and unable to open her eyes, she had arrived at a friend's house after one of the gang had sent her home with a warning not to tell what had happened.

At first, the friend did not recognise her. Eventually she was taken to hospital in Merthyr Tydfil.

~~She was taken to hospital in Merthyr Tydfil. She was taken to hospital in Merthyr Tydfil. She was taken to hospital in Merthyr Tydfil.~~

~~At first she was terrified that she had been taken to a bank by a gang of boys. Then she crumpled and told detectives the truth.~~

Her mother, 47, has given up her shop assistant's job to spend more time with her, helping to rebuild her life.

There has been some progress. She has just taken nine OCEs and is transferring to a sixth-form college in Cardiff to study for A-level French, music and sociology. And she is talking about trying for a degree at Liverpool University.

There have been happy family outings and work as a volunteer at a home for mentally handicapped adults. But there is still a lot of healing to be done.

'My daughter's self-confidence has gone completely,' her father said. 'She has to re-establish herself in society.'

women: general

It's pay-back time

Move over Thelma and Louise. After recent real-life cases, **Linda Grant** looks at the glamour of women and crime

A WOMAN in her twenties armed with a semi-automatic pistol is currently wanted by Kent CID for the hold-up of four sub-post offices and petrol stations. Meanwhile in the US, bounty hunters hungry for a \$25,000 reward are hunting two psychiatric nurses on the run after jumping bail. The women are charged with persuading men they met on a telephone dating service to strip naked, consent to be handcuffed and then robbing them at gunpoint. When last heard of the pair were disguised as nuns.

It's hard not to smile. The two nurses, Rose Turford and Joyce Stevens, are, inevitably being dubbed the Thelma and Louise of Nevada and Texas. "They get all of what they do from movies and books," says the Clement Romeo, a Houston bail bondsman, who says that trying to capture them has been "the two most frustrating months of my life".

Where else would they find their role models? Swapping stories at the beauty parlour? What women know about guns we mostly learn from the silver screen, and the association of women and crime has an undeniable glamour. A beautiful woman with a weapon is a teasing paradox, a sexually loaded symbol. I am hot, I am dangerous, she says. The *temptress* of cinema is propelled forward by this wetting of male erotic imagination in the person of chic murderers, amoral, greedy, bloodthirsty but finally betrayed by love, the woman's heart which let her down. "I won't be a sap for any woman," Humphrey Bogart calls out to the villainess Mary Astor as she disappears behind the iron bars of the lift on the way to her execution.

But each generation forms its own archetype. In *Bonnie and Clyde*, 25 years later, Faye Dunaway created a new prototype for women in crime: the marginal, modish outlaw, at odds with society and its morality. Subsequent films such as *Badlands* continued the theme of the drifting, artistic killers: couples as much in love with the media image of violence as with each other.

It was *Thelma and Louise* who finally provided women with models of female violence which seemed to escape retribution. Death in a pool of blood. Like the characters in *Basic Instinct* and *The Last Seduction*, they embody a dream of freedom. In the latter film we see a woman use her brains and her sexuality to manipulate the men around her for her own self-interest. Leaving a set full of corpses and \$700,000 the richer, we last see her being walked to her limo. Why do we cheer these women on? Because they finally break the cycle of women as the victim of crime.

"Women are socialised into docility, acquiescence and passivity," says Chris Tchaikovsky, director of the campaign organisation Women in Prison. "It's the Lorena Bobbitt factor. A small part of us is thrilled by these women." In grubby, unreconstructed, unglamorous real life, 35 per



Modish outlaw... Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde*

cent of women prisoners are behind bars for non payment of debt. Others are in prison for drug and prostitution offences, social security fraud and shoplifting. Of those convicted of violent crime, most have struck back at battering husbands. While Rosemary West awaits trial, there are no female serial killers, no women behind bars for sex offences. *Women do not quarrel* the prospect of gangs of teenage girls breaking through their mother's locks and making off with the TV.

If there has been an increase in violent crime committed by women, it is not because large numbers of women have seen *The Last Seduction* and are busy planning their criminal route to a tax free haven in the Bahamas. "The only girl gang I know of is the Pram Posse in Shepherd's Bush who do a bit of shoplifting," says Tchaikovsky. The other better-known team of daring desperados were the girls who mugged Elizabeth Hurley at knife-point last year. Homeless and jobless, they got away with a whole £10 after an afternoon spent drinking cheap sweet wine.

The numbers of women charged with offences involving violence against the person has doubled in the past decade, to 9,400 a year. The average daily prison population of females jailed for violent crimes has jumped from 240 in 1992 to 360 last year, though these are still tiny figures compared to male offenders. Tchaikovsky believes that the incidence of women involved in violent crime may be rising as a result of crack cocaine. "Crack is cheap and the buzz is very empowering followed by a chronic come-down coupled with feelings of aggression. That's a recipe for violent crime." But even if women are using crack and carrying weapons, they tend to be accomplices to men. Very few women have murdered for pecuniary motives, Tchaikovsky argues.

So what are we to make of an in Kent? Is she Thelma, the store with grace and a highwayman of the late 20th? An eye witness, cashier in a Shell station near Rochester in a home-made black t-shirt with eyes roughly cut out (knit it?), green tracksuit in black bomber jacket, pink t-shirt and gloves. Minty reports: "I pointed the gun and said, 'I've got money in the till, hurry up, I'm joking.' She said she didn't think that was all the cash I had in the till. I could hear it click firing position and that was most frightening because her hand was shaking. I thought she'd make the till empty."

Is this a male belittling of a temporarily more powerful than himself? Of the fantasies that have taken Kent, the county CID says: "It's unusual for a woman to get in armed robberies, participating on her own. As it's usual, we are assuming this has been done by the same woman. The woman has been identified as being in her twenties. If she has an urgent need for money, the far more traditional crime that she could have followed with lower penalties: prostitution. That has been the usual dialogue between men and women when they are short of cash: 'I'll break and enter, I'll sell my body.' Which, we know ourselves, is the most victim who is most likely to end up with a drug habit and an incurable disease. Is that what was going through the woman's mind as she aimed the gun? Better upright than on your back. And the two nurses in America screw than get screwed."

When they are bad, they are very, very bad

WJMACA: GEA.

If I see a bunch of hard girls coming towards me on the street, I cross the road. It's the girls that get you round here - they're the ones who mug you, beat you up, not the boys, they don't attack girls," says Jane, 14, from north London, as six of her peers nod vigorously.

For these girls, there was nothing that unusual about last week's fatal beating of a 13-year-old girl in Corby, Northamptonshire, by a schoolgirl mob. Marcelle, 14, says: "That happened with those kids beating up that girl could have happened round here. Loads of girls go into hospital after fights and it's not news. The only reason this has blown up is because someone died. Like with Leah Betts and Ecstasy. Girls beat up

girls really badly round here, it's quite a thing."

For these girls, the notion that females are the 'gentle sex' is ridiculous. In their world teenage girls regularly carry knives - pen knives, kitchen knives, flint knives - and if you happen to brush up against one, or look at her the wrong way, 'she'll do you'.

Dominique, 14, describes a typical incident, which happened a few months ago: "We were walking home after a rave about 3am when we saw three white girls coming towards us. There were eight of us, all girls, so my mate Donna said, 'Go and hit 'em'. They hadn't even brushed past us, but Donna thought they were screwing her - ing her dirty-looks!."

She went round all of us, saying

Look at these girls - or their boyfriends - the wrong way and they're reliable to beat or knife you, says Eleanor Mills

"Go on, you hit 'em". We said, "No", so she pulled out a knife, yelled, "You're all pussies" and went and hit them herself."

That was only the beginning. She came back and was still so angry with us for not hitting them that she got Kim's head. Kim was part of Donna's group and started whacking it against billboards and the pavement and screaming her against the phone box. She stopped after about 10 minutes, but was proud of Kim for holding her tears in. If she'd cried, she'd have got hit worse."

The others confirm this version

of events, and Dominique continues: "Donna's just bad, because she's drunk, her mum's an alkie too, she's had a bad time - there's been worse than her."

"Yeah, but she's still the source of all young girls' terror," counters Kelly. "Do you remember when Chloe told us she was downstairs when we were at McDonald's? We all froze, she scared. It wasn't even funny when she said it was a joke. They all laugh."

The girls agree that female fights are usually about 'boys or back-ground'. As Dominique explains: "Girls don't get enough respect

from boys, so they feel impotent and get extremely angry. It's bad because they just want to prove themselves."

They just want to prove themselves. Some of the most violent girls come from poor families, where they've been beaten up about themselves. If you feel angry with your family, but you can't say anything because you're the best in your family, you take it out on others. My mum said when I was little, 'If someone hits you, hit them back harder'. She said if I didn't, she'd hit me twice as hard. I'd never start something but if someone started on me, I'd have 'em."

Girls don't get enough respect

Why do they fight about boys? "Girls fancy the bad boys who cheat on them," says Kelly. "But when they find out that a boy's been cheating, they don't yell at the slack boyfriend, they beat up the other girl instead. They'll go, 'I'm going to eat your pussy like a sandwich, you bitch'. It's all about stopping the other girl looking attractive."

Calby, 14, said: "Last week one of my friends got mugged outside school by three girls. They punched her in the face for her cash card and about £1. The next day the girls said hello to her in school. She was really shocked and upset."

Carl muggers are not always after money alone. "Girls mug girls for jewellery or pulka clothes - they'll even take

trainers off of people's feet if it's labels they want, like Nike," explains Clare, 14.

But while teenagers are well aware of girl-on-girl violence, Jane puts things into perspective. "I don't go to school in fear every day, because I've got the support of my peer group," she explains. "It doesn't happen all the time, and, to a certain extent, you can avoid it."

"I try and keep myself out of trouble - if I walk down the street and I have to pass hard girls, I look straight ahead or down at the pavement. If I'm walking around without my friends, I tuck my chains in and pull my sleeves over my hands to hide the rings. You never think it's going to happen to you, but I'd rather be safe than sorry."

7/9/95

1996

DTel *Case:*

Career shoplifter is banned from 500 Tesco stores

By Sandra Barwick

A SHOPLIFTER has been banned by the High Court from going into any Tesco store in England and Wales.

James Heritage has already been barred from all branches of Sainsbury's and local shops near his home in Walsgrove, Coventry.

As he left court yesterday, he said: "I want to give up. But shoplifting is all I have known since I was at school and I am good at it."

"It was the one thing I knew how to do without hurting anybody else."

Media attention meant that he now had no choice but to give up, he said. "Where can I go now?" he asked. "I have become too well known."

Heritage, 37, has spent 22 years as a shoplifter and estimates he has been on 20,000 shoplifting forays. He has been prosecuted 40 times and has spent almost five years in prison.

"I get a buzz out of it," said Mr Heritage, who compared shoplifting to a drug. "I didn't do it for the money. If I had, I would have had everything I ever wanted."

Heritage, who has two daughters, aged seven and 14, said he realised that his actions put up prices, but said they did not hurt individuals.

He refused to disclose his methods, but said his record haul was 189 bottles of spirits from Tesco, which took around three-and-a-half hours in several trolley trips.

In the High Court, Heritage, who is currently doing community service, agreed to be bound by an injunction preventing him from entering Tesco's stores.

He was represented at the private hearing by the Citizens' Advice Bureau, and



Heritage: 'I want to stop'

said afterwards that he thought the ban would help him give up his shoplifting career.

"I have got to give this up. At the end of the day the only reason I have gone along with this order is because I want to stop."

He was banned from Sainsbury's stores in 1994 after being prosecuted 15 times for shoplifting.

A spokesman for Tesco, which has almost 500 stores in England and Wales, said the firm was pleased that the injunction had been issued.

"This is an unfortunate but necessary action given Mr Heritage's persistent shoplifting and was taken only as a last resort to protect our property," he said.

Mr Heritage, who has managed to stay out of jail for the past three years, now hopes to enter the superstores by a different door, by offering them his services as a security consultant.

"I'm sure it would work," he said. "I could give them an insight into the mind of a shoplifter and show them what to look out for."

Daily Telegraph

Women win brain battle

Men's mental power burns out earlier

WOMEN have been claiming it for decades and now scientists have proved it.

What they lack in brawn, women make up for in brains.

They have greater mental stamina than men, according to new medical research. Men are like cars, say leading scientists. A new model will speed along and reach its destination without problems. But an old car will struggle to get there if it is driven too hard.

Men "burn out" faster because they lose their brain cells more rapidly by using up extra fuel in the tissues where thought processes take place.

By contrast, women have become more articulate, imaginative and intellectually agile because their brains remain intact for longer as they grow older.

Three hundred people aged between 18 and 80 took part in a study involving brain



COOPER: Men build up frustrations
by PAUL FULLER



BRAGG: Women have more stamina
from teenage years

scans and psychological tests. Findings may help to explain why men are at greater risk of developing dementia and live shorter lives.

British men live for an average of 73.2 years compared with 78.7 years for women.

Damage to men's brains begins almost before they have left school.

The capacity of men to perform a variety of mental tasks was found to deteriorate significantly faster than

women from teenage years onwards. The problem is that men find it harder to switch off when they have finished work.

While a male accountant at home still uses brain cells linked to mathematical calculation, his female counterpart has shut hers down for the night.

"Men may need to learn to relax their brain in the same way they relax their muscles," said Ruben Gur, professor of psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania, who led the

study. "We see a fairly dramatic decline in attentional capacities of men between the ages of 18 and 44, whereas in women we see not a hint of decline."

Broadcaster and "Intellectual" Melvyn Bragg conceded: "I have never doubted that women have more mental stamina than men."

Novelist Jilly Cooper said men build up frustrations by driving themselves too hard. "Men don't know how to let off steam," she said. "It vents itself in rage or violence."

CALLING BRITAIN'S BRIGHTEST

from PETER SHERIDAN
in Los Angeles

TOMORROW'S "master race" could all vote Conservative, smoke big cigars and be able to calculate the square root of Pi in an instant.

For a Californian sperm bank is looking to members of Mensa in Britain for donations to create a race of super-intellecuals.

The club for the brainy includes former Tory party chairman Jeremy Hanley, TV's Countdown maths whizz Carol Vorderman and fund-raiser Sir Jimmy Savile among its members.

The sperm bank, called the Repository for Germinal Choice, claims some women have already been artificially inseminated with the sperm in Britain.

And they have given birth to children with IQs 20 per cent higher than average, it says. Now adverts asking for donations to the cause have been placed in Mensa's magazine.

They were paid for by an 89-year-old businessman called Robert Graham and Willard Hoyt, who runs a Mensa eugenics group, dedicated to selective breeding as a means to improve the human race.

Jim'll fix it for the master race

before being allowed to father a superbaby.

This includes such questions as: "Have you ever had delusions of greatness or omnipotence?" and "How often do you lose your temper?"

The controversial plans could overshadow this summer's celebrations to mark the anniversary of Mensa which was set up 50 years ago so those with high IQs could meet similar people.

The sperm donors will never meet their partners.

Inventor Sir Clive Sinclair is in favour of the scheme. "If women want to have particular sperm, that's not a bad way to get it," he said.

All the recipients are told is a general description of the donor and whether he is a scientist or mathematician.

They may never know if he is a cigar-chomping former disc jockey with a bizarre taste in hair styles.

on 11/15/85 12 Kennedy 1986

Daily



Mail

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1966

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 35p

Daily Mail
HISTORICALLY
OVER 11 MILLION NOW AHEAD!
PLAY TODAY ON PAGE 65



Why Stalin's daughter is living on welfare in an English village

REMMAIL Magazine : PAGES 37, 38, 39



The real problem is not the hard-pressed single

Crime:

mum or pensioner putting a treat in their pocket... *Shoplifting*

**BLAIR BLINDERS
ON SHOPLIFTING**

By DAVID HUGHES 1.4.66, p. 11, 12

TONY BLAIR ran into a new storm over law and order last night after taking an astonishingly soft line on small-scale shoplifting.

The Labour leader suggested that 'hard-pressed' single mothers or pensioners pocketing 'treats' were not a serious concern.

The real threat, he told a meeting of retailers, came from organised gangs.

His speech was seized on by Tories who accused Labour of 'excusing' crime and criminals. Home Secretary Michael Howard declared: 'Theft is theft. It is wrong. It should always be condemned. That is clearly a lesson Labour still have to learn.'

A spokesman for the Association of British Chambers of Commerce said: 'This is extremely surprising. Crime, particularly in small shops, is mainly petty shoplifting and shops lose thousands of pounds through it every year. Petty theft is a big, big problem.'

Fay Ouldman, of the Federation of Small Businesses, said: 'People may start with pilfering, but it can lead on to bigger things. He needs to ask where these gangs begin.'

The Blair blunder came in a speech to the annual dinner in London of the British Retail Consortium. He said retail crime cost £1.5 billion a year — putting £90 on every household's shopping bills — and promised to investigate new measures to fight it.

But he went on: 'The real problem is not the hard-pressed single mother or pensioner putting a treat in the pocket rather than a £50 note. The problem is organised gangs who choose to make a living from this sort of crime.'

The remark reopened the angry law and order debate sparked two weeks ago when

Turn to Page 2, Col. 2

SERENA'S TREASURE TRAIL



Serena Soames, pictured with her husband, the Armed Forces Minister was rewarded yesterday after hunting down stolen family treasures

Full story — Page FIVE

INSIDE: Littlejohn 11, Keith Waterhouse 12, Diary 35, Letters 53, TV & Radio 54-56, Scratchcard 65, Coffee Break 69-70, City 71-73, Sport 74-80

Labour says no to Scott lock-in farce

THE Government's high-security arrangements for allowing Opposition leaders a preview of the Scott report into the arms-to-Iraq affair were greeted with fury yesterday.

Labour's Robin Cook, who described the plans as 'audacious' said: 'The Opposition are being treated like common criminals.'

Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, Liberal Democrat leader in the Lords, said he refused to be effectively locked up in a 'padded cell' to read the 1,800-page report.

Both he and Labour leader Lord Rishi said they would boycott the arrangement.

Tony Blair also turned down the opportunity, saying he had no intention of accepting the extraordinary and insulting conditions proposed.

The row is certain to add to the supercharged atmosphere expected in the

By Political Editor

Commons at 3.45pm today when Board of Trade President Ian Lang unveils Sir Richard's findings.

Labour published a letter from Mr Lang describing the arrangements for Mr Cook to view the report at noon.

It said that a car would take him from the Commons to the Department of Trade and Industry nearby, with an official escort throughout — 'for your own convenience and security' — he would be taken to a room to read the report. The escort would be

Turn to Page 2, Col. 2

15 February 1966

Yvonne/Independent?

As two girls face charges of manslaughter following the death of a fellow teenager, Yvonne Roberts looks at the facts behind female violence

11.1.85A: 1991.

Women on the verge

WVVA's General

ON MONDAY NIGHT, in County, 13 year old Louise Allen died. She had been surrounded by a crowd of girls after being beaten to a pulp. Two fellow 13 year old girls have been accused of her killing. Allen's headmaster, James Platt, in expressing his grief, endeavoured to claim a sense of proportion.

"Incidents like this happen in every town in every corner of every land," he said. "I don't think there is a culture of violence. Nobody set out on Monday night to kill anybody."

The difference, of course, is that "incidents like this" have traditionally always been the business of a certain type of lad. Underlined by James Platt and in ignorance of precisely what occurred, yesterday's headline in The Sun read: "Kicked to death by 30 schoolgirl yobs."

Much of the press will now be pre-occupied, yet again, with apocalyptic visions of a "new" breed of female: violent, lawless, minus testosterone, but fuelled by something infinitely worse... feminism.

But is female violence on the increase? And if it is, who is to blame? Is it feminism? Or today's fight for civilisation on the streets, in which

and politicians

mean to lead. Many women were and are extremely violent, but only to themselves: self mutilation, anorexia, drug abuse.

(Cases of extreme female savagery have never been difficult to find. Rosemary West and Rwanda being the most recent examples — but judges, like others, have held dear to the mad or bad categories. In 1972, Maria Kossel and Christina Molloy, both 18, who had terrorised their

neighbourhood for years, murdered Edna Phillips, a pensioner, using a dog chain, a knife, broken glass and scissors. The judge called them "evil products of the modern age".

Since the eighties, popular culture has shown women doing it for themselves — as psychofemmes. Interestingly, in film, while we've had the mad and the bad (Basic Instinct, Single White Female), we've also had what

approximates to real life: "nice" women drawn into violence by circumstance (Thelma and Louise); not so nice women who enjoy what they're doing, not least because it is lucrative (The Last Seduction); and the just plain nasty. In Blue Steel, the heroine explains she is a cop because

"I like slapping people's heads against the walls"

Women may commit

under pressure? There's something far more complex about — a combination of influences as complex as that which it takes to drive in men?

Officially, female violence

appears to be rising. Over the past five years, reported female violent crime has risen by 12 per cent — four times the rate of male violent crime. Since 1973, offences involving women carrying out robbery, murder, assault and drug related crimes have increased by a staggering 250 per cent. In particular, however, the number of offences remains small. In 1981, 5,300 women were found guilty of violence against persons; in 1994, the figure was 9,700.

What is obviously not known is the amount of unreported crime, the scale of random acts of physical abuse carried out by women. It isn't difficult to come across stories. A fracas in a minicab office: a woman walls, three teenage girls jump the queue. She objects. They punch, kick, black her eye, slap her. She is too frightened to make a report.

Female violence may be statistically small, but daily experience tells many of us that female aggression appears to abound. The restraints are off and feminism has helped to lift those restraints. The woman who screams abuse in her car, the belligerent teenager, the mother who beats hell out of her tiny child.

In the 19th century, criminologists were convinced that, biologically, women were too "nice", too programmed for nurturing, to give life — or living — a kick in the teeth. Hence a violent woman was out of the norm.

violence for many reasons — poverty, boredom, isolation, fear, greed, kicks, just like men'

Equally means that today, in fantasy and in real life, women too can become rapists, serial killers, psychopaths, sadists and all-round bad guys. In her book *Devil's Tan*

The Male, Alex Kishla writes that women may commit violence for many reasons — poverty, harassment, isolation, fear, greed, kicks, desire for attention, power and dominance, and in self defence. Just like men.

Critics will argue that feminism has destroyed the female ideal and with it the civilising habit it laid on women's behaviour. (Others will counter that too many women paid too high a price for that idea — trapped in economic dependency and powerlessness to the point at which their own lives were (and are) at risk.

Ann Lloyd, in *Doubly Deviant* Doubly Damned, Society's Treatment of Violent Women, reminds us that females are still more likely to be the recipients of violence than the instigators. She also points out that, if prison populations are any guide, then the same type of woman gets convicted now as years ago: the violent, the ill-educated, the survivors of that most brutalising of experiences, being "in care".

Arguably, if feminism has encouraged women to look to self-esteem, the importance of education and the need to take control of one's life, then it just might have prevented some women from joining the group who are abandoned in Holloway or who live by violence.

And it may yet persuade others that raising a fist in defiance is best left as a symbolic gesture.

WOMEN

Women: General

new
in
April

Girls get

Girls are beating boys in exams. Young women have moved into former male preserves like the professions. Feminism has brought greater equality. But is it also leading more women to resort to physical violence? Rebecca Fowler reports

There is something unique about being in the range of young women using physical violence against their own sex. We have come to expect violence from boys. We don't expect it from girls.

Sandwiched between the events that led up to Louise Allen's hit kiss, being pushed to hospital, reportedly after she was set upon by a group of girls "like a pack of animals" after she left a football club to her home in Cully, Monaghan townshere, on Monday evening. I can't in a violent age the news of her death was met with disbelief.

For the community where Louise's death is being treated as a terrible and isolated tragedy that has shaken the Roman Catholic school where she was a pupil it is a tragedy that it is bound to feel even over the more common evidence that young girls are more violent often to one another, than women to other people.

Of course it is a myth that girls are both angels and devils. In fact, in both aspects of the playground with antagonism and verbal abuse, including spreading rumours and excluding members of a group that until recently they had not resorted to physical violence.

old neighbour, in which they strangled her with a dog chain; two women who tortured and burned a 16-year-old girl to death in Manchester; and a host of recent crimes in America, from where the trend of female gangs has already started to catch on.

Kibera, a child protection charity, has seen an increase in the number of calls from girls who are the victims of violent attacks by other girls. The charity received 80 reports of violence in 1993, which rose to 97 in 1994 and to 119 in 1995, varying from kicking and pushing to one group attack in which a girl was pinned down in the showers by classmates who pushed a bar of soap into her anus.

Michael Elliott, director of Kibera, says young women are getting a confusing

Though women are becoming more violent, there is not yet a culture of violence like that which thrives among boys

and *Tank Girl* both portrayed younger women who seized their independence through violence.

The 2,000-strong Demos survey of 18 to 34-year-olds made it clear that women had become more assertive. They are just as likely to travel, rock-climb and bungee-jump as men. There are now more female solicitors under 30 than male, and gradually women are ascending to the top positions in their professions. Women have also won the basic right to equal opportunities in work and education, something that was unheard of half a century ago.

But for a generation of women who have inflicted the fruits of feminism there is a risk of also taking on the most negative aspects of a society once controlled exclusively by men. Heart disease and alcoholism are rising in women, female harassment against men is also on the increase, and the early evidence suggests the connection between violence and poverty is as strong in women as it is in men.

Nick Winkfield, a partner in MORI, the opinion polling organisation, which conducted the research for Demos, says: "Women in the lower social groups are much more tolerant of violence and more willing to use force to get what they want, compared to well-off women."

The first study on female violence and the first to be reported in such a leading magazine that girls are being victimized with almost as much enthusiasm as boys. Women's lives have been transformed by a growing sense of equality with men. Yet it is not the men who are shown as taking up some of the darkest aspects of male behavior and making up part of the same response to their frustrations and fears.

In the past five years I made thirty-nine films on the 1970s and 1980s, the latter covering the 1970s and 1980s. I've written about women's violence, murder, and drug-related crimes. But none of my 250 past years since 1971. Although the numbers remain small, with my statement a handful of girls are reported to be in prison in 1971 compared to 5,000 in 1992, such a pattern is emerging: women are becoming more violent.

Most disturbing are the signs of increasing violence among younger women who, at the most extreme level, are being murdered. American style gangs are some of the most violent. If Judith Harkley, the actress and model was formerly targeted by such a gang in London last year (in a survey by Penn), the independent film, it emerges that in the 15 to 17 age group, girls are more likely to take pleasure in violence than boys, recognizing that we may have a new generation of female aggressors in the making.

Among the most disturbing recent cases were two 17-year-old girls who carried out a vicious attack in 1992 on their 70-year-

old grandfather. "I had a girl who thought that to be young and violent was like a boy. There is a whole generation of films in which the heroine is a 'bad girl,'" she says. "I'm not sure if that's the only explanation for the increase in violence by girls in the same way that we do. I think we need to look at the way we've got to look at it. They've become a generation in a film and got up. They don't make violence the same way."

The culture of the 1970s in which women are portrayed as more assertive, and more aggressive, has changed and is changing in the early Nineties. The film *Thelma and Louise*, in which two female cops a trail of revenge against violent and aggressive men, appeared to an older generation of women who have fought for a hard-won sense of equality. As I find in among those who believe in women's and women's subjects to younger girls: "Where do you want to go? You want to go to the bank, but back at the bank, we are going to get you. We've gone from *Thelma and Louise* to *Thelma and Louise*. This is a woman trying to be more like men, but instead of taking the best traits, like assertiveness, they've gone for the worst: violence."

Women have always been portrayed as talented practitioners of evil, but it is as if Lady Macbeth has finally taken up the dagger herself. *Thelma and Louise* was followed by a host of films with subversive, violent heroines including *Basic Instinct*, *The Last Seduction* and *Single White Female*. More recently, *Thelma & Louise*

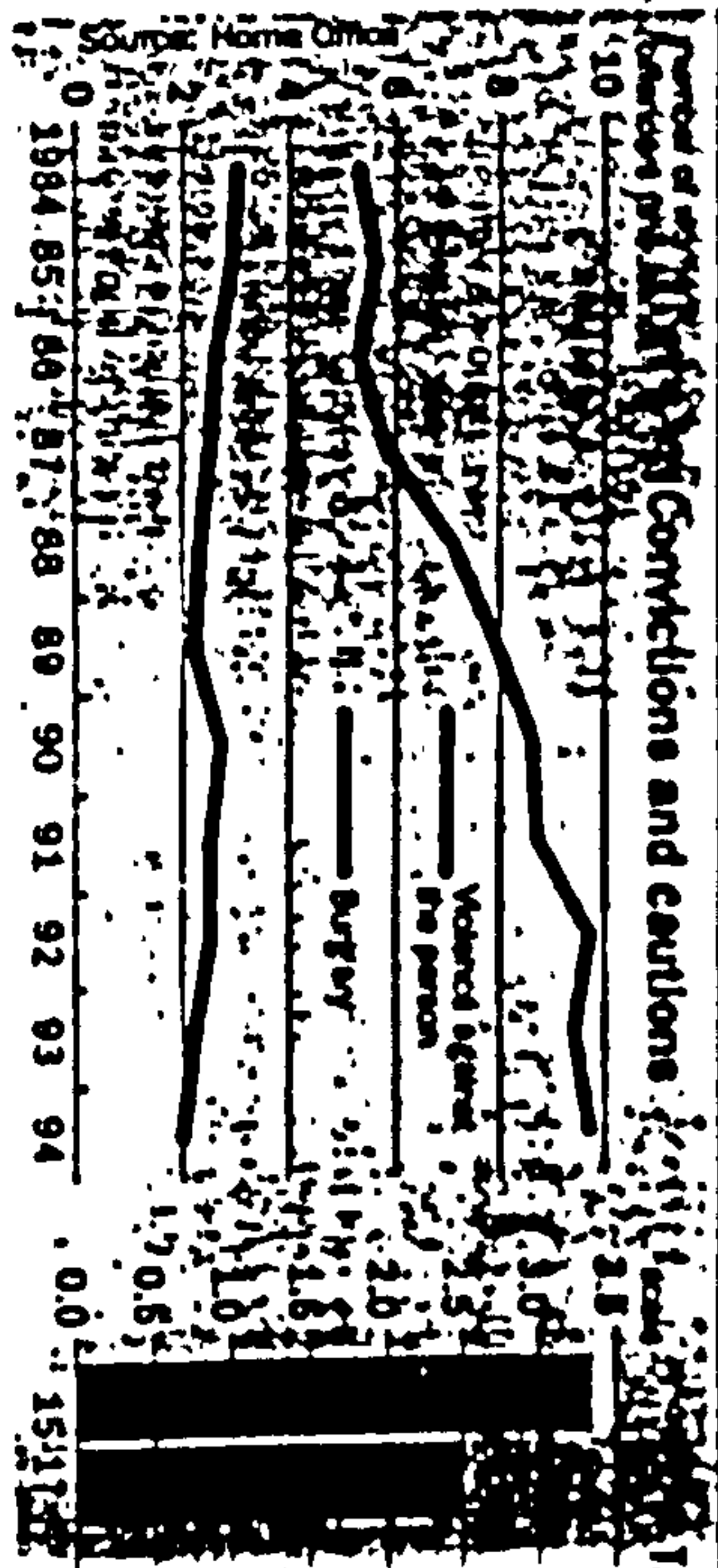
Women's lives have been transformed and women's crimes, from Sylvia Plath to Rosemary West, have been dismissed as so far beyond the pale that it is impossible to do an analysis from their actions. But the deadly increase in violent crimes among women, especially those in their teens, is having a tremendous effect on the relationship between women, violence and power.

Those who work with children believe that the most significant factor in the rise in female crime is the exposure of all young people to violence. Peter Wilson, director of Young Men's, which campaigns for children's mental well-being, explained: "Women may have become more assertive, but across the genders violence is often the response to a violent upbringing, combined with the fact that children are now exposed to a host of violent images on television."

Despite the increase in female violence, it is significant that girls are still reluctant to be known to be violent. Research at Sheffield University into bullying among 7,000 children suggests that girls are just as likely to use physical violence when they are bullied as boys, but they are ashamed to admit to it. Although women are becoming more violent, there is not yet the equivalent of the macho culture of violence which thrives among boys. That reluctance to boast about violence may offer some hope of containing the rise in female aggression. But the statistics suggest that female violence may well be here to stay... in which case the playground is set to become an even more frightening place than it already is.

How women are becoming more violent? American gang violence has influenced girl gangs in Britain.

How women are becoming more violent



2/5/96

Barrister defends covert videoing of 'sexy' princess in top store

crime: shoplifting. 21/8/96

Stuart Millar

PRINCESS Diana and other women had no right to complain if they appeared provocatively dressed in public and men took pictures of them, a court was told yesterday.

Less than a week after the princess gained an injunction against a photographer, barrister Jacqueline Samuel told Southwark crown court in south London that criticism of men who took photographs or video footage of women in sexy clothes, even if without their knowledge, was unfounded.

Her comments came during legal arguments while she was prosecuting Gary Archer, the former head of

security at Harvey Nichols, for two charges of theft from the London store. The judge later dismissed the charges.

Mr Archer, aged 36, from Somerset, was branded a "video rat" in January after allegations that security cameras at the store were used to record the princess as she shopped and met a property millionaire, Christopher Whalley, in the coffee shop. The 25-minute video contained lingering close-ups of her cleavage and legs. Mr Archer's defence argued the "video rat" tag prejudiced his trial.

"It is no offence at all to take videos of people who wear low-neck dresses in public places. Princess Diana was in a public place — I think criticism of a person

who took the video would be unfounded."

Mr Archer, who resigned from Harvey Nichols in 1994 over an unrelated matter, denies making the tapes, which were discovered in his desk. Police were called but it was decided no offence had been committed.

Earlier, Mark Milliken-Smith, defending, told the court that the theft charges, which involved two rugs, two walkie-talkies, a tapestry border and a footstool appeared to have been instigated by Mr Archer's common-law wife, Susan, after they separated last year. There had been undue delay, and the prosecution and police had made mistakes. It was also possible that Mrs Archer, a prosecution witness, had

soft the story of the video as part of a campaign against her husband.

The judge, Recorder Desmond Browne QC, agreed that the story was not in itself prejudicial. He dismissed the charges, saying the possibility of a prosecution witness having instigated the charges could be prejudicial, and the lapse since 1993 when the rugs were allegedly taken meant Mr Archer was unable to trace a defence witness.

After the hearing, Miss Samuel said: "The point was whether the defendant would have his reputation lowered in the view of a jury by taking a photograph of a woman in a low cut dress.

"It is not necessarily my point of view — I was using a legal argument."

Gentle sex indulges in thrill-seeking violence

Girl gangs raise fears of female swing to aggression

Eleanor Mills

BILLIAM is facing an epidemic of female violence, particularly among teenage girls who 'take more pleasure in aggression than their male counterparts', research by the think-tank Demos reveals.

A report to be published on Tuesday states: 'We have discovered a remarkable attachment to violence among younger women... we are already hearing of growing numbers of girl gangs and criminals. Our figures suggest it could become an epidemic.'

Researchers found that 13 per cent of women aged 18 to 21 thought it was acceptable to use violence to get something they wanted.

According to the report, women have become more assertive and 'masculinised' in the past 10 years. The propensity towards physical aggression is confirmed by Home Office and police statistics.

The number of women charged with violent offences has doubled from 5,199 to 9,397 in the past 10 years. By contrast, the number of men charged with the same offences over the same period has remained constant, at about 50,000.

The rising tide of female violence is reflected in an increase in the number of women sent to prison for violent crimes. In 1972, the average was 214; last year it was 310. Women are also behaving worse in prison, according to a new report into offences against prison discipline.

Police confirm that women are becoming more aggressive. Det Sgt Dick Hunt of Kent CID is hunting a woman in her mid twenties who has carried

One woman has carried out four armed robberies in the past month

out four armed robberies on garages and post offices in the last month. 'In my 28 years of policing I have never known a woman to commit armed robberies on her own. This woman is brazen,' he said.

In Glasgow earlier this year, two women viciously attacked a man outside a pub. PC Graham MacDiarmid of Dinningthorpe police said: 'It is unusual for girls to attack men round here, but among younger girls, those between 13 and 19, we have seen a lot of

incidents in the past two years of girls using violence against each other.

'It seems to be connected to a rise in female drinking. We get gangs of teenage girls drinking sweet fortified wine and then losing control of themselves.'

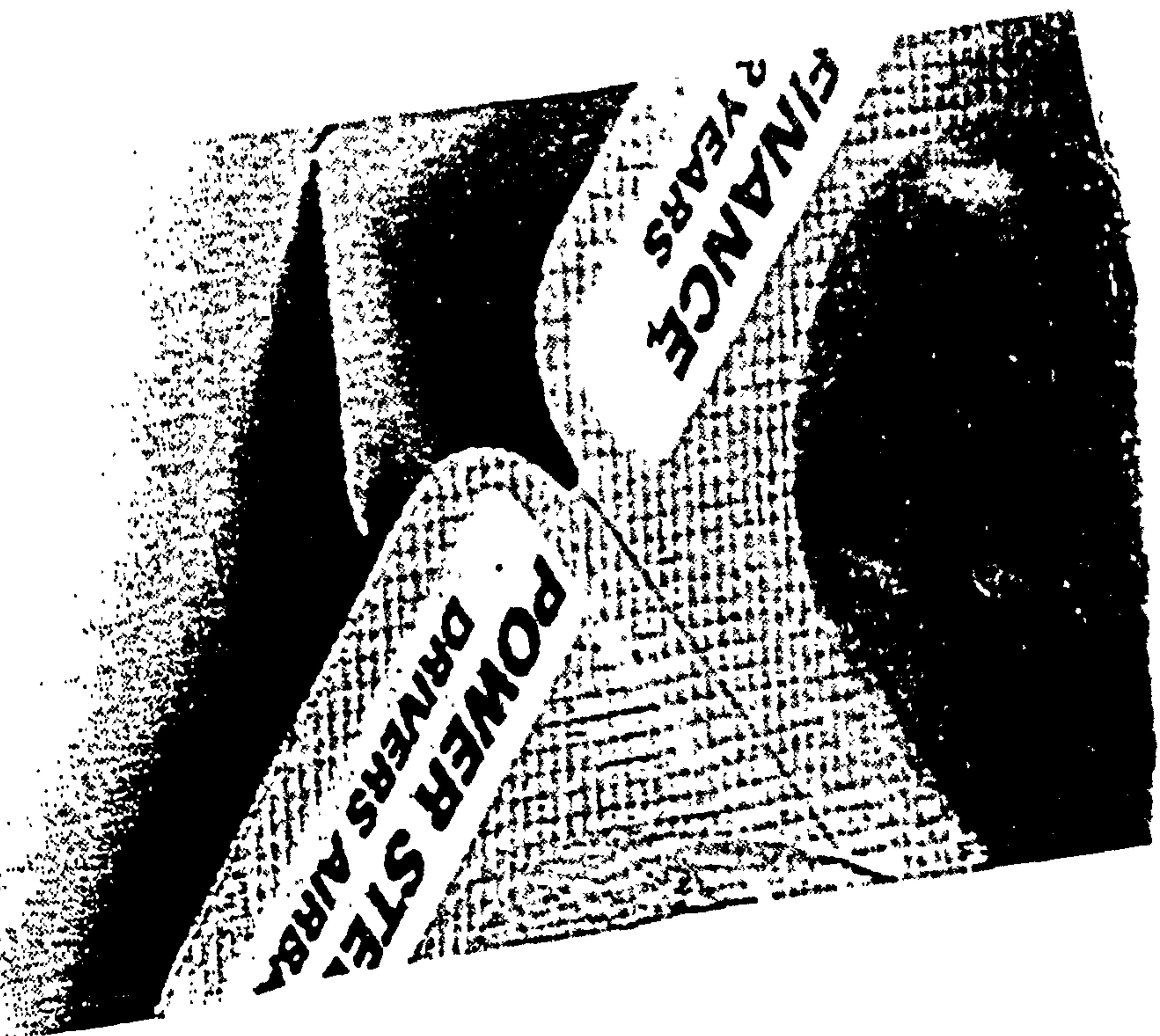
The Demos report comments: 'Young women are exhibiting what have typically been seen as male attributes -- they are less emotional than older women, more willing to take risks and seek excitement in such things as foreign travel, parachuting, rock climbing and drug taking.'

The report is based on extensive new data commissioned by Demos from the British Household Panel Study and Mori. Researchers compiled a 'pleasure in violence index' where they constructed a series of questions to assess people's reactions to violence. It discovered that girls aged 15 to 17 were 'taking more pleasure in violence' and were more likely to resort to it than their male contemporaries.

On the index they found females aged 15 to 17 scored 3.35, whereas males of the same age scored 2.49.

'Freedom's Children: Work, Relationships and Politics for 18-34-year-olds in Britain Today', Demos, price £9.95.

Guardian 24 September 1995



Girlz 'n' the Hood

Guardian/Independent?
WOMEN:
GENERAL

An attack on actress Elizabeth Hurley prompted fears of LA-style girl-gang culture exploding on the streets of Britain. **Sally Weale** reports

ONPAPER. Colette Scotton would probably conform to the tabloid nightmare of rampaging girl criminals bringing terror to the streets of Britain. Just 23, she has two convictions for grievous bodily harm after attacking police officers — one had to take time off work to recover from the injuries her teeth caused. She slashed her mother's boyfriend with a broken bottle across the arm, resulting in an injury which required 38 stitches (he was lucky — she was aiming for his face). And she smashed up her mother's flat in a drunken rage — but not before she had thumped the boyfriend a few times after a family row.

She has two suspended sentences behind her, an assortment of fines and probation orders and an earlier problem with Scott. She calls it binge drinking — others call it alcoholism. She began boozing at the age of 11, swigging from her mother's bottle when she was too far gone to notice. After that there were spells in care and foster homes.

In person, the reality could not be further from the media hype. Eight-months pregnant, her first child Shavanya pleading and pestering for attention, Colette is bright, funny and articulate. "Not a nice record," she says, her eyebrows arched wryly, after listing her convictions, with a little prompting from her probation officer.

It was the attack last November on Elizabeth Hurley, the actress-model who was threatened at knifepoint by four girls near her south-west London home, which more than any other single incident prompted speculation about girl gangs and the rise of violence among young women in this country. The probation service and ex-offender organisations found them-

selves bombarded with requests from journalists seeking out case histories to illustrate this apparent explosion of LA-style girl-gang culture on the streets of Britain.

There have been other recent cases of "unexpected" violence perpetrated by women, such as the female armed robber in Kent who held up a post office and two garages for cash (apparently her hand was shaking uncontrollably). And there was the Suzanne Capper trial, which heard how two women were part of a gang who tortured a 16-year-old girl for a week before burning her to death.

The consensus among experts, however, is that this supposed tidal wave of violence perpetrated by women does not exist. The vast majority of women cautioned or convicted by the courts are guilty of theft, handling, fraud and forgery, not crimes of violence. As Mary Barnish, senior probation officer at the Inner London Probation Service Women's Centre, says: "One woman does something somewhere and immediately there's a great moral panic. People think there's an epidemic of it."

Yet statistics and research produced last month by the National Association of Probation Officers do show an increase in the number of women jailed for offences involving violence. The overall figures are small but assistant general secretary Harry Fletcher believes the change is "quite dramatic", with particular concern surrounding women aged 21 and under.

In the last decade, the number of women found guilty or cautioned for an offence involving violence against the person has nearly doubled to 9,400 — a rise which has coincided with a shift towards greater use of cautioning from about a quarter of offences to nearly three-



quarters. But, most worryingly, the average daily prison population of women jailed for violent crimes has risen in the past two years from 240 in June 1992 to 360 in the same period this year.

According to Fletcher, who interviewed staff at Holloway Prison as part of his research, the increase has been primarily in street robbery, burglaries and fighting. Most of the women had a history of sexual abuse, often followed by a period of prostitution and drugs.

The image of amoral female gangs is wide of the mark," says Fletcher. "There has been a rise of 50 per cent in the number of women jailed for violence in the last three years, but the reasons are complex. The majority of the women are characterised by neglect, personal abuse, drug or alcohol abuse and low self-esteem. Many have themselves been the victims of violence. The problem needs help rather than incarceration."

Criminologists are keen, however, to put the statistics in perspective. To begin with, women make up less than 4 per cent of the total prison population. Figures for August 31 this year put

the total female prison population at 1,984, compared with 51,362 men. Sandra Walklate, reader in criminology at Keele University, says the numbers involved in crimes of violence are so small that any increase has to be pretty negligible. "It's true the gender difference between men and women in committing crime since 1950 has reduced. But whether that's significant over a long historical period, I don't know."

A closer look at women's convictions for violence shows most involve attacks in a domestic setting. "Women in general do not assault total strangers. There's usually a relationship of some kind," says Barnish. Of the 10-12 women she is working with who have convictions of violence, about half were involved in assaults against other women in disputes over boyfriends and the rest in either assaults on police officers, usually after drinking, or against men they know who have often been harassing them.

"There's this unspoken social contract that women are supposed to be the people who rear the children and pacify the men. You could

argue that, as women become less like doormats and begin to assert themselves, that will in some circumstances mean that some women will go too far and end up entangled in the law," Barnish says.

Colette Scotton has been out of trouble for some time now. She's looking forward to the birth of her second child. She knows she's got a temper and these days she keeps it in check. "There are a lot of women out there now who are standing up for themselves. I think 'good on them'. I know violence is not right but the way I see it we are living in a violent society. It's just the way we have to protect ourselves.

"In this day and age it's always men who are violent. I look at some of my friends and we're just getting up with the men. We're showing the men we're standing up on our own two feet.

"Women are fed up of being second-class citizens. Here in the 1990s we're fighting for equality. We are going to any length to stand up and say 'Right, we are people and this is what we want to do'. It's just a shame women have to resort to violence. But if that's the only way

15 November
 1996

Town halts as 200 screaming schoolgirls slug it out on streets

by SANDRA LAVILLE

MORE THAN 200 battling schoolgirls brought the centre of Wimbledon to a standstill in an organised gang fight over boyfriends and inter-school rivalry.

In what the police officer on duty described as "the biggest fight between schoolchildren" he had ever seen, the marauding youngsters fought, kicked and shouted in a rolling brawl which moved from the centre of Wimbledon station through the shopping mall before spilling out onto the streets.

Members of the public were drawn into the battle as they tried to get out of the way. One elderly woman who pitched

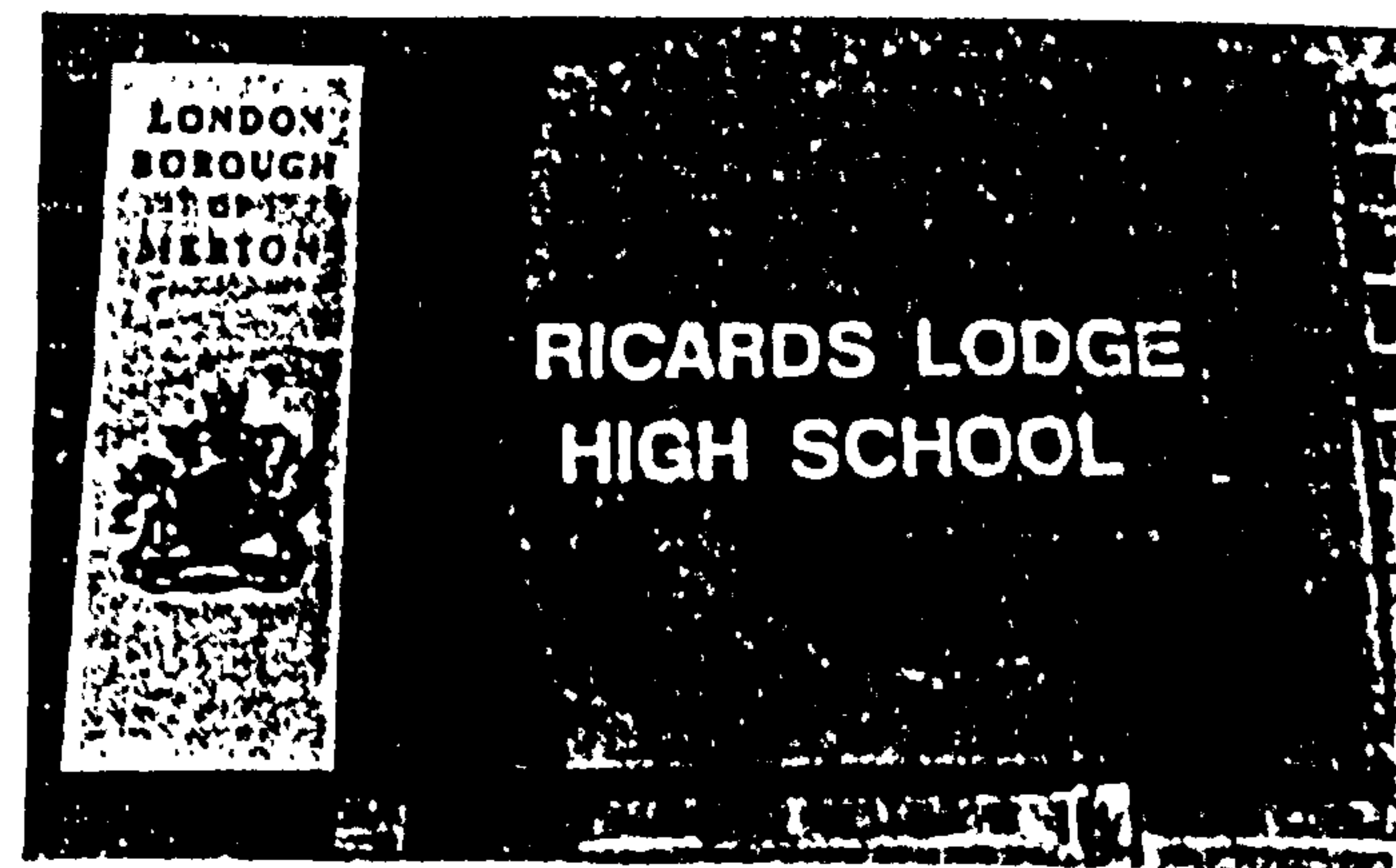
in with her walking stick was hit by a group of children. Inspector Bob Ferris, from Wimbledon police station, said: "It was like nothing I have ever seen before and it seemed very much like it was organised. The children revel in their anonymity, when the police arrive they know we do not know them, and we don't seem to have any effect."

"There were between two and three hundred children there and they were very intimidating. They were extremely disorderly and it seemed to be a pre-arranged fight although we have no proof of that."

Pupils from four schools were involved in the battle which broke out at Wimbledon Underground station at 4.45pm yesterday. The two schools principally involved were Ursuline Convent School and Ricards Lodge High School, where inter-school rivalry has been ongoing since 1982 when pupils fought over a boy.

Today, excited children arriving at the station could talk of nothing else but the brawl. One pupil from Ricards Lodge said: "It was a riot. There were hundreds of people involved. An old woman tried to come and stop them, she was waving her stick, but she got hit."

Most pupils said the fight started between teenagers from Ursuline Convent. Boys from Wimbledon College then joined in because one of their girlfriends was involved and then the rival Ricards Lodge pupils piled in with their fists to attack girls from Ursuline



Signs of the times: Ricards Lodge and Ursuline Convent schools have dev

Convent. Ursuline pupil Joanne Dox, 15, said: "At first, just a few people started fighting, then everyone joined in. It's a tradition at our school that there is rivalry with Ricards Lodge. It goes back a long way."

Lindsay Roberts, 15, said: "It was a massive fight. There were hundreds of police."

Crowds of pupils from Ricards Lodge gathered outside the station today threatening to cause a serious public disorder as they shouted and boasted about the brawl last night.

At least three children were arrested last night but later

released. Police called an emergency meeting with the senior teachers and heads involved yesterday. One taxi driver said the fighting had brought rush hour Wimbledon to a standstill.

Paul McDermott, a South West Trains employee, said: "It started off with just two girls fighting then suddenly all hell broke loose. Other kids came running up trying to have a go and the thing just took off from there."

Shopkeeper Prakash Makwana said: "We saw a huge gang running out of the station, as they ran they banged on the windows of the shops outside with their fists. They

Witnesses, but uninvolved: Ursuline Convent's CI

ally published in Britain yesterday

15/11/96
Duchess may not be able to stop spending money on herself

inclusion: gen
SHE has finally admitted it. In her interview on the BBC's Today programme yesterday the Duchess of York said she was addicted to shopping. *writes Kamal Ahmed.*

The idea of "shopaholics" may induce sniggers but psychologists have long recognised a syndrome known as onomania; the inability, even when over budget, to stop spending money on yourself.

It is a condition which could affect hundreds, possibly thousands, of people, most of them women. Last year the Government agreed funding for research at Oxford university to find the extent of the problem.

Experts say shopping gives respite from low self-esteem and depression. "Money is valued, so spending it lavishly similarly

makes one feel valued and this may be a way of bolstering one's self-esteem," said Corinne Usher, a clinical psychologist.

"Shopping is a great distraction. It takes time and it takes effort. But spending so much money can of course cause further difficulties. People can amass huge debts."

The duchess's debts have been estimated at £3.3 million, run up after holidays abroad including flights on Concorde and shopping trips in New York. Jackie Onassis was another "shopaholic", able to spend \$100,000 on one shopping trip.

Experts say that partners will often shop in revenge against their partners, who might be working late or not paying them enough attention.

She said it resembled a female version of humour typified by BBC1's popular situation comedy, Men Behaving Badly, and magazines like Loaded.

That's Lifest was astonished at the response when it first published its first "near-to-the-knuckle chuckle".

It now receives more than 150 a week, many unprintable. "Some are toe-curling; some come from 80-year-olds in spider writing and involve nuns and sheep," Ms Turner said.

"Readers tell us they cut them out and pin them up on the canteen wall. It is not sexist, but it's an affectionate pop at husbands and male bosses."

She said women had always been less shockable than men, but the public display of bawdiness was a new development.

The trend was now being followed by other female titles, including Minx, Elle and Take A Break. "We are cutting a new groove and I expect others to follow."

David Speddie, features editor of Minx, a new monthly which has resisted being labelled a female Loaded, said: "It sounds like a perfectly sensible move."

"Women's humour has always been there — but it is finally making it into print. If you put a group of women together without men they will talk about sex in an incredibly funny way."

That's Lifest expected complaints from readers, but received just one, from a man who sent in a religious tract.

He would not have appre-

E NEWS | 9

Girls
'just want
to have
fun with
booze
and sex'

Woman: General

Andrew Culf on
rude joke trend

WOMEN'S weeklies are casting off the recipes and knitting patterns and heading down the route pioneered by laddish magazines like Loaded.

The new trend is being developed by That's Lifest, a 500,000-circulation magazine, which has published a collection of nearly 400 jokes — all at the expense of men.

"Women are behaving badly — they get beered up and go for hen nights. People have loosened up," said the magazine's editor, Janice Turner.

Readers of That's Lifest, launched by the German publisher H Bauer in 1993, are mainly working class and have an average age of 35.

"We are not Cosmopolitan — we do not do sex surveys. The weeklies used to be about knitting and maternity bras, but women seem to enjoy a really rude joke," she said.

16-11-96

Baby Telegraph

Crime:

DIARY OF A SHOPLIFTER

Counter rebellion

For **Guy Rafe**s the thrill of thieving made him believe he was invincible

SHOPLIFTING is far more widespread than you might think. A member of your family may be doing it without you even realising. My parents had no idea what I was up to until the police knocked at the door with a warrant to search my room. Do you know what your children spend their money on? Probably not. So how can you tell what they haven't spent money on?

Teenage rebellion frequently takes the form of some kind of law breaking — drugs, joy-riding, underage drinking or sex — and shoplifting is no different. It will usually be done in groups (a regular excuse when caught is "everyone else was doing it"), or individually as a dare from a group. We all know how difficult our teenage years can be as we strive for more freedom from our parents and try to define ourselves as part of a particular crowd; criminal activity is often a part of group culture, and peer pressure is a major contributor to the number of people arrested for theft. However, the actual loss of profit from items stolen by this group is relatively low; it is the professional shoplifter who steals higher priced items.

I was semi-professional. I started stealing because I had no income, and would walk around town gazing longingly at the items I could not afford. But something else affected me more profoundly than the knowledge that I could get anything I wanted for free — the first time gave me an incredible buzz. Even losing

my virginity came nowhere near the endorphine rush I got from my first heist. From then on I was hooked.

Any addictive drug needs to have its dosage increased to give the same hit. I needed a new challenge. I started to try new shops, but this had no effect, so instead I began to steal more. The thrill then was to see how much I could take, how far I could push my luck (or as I thought at the time, skill) without being caught. Every time I went into town I would return with eight to 10 items, usually really trivial stuff.

Ironically, the only times I was ever noticed were when I had no intention of taking anything. I once picked up a magazine, intending to read it in the shop, and took it to some steps at the back. Immediately I sat down a woman rushed over, glanced at me, and began to furtively rummage through a bargain bucket. I had to ask, "You're a store detective, right?" She replied in the affirmative. "You're not a very good one."

Eventually though, what I was doing was not enough. I began to steal from stores with security cameras: 6 feet away from a queue; in front of manned cash desks, and thrived on the challenge. I would lie awake at night planning where to rob next, and the route I would use to leave. I even stole to order for friends, for a small fee of course. It was then that I realised there was money to be made. Computer games were best; I could make £20 per game in second-hand shops, one of which also sold sci-fi videos. I took four

videos down one afternoon, hoping to offload them, but the man who did all the buying was not in. I was told that I could leave them there and come back the next day, but I declined. This was a stupid mistake. On my way home I went into a shop and glanced through the CD rack. Out of habit, I looked at the security camera. And that was enough for the men watching the monitors. They saw me as suspicious and called the police, who began to follow me. I was stopped, searched, and when I couldn't account for my possession of the videos, arrested.

Arrest was certainly a blow to my confidence. I didn't do it again for at least two weeks. Every time I did it, I kept telling myself, "This is the last time," but there were a lot more last times. However, realising that if I was caught again I would go to prison, I made an effort to quit. I began spending money again, which was horrible. After eight months of getting everything for nothing, it was like one long nightmare.

WITH hindsight, I realise that my problem was the longer I got away with shoplifting, the more confident I became in my abilities. I was invincible, unstoppable; never for one second did I think it was me the police were following. I believed that I could steal for the rest of my life without detection, but, like the Party in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, they always catch you in the end.

Nevertheless, I'd had a pretty successful eight months, netting a total of around £500 worth of goods. I was only charged for the videos though, as the police had no idea what they were looking for. Stolen goods were staring them in the face.

Now however, I am "clean", and have an income. In fact, in a complete turnaround from a year ago, I am spending money profusely. I am living proof that any addiction can be beaten with a little willpower, of course, it helps to have a short sharp shock first.

new buzz /
same buzz
to name!