

Recent Thefts in the Pentlands



Opportunist thieves at large in the Pentlands.

Golfing, climbing and skiing may be the primary activities that come to mind when thinking of the Pentland Hills, but now there is another: thefts from parked cars.

Celia Graham was a victim of this recent crime spree, having recently had her phone, wallet, bag, and makeup stolen from her locked car. She said:- “Apparently there was a sign up saying not to leave valuables in the car, but even that had been stolen!”

The car park from which Celia’s belongings were stolen is at the Pentlands National Park and is on a farm, about a mile beyond the ski slope. Celia and her flatmate had driven out to the Pentlands to take their dog for a walk. In an attempt to avoid drawing attention, they had cautiously stowed their belongings under the car’s back seat. In retrospect, Celia believes the thieves must have been watching when they did this.



They were gone for no more than half an hour, and then they returned to the car park. There were no immediate warning signs, as the car still looked to be in perfect condition, no signs of forced entry, no smashed windows or broken glass. When Celia opened the door, however, she found her shoes on the seat, something she found odd. Then, instantly, she knew there was a problem, and hurried to check beneath the back seat. She found that her personal items, and those of her companion, were all missing. However, the Sat Nav in the glove

box was still in place, supporting Celia's suspicions that the thieves had been watching when she hid her possessions. While Celia's phone was amongst the goods stolen, her housemate had taken hers on their walk, so they were at least able to phone the police.

While on the line reporting the incident, another couple returned from their own walk. None of that couple's possessions had been stolen, but they did say that they knew others who had experienced theft from the same car park. Several other people who Celia has spoken with since the incident also know victims of this same kind of crime. A spokesperson for The City of Edinburgh Council said:- "We are aware of the thefts from cars parked in the Pentland Hills Regional Park and are working closely with Lothian & Borders Police to investigate this."

Celia said that the police were originally "very enthusiastic and supportive," but she was then told to contact her local station. She hasn't heard anything since and feels that her file may have merely become another case number.

There are no CCTV cameras located in that car park, which may mean that the police have few leads. Other surrounding car parks also lack the level of security which CCTV can offer. While a sign advertises the cameras at the lot outside Cafe 360 at Midlothian Snowsports Centre, a receptionist admitted that they no longer worked, and hadn't for some time. When passers by were asked for their opinion on the subject, opinions were varied. One man said "I'm generally against CCTV on the grounds of infringement of human freedom, but if it's going to stop these thefts then I can think of nothing better."

Alternatively, another commented on his own Pentland experience, noting that park ranger stations were commonly empty. He said:- "I would have thought a fairly cheap solution to the problem would be having slightly more officials present

on the park. If you had a person there, I think you've got less of the issues with CCTV, especially when you start exporting CCTV to an area that's supposed to be the countryside, people don't like that."

A third woman wasn't concerned about the methods employed to deter thieves, but merely said:- "The incidents are definitely of concern, I hope they catch the people who do it." Police suspect that thieves put a coat hanger in between the doors and pulled the lock, explaining how Celia's car was broken into, with no obvious damage.

Celia is grateful they were away for such a short period of time, as it allowed them to cancel her phone and credit cards very quickly. She suspects the thieves banked on them taking a significantly lengthier walk. Aside from the annoyance and frustration of having her possessions stolen, Celia says the worst part is "the invasion of privacy."

This incident has definitely deterred Celia from returning to the Pentlands. "I have no interest in going back and if I do I won't leave anything in the car, which is sad because it is quite a nice walk." Celia emphasizes that "there should be cameras or some kind of security, so this doesn't happen to somebody else."