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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2003



**Fantastic
McDonald's
meal deal**
See P24



**M&S hamper
and vouchers
to be won**
See P16

**A+ Complete
leisure &
pleasure
pull out**



Plus: Five £42 Flowerland bird tables to be won: See Homes&Gardens in A+

Card cloners plunder victims' accounts

Cashpoint targeted by high-tech crooks

By Lucy Rutherford

UNSUSPECTING bank customers in Maidenhead are being urged to check their statements after criminals used high-tech equipment to plunder their victims' accounts.

At least three people who used the cashpoint at HSBC in the High Street over the last two weekends have been targeted. One customer lost £900, while another found his balance short by £600 and the third had his account cleared of his final £200.

Maidenhead police and HSBC refused to confirm whether more customers have reported falling victim to the scam, where a 'skimming' device records the details of the card's magnetic strip as it is swiped to gain access to the lobby.

But both have urged customers to be vigilant and check their details if they used the cashpoint at the weekend.

It is the second time HSBC has been targeted, with £800 stolen from a customer's account in August.

James O'Meara, 30, had £600 removed from his account this week after using the bank on Friday. He had tried to use the machine at the Royal Bank of Scotland opposite but was prevented by matchsticks which had been forced into the card slot - set up to make customers use the rigged HSBC foyer.

He said: "I was told that from Friday onwards they were scanning your card as you went in the door and they had some sort of camera put up to look at your pin number. It is very frustrating."

Another customer, who wished to remain anonymous, lost £200. He said: "There was a sign on one of the cash machines which was printed and said 'out of order' which I now realise was odd."

"Usually I'm very cautious and cover my hand when I'm putting my pin in but because I was in my own bank and there was no one over my shoulder, I didn't bother."

DC Chris Goodall, of Maidenhead police, said: "We do not know how many people have been affected."

"A number of the cashpoints nearby had been disabled so people had to go to the HSBC. Anybody who would have used the cashpoint over the weekend is urged to contact their bank."

HSBC spokesman Charlie Brett said customers who had been a victim of fraud would be reimbursed. He said: "We have put posters up warning people about how they can be vigilant and we take security very seriously."

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Weekend train woe

RAIL passengers are facing two weekends of woe as engineering work in the Slough area causes delays and a 'significant reduction' in the number of trains between Reading and Paddington.

In addition to extra stops and delays, trains will only stop at Burnham and Taplow on the way into London and passengers leaving Paddington will need to change at Maidenhead in order to travel back.

For more information call national rail enquiries on 08457 484950 or visit www.thamestrains.co.uk

Hot on the heels of charity cash

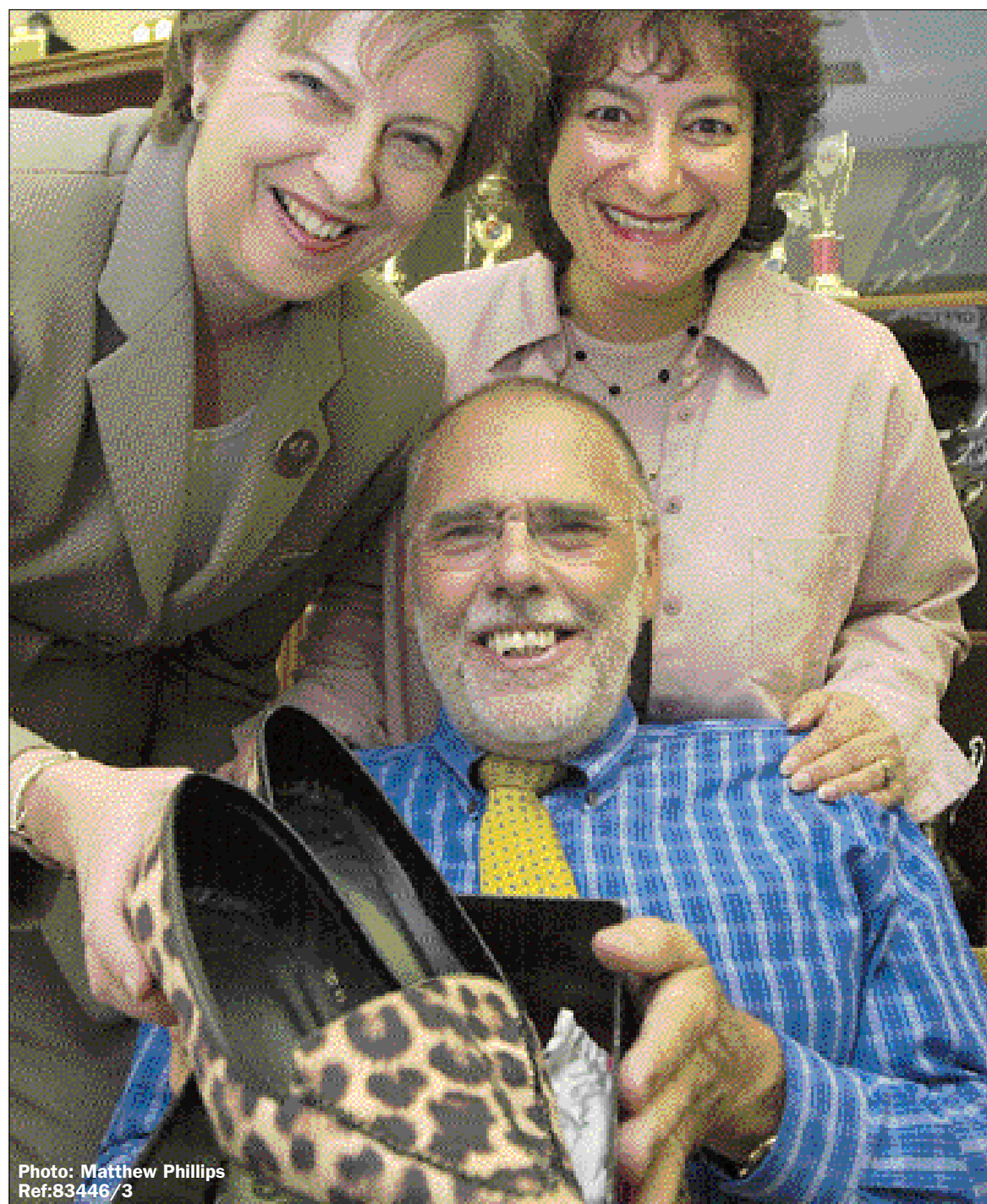


Photo: Matthew Phillips
Ref:83446/3

PAWS for a good look at this pair of leopard print shoes which have the sole aim of helping disabled athletes reach the Athens Paralympics. Maidenhead MP Theresa May, who has become famous for her snazzy heels, donated the shoes to be auctioned in aid of disabled sports club Wamdsad at a star-studded ball. She is pictured with Wamdsad chairman John Jenkins and Hilary O'Rourke from the charity. For full story see P11.

Fire engine and car in road smash

A FIRE engine from Maidenhead was out of action this week after it was involved in a collision with a car while responding to a false alarm, writes **Hannah Satterthwaite**.

The engine was travelling towards Slough on the A4 Bath Road at around 11.30pm on Saturday when it was in collision with a Fiat Punto at the junction with Tuns Lane.

The driver of the Punto was taken to Wexham Park Hospital with head injuries but was released this week.

The road was closed until 2am on Sunday.

Nicole Targett, spokeswoman for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue, said the engine had received minor superficial damage to the bodywork and one of the headlamps.

"Because they are built for a hard life most of the panels can be replaced very easily," she said.

She added the engine was currently being assessed by police, as was standard after traffic accidents, and would be returned shortly for repairs.

Accidents were not a frequent occurrence, she said, because the firefighters were trained to drive at high speeds, with care, through urban areas.

John Miller, a crew commander at Maidenhead fire station, said a reserve fire engine would be based at Maidenhead until the engine was back in action.

The fire call in Langley was dealt with by a reserve crew, and turned out to be a false alarm.

Fall back

READERS are reminded British Summer Time ends this weekend.

Put your clocks back by one hour at 2am on Sunday.

Inside

3 Student's train fine is so 'un-fare'

5 Evenlode winning fight to clean up image

6 Concorde pilot admits he will 'shed a tear'

7 Parties unite to save sub-post offices