

13th January 2004

Warning after rape attack

WOMEN were today warned not to walk home alone at night, following the violent rape of an 18-year-old girl.

The victim was assaulted close to busy Bolton Road, Blackburn, a street lined with small businesses, on her way home from Utopia nightclub in the town centre on Saturday.

Shopkeepers today expressed their shock at the rape, which took place just yards from their stores.

Detective Inspector Simon Giles of Blackburn CID, said: "We are still continuing with the inquiries and we are very much appealing for information from the public.

"Thankfully, these incidents are very rare and it isn't an everyday occurrence. We would look for people to take care and, wherever possible, don't walk on your own that late at night. Look to take a cab or travel with a companion."

Store workers in the area said there have never been any similar attacks in the area and hoped the police would catch the attacker before he struck again.

Alan Seed, of William Wilson Electrical Supplies, said: "There has never been anything like a physical assault before. We have got a lot of damage at night and there was a lot of drinking in the area last summer. But the police moved them on and there hasn't been anything since.

"A physical assault is very shocking."

The young victim had been on a night out at the weekend with her boyfriend and other friends. But the group got separated at the Utopia nightclub and she set off home along Bolton Road at about 1.45am.

The attacker grabbed her from behind and dragged her to the back of William Wilson Electrical Supplies.

Ali Hussain, of North West Services TV and Video, said: "It's a shock to hear of something like that happening. I have been here since 1994 and there hasn't been a problem.

"I had a break-in before Christmas, but I've known of nothing apart from that."

And one shopkeeper, who asked not to be named, said: "I was very surprised to hear of the attack.

"I have been here since 1986 and in all that time I have never heard of anything like that along here. Somebody must be very brave because there must have been people around. I hope the police get him."

Anybody with information can call the police on 01254 353569.

http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/5862728.Warning_after_rape_attack/