

## READING



1 Before you read about Rose Jones, look at the photo of her and describe her in as much detail as possible. Then read the article and answer these two questions.

- 1 What reasons does she give for her life of crime?
- 2 Do you think her reasons are, in fact, reasonable?

## A LIFE OF CRIME



Looking at this little old lady, it is hard to believe that she has spent 20 of her 76 years in jail. Her crime has been pickpocketing. Just a short while ago she was caught practising her trade in Harrods — a favourite hunting ground for the pickpocket as it is frequented by the well-off. Her fingers aren't as quick as they once were and she was spotted by a sharp-eyed store detective more used to catching shoplifters.

Luckily for her, the judge let her off. All the same, crime certainly hasn't paid for Rose Jones. She lives in a damp, uncomfortable basement bedsit with no heating and no company except for her dogs

and cats and the TV. Nevertheless, she believes that it is better there than in prison. During her many spells in prison, she met Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in Britain, and the notorious murderer, Myra Hindley, who would have certainly followed Ellis to the scaffold if hanging had not been abolished. Instead, she was given life imprisonment.

Rose blames her life of crime on her childhood and harsh upbringing. She feels that if her mother hadn't died when she was small, her life would have turned out differently. As it was, her father remarried and her stepmother was cruel to her. Hunger drove young Rose to steal food and she quickly graduated to picking pockets. She was only six at the time. When she was 11, she started doing menial jobs in big houses. She perhaps wishes she had taken that opportunity to go 'straight' but she didn't. She remembers taking a lipstick and a five pound note from some guests' luggage. When her mistress accused her of stealing, she denied everything and, for once, got away with it.

Her life 'inside' started when she was 17. Following a conviction, she was sent to a prison for young people. It was to be the first of many such visits. Yet, in all her long criminal career, Rose has never made any real money. Either she gave it away or she spent it on trivial things. Her husband stole the little money she had managed to save while she was in prison.

Nowadays, she has just about decided that her life of crime is over. After all, she finds it difficult to move around now without any support which makes her line of work rather difficult. In addition, the popularity of credit cards means that people tend to carry less cash around with them than they were once accustomed to. Rose thinks it is time she turned over a new leaf. But is it possible to break the habits of a lifetime?