

# The Oxford Street False Alarm, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017

## Full Triangulated Account

Linda Bell<sup>1</sup>

John Drury<sup>1</sup>

Dermot Barr<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Psychology, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9QH UK

<sup>2</sup> Liverpool John Moores University, 70 Mount Pleasant, Merseyside L3 5UX UK

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### Data availability

The primary data that support the findings of this study are openly available at the following sites:

- Project website: <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/research/projects/stampedes/research-outputs/data-sharing>
- UK Data Service (via the project reference number ES/T007249/1, at <https://reshare.ukdataservice.ac.uk> )

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## Introduction and overview

In 2017, the UK witnessed four terrorist attacks in London: Westminster Bridge (22<sup>nd</sup> March), London Bridge (3<sup>rd</sup> June), Finsbury Park (19<sup>th</sup> June), and Parsons Green (15<sup>th</sup> September). Plus, there was a major bomb attack at Manchester Arena (22<sup>nd</sup> May). The UK Threat Level was set at “Severe” that year, meaning that “an attack is highly likely”.

In the same year there were nine false alarms in the UK involving crowd flight from a perceived hostile threat.<sup>1</sup> The largest of these false alarms took place in and around Oxford Street, London, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, Black Friday, the busiest shopping day of the year.

Just after 16.30 p.m. on November 24<sup>th</sup> 2017, an altercation on an Oxford Circus station platform led to the evacuation of hundreds of passengers amid reports of gunshots being fired. A police armed response unit arrived less than one minute after the first call, entering the tube station, as other law enforcement officers on the street instructed people to move out of the area and take shelter. Three fire engines and 15 firefighters were despatched. At around five o’clock cordons were being erected as police vehicles sped to the scene, while the area was being cleared of people who were told to “move along” and “go inside”. Fearful passengers joined an already crowded Oxford Circus with shoppers taking advantage of Black Friday bargains and hundreds, possibly thousands, of people fled from the area. Many hid in local stores, cafes, and pubs. Some people reported hearing more gunshots on the streets, adding to the spread of alarm and crowd flight. Transport for London closed Oxford Circus station, therefore more people were departing at Bond Street station one stop along, whilst people seeking refuge from Oxford Street poured into the station. There were some chaotic scenes as people tried to get down the escalators as others were going up. Another report of gunshots emanated from nearby Selfridges which led to the store being evacuated, an event amplified by a tweet from pop singer Olly Murs.

Across the incident as a whole, sixteen people were hurt, nine of them taken to hospital, one of whom was taken to a major trauma centre for leg injuries. Shopping was abandoned and stores overturned, with the spread of people fleeing and hiding reaching as far afield as Soho, Piccadilly, Mayfair, Covent Garden, Tottenham Court Road and Marble Arch. Around an hour and a half after the initial call, the Metropolitan police stood down the operation. It had been a false alarm.

However, despite the size of the response from the emergency services, the number of people affected by the incident and the number needing medical attention, there is no verified, comprehensive account of the incident. Information thus far has largely relied on news coverage and social media, which inevitably gives a partial and often dramatic view. To rectify this situation, the present study uses a multiplicity of sources, carefully validated, to establish a more objective account of what happened that afternoon.

## Abbreviations

Met	Metropolitan Police Service
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BTP	British Transport Police
LFB	London Fire Brigade

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<sup>1</sup> (Barr, Drury & Choudhury, 2022).

TfL Transport for London

RSM Royal Society of Medicine

## Timeline Summary

Time	Location	Event
~16.35	Oxford Circus station	Fight breaks out on platform, people think they hear gunfire, emergency button pressed, evacuation announcement, people board the train or flee as train departs. People spill out on to Oxford Street
16:37	Oxford Circus	BTP first armed response, reports of gunfire
16.38	Oxford Circus	Met responds as if terrorist attack
16.43	Oxford Circus	BTP lock down area
16.43-17.00	Oxford Circus	Reports of 'panic', running, dropping bags, police instruct people to get inside buildings; move away from area. People think they hear shots.
~16.43	Oxford Circus	TfL discern no armed attacker on platform; allow self-evacuation; police receive around 600 emergency calls.
16.56	Oxford Circus station	Tweet posted by BTP, station closed while police respond to incident
~17.00	Oxford Circus area	People hide in department stores, pubs and cafes. People spread from Oxford Circus station to Oxford Street east and west, Regent Street north and south, surrounding streets and further afield. Walking/running in "waves" as people report hearing gunshots. Cordons erected.
17.00	Selfridges	Olly Murs tweets shots apparently heard, people guided to offices and basement, police enter store.
17.07	Oxford Street area	Met/BTP tweet: go into building, officers are on scene, more information when we can, avoid the area
17.08	Bond Street	Station closed for short while, due to overcrowding
17.08	Selfridges	Evacuated
17.15	Bond Street station	Crowds exit at Bond Street because Oxford Circus closed. Chaotic scenes as people try to get down the escalators.
17.16	Oxford Circus station	Met tweet: responded as if incident is terrorist related, armed officers are on scene establishing what happened.
17.30	Whole area	Many shops still in lockdown, but unofficial reports of calming down
17.42	Oxford Circus	Met: Not located any trace of suspects, shots fired or casualties, stay in building, more updates to come
17.47	Oxford Circus and Bond Street stations	TfL: stations re-opened

17.54	Whole area	Police report incident appears to be coming to an end, police look for evidence.	
18.02	Whole area	Police working to lift cordons and reopen stations	
18.04	Whole area	Met: operation stood down	

## Methodology

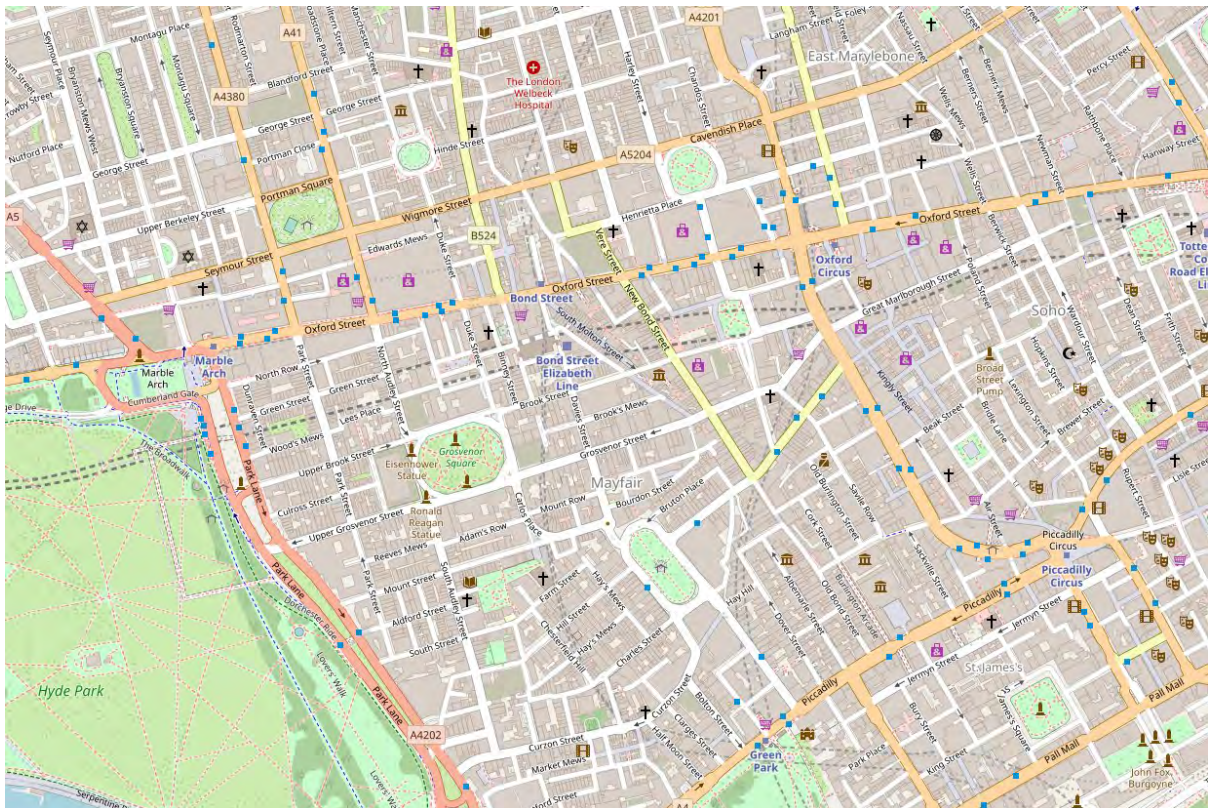
The method of triangulation has been used in the present study into the events of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017. This methodological approach mirrors that of the examination by Ball et al. (2019) of the 2011 “English Riots” for the Beyond Contagion project.<sup>2</sup> This method is employed for analysing real life events and entails using times and locations taken from a variety of sources, in this case eyewitness and participant accounts, emergency services sources, videos, news reports online, broadcast news online, social media and academic reports. By cross referencing such a range of sources it is possible to build a robust evidential base for an assessment of the patterns in the physical movements of the crowds and emergency services. Along with establishing the quality of the sources, the quantity and diversity of information allows a greater level of confidence and granularity than otherwise possible.

Sources of information on the time and location of events and the movements of people were compiled into a chronological timeline in Excel, consisting of 184 actions and observations, with 120 references. Timeline entries have been triangulated for the narrative, and notes have been made where conflicts arose. The aim was primarily to create an objective account of the timing, pattern and order of group, inter-group and individual behaviours of the public, and the emergency services, throughout the incident. The timeline forms the basis for this narrative account.

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<sup>2</sup> Ball et al. (2019) <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=full-triangulated-account---croydon.pdf&site=557>. See <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/beyondcontagion/projects> .

## Map of Incident area



Link for expandable map: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=16/51.5149/-0.1520>

### Oxford Street Distances

Whole area affected: approximately 7.5 square kilometres

Oxford Circus to Bond Street Station, walking: 5 minutes, .2 miles, 0.3 kilometres

Oxford Circus to Marble Arch, walking: 18 minutes, .8 miles, 1.3 kilometres

Oxford Circus to Tottenham Court Road, walking: 10 minutes, .5 miles, 0.8 kilometres

Oxford Circus to Selfridges, walking: 10 minutes, .5 miles, 0.8 kilometres

Bond Street station to Selfridges, walking: 1 minute, 0.1 miles, 0.2 kilometres

Bond Street station to Marble Arch, walking 9 minutes, 0.4 miles, 0.6 kilometres

Shops and other premises identified as sheltering members of the public:

Aquascutum

Barclays Bank

Boots

EE

French Connection

Gap

H&M

LUSH

Nike

North Face Shop

Royal School of Medicine

Selfridges

Swatch

Topshop

## Data

### News online sources

Timelines, interviews and narrative descriptions from news online and broadcast news reports provided a general overview of the events of that day and a starting point in compiling an order of incidences. Fifty-nine news articles were sourced via the Nexis media data base, out of which 24 proved significant to use. These were retrieved from one local (Evening Standard) and 10 national newspapers, with The Independent, Express, Guardian, Daily Mirror, Mail and The Sun proving particularly fruitful with contemporaneous, or near contemporaneous, interviews, rough timelines, and reportage. By around 17.00, cameras and reporters were on the street. (As well as the closeness of BBC's London news division just north of Oxford Circus, the Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium, next to Oxford Circus station, was taking place that evening which may account for the speed at which journalists appeared at the scene.)

### Videos and broadcast news

The video sharing website YouTube and other sources were then used to locate 34 videos relating to the event, the majority of which were real-time footage, as well as on the day news reports and interviews. Thirty of these are referenced for the timeline, including eight direct news reports from five broadcast channels (BBC, ITV, Sky, AP, ABC news), and 19 were used in this narrative account. In addition, there are video clips contained within many of the news on-line sources above. Crucial as the news reports are, the tendency of the media is to focus on the "action" sequences, mostly staying within reach of Oxford Circus itself. This inevitably gives just part of the picture. Amateur footage,<sup>3</sup> particularly where the operator kept the camera running, provided a raw, unedited version of what was happening. Amateur footage also offered sequences some distance away, such as Marble Arch, Park Lane and Tottenham Court Road that were not covered in newspaper or broadcast media. The use of both types of moving image provided a rich visualisation of the events of the day.

### Twitter

Online news reports sometimes relied on the social media platform Twitter to provide another source of contemporaneous, or near contemporaneous, descriptions from participants. Thirteen participant Tweets found in news sources have been utilised for the timeline. In addition, 30 original participant tweets were collected by the researchers, seven of which have been applied in the

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<sup>3</sup> Eight amateur videos were sourced for the narrative account.



construction of the timeline. The advantage of the originals was their specificity on timings where this was lacking in other sources. (For instance, online news sources remove the timestamps for publication.) The use of original tweets (i.e., those that have not been published already) has been restricted in order to keep any chances of breaching confidentiality to a minimum. The wording has either been generalised, or direct quotes used where hashtags have been applied, or they are direct replies to the ongoing public debate. All identifying features such as names, usernames (hashtags) and URLs have been removed.<sup>4</sup> Nine tweets from celebrities have been included, particularly those between Olly Murs and Piers Morgan who engaged in a somewhat spikey exchange over spreading information that turned out to be untrue. Before any Twitter research was conducted, ethical approval was obtained from the School of Psychology, University of Sussex (reference ER/LB679/1).

In terms of tweets from official sources, 28 tweets issued by the authorities were identified largely from the Metropolitan Police and British Transport Police, but also Transport for London, London Fire Brigade and London Ambulance Service. These provided precise timing information. Sixteen originals were traced. Twitter was the social media tool utilised by the emergency services to impart information to the public both directly via their own feeds, or via news outlets as above. These were heavily retweeted: there were 7,949 retweets for one tweet from the Met alone.<sup>5</sup>

In all, 57 postings have been used for the timeline.

### Interviews

Transcripts from interviews with participants were analysed which provided a comprehensive description of what was happening from a number of different personal perspectives. These contributed significantly to the depth of the research. Thirty-nine detailed, semi-structured interviews by five researchers were carried out with people who were present at Oxford Street and/or the surrounding streets on 24th November 2017 during the incident. The interviewers were: Dermot Barr, Nils Devynk, Cagla Gayretli, Simran Lalli and Harry Linfield. The research team contacted 47 potential participants which resulted in 39 successfully completed interviews. The team used a variety of recruitment strategies including: passive recruitment on social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and WhatsApp where participants were asked to respond to recruitment advertisements which were posted on the team members pages (15 interviews); active recruitment on social media was also used where team members directly contacted people on Twitter who identified themselves as being at the incident (8 interviews); a call out on BBC Radio 4's 'All in the mind' program (12 interviews) and in person recruitment where a team member went to Oxford Street and recruited public and shop workers (2 interviews), snowballing from these initial contacts also resulted in 2 further interviews. Eight contacts did not result in interviews as potential participants who either did not pass the mental health screening threshold (2), refused to take part after being introduced to the screening tool (1) or stopped replying to emails (4).

Before any interview research was conducted, ethical approval was provided by the School of Psychology, University of Sussex (ER/CG456/1, ER/CG456/1, ER/HL429/3, ER/SL750/2). The interview schedule covered eight topics: the story of the day, perception of the event, interpretation of the event, public behaviour, police behaviour, terror attack awareness and leaving. There were ~45 questions in total, which were mostly opened-ended. A disadvantage was that interviews were

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<sup>4</sup> (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> (Eriksson Krutrok & Lindgren, 2022) This was the tweet stating the Metropolitan Police were responding as if the incident were "terrorist related". (Tweet 015; Griffin, 2017).

completed five years after the incident, so timings were vague, but this was compensated for by the details they were able to provide.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Transcripts and accompanying data documents can be retrieved from: <https://osf.io/8f6xn/>

Table 1: Aggregated demographic information of interviewees

Demographic Category																									
Age Range	20-71																								
Mean Age	42.69																								
Female	22																								
Male	17																								
Standardised Ethnicity	<table> <tr><td>White British</td><td>23</td></tr> <tr><td>White Scottish</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>White US/British</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>White Australian/British</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>White American</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Arab</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Asian (South Asian)</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Chinese</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Hispanic</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Mixed British Asian</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Mixed White and Black Caribbean</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Unknown</td><td>6</td></tr> </table>	White British	23	White Scottish	1	White US/British	1	White Australian/British	1	White American	1	Arab	1	Asian (South Asian)	1	Chinese	1	Hispanic	1	Mixed British Asian	1	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	1	Unknown	6
White British	23																								
White Scottish	1																								
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Nationality	<table> <tr><td>British</td><td>24</td></tr> <tr><td>British English</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>British Scottish</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Australian/British</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>US/British Dual Nationality</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>American</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Qatari</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Unknown</td><td>6</td></tr> </table>	British	24	British English	3	British Scottish	1	Australian/British	1	US/British Dual Nationality	1	American	2	Qatari	1	Unknown	6								
British	24																								
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British Scottish	1																								
Australian/British	1																								
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Qatari	1																								
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#### Official sources

A Knowledge Exchange workshop was held between collaborators of the project and representatives of emergency planning authorities such as Transport for London (who were the hosts), British Transport Police, Department for Transport, and others.<sup>7</sup> This gave the researchers the opportunity to discuss the incident with key players during the event, as well as a private viewing of some sections of CCTV footage at a subsequent meeting with Transport for London.<sup>8</sup>

#### Academic articles

There is little published research literature specifically on the false alarm on Oxford Street 2017; just two peer reviewed, published papers have been identified.<sup>9</sup> Our systematic review of false alarms between 2010-2019 examines the relation between the number of genuine terrorist incidents and

<sup>7</sup> Knowledge Exchange Workshop, London, 11/01/2023.

<sup>8</sup> Teams meeting, Transport for London, 25/01/2023.

<sup>9</sup> (Barr, Drury & Choudhury, 2022; Eriksson Krutrok & Lindgren, 2022).

false alarms in Great Britain, including the present example.<sup>10</sup> Also, Eriksson Krutrok and Lindgren (2022) provide a detailed analysis of Twitter usage and spread on the day in question.<sup>11</sup>

### Limitations

No official reports by the authorities are available and may not have been undertaken. These would normally include timings as well as details of actions taken and crowd behaviour, particularly from a police perspective.

### Final note

The words “panic” and “stampede” were used by many participants and most of the media.<sup>12</sup> However, in the present context these terms make judgements about the reasonableness of mental processes that can obscure understanding the nature and diversity of behaviour that afternoon.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in the interests of a more neutral presentation, they are not used unless in direct quotes.

## Narrative Account

### Oxford Circus and surrounding area

At just after 16.30 p.m. on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017 an altercation broke out between two men on the Central Line westbound platform of Oxford Circus London Underground (‘tube’) station.<sup>14</sup> It was rush hour, on the busiest shopping day of the year (Black Friday), and the platform was crowded. Witnesses at the scene described two men bumping into each other and a fight starting. Punches were exchanged, people were pushed against the wall, and as others tried to break up the fight more people became involved. People heard shouting and screaming, and passengers reported being frightened that someone would be pushed onto the tracks as the train was approaching. During the melee, some individuals reported hearing what they thought were gunshots,<sup>15</sup> and a member of the public pressed the emergency button.<sup>16</sup> When the next train arrived, the fight stopped. Some people boarded the train to get away. As the train was departing, there was an announcement on the platform communications system asking the public to evacuate the station. Passengers fled from the platform and the station itself, with some people reporting hearing cries and shouts.<sup>17 18</sup>

At 16.37, British Transport Police received reports of gunfire on the westbound Central Line platform and shortly afterwards at 16.38, the Metropolitan Police also took similar calls.<sup>19</sup> They responded “as if the incident were terrorist related”.<sup>20</sup> Crowds of people, from all over the underground complex, were evacuating the station at this point as the automated message urged passengers to leave immediately.<sup>21</sup> Not all passengers would have been aware of the cause of the original incident. A witness who was on the top steps of one of the exits described how a crowd of

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<sup>10</sup> (Barr, Drury & Choudhury, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> (Eriksson Krutrok & Lindgren, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> There are 46 references to “panic” in the timeline and 12 for “stampede”.

<sup>13</sup> (Barr, Drury & Choudhury, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> (Dearden, 2017; Towners, 2017; Greenfield, Cobain & Dodd, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> (Tweet 3; All press and media report gunshots were heard. Two examples: Griffin, 2019; Express Digest).

<sup>16</sup> (Dearden, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> (Clarke-Billings, 2017; express digest; Paterson, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Two witnesses mention more than two people involved in the initial altercation, but visibility was limited on the crowded platform, and other evidence, primarily from BTP, outweighs this.

<sup>19</sup> (Tweet 002; Daily Record, 2017; Dearden, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> (Tweet 002; express digest, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> (Parkinson, 2017, VIDEO 00:26). This video also shows people walking out of the exit.

people came towards him “sprinting upstairs”, looked around as got they out, and “sauntered away.”<sup>22</sup> The witness then saw “loads” of police vehicles coming towards the station<sup>23</sup> as an armed response unit arrived less than a minute after the initial calls.<sup>24</sup> They entered the station, ordering people to “get out of the way” and “move, move, move”.<sup>25</sup> A passenger arriving on a train on the same platform as the altercation described how there was a station announcement saying evacuate the train and to use first available exit. Most people left the train.<sup>26</sup> They were leaving in a “civilised manner”, “shuffling along like little penguins, following the crowd” when just they as got to the main concourse and started to walk up the steps to the exit, “10, 11, 12 police officers came down wearing stab vests and looking like they were carrying Kalashnikovs. They pushed people out of the way, saying ‘get out of the way’”. The witness then “plainly heard” gunshots down in the distance and thought other people heard them too; they described that people started to run, dropping their shopping, screaming and falling over, with people stepping over them.<sup>27</sup> Another witness, going towards a different exit, recounted a change in the general movement of people, “as I got nearer the top, it started to get more crowded and it suddenly felt like there was this sense of like needing to get out” and put it down to Black Friday. They could hear shouting before three armed police came “rushing down” past them shouting “move, move, move”. People heard cries of “run”.<sup>28</sup>

Transport for London knew within “a couple of minutes” that there was no gunman on the platform. However, given the uncontrolled situation, the decision was taken to support the evacuation to give time for the station to be “reset”. At the time of the initial alarm, an escalator belt slipped, causing it to drop down with a loud bang which, according to the emergency services, contributed to the sense of alarm, and could have been misinterpreted as a gunshot. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police and British Transport Police were receiving around six hundred 999 calls, many from above ground.<sup>29</sup>

Alarm spread as hundreds of passengers fled out of the tube station on to the street, with some people screaming, and repeating rumours of gunshots.<sup>30</sup> People in an already crowded Oxford Circus joined the passengers in running and hurrying to get away.<sup>31</sup> Dozens of uniformed police officers, who by then had joined the operation, ordered people to “get inside”, “move along”,<sup>32</sup> “go down this way, move inside building if you get a chance please, first one will do, anywhere” as they cleared the area.<sup>33</sup> Our previous witness ran with the crowd into Regent Street (south) and could see people being ushered into shops. The staff at Aquascutum guided them and other people inside before locking the doors. The witness reports that many people were very fearful.<sup>34</sup> At 16:43, London Fire Brigade despatched three fire engines, with 15 firefighters.<sup>35</sup> British Transport Police and Transport for London posted tweets at 16.56 announcing that Oxford Circus station was closed “while we

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<sup>22</sup> Transcript Participant 14. Van.

<sup>23</sup> Transcript Participant 14. Van; (Griffin, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> (Dearden, 2017; The Straits Times, VIDEO 00:30).

<sup>25</sup> (express digest, 2017; Paterson, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Some people stayed on the stationary train waiting for it to move, not wanting to get out.

<sup>27</sup> Transcript Participant 26. Grace. Witness also used the word “trampling” but subsequently corrected themselves.

<sup>28</sup> Transcript Participant 28. Charlie.

<sup>29</sup> Knowledge Exchange Workshop, London, 11/01/2023; Teams meeting, Transport for London, 25/01/2023.

<sup>30</sup> (Dearden, 2017; Clarke-Billings, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> (On Demand News, VIDEO 00:00; AFP News Agency, VIDEO 00:16; Guardian News, VIDEO 00:16; Olaftology, VIDEO 00:00; Greenfield, Cobain & Dodd, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> (VAL VLOG, 2017, VIDEO 00:30).

<sup>33</sup> (VAL VLOG, 2017, VIDEO 02:51).

<sup>34</sup> Transcript Participant 26. Grace.

<sup>35</sup> (Tweet 009; express digest; News Letter, 2017).

investigate a customer incident”. They also advised “avoid the area, officers are on the scene.”<sup>36</sup> At around 17.00, cordons were being erected across the main thoroughfares including Regent Street, Oxford Circus, Argyll Street and Oxford Street with officers gradually moving them further outwards from Oxford Circus as they cleared people away from the incident.<sup>37</sup>

Although many people ran from the station,<sup>38</sup> behaviour varied. Video footage from the east side of the station, with a substantial police personnel and vehicle presence, shows people walking away in an orderly fashion as the announcement to evacuate the station can be heard in the background.<sup>39</sup> However, a cyclist further along the east side of Oxford Street reported “loads of people” running down the road from Oxford Circus and “loads of police cars appeared” before things “went quiet.”<sup>40</sup> The cyclist started filming from their head camera as they approached Oxford Circus. It was blocked by police who were calling for people to get out of the area now. A crowd of people were standing around and walking away, when suddenly people started running and hurrying away, which the witness interprets as evidence of an attacker on the streets.<sup>41</sup> Other witnesses report hearing a gunshot on Oxford Circus itself, leading people to flee, many of them into nearby stores.<sup>42</sup> Many people kept moving, and as they moved away from the initial incident, they would start to walk normally, but then a sound they attributed to a gunshot would be heard, and running and hurrying would start again, with people moving like this in “waves” as they progressed through the streets.<sup>43</sup> Crowds spread out in all directions from the eight exits of the tube station,<sup>44</sup> eventually reaching as far as Soho, Mayfair, Covent Garden, Marylebone, Marble Arch and Tottenham Court Road (see Map). The initial rush from Oxford Circus meant that other people, as they were approaching the station, saw large groups of people running and hurrying towards them. This caused some of them to turn round and join the throng in running away from the direction of Oxford Circus.<sup>45</sup>

There was a lot of running, but people also stood around asking for information, others walked quickly, others walked normally.<sup>47</sup> There are often verbal descriptions on video of ‘running’ when in fact there is a variety of movement, including not just running but also purposeful walking and walking briskly.<sup>48</sup> There were frequent reports of people dropping their shopping,<sup>49</sup> and people

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<sup>36</sup> (Tweet 008; express digest).

<sup>37</sup> (AP Archive VIDEO 00:00, 01:24; Transcript 15. Jasmine; Paterson, S., 2017).

<sup>38</sup> (AFP, VIDEO 00:23; Guardian News VIDEO 00.16; Olaftology VIDEO 00:00).

<sup>39</sup> (Parkinson, VIDEO 00:11).

<sup>40</sup> (Beno, 2017, VIDEO 00:00).

<sup>41</sup> (Beno, 2017, VIDEO 00:11).

<sup>42</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 00:35, 03:36; MPs Newswatch, VIDEO 04.06; LONDON 24 HOURS, VIDEO 16:46); Transcript Participant 25. Mia.

<sup>43</sup> (Mambo Tone, 2017, VIDEO starting 00:00 lasting 6 mins 32 secs; BBC News, VIDEO 01:51 [2]); Transcript Participant 01. Efe.

<sup>44</sup> A member of the British Transport Police described this process as a “loop of perceptions”. (Knowledge Exchange Workshop, London, 11/01/2023).

<sup>45</sup> (Dearden, 2017; Clarke-Billings, 2017); Transcript Participant 07. Arthur.

<sup>46</sup> Transcript Participant 05. Amelia. (Press association via Guardian, 2017 (see embedded video); Griffin, 2017).

<sup>47</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 00:00).

<sup>48</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 00:49; AP Archive VIDEO 00:00).

<sup>49</sup> (The Straits Time, 2017, VIDEO 00.22; Greenfield, Cobain & Dodd, 2017).

falling over.<sup>50</sup> There are also accounts of pushing,<sup>51</sup> trampling,<sup>52</sup> and climbing over each other<sup>53</sup>. Incidents often happened in shops with people trying to get into an already crowded space<sup>54</sup> or tripping over each other.<sup>55</sup> There were also instances of the public, and the police, helping those who had fallen over.<sup>56</sup> There were many instances of kindness,<sup>57</sup> people often held hands and hugged each other,<sup>58</sup> and gave comfort and support,<sup>59</sup> frequently going out of their way.<sup>60</sup> Information was shared amongst members of the public on what direction to go<sup>61</sup> and what might be happening on the streets.<sup>62</sup>

Police continued to be firm in instructing people that they could not return to the area, to keep away and go inside. Audience members wearing evening clothes for the Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium (virtually next to Oxford Circus station) were turned away.<sup>63</sup> It was doubtful at that point whether the evening's entertainment would go ahead. In contrast to the people fleeing and hiding, some ignored the signals and instructions from the police,<sup>64</sup> and rejected the barriers and went through them,<sup>65</sup> or by stopping to take pictures.<sup>66</sup> Police commanded them to get out of the cordoned area.<sup>67</sup> There was much confusion as people fled the scene, with some people not actually knowing why they were running but following the actions of the crowd.<sup>68</sup> Video footage shows people fleeing the wrong way towards Oxford Circus, rather than away, and then being directed back.<sup>69</sup>

While some people kept moving away along the streets, others sought refuge inside. Some went into offices,<sup>70</sup> pubs<sup>71</sup> and cafes,<sup>72</sup> hiding in basements or lying on the floor. A number of pubs kept strictly to the same numbers policy that they would use on any normal business day, and once the limit was reached, they shut their doors to any newcomers.<sup>73</sup> People had to move along and try somewhere else. Others hid in nearby stores. Boots, round the corner from the Oxford Circus station entrance on

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<sup>50</sup> (VAL VLOG, VIDEO 00:12; Nini Video's VIDEO 00:12; Press association via Guardian, 2017 (see embedded video); Osborne, 2017; Daily Record, 2017).

<sup>51</sup> Transcript Participant 31. Harriet; (BBC News, [2] VIDEO 02.21).

<sup>52</sup> (Baker, 2017); Transcript 31. Harriet.

<sup>53</sup> (Oliphant, 2017)

<sup>54</sup> Transcript Participant 04. Penny ; Transcript Participant 35. Liang.

<sup>55</sup> (Guardian News, VIDEO 00.09).

<sup>56</sup> Transcript Participant 07. Arthur; Transcript Participant 11. Carrie; (VAL VLOG VIDEO 00.12; Oliphant, 2017).

<sup>57</sup> Transcript Participant 14. Van; Transcript Participant 31. Harriet.

<sup>58</sup> (Guardian News, VIDEO 00:33; MPs' Newswatch, VIDEO 00:31).

<sup>59</sup> Transcript Participant 31. Harriet; Transcript Participant 12. Greg.

<sup>60</sup> Transcript 12. Greg; Transcript Participant 24. Leo.

<sup>61</sup> (VAL VLOG, VIDEO 003:03 & 00:34; Beno, VIDEO 00:32).

<sup>62</sup> (Mambo Tone, VIDEO 04:15; VAL VLOG, VIDEO 01:16).

<sup>63</sup> (VAL VLOG, VIDEO 03:02).

<sup>64</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 00.51; Paterson, 2017).

<sup>65</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 01:29; Haq, VIDEO 00:40, 01:06).

<sup>66</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 00:04, 00:54).

<sup>67</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 00:52).

<sup>68</sup> (Guardian News, VIDEO 00.26; Collier & Grafton-Green, 2017; Oliphant, 2017) Transcript Participant 5. Amelia.

<sup>69</sup> (Beno, VIDEO 01.10)

<sup>70</sup> Transcript Participant 01. Efe; Transcript 36. Rory; (Griffin, 2017).

<sup>71</sup> Transcript 07. Arthur; Transcript 17. Oliver; (Oliphant, 2017).

<sup>72</sup> Transcript Participant 35. Liang; (LONDON 24 HOURS, VIDEO 01:02; Griffin, 2017).

<sup>73</sup> Transcript 07. Arthur; Transcript 31. Oliver.

Regent Street, was one of the first refuges for fearful passengers,<sup>74</sup> even before the police arrived.<sup>75</sup> More and more people tried to get in, which made those already there nervous as some were pushed against the wall. One witness reports they didn't want more people getting in, both for the overcrowding, and the worry that the 'shooter' might get in too.<sup>76</sup> Some people left, but then rushed back in,<sup>77</sup> a lot of people ('hundreds' according to one witness) were reported sheltering there at one point with their Black Friday shopping bags<sup>78</sup> and eventually staff pulled the shutters down and gave people water and food.<sup>79</sup> As the public sought shelter, there are reports that the sight of so many people suddenly rushing into a store caused alarm for both shoppers and staff. One staff member described how people shouted and screamed as they sped inside, display panels gave way with loud bangs and goods were scattered on the floor.<sup>80</sup>

Topshop, Nike and Gap on Oxford Circus were just some of the stores that took people in, ushering them into offices and basements. Staff may have been trained in what to do in a potential terrorist attack<sup>81</sup> but even so, scenes in department stores were often chaotic. Workstations were abandoned and goods spilled onto the floor.<sup>82</sup> One staff member said they knocked over a thousand pounds worth of perfume and make-up but left it.<sup>83</sup> Once inside, staff and customers alike had to wait, often in basement rooms or offices.<sup>84</sup> Those that could get a signal on their phones were searching for information via social media as neither staff nor security personnel had any further information.<sup>85</sup>

Some stores however opened their doors at the exits and told people to run because the police were asking people to leave the area.<sup>86</sup> One shopper reported how, as they were preparing to leave a department store, crowds ran right through the shop with someone knocking over their shopping, and someone fell over; they described how people lost their shoes and left them where they were. The witness joined the movement of the crowd.<sup>87</sup>

Staff and shoppers rushing through a store on Oxford Street ended up at the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM) on Wimpole Street nearby. As RSM staff let them in, the Society were advised by the police that all buildings in the area had to go into lockdown. One member of staff described how people arrived looking fearful and confused, with some people finding "hidey holes" in the building.<sup>88</sup> Staff endeavoured to calm people down and bring them together; chairs were found, and water offered for 300 visitors who were ushered into the lecture hall. They were treated to a talk on resilience from one of the staff to help keep them occupied during the wait, "And this being 2017, people started to first to watch, then listen, and then Tweet."<sup>89</sup>

Behaviour during the lockdown period varied. One witness kept in the basement of a large store on Oxford Circus described how the tills were suddenly closed with the staff saying they'd been "told to

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<sup>74</sup> (Paterson, 2017 [Video file]).

<sup>75</sup> Transcript Participant 10. Alice.

<sup>76</sup> Transcript Participant 35. Liang; Transcript Participant 10. Alice.

<sup>77</sup> (Towners, 2017).

<sup>78</sup> (Paterson, 2017).

<sup>79</sup> Transcript Participant 10. Alice.

<sup>80</sup> Transcript Participant 29. Kai.

<sup>81</sup> (GOV.UK, 2016, Project Griffin) NB: now withdrawn but active in 2017.

<sup>82</sup> Transcript Participant 34. Jessica

<sup>83</sup> Transcript Participant 33. Jeremy

<sup>84</sup> Transcript Participant 21. Abigail; (express digest).

<sup>85</sup> Transcript Participant 11. Carrie; Transcript Participant 25. Mia; Transcript 21. Abigail.

<sup>86</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 01:08).

<sup>87</sup> Transcript Participant 11. Carrie.

<sup>88</sup> Transcript Participant 32. Jack.

<sup>89</sup> (Wessley, 2017); Transcript Participants 32. Jack.



hold you there, something's going on." The witness went on "It was actually ... quite nice, people were being quite friendly. I had a really long conversation with some complete random stranger. ... it felt like we kind of clustered into groups, the people that were panicking, the people that were just chilling, and the people that were just like, we're here, we might as well get to know each other." Some people carried on browsing.<sup>90</sup> Another witness reported when sheltering in a storeroom that it was completely silent,<sup>91</sup> and another that for a few minutes it was "quite terrifying" and then it was "normal", people "just getting on with their business really, seemed quite calm".<sup>92</sup>

People were wondering what was happening.<sup>93</sup> Various rumours were spreading<sup>94</sup> of gunshots,<sup>95</sup> of a stabbing,<sup>96</sup> much of it by word of mouth,<sup>97</sup> <sup>98</sup> but also amplified by social media.<sup>99</sup> The Mail Online published a false rumour of a lorry turned over and blood on the pavement (a ten-day-old story subsequently withdrawn).<sup>100</sup> There was no official information at this point apart from the British Transport Police tweet that an 'incident' was being investigated; therefore rumour and social media, particularly Twitter, started filling the gap.<sup>101</sup>

It would have been around 17.00-17.15 that the Oxford Circus area was cleared of the general public with just police personnel and vehicles present.<sup>102</sup>

### Selfridges

Further west down Oxford Street, opposite Bond Street station, there were scenes of confusion in Selfridges,<sup>103</sup> when there were rumours of gunshots. (One witness reports the intercom was not working.<sup>104</sup>) Video footage shows people inside crouching on the floor.<sup>105</sup> One staff member heard a huge crash and a couple of seconds later saw a crowd of people running towards them, so they went into a storeroom along with other staff and shoppers. However, a security guard told them they could leave.<sup>106</sup> Another witness at the top of an escalator saw lots of people rushing in from the street through the front doors "screaming and shouting". The witness started going down the fire exit stairs, but other people were coming up. Returning to the escalator they saw the front doors open and armed police coming in shouting "get out, get out".<sup>107</sup> At 17.00 pop singer Olly Murs

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<sup>90</sup> Transcript Participant 23. Akira.

<sup>91</sup> Transcript Participant 34. Jessica.

<sup>92</sup> Transcript Participants 17. Oliver.

<sup>93</sup> (The Straits Times, VIDEO 00.52; VAL VLOG, VIDEO 00:00; Mambo Tone, VIDEO 00:38).

<sup>94</sup> (Clarke-Billings, 2017).

<sup>95</sup> (Mendick & Yorke, 2017); Transcript Participant 05. Amelia.

<sup>96</sup> Transcript Participant 03. Fred.

<sup>97</sup> (VAL VLOG, VIDEO 01:29; Griffin, 2017).

<sup>98</sup> There was a rumour of ISIS presence, Transcript Participant 36. Rory; also a tweet from the far-right organisation EDL (Dearden, 2017).

<sup>99</sup> (express digest; Griffin, 2017; Paterson, 2017).

<sup>100</sup> (Wessley, 2017; Di Stefano, 2017).

<sup>101</sup> (Eriksson Krutrok & Lindgren, 2022; express digest; Clarke-Billings, 2017).

<sup>102</sup> (BBC News, VIDEO [3] 01.23.) Live broadcast of Topshop, reporter commentary saying getting reports of police entering Selfridges, though there would have been a delay in news getting through; Simpson, 2017, describes the operation happening "quickly and efficiently"; also video footage (e.g. VAL VLOG) shows police at pace moving people along.

<sup>103</sup> (O An Ajans, VIDEO 02 :14).

<sup>104</sup> Transcript Participant 30. Isla.

<sup>105</sup> (Paterson, 2017, [Video file]).

<sup>106</sup> Transcript Participant 34. Jessica.

<sup>107</sup> Transcript Participant 03. Fred.

posted a tweet, “F\*\*\*k everyone get out of Selfridges now gun shots!! I'm inside”<sup>108</sup> to his millions of followers.<sup>109</sup> The tweet was picked up by some of the many people searching for information.<sup>110</sup> A few minutes later he tweeted, “Really not sure what's happened! I'm in back office but people screaming and running towards exits”,<sup>111</sup> followed a minute later by “Evacuating stores now!!! F\*\*\*k heart is pounding”.<sup>112 113 114</sup>

At 17.07, the Metropolitan Police tweeted “If you are on Oxford Street go into a building. Officers are on scene and dealing. More info when we can”.<sup>115</sup> One person tweeted, “I dont understand why they are telling everyone to go into the nearest building but evacuating Selfridges meaning loads of scared n confused people on the street??”.<sup>116</sup> At 17.07, British Transport Police tweeted that Bond Street station was closed and to continue to avoid the area, and that police were on the scene.<sup>117</sup>

### Bond Street station and surrounding area

Crowds were leaving Selfridges as police directed people away,<sup>118</sup> with some people running to evacuate the store.<sup>119</sup> A witness recounted that it was like leaving a test match, you could not go in a different direction to the crowd, but the situation was orderly. Then they reported hearing a loud bang from the Oxford Circus direction, along with screaming and yelling. Some people started screaming near the witness and scattered out on to side streets. He tried to calm them down as he knew that it was not the sound of a gunshot.<sup>120</sup>

Possibly related to this observation, shortly before 17.15 an incident was developing at Bond Street station opposite, the next station along from Oxford Circus. People who could not disembark at Oxford Circus were getting off there. A witness described how everyone was walking normally when there was “some sort of random noise” that some people interpreted like gunshots, at which point people started running up the overcrowded exit stairs. The escalator stopped and two men carried a man “like in a war”, bleeding from the eye, and the witness ran outside next to Selfridges to see a group of news journalists and what were described as “SWAT<sup>121</sup> type police officers” standing in a “square” “from Hyde Park to Oxford Circus”.<sup>122</sup> However, a Sun journalist reported people screaming and running back *down* escalators to get back on to the carriage. They describe a woman screaming “my baby”, people shouting “gun”, and a man falling, his face covered in blood.<sup>123</sup> Transport for London CCTV footage timed at 17.15 shows chaotic scenes with people attempting to get down a crowded escalator that was going up. There was some pushing, one person jumped over other people to get down, someone fell, and some people slid down the central barrier. Transport for

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<sup>108</sup> (Tweet 110).

<sup>109</sup> There were 3,887 tweets, 1,482 retweets and 7,355 likes.

<sup>110</sup> Transcript Participant 16. Ken; Transcript Participant 31. Harriet; (express digest; Clarke-Billings, 2017).

<sup>111</sup> (Tweet 111).

<sup>112</sup> (Tweet 112).

<sup>113</sup> There were 1,355 retweets, 599 quote tweets and 5,572 likes.

<sup>114</sup> Police inside Selfridges (MPs Newswatch, VIDEO 01.20).

<sup>115</sup> (Tweet 006; Wright & Harrison, 2017).

<sup>116</sup> (Tweet 6).

<sup>117</sup> (Tweet 007). NB: Bond Street station was closed and reopened several times during the course of the incident. (Teams meeting, Transport for London, 25/01/2023).

<sup>118</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 00:00).

<sup>119</sup> (Guardian News, VIDEO 00:11).

<sup>120</sup> (Rowe, 2017).

<sup>121</sup> In the United States, a SWAT (special weapons and tactics) team is a police tactical unit that uses specialized or military equipment and tactics.

<sup>122</sup> Transcript Participant 22. Fatima.

<sup>123</sup> (Baker, 2017).

London interpreted this action as a response to blue lights flashing on police vehicles as they came down Oxford Street (presumably with sirens sounding as well). The station was closed at 17.17 “for a short time” and an evacuation was initiated for public safety to regain control of the station.<sup>124</sup>

Again, possibly related to this incident, at Marble Arch, the cyclist with a body camera filmed people gathering at a police checkpoint watching the scenes towards Bond Street station/Oxford Circus. Sirens and an official alarm can be heard in the distance. Suddenly people started running “as if someone is shooting people down the street”. Some screaming can be heard on the footage, with people running, walking briskly, often holding hands. They continued moving away from Marble Arch and started running up Park Lane, covering some distance before people slowed down and dispersed.<sup>125</sup>

As in the Oxford Circus area, when people left the station behaviour varied. Some people were “jogging along,” others moving hurriedly, and people in groups “grabbing each other and running along together.” A shoe was abandoned on New Bond Street.<sup>126</sup> On the streets, a pedestrian saw people walking more quickly, building into a run and then dispersing, with “screaming”, and people “sprinting” out of Bond Street station. There was one woman on the central reservation of Oxford Street, “screaming” with her “shopping bags flying” with a small number of people around her.<sup>127</sup> People were dispersing round the area, towards Beak Street to the south and Wigmore Street and Baker Street to the north of Selfridges.<sup>128</sup> However, the scale of crowd flight in the Bond Street area was not as great as Oxford Circus.<sup>129</sup> Police on Oxford Street were instructing people to make their way towards Marble Arch. Video footage shows some people running, then people walking, with a policeman saying, “quick walk, quick crisp walk to Marble Arch, walk do not run.” The officer asked people to stop filming or taking pictures.<sup>130</sup>

#### Whole area

At 17.16, the Metropolitan Police issued a tweet with more information: “Police were called at 16:38hrs on Friday, 24 November to a number of reports of shots fired on Oxford Street and underground at Oxford Circus tube station. Police have responded as if the incident is terrorist related. Armed and unarmed officers are on scene and dealing along with colleagues from British Transport Police. If you are on Oxford Street go into a building and stay inside until further direction. Avoid travelling to the Oxford Street area.”<sup>131</sup> This tweet alone was retweeted 7,947 times.<sup>132</sup> British Transport Police added in a tweet, “At this stage police have not located any casualties.”<sup>133</sup> British Transport Police and the Metropolitan Police tweets were the most retweeted during the incident, often referencing each other.<sup>134</sup> One witness was certain London was under attack, and

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124 Teams meeting, Transport for London, 25/01/2023.

<sup>125</sup> (Beno, VIDEO 02:14 ).

126 Transcript Participant 31. Harriet; (AP Archive, VIDEO 00:25).

127 Transcript Participant 14. Van.

128 Transcript Participant 31. Harriet ; Transcript 30. Isla ; (AP Archive, VIDEO).

129 Transcript Dermot Van.

<sup>130</sup> (AP Archive, VIDEO 01:08).

<sup>131</sup> (Tweet 015; Wright & Harrison, 2017).

<sup>132</sup> (Eriksson Krutrok & Lindgren, 2022)

<sup>133</sup> (Griffin, 2017; Wright & Harrison, 2017).

<sup>134</sup> (Eriksson Krutrok & Lindgren, 2022).

wrongly reported, “Latest update from the police 'we can't give you specifics. But there's been shots fired and explosives.<sup>135</sup> So please stay in the shop and move to the back”<sup>136</sup>.

People also gathered at the other end of Oxford Street near Tottenham Court Road, nearly a mile and a half away from Marble Arch, where police were preventing people from walking in the Oxford Circus direction. Some of the pedestrians had walked that way escaping from Oxford Circus, and police officers had also advised a number of people to make their way towards Tottenham Court Road, avoiding Oxford Street.<sup>137</sup> Video footage demonstrates a crowd of people walking towards the barrier and standing around.<sup>138</sup> Further south, a witness seeking shelter had got as far as Charing Cross Road, finding people were “barricaded in pubs” and would not let anyone in. People were still “scattering” as they reached Leicester Square where “50-100” people just dispersed. When the witness reached Trafalgar Square, they walked into a pub to find “everyone’s laughing, dancing like nothing had happened”.<sup>139</sup> Another witness, tweeting at 17.11, says they are “safe and sound” in Leicester Square.<sup>140</sup> However, diners at Piccadilly Circus could still see people rushing away.<sup>141</sup> In Soho, one person reached their restaurant with some relief, only to be told by staff to move into the basement for their safety.<sup>142</sup>

Just after 17.20, some eyewitnesses reported they were being released from shops and restaurants they had been told to shelter in. It was not clear if the incident was over, but it appeared that the street itself was safe enough.<sup>143</sup> Video footage indicates a deserted Oxford Circus.<sup>144</sup> However, other people were still being held inside some premises just after 17.30.<sup>145</sup> A staff member in a store in Oxford Street was advised to let people out one by one.<sup>146</sup> A BBC producer director said police were not treating the incident as a 'mass casualty attack', and a member of the public tweeted, "Police officers on the scene have told me this is not a mass casualty attack. No ambulances beyond the cordon. Sense the incident is drawing down."<sup>147</sup> At 17.30, British Transport Police tweeted they had had one report of a “woman sustaining a minor injury when leaving Oxford Circus station. No other reported casualties. More updates to follow.”<sup>148</sup> At 17.42 the Metropolitan Police tweeted “We have not located any trace of suspects, evidence of shots fired or casualties. Officers are still on the

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<sup>135</sup> There is no evidence the police used the word “explosives”.

<sup>136</sup> (Mendick & Yorke, 2017).

<sup>137</sup> Transcript Participant 01. Efe; (Griffin, 2017; Oliphant, 2017).

<sup>138</sup> (Haq, 2017, VIDEO 00:00).

<sup>139</sup> Transcript Participant 07. Arthur.

<sup>140</sup> (Tweet 5).

<sup>141</sup> Transcript Participant 09. Ramone.

<sup>142</sup> Transcript Participant 05. Amelia.

<sup>143</sup> (Griffin, 2017).

<sup>144</sup> (BBC News VIDEO [3] 00:00). Exact timing is difficult to ascertain but helicopter shot probably held for some time.

<sup>145</sup> (Tweet 1)

<sup>146</sup> Transcript Participant 29. Kai 3.

<sup>147</sup> (Mendick & Yorke, 2017)

<sup>148</sup> (Tweet 011)

scene.”<sup>149</sup> On hearing the news, Olly Murs tweeted “Being told no shots in Selfridges! Have no idea the whole store went crazy!”.<sup>150 151 152</sup>

At 17.47, Transport for London tweeted that Oxford Circus and Bond Street stations had reopened, and all trains were stopping normally.<sup>153</sup> A BBC London news correspondent tweeted that the Metropolitan Counter Terrorism Command were not getting involved in the incident.<sup>154</sup> At 17.57 British Transport Police issued a full statement via Twitter: “Officers were called to Oxford Circus Tube station following reports of gun fire on the westbound Central Line platform. Passengers at the station then self-evacuated the station onto Oxford Circus and Regent Street area of London. This caused a significant level of panic which resulted in numerous calls from members of the public reporting gunfire. Officers responded in line with our procedures of a terrorist incident, this included armed officers from British Transport Police and the Metropolitan Police. A full and methodical search of the station and Oxford Street was conducted by officers. At this stage, we are examining the circumstances of the incident which resulted in the station being evacuated. During the station evacuation, one woman is believed to have sustained a minor injury.”<sup>155</sup>

At 17.58, one news outlet reported that Oxford Circus itself was completely deserted apart from the police presence.<sup>156</sup> People can be seen standing around, on their phones and talking, at the cordon near Tottenham Court Road.<sup>157</sup> Kensington Palace announced that it was still unclear whether the Royal Variety Performance was going ahead at 17.58.<sup>158</sup> At around six o’clock, people were waiting for the all clear,<sup>159</sup> though some cordons were coming down<sup>160</sup> with people starting to head for the station entrances.<sup>161</sup> Some people were allowed to leave shops and start to emerge along the pavements.<sup>162</sup> Others were still held in shops.<sup>163</sup> Just after six o’clock British Transport Police tweeted “A big thank you for bearing with us whilst we and @metpoliceuk responded to #Oxford Circus. Armed officers were quickly on scene, no evidence of gunfire found. The area was searched swiftly and we are working to lift cordons and reopen stations”.<sup>164</sup> At 18.04 the Metropolitan Police announced in a tweet: “The Met response on Oxford Street has now been stood down. If you sought shelter in a building please now leave and follow the direction of police officers on the ground if you need assistance.”<sup>165</sup> At 18.08 a video tweeter outside Oxford Circus station reported “normality

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<sup>149</sup> (Tweet 010).

<sup>150</sup> This tweet drew some opprobrium from broadcaster and commentator Piers Morgan who wrote to him to stop tweeting, to leave it to the police and stop “stirring extra panic”. The singer defended himself saying that had he been there, he would have understood, “... the whole place went mad.” (Express Digest, 2017; Westbrook, C., 2017).

<sup>151</sup> (Tweet 113; Tweet 114; Express Digest, 2017).

<sup>152</sup> Russell Brand also posted, from Hanover Square, and was treated to similar criticism. (Tweets 115, 116).

<sup>153</sup> (Wright & Harrison, 2017; News Letter, 2017). This probably allowed passengers to change trains. (MPs Newswatch, VIDEO 02.26)

<sup>154</sup> (Wright & Harrison, 2017).

<sup>155</sup> (Wright & Harrison, 2017).

<sup>156</sup> (Siddique, 2017; BBC News, VIDEO [3], 00:00).

<sup>157</sup> (Haq, VIDEO 05:28)

<sup>158</sup> (Griffin, 2017).

<sup>159</sup> (Griffin, 2017).

<sup>160</sup> (Siddique, 2017; Greenfield, Cobain & Dodd).

<sup>161</sup> (Siddique, 2017).

<sup>162</sup> (MPs Newswatch, VIDEO 02.45).

<sup>163</sup> (Tweet 7).

<sup>164</sup> (Tweet 012).

<sup>165</sup> (Tweet 013).

appears to have been restored”, as people waited for the gates to open.<sup>166</sup> The Royal Variety Performance went ahead, although the arrival of Prince William and Kate Middleton was delayed.<sup>167</sup> Additional police officers remained in the West End to “reassure the public”.<sup>168</sup>

As people dispersed, some took their normal route,<sup>169</sup> others walked a long way home instead of taking public transport.<sup>170</sup> Department stores looked as if a “whirlwind” had gone through them<sup>171</sup> and one of them had a large window broken.<sup>172</sup> One woman, who had nearly been run over in her bid to get away, was badly shaken up and walked with a group of strangers to Euston Station, suffering a panic attack on the train home.<sup>173</sup>

Later that evening London Ambulance Service released an update, confirming sixteen people required medical attention while leaving the Oxford Circus area. Seven patients were discharged at the scene, eight patients were taken to two central London hospitals for minor injuries, with one patient attending a major trauma centre for leg injuries.<sup>174</sup>

Later that evening British Transport Police released a CCTV image of two men they wanted to talk to in relation to the incident.<sup>175</sup> The following day the men identified themselves and were released without charge.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> (Siddique, 2017, [Video file]).

<sup>167</sup> (Siddique, 2017).

<sup>168</sup> (Tweet 014).

<sup>169</sup> Transcript Participant 35. Liang.

<sup>170</sup> Transcript Participant 18. George.

<sup>171</sup> Transcript Participant 30. Isla.

<sup>172</sup> Transcript Participant 33. Jeremy ; (Collier & Grafton-Green, 2017).

<sup>173</sup> Transcript Participant 11. Carrie.

<sup>174</sup> (Hyatt, 2017).

<sup>175</sup> (Hyatt, 2017)

<sup>176</sup> (Press Association via Guardian, 2017).

## References

### Transcripts

Participant 01. Efe

Participant 03. Fred

Participant 04. Penny

Participant 05. Amelia

Participant 07. Arthur

Participant 09. Ramone

Participant 10. Alice

Participant 11. Carrie

Participant 12. Greg

Participant 14. Van

Participant 15. Jasmine

Participant 16. Ken

Participant 17. Oliver

Participant 18. George

Participant 21. Abigail

Participant 22. Fatima

Participant 23. Akira

Participant 24. Leo

Participant 25. Mia

Participant 26. Grace

Participant 28. Charlie

Participant 29. Kai

Participant 30. Isla

Participant 31. Harriet

Participant 32. Jack

Participant 33. Jeremy

Participant 34. Jessica

Participant 35. Liang

Participant 36. Rory

## Twitter Data

Number	Date	Time	Comment
1	24/11/2017	17:34	Currently in oxford street primark
2		17:10	Everyone please avoid these areas! I'm here and it's chaos, panic and floods of crowds running. Not clear at all what's going on yet
3		17:17	Still hiding downstairs in an Oxford Circus chain store
4		17:19	Still hiding downstairs in an Oxford Circus chain store
5		17:11	I ran and now in Leicester Square safe and sound.. what is really happening there?!
6		17:15	I dont understand why they are telling everyone to go into the nearest building but evacuating Selfridges meaning loads of scared n confused people on the street??
7		18:01 (Photo three people huddled on floor)	I am in River Island stuck in the main floor. Crying babies and teens hysterical.. any updates??

## Twitter Data official sources

Number	URL link + content	Time posted
001	<a href="#">Metropolitan Police on Twitter: "Our response on #OxfordStreet has now been stood down. If you sought shelter in a building please now leave, and follow the direction of police officers on the ground if you need assistance" / Twitter</a>	18:04
002	<a href="#">Metropolitan Police on Twitter: "At about 16:38 we started to receive numerous 999 calls reporting shots fired in a number of locations on #OxfordStreet &amp; at Oxford Circus tube station. Given the nature of the info received we responded as if the incident was terrorism, including the deployment of armed officers" / Twitter</a>	18:05
003	<a href="#">Metropolitan Police on Twitter: "Additional officers remain on duty in the West End to reassure the public. We thank the public for their patience and assistance during our response. If you see anything suspicious dial 999 immediately #OxfordStreet" / Twitter</a>	18:06
004	<a href="#">(5) Metropolitan Police on Twitter: "We have not located any trace of suspects, evidence of shots fired or casualties. Officers still on scene. If you are in a building stay there, if you are on the street in #OxfordStreet leave the area. Officers continue to search the area. More updates as soon as we have them" / Twitter</a>	17:42 Posted several times
005	<a href="#">British Transport Police on Twitter: "At this stage, we have received one report of a woman sustaining a minor injury when leaving Oxford Circus station. There are no other reported casualties. More updates to follow." / Twitter</a>	17:30
006	<a href="#">(2) Metropolitan Police on Twitter: "If you are on Oxford Street go into a building. Officers are on scene and dealing. More info when we can" / Twitter</a>	17:07
007	<a href="#">(2) British Transport Police on Twitter: "Officers are on scene alongside @metpoliceuk at Oxford Circus. Please continue to avoid the area. Oxford Circus and Bond Street station are closed." / Twitter</a>	17:08



008	<a href="#">(2) British Transport Police on Twitter: "We continue to respond to an incident at Oxford Circus. The station is currently closed, please avoid the area at this time. Officers are on scene." / Twitter</a>	16:56
009	<a href="#">(8) London Fire Brigade on Twitter: "We were called at 1643 to an incident at Oxford Circus tube. Three fire engines &amp; 15 firefighters are in attendance. Please avoid the area. Follow @BTP &amp; @metpoliceuk for more information #OxfordStreet" / Twitter</a>	17:23
010	<a href="#">(8) Metropolitan Police on Twitter: "We have not located any trace of suspects, evidence of shots fired or casualties. Officers still on scene. If you are in a building stay there, if you are on the street in #OxfordStreet leave the area. Officers continue to search the area. More updates as soon as we have them" / Twitter</a>	17:42
011	<a href="#">(8) British Transport Police on Twitter: "At this stage, we have received one report of a woman sustaining a minor injury when leaving Oxford Circus station. There are no other reported casualties. More updates to follow." / Twitter</a>	17:30
012	<a href="#">(8) British Transport Police on Twitter: "A big thank you for bearing with us whilst we and @metpoliceuk responded to #OxfordCircus. Armed officers were quickly on scene, no evidence of gunfire found. The area was searched swiftly and we are working to lift cordons and reopen stations." / Twitter</a>	18:02
013	<a href="#">Our response on #OxfordStreet has now been stood down. If you sought shelter in a building please now leave, and follow the direction of police officers on the ground if you need assistance</a> <a href="#">(8) Metropolitan Police on Twitter: "At about 16:38 we started to receive numerous 999 calls reporting shots fired in a number of locations on #OxfordStreet &amp; at Oxford Circus tube station. Given the nature of the info received we responded as if the incident was terrorism, including the deployment of armed officers" / Twitter</a>	18:04
014	<a href="#">(8) Metropolitan Police on Twitter: "Additional officers remain on duty in the West End to reassure the public. We thank the public for their patience and assistance during our response. If you see anything suspicious dial 999 immediately #OxfordStreet" / Twitter</a>	18:06
015	<a href="#">Police called at 16:38 to a number of reports of shots fired on #OxfordStreet &amp; underground at Oxford Circus tube station. Police have responded as if the incident is terrorist related. Armed and unarmed officers are on scene and dealing along with colleagues from @BTP</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/metpoliceuk/status/934108530809999363?lang=en">https://twitter.com/metpoliceuk/status/934108530809999363?lang=en</a>	17.16

## Twitter Data Celebrity Tweets

### Olly Murs:

110 : "F\*\*\*k everyone get out of Selfridges now gun shots!! I'm inside

URL: <https://twitter.com/ollymurs/status/934104483537326080?lang=en>

111: Really not sure what's happened! I'm in back office but people screaming and running towards exits

URL: [https://twitter.com/ollymurs/status/934106295585697792?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://twitter.com/ollymurs/status/934106295585697792?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

112: Evacuating store now!!! Fuck heart is pounding

URL:

[https://twitter.com/ollymurs/status/934106556777496576?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcam%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E934106556777496576%7Ctwgr%5E64d3336a245460c4445fad52e6f9fad3ddbe688%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fuk-news%2Fcrime%2F2017%2F11%2F24%2Ffoxford-circus-police-london-tube-gunshots-live](https://twitter.com/ollymurs/status/934106556777496576?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcam%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E934106556777496576%7Ctwgr%5E64d3336a245460c4445fad52e6f9fad3ddbe688%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fuk-news%2Fcrime%2F2017%2F11%2F24%2Ffoxford-circus-police-london-tube-gunshots-live)

113: Listen piers! I was shopping .... If you was there you'd have understood mate.

URL: <https://t.co/mnZBTSLOd4> / Twitter  
"Listen piers! I was shopping and then all of sudden the whole place went mad, I mean crazy people running & screaming towards exits. We found a small office to hide to which loads of staff and people were saying there was shots fired. If you was there you'd have understood mate. <https://t.co/mnZBTSLOd4>" / Twitter

114: <https://t.co/mnZBTSLOd4> / Twitter  
"Being told no shots in Selfridges! Have no idea the whole store went crazy!" / Twitter

Russell Brand:

115: URL: <https://t.co/WZaRBetpIT> / Twitter  
"Live from Oxford St <https://t.co/WZaRBetpIT>" / Twitter

116: URL: <https://t.co/AvME25LcmV> / Twitter  
"Dramatic reporting of absolutely nothing happening. 🤔🤔🤔🤔 <https://t.co/AvME25LcmV>" / Twitter

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