

Full triangulated account for the 2011 “riots” in Birmingham

Beyond Contagion

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The Birmingham 'riots'

Monday 8th - Wednesday 10th August 2011

Contents

List of Figures	2
List of Abbreviations	2
Note on Locations	2
1. Methodology.....	3
2. Data Sources	3
3. Analysis	5
Introduction	5
Geography and demographics.....	5
Disorder-related crimes and arrestees	7
Demographics of arrestees	8
Sunday 7 th August	10
Monday 8 th August.....	10
Outbreak in the City Centre	10
Spread in the City Centre	12
WMP respond	14
Handsworth.....	15
Signs of spread beyond Birmingham	18
Tuesday 9 th August.....	18
Clean up	18
Gathering in the City Centre	18
Spread and control.....	19
Final attacks	20
Tuesday 9 th August - Wednesday 10 th August	20
Late disturbances.....	20
4. References	21
<i>The Guardian</i> - London School of Economics “Reading the Riots” transcripts	21
Twitter data.....	21
Other sources.....	26

List of Figures

Figure 1: West Midlands Conurbation	6
Figure 2: Index of multiple deprivations for the City of Birmingham in 2004 (darker shade indicates greater deprivation)	6
Figure 3: Centre of the City of Birmingham showing City Centre Core and surrounding quarters.....	7
Figure 4: Wards in the City of Birmingham with > 10 disorder-related crimes in August 2011	8
Figure 5: Postcode areas of August 2011 disorder-related arrestees' addresses for WMP force area	9
Figure 6: Age of August 2011 disorder-related arrestees for WMP force area	9
Figure 7: Proximity of areas that experienced significant disorder in the City of Birmingham in August 2011	10
Figure 8: Locations of disorder in Birmingham City Centre on Monday 8th and Tuesday 9th August 2011	13
Figure 9: Locations of disorder in Handsworth: 8 th -9 th August 2011	17

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
BBM	BlackBerry Messenger
HO	Home Office
LSE	London School of Economics
PSU	Police Support Unit
RtR	<i>The Guardian</i> and LSE Reading the Riots project
RTC	Road Traffic Collision
UK	United Kingdom
WMP	West Midlands Police
YT	YouTube

Note on Locations

Some of the place names mentioned in the following report will be inaccurate at the time of reading, as retail premises have since closed, relocated or changed their name. Therefore, a list of names is provided below for places which currently exist under a different name to the one given in the report.

Locations with new names

Name in Report	Current Name
Pallasades	Grand Central Birmingham
Orange	EE
T-Mobile	EE

1. Methodology

The methodological approach used to analyse the events which transpired in Birmingham from the 8th to the 10th of August, 2011 is based upon that used by Stott, Drury and Reicher in their analysis of the disorders in Tottenham and Hackney in August 2011.¹ This method centres on a process of triangulation, wherein the veracity of an incident within the 'riot' event is verified by establishing its time, location and content using a variety of different data sources. These sources included official reports from a number of state bodies, social media posts, shared internet video, newspaper articles and eyewitness testimony. This analytical process was utilised to produce a corroborated, and detailed, timeline of events. The timeline itself details the movements of different crowds, the activities they partook in, and the movements and actions which West Midlands Police (WMP) took in response.

2. Data Sources

The data utilised to produce the analysis of the 'riot' events which transpired in the early August of 2011 in Birmingham came from four broad sources. The first comprised of three separate documents procured from the WMP and data obtained from the Home Office (HO). Of these, the first to be consulted was the Interim Report from the Chief Constable of the WMP to the West Midlands Police Authority.² This document contained a basic timeline of police actions and deployments and details of large-scale disorder events which occurred in the WMP area in August 2011. This source was used as the basis for the fully triangulated timeline of events in the Birmingham area which is the basis for this narrative account. The second source provided by WMP detailed the dates, times, locations and brief descriptions of incidents (N=27) where police officers sustained injuries during various disorder events in the WMP area. This data was utilised to provide detail for situations where police and crowds interacted.³ The third WMP source, an anonymised database of disorder-related arrestees (N=622) was determined to be of small value in establishing timeline events, though proved useful in establishing a general understanding of the demographic make-up of those involved in the disorder across the West Midlands force area.⁴

The information supplied by the HO consisted of a dataset of the dates, times, locations, types and targets of disorder-related crimes for August 2011 for the whole of the UK.⁵ From this dataset disorder-related crimes for the Birmingham District Local Authority area were extracted (N=363), mapped and broken down into ward-level counts. Studying spatial and temporal concentrations of these crimes allowed the locations and durations of individual disturbances to be verified. The dataset also provided information for triangulating incidents within these disturbance events. Unfortunately, the HO crime data and the WMP arrestee data could not be cross referenced which precluded an analysis of how far participants travelled to engage in their crimes.

¹ (Stott, Drury, & Reicher, 2016).

² (West Midlands Police, 2011).

³ (West Midlands Police, 2019a).

⁴ (West Midlands Police, 2019b).

⁵ This dataset (Home Office, 2018) was compiled by the HO from returns by UK Police forces in the wake of the August 2011 riots. It was presented in summary form in (Home Office, 2011).

The second broad data source was social media. A wealth of videos of the disorder events had been uploaded to the video hosting website YouTube (YT). Fifty-five videos pertaining to the events in Birmingham were collected of which 36 proved to be of significant use in the timeline.⁶ The content ranged from media footage recorded from the television, real-time filming by first-person eyewitnesses and material from online media companies. In addition to video sources, Tweets were selected from the *Twitter Harvesting Dashboard* produced specifically for this research project. This platform samples from a database of 2.6 million 'riot-related' tweets collected during the August 2011 disturbances by *The Guardian* & London School of Economics '*Reading the Riots*' (RtR) project.⁷ From these, 49 tweets were specifically selected for referencing in this account. These provided a rolling timeline constructed from crowd-sourced, time-stamped eye-witness testimony, albeit one that required cautious analysis.⁸

The third source of data was the series of anonymized transcripts of retrospective eyewitness testimony. These data, collected by the London School of Economics (LSE) and *The Guardian* newspaper as part of their Reading the Riots project (RtR), consisted of 20 transcripts of interviews with persons involved in the Birmingham 'riot' events on the 8th and 9th August 2011.⁹ These interview transcripts are identified with unique codes, beginning with 'BIR', taken directly from the RtR data corpus.

The fourth, and final, source of analysed data consisted of secondary print media. Eighteen local newspaper articles, collected from the online database ProQuest, reported on the various 'riot' events into December of 2011, detailing the various waves of arrest and sentencing of offenders, as well as publishing some eyewitness descriptions of the disorder events themselves.

Given that no single data source could be completely verified by itself, it was necessary to employ the above outlined triangulation method to assess the relative veracity of the events described both within and between the various data sources. The nature of this process inevitably led to the discarding and modification of certain versions of incidents, in order to produce an accurate analysis of the disorder events which took place in Birmingham in early August 2011.

⁶ All of the videos can be found on the *Birmingham Case Study* playlist on the *Beyond Contagion* YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLKsjFC5HBgnDTE7R2HFTiw>. They are cross-referenced in the *References* section of this document using the acronym Bxx, where xx is the *Birmingham Case Study* playlist number.

⁷ (*Twitter Harvesting Dashboard*, 2018).

⁸ The most significant use of Twitter was for increasing the accuracy of the timing of each event. Although a time lag was inevitable, tweets were invaluable in gauging that an event had taken place before a given time.

⁹ (The Guardian & LSE, 2011).

3. Analysis

Introduction

Prior to the disturbances which took place in Birmingham, 'riots' had taken place over two days in London. Rioting first occurred in Tottenham, Tottenham Hale and Wood Green on Saturday 6th August. These events took place following a demonstration in Tottenham against the killing of Mark Duggan by a Metropolitan Police firearms team on Thursday 4th August.¹⁰ Following the 'riot' events in Tottenham and Wood Green on 6th August, further disturbances broke out in other areas of London in the following days. In the north of the city, Enfield, Waltham Forest and Islington experienced significant public order events on Sunday 7th August, as did Brixton in the south. On Monday 8th and Tuesday 9th August, the City of Birmingham experienced serious incidents of disorder. One of the reasons Birmingham was chosen for case study analysis was that it was one of the first major cities to see disturbances outside of London. Other areas of the West Midlands including Wolverhampton and West Bromwich also experienced disorder, but these occurred after the initiation in Birmingham City Centre and are not considered in detail in this study.

Geography and demographics

The city of Birmingham is a metropolitan district consisting of 40 separate wards situated in the West Midlands conurbation (see Figure 1). Birmingham is ethnically diverse, with the following breakdown in 2011: White (57.9 per cent), Asian (26.6 per cent), Black (8.9 per cent), Mixed (4.4 per cent), Other (1.2 per cent) and Arab (1.0 percent).¹¹ Of note is Handsworth which has a majority South Asian and African-Caribbean population. Birmingham has a particularly high rate of poverty and deprivation, particularly in areas surrounding the City Centre, and among its non-majority ethnic groups.¹² A heat map of this deprivation, produced using Indices of Multiple Deprivation, can be seen below in Figure 2.

Whilst the areas surrounding the City Centre, particularly Handsworth, Nechells, Winson Green, Smethwick and Aston, experience a lot of poverty, the City Centre itself is relatively affluent. Birmingham City Centre has recently been redefined as the area within the A4540 'Middle' ring road, consisting of most of the Ladywood ward and parts of the Nechells and Aston wards. The original definition of the city centre, now known as the 'City Centre Core', was based on the Inner Ring Road or Queensway and lies at Birmingham's historic centre surrounded by seven quarters within the Middle Ring Road (see Figure 3).

The City Centre district contains three separate shopping centres; *Grand Central Birmingham* (called *Pallasades* in 2011), the *Pavilions*, and the *Bullring*. There is also a shopping area consisting of very exclusive designer shops called the *Mailbox*, which included a Hugo Boss and Giorgio Armani store in 2011. Outside of the major shopping complexes the city centre area is filled with shops ranging from electronics stores such as Richer Sounds on Smallbrook, Queensway and Jessops on Cherry Street, to confectionary stores like Cyber Candy on Bull Street, and clothing stores such as Adidas on New Street.

¹⁰ (Stott. et al., 2016).

¹¹ (ONS, 2011).

¹² (Cangiano, 2006).



Figure 1: West Midlands Conurbation¹³

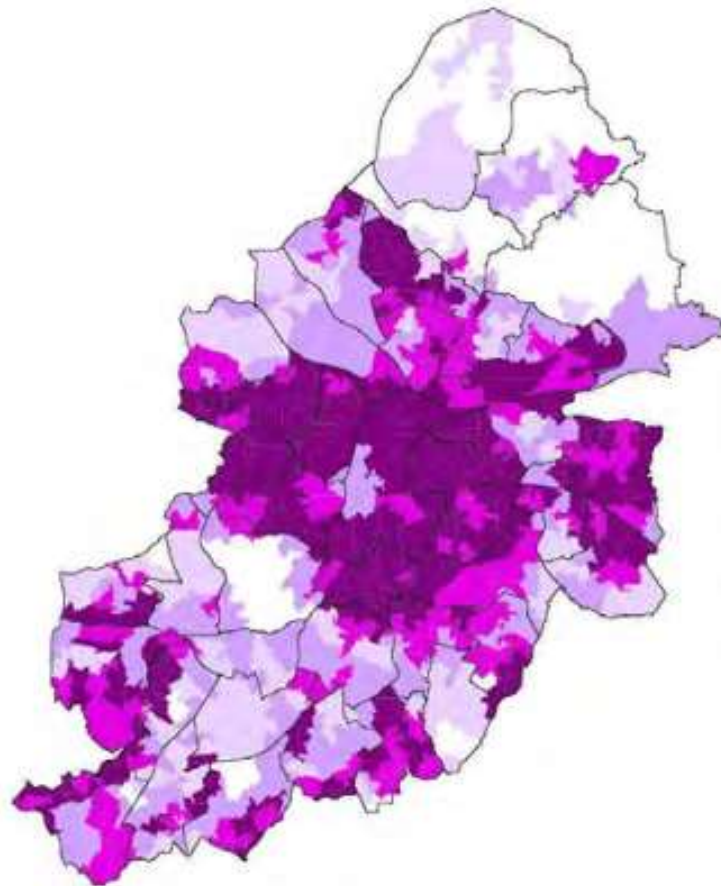


Figure 2: Index of multiple deprivations for the City of Birmingham in 2004¹⁴ (darker shade indicates greater deprivation)

¹³ This map shows the WMP force area (West Midlands Police and Crime Panel, 2014).



Figure 3: Centre of the City of Birmingham showing City Centre Core and surrounding quarters¹⁵

Disorder-related crimes and arrestees

Analysis of the distribution of disorder related crimes in the City of Birmingham in August 2011 (N = 363) demonstrated that of the 40 wards making up the Local Authority area only six experienced ten or more reported crimes. In fact 93 percent of all disorder related crimes in the City of Birmingham occurred in this small number of contiguous districts. They consisted of the three city centre wards of Ladywood (179 disorder-related crimes, 49.3 per cent of the total), Nechells (58, 16.0 per cent) and Aston (12, 3.3 per cent) and three wards to the northwest in the vicinity of the district of Handsworth: Soho (48, 13.2 per cent), Lozells and East Handsworth (24, 6.6 percent) and Handsworth Wood (16, 4.4 percent).¹⁶ These six wards and their respective numbers of disorder-related crimes are shown in Figure 4.¹⁷ This predominant concentration of disorder in two adjacent areas directed the research activity towards the City Centre and the Handsworth area.

¹⁴ (Cangiano, 2006).

¹⁵ (Birmingham City Council, 2007).

¹⁶ (Home Office, 2018).

¹⁷ These are the wards that were in existence in 2011. There were significant electoral boundary changes in 2016.

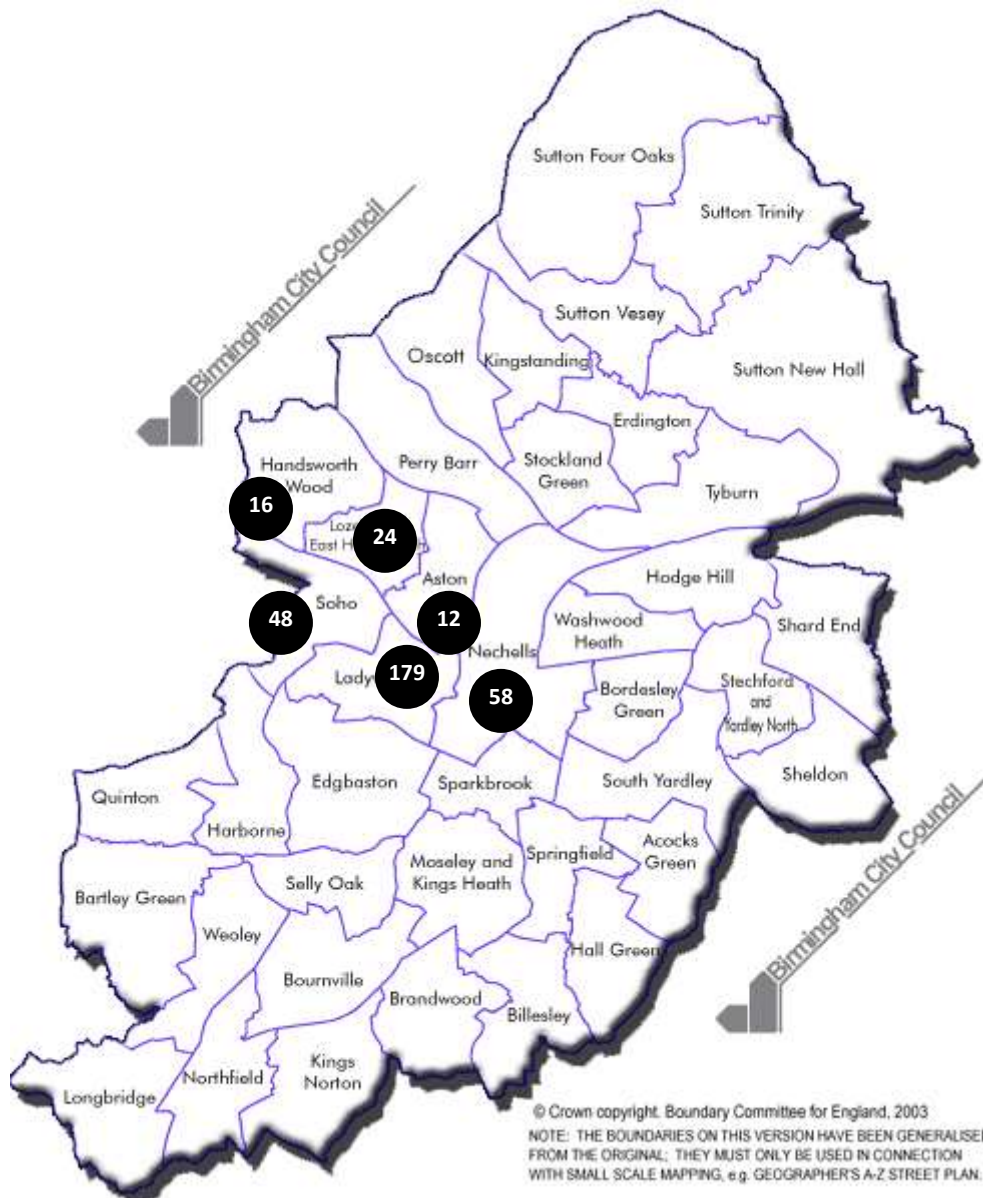


Figure 4: Wards in the City of Birmingham with > 10 disorder-related crimes in August 2011

Demographics of arrestees

The data on those arrested for disorder-related offences in August 2011 supplied by the WMP applied to all the local authorities that experienced disturbances in the force area (see Figure 1). These comprised the City of Birmingham as well as Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Coventry. Consequently, the following statistics were representative of the whole WMP area rather than just the City of Birmingham.

The demographic makeup of arrestees (N=622) reveals that the two largest ethnic groups were White European (40.4 percent) and African-Caribbean (39.5 percent), with a significant minority of Asian arrestees (16.7 percent). Males were overwhelmingly represented at 90.5 percent of all 'riot' related arrests.¹⁸ Arrestees were not, however, concentrated in solely the main areas experiencing disorder, but were spread out across a series of different

¹⁸ (West Midlands Police, 2019b).

locations across the force area (see Figure 5). Therefore, it is likely that a number of participants travelled from their homes into the areas experiencing disorder events. The majority of arrestees were younger rather than older, with a modal age of 17 and median of 20, with a range of 12 to 65 (see Figure 6).¹⁹ Also, 57 percent of those arrested were classified as unemployed.

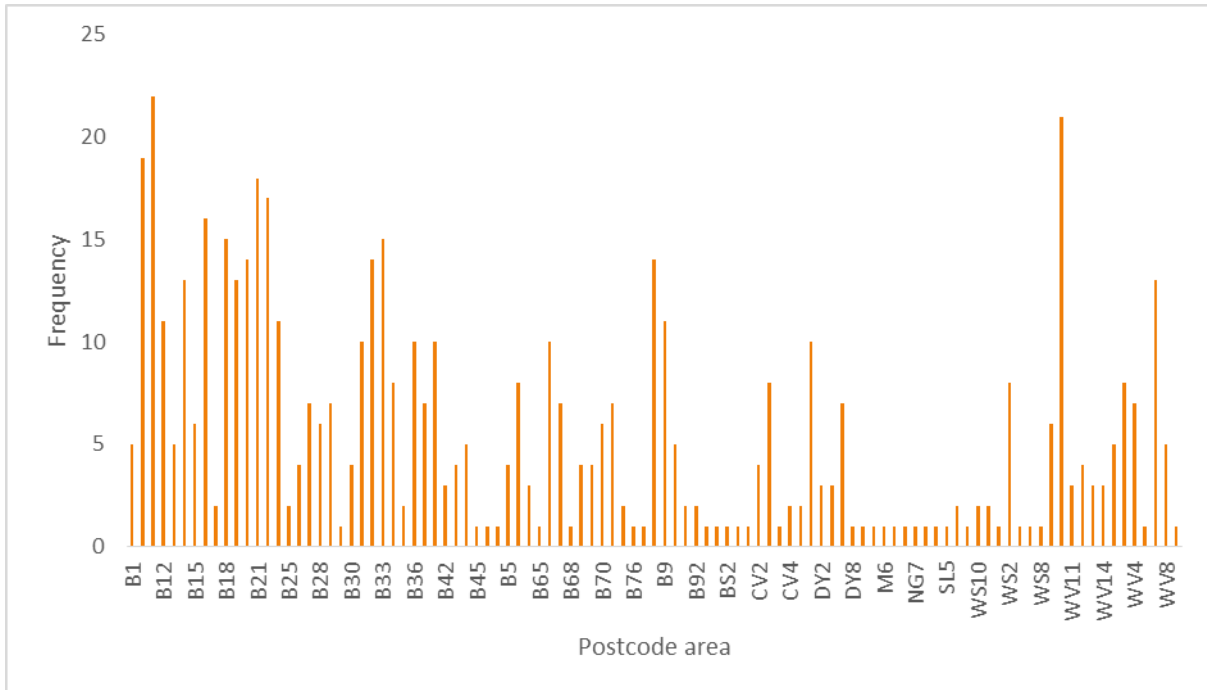


Figure 5: Postcode areas of August 2011 disorder-related arrestees' addresses for WMP force area

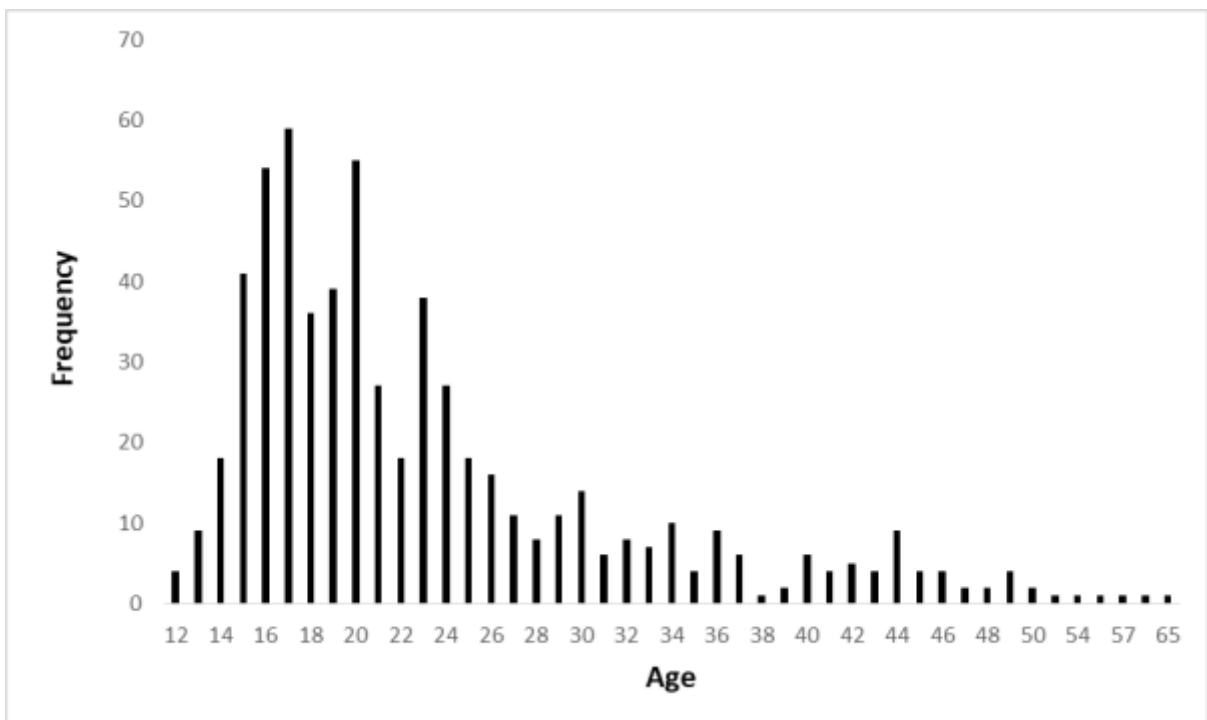


Figure 6: Age of August 2011 disorder-related arrestees for WMP force area

¹⁹ Ibid.

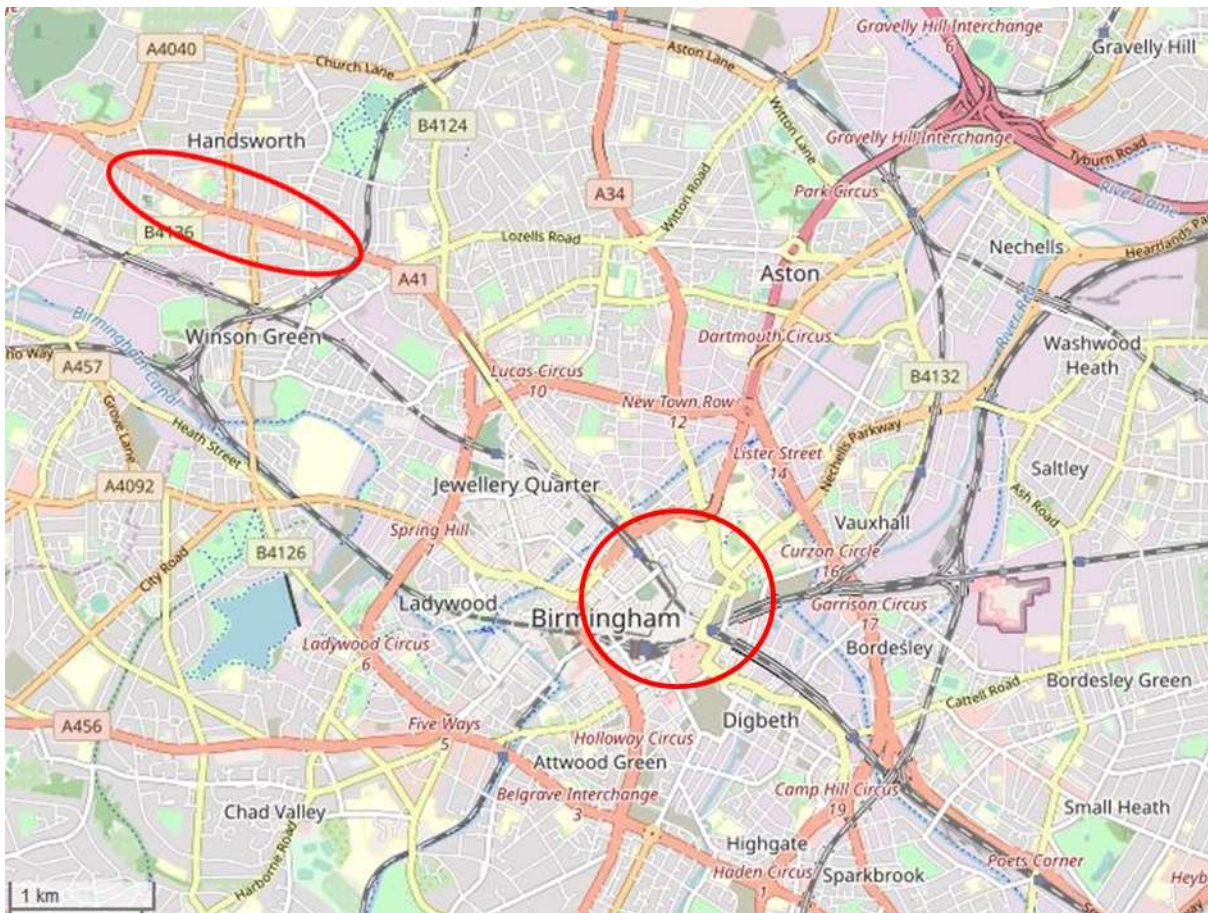


Figure 7: Proximity of areas that experienced significant disorder in the City of Birmingham in August 2011

Sunday 7th August

On Sunday 7th August, in Handsworth, the biannual Birmingham Carnival took place on the streets.²⁰ The WMP had received information prior to this event that there was “significant potential for disorder” and as a result had mobilised additional public-order trained mobile reserves. However, a police “intelligence cell operating at the carnival picked up no exceptional reports of potential disorder at the carnival or beyond its boundaries” and little disturbance was reported during or after the event.²¹ Although Birmingham Carnival transpired without incident whilst London experienced significant disorder, one Twitter user praised the London 'riots', and appealed to his followers to bring the disorder to Birmingham the following day.²²

Monday 8th August

Outbreak in the City Centre

In the early afternoon of Monday the 8th of August, messages began to circulate on BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) and similar services. These drew reference to the disturbances

²⁰ The Birmingham Carnival returned to Handsworth Park in 2011 and attracts crowds in the order of 30,000 people (Bentley, 2014).

²¹ (West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 7, 22).

²² (LewiBizzle, 09:24). LewiBizzle’s tweet criticises this call for action.

in London and urged recipients to go to Birmingham City Centre, with the intention of rioting.²³ Whilst some people ignored these messages, others actively propagated them.²⁴ Based on this information, groups of people begin to gather in the city centre throughout the afternoon and into the early evening (from around 17:00), particularly in the vicinity of the Bullring (Location 1 Figure 8) and Pallasades (now Grand Central, Location 2 Figure 8) shopping centres.²⁵ Others, however, travelled to the city centre as they would on any other day to find that the police presence there had been elevated above normal. This increase had been based upon intelligence reports including on BBM messages circulating earlier in the day.²⁶ The groups began to coalesce into crowds of hundreds with others gathering at New Street Railway Station.²⁷ At this point, the Footlocker store inside the Pallasades shopping centre and the Debenhams department store inside the Bullring were looted by several small groups gathering inside the buildings.²⁸ Shoppers were still inside both retail centres as the looting began. Some of these looters then left the Pallasades, whilst the Bullring's internal security began to eject similar groups causing disturbances.²⁹ Descriptions of these early events were shared on Twitter.³⁰

As more people gathered, mixing with the groups exiting both the Bullring and the Pallasades, WMP responded by 'kettling' a section of the crowd, around 30 individuals, on Stephenson Place (known colloquially as the 'Ramp', Location 3 Figure 8).³¹ Several hundred onlookers watched the event and shouted at police officers on the intersection of New Street and Corporation Street (Location 4 Figure 8).³² This kettle remained in place whilst part of the crowd was moved east onto New Street, and north onto Corporation Street at around 18:30. Police officers shouted for the crowd to move and then walked toward them in horizontal ranks to move them on. Some of the crowd were pushed forward by officers. At this point police officers were wearing no specialist equipment, save for Hi-Viz jackets.³³

As groups began to leave the Bullring shopping centre, others reached the Rotunda building (Location 5 Figure 8) by travelling east along New Street from the 'Ramp'. Just after 18:30, the H&M clothing store adjacent to St Martin's Walk, as well as other nearby shops, were targeted by several hundred looters.³⁴ A journalist taking photographs was attacked at this point by a small group.³⁵ The Halifax bank and Adidas and JD Sports footwear and clothing

²³ (BIR1810110501, BIR2609113604, BIR2609113613, BIR2609113616; eight_, 14:13).

²⁴ (BIR2609113616).

²⁵ (BIR2609113604; Tonybatesidex, 18:56; robbiewinters, 17:00; Dayani et al., 2011; West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 8).

²⁶ (West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 23).

²⁷ New Street Railway Station lies below The Pallasades (Grand Central) shopping centre.

²⁸ (BIR2609113616; BrummyInLondon, 19:21; Tyler, & Lillington, 2011; Anonymous, 2011f).

²⁹ (BIR2609113616; BIR2609113613; BIR181011503; BIR2609113613; BIR2609113616; charlottegrant, 18:39; MissSavz, 18:48; Tyler & Lillington, 2011).

³⁰ (StayFreshJamieD, 18:09).

³¹ 'Kettling' is a police tactic for containing crowds. It involves the formation of large cordons of police officers who then move in to corral a crowd within a limited area.

³² (BIR2609113616; brumriot, 2011, 00:13 - 00:31).

³³ (BIR2609113615; Scifikid1008, 18:35; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 0:32 - 2:30; Tyler & Lillington, 2011; Dayani et al., 2011).

³⁴ (BIR181011503; Scifikid1008, 18:33).

³⁵ (BIR2609113604).

shops on New Street were attacked as the crowds made their way past the Rotunda, and north onto High Street, causing WMP officers to follow.³⁶ After rounding the corner, around 45 individuals targeted the Orange and Carphone Warehouse mobile phone retailers for looting.³⁷ Meanwhile police officers removed the remaining looters from New Street, making some arrests and moving the crowd down New Street toward Corporation Street (where the two groups joined together). They followed the crowd onto High Street, where they halted to seal it off; whilst the crowd advanced towards Bull Street (Location 6 Figure 8).³⁸ As attacks on shops began to occur, news began to travel through 'word of mouth' and photographs on social media, encouraging more people to travel to the City Centre.³⁹

Spread in the City Centre

The crowd on Corporation Street, which included some of those from New Street, looted a T-Mobile phone shop, distributing the phones to other members of the crowd outside the store. They engaged in a number of minor acts of criminal damage as police moved them north along Corporation Street.⁴⁰ By this time WMP officers had ended the 'kettle' on the Ramp and prevented any return south along Corporation Street. They then closed the Ramp, and a police van advanced from New Street on to Corporation Street.⁴¹ The Bullring shopping centre was then closed an hour earlier than normal at 19:00.⁴²

The looting on Corporation Street then spread onto Cherry Street (Location 7 Figure 8) as a large number of individuals split off from the main group. This smaller group attacked several shops on Cherry Street beginning with the clothing department store House of Fraser. Then, a significant number of people begin to attack McDonald's, which had earlier been closed, by throwing a bin at the doors and windows, eventually smashing them and gaining entry; some employees were still inside the building at this time.⁴³ Following this, Jessops camera store was broken into; the front door was smashed open, and a number of people entered, whilst around 50 people stood by and watched.⁴⁴ The crowd on Cherry Street stayed in this location for a few minutes, whilst the tail end of the larger crowd made its way up Corporation Street at the behest of the police. Once the police reached the end of Cherry Street, they prevented access to it by forming a cordon. During this process, people waiting for buses and not involved in the events were also moved along, whilst a group of street dancers performed on the corner where Cherry Street meets Temple Row. A police officer attempted to move the dancers on, but his colleagues prevented him.⁴⁵

³⁶ (BIR181011503; BIR2609113610; BIR2609113616; BIR251011504; BIR2609113611; asshHOLE, 23:58; Tyler, & Lillington, 2011; Anonymous, 2011f; McCarthy, R., 2011).

³⁷ (BIR2609113603; BIR2609113607; BIR2609113610; BIR2609113616; danielinbar, 2011b, 0:06 - 0:30; Anonymous, 2011f).

³⁸ (BIR181011504; AaronLinstead, 19:00; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 4:21 - 4:44).

³⁹ See for example (BIR2609113613; monkeysailor, 19:15; bozzystuff, 19:22).

⁴⁰ (BIR181011504; BIR2609113607; BIR2609113616; BIR2609113615; BIR181011504; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 0:59 - 2:32).

⁴¹ (Oliviaalbx, 18:59; drmarkglee, 19:18; brumriot, 2011, 00:32 - 00:46; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 0:15 - 0:54).

⁴² (Dayani et al., 2011).

⁴³ (PilkingtonLisa1, 23:57; brumriot, 2011, 2:20 - 2:40; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 2:36 - 3:39; Savvas, 2011b).

⁴⁴ (BIR181011504; PilkingtonLisa1, 23:58; brumriot, 2011, 2:20 - 2:40; IVIRTU, 2011a, 0:13 - END; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 2:36 - 3:39).

⁴⁵ (brumriot, 2011, 2:48 - 3:00).

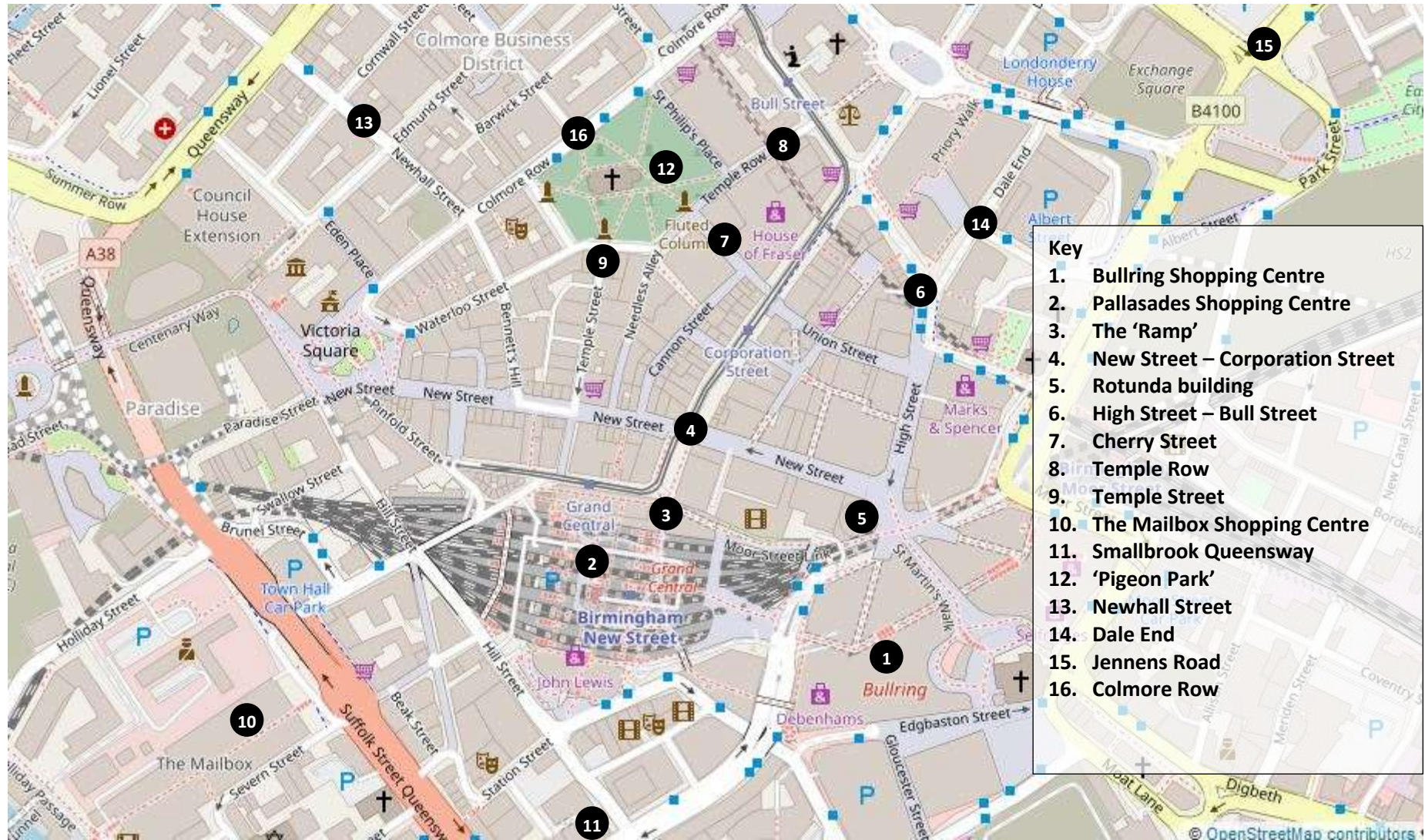


Figure 8: Locations of disorder in Birmingham City Centre on Monday 8th and Tuesday 9th August 2011

As the attacks on Cherry Street took place, those who were heading north along High Street arrived on Bull Street and begin to target a number of shops, including Cyber Candy, a shop selling imported sweets. This attack was carried out by a relatively small number of people, around 4 to 5, but a large group gathered to watch, and shout at or to them.⁴⁶ The Cherry Street group, now on Temple Row (Location 8 Figure 8), carried out a series of attacks on retailers, shouting out targets and instructions to one another, as they made their way up to Bull Street and joined with the crowd there.⁴⁷ As the two groups merged, Monty's Deli a sandwich bar was broken into and entered, followed by a second attack on Cyber Candy.⁴⁸ The nearby second-hand goods chain specialising in technology, computing and video games Computer Exchange was also looted around this time.⁴⁹

WMP respond

At 19:36, shortly after the looting on Bull Street, WMP decided to close off much of the City Centre. Buses were cancelled in order to stop potential participants travelling into the centre and the A38 Aston Expressway, a major thoroughfare to the north of the City, was closed to traffic.⁵⁰ Bull Street was then locked down by police.⁵¹ WMP also authorised the mobilisation of further police units into the City Centre area and gave the order for trained officers to wear public order equipment.⁵² The newly equipped police begin to move members of the crowd from Temple Street (Location 9 Figure 8).⁵³ As this occurred, the first signs of disturbance appeared at the more exclusive high-end shopping area The Mailbox (Location 10 Figure 8) to the south-west of the City Centre, as a Tesco store was attacked by a small group of looters.⁵⁴

Whilst police were focusing on various different areas of the City Centre, a small group of around 20 people regained access to New Street and again targeted the Adidas sportswear store there as the sun set.⁵⁵ After darkness fell another group of around 30 people attacked Boots and The Coventry Building Society on New Street. A short time later, at around 21:30, public-order equipped police deployed onto New Street.⁵⁶ At this point, a small group proceeded to attack Maplins (an electronics shop) on Temple Street.⁵⁷ A separate group also attempted to loot Richer Sounds (another electronics shop) on Smallbrook Queensway (Location 11 Figure 8), but were quickly chased off by police vans.⁵⁸ In response to disturbances in the area, police begin to increase their numbers around 'Pigeon Park' on

⁴⁶ (BIR181011503; BIR2609113603; modernemeid, 21:14, cwilliamson1975, 22:01; brumriot, 2011, 3:55 - 4:15; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 3:40 - 4:18).

⁴⁷ (brumriot, 2011, 3:16 - 3:54; IVIRTU, 2011b, 1:05 - 1:07; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 2:36 - 3:39).

⁴⁸ (BIR181011503; BIR181011504; jocialism, 22:49; HelenRoseP, 22:54; OilandGasRoles, 21:46; IVIRTU, 2011b, 0:10 - 0:47).

⁴⁹ (jonsnofun, 23:10; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 8:34 - 9:17).

⁵⁰ (Dayani et al., 2011).

⁵¹ (IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 4:43 - 6:30).

⁵² (BIR2609113604; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 7:28 - 8:16; West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 8).

⁵³ (IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 7:28 - 8:16).

⁵⁴ (BIR2609113604).

⁵⁵ (BIR181011504; danielfinbar, 2011a, 0:09 - 0:33; Tyler, 2011).

⁵⁶ (Nightsforever, 2011b, 0:01 - 0:26).

⁵⁷ (Christopher Davis, 2011, 0:01 - 0:27; Savvas, 2011a; McCarthy, R., 2011).

⁵⁸ (Glittercat77, 22:58; davadaun, 2011a, 0:01 - 1:02).

Temple Row (St Philips Cathedral Park, Location 12 Figure 8), in order to disperse the last of the looters from the City Centre. This police presence continued until midnight and into the early hours of the following morning.⁵⁹

As police concentrated on the northern areas of the City Centre just after 22:00 The Mailbox shopping area suffered a series of attacks. The designer clothes shop Giorgio Armani and the luxury department store Harvey Nichols were both targeted by large crowds. Whilst Harvey Nichols was only slightly damaged, looters gained full access to Giorgio Armani which reportedly lost £500,000 of stock.⁶⁰ In response, police deployed several carriers to the vicinity.⁶¹ Sporadic incidents continued over the next two to three hours and it wasn't until 01:32 that Birmingham city centre was reported "quiet and secure" by WMP.⁶² However, the preceding few hours had seen the locus of disturbances switch from the City Centre to Handsworth.

Handsworth

Around 20:45, as police began to regain some control over the City Centre and a number of 'looters' were being arrested or returning home, small groups of people begin to coalesce around the Soho Road area in Handsworth. After about half an hour a crowd of about 50 people had gathered at the Rookery Road junction (Location 1, Figure 9), some of whom had participated in the earlier City Centre disturbances.⁶³ This group remained in the area. At this point demands for an increase in the numbers of public order trained police to deal with the disturbances in the City Centre led to some police from Handsworth being moved. Another crowd of approximately 40 people followed the police east along Soho Road toward the City Centre. At about 22:00, as this group eventually began to return westwards, a third group of around 30 people began to move along Soho Road in the same direction. In the absence of a significant police presence, over the next hour "significant and widespread disorder" took place in the Soho Road area of Handsworth with some cars overturned, barricades in the road consisting of rubbish bins created, and shops attacked.⁶⁴ For example, the mobile phone retailer Fone Junction was looted and seriously damaged.⁶⁵ This group of rioters was followed up Soho Road sometime later by public-order trained police in carriers.⁶⁶

At 23:28 a police car travelling along the Holyhead Road to the west of the Soho Road was attacked with missiles. A few minutes later a similar incident occurred on Soho Road. As the anti-police violence began to spread a group of 'rioters', who had remained further to the west along Soho Road initiated an attack on the unmanned Handsworth West Police Station (Location 2 Figure 9). At 23:30 a crowd of 40-50 rioters pelted the Station on Holyhead Road

⁵⁹ (BIR2609113603; BIR2609113604).

⁶⁰ (McCarthy, N., 2016).

⁶¹ (OldManGlenners, 23:58; IAmBirmingham, 2011a, 10:07 - 11:20; georgesmith18000, 2011, 0:01 - 0:31; Anonymous, 2011a; Anonymous, 2011e; McCarthy, R., 2011).

⁶² (West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 10).

⁶³ (BIR2609113611; BIR2609113612; RaviPandaParmar, 22:37; wlewandowsky, 2011a, 0:01 - 0:58; wlewandowsky, 2011b, 0:01 - 1:31).

⁶⁴ (West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 9).

⁶⁵ (BIR2609113611; BIR2609113612; modernemeid, 23:56; Sangat Television, 2011a, 0:07 - 1:16, 1:38 - 2:00, 2:57 - 4:33, 12:30 - 14:00, 20:53 - 22:08; Anonymous, 2011b).

⁶⁶ (BIR2609113611; BIR2609113612; taiyab, 23:33; wlewandowsky, 2011a; West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 9).

with stones and then broke into the buildings. The rioters burned police documents, stole items of public order equipment and then set the building alight. By 23:44 it was reported to be on fire, and it continued to burn throughout the early hours of the Tuesday morning leaving the building partially destroyed.⁶⁷ The same group then initiated an attack upon a public order serial,⁶⁸ which had followed the second group of Handsworth rioters westward along Soho Road. This involved several missile attacks, causing three injuries to officers as they pursued the group around the surrounding areas throughout the night and into the early hours of the morning.⁶⁹

Whilst some of the rioters retreated south into Smethwick, others withdrew eastwards along Soho Road causing damage to banks, a petrol station, and a number of other businesses and parked cars south along Nineveh Road, and Grove Lane to the north of Lloyds TSB bank (Location 3 Figure 9).⁷⁰ The damage and looting on Soho Road was not random as one eyewitness described:

All the shops that were smashed were of high value goods. Not, as you can see, the pubs, the chip shops, the clothing firms, they've not been touched. But Electronic City, they've taken all the TVs out of the window, the banks they've smashed all the windows, jewellery shop, Ladbrokes [a bookmaker], I assume a lot of people have lost money over the years, so it's time to get [them] back.⁷¹

Another eyewitness described the composition of a crowd of 50 people who had barricaded Nineveh Road by overturning a car and setting it on fire and then looted a nearby convenience store, before making their escape:

There was quite a few Black people, and a few Iraqis, and Polish people and they were all running down Ashwin Road, down the tunnel and they had crates in their hands full of wine and everything.⁷²

WMP eventually decided to maintain a presence around the Lloyds TSB bank, where Grove Lane and Nineveh Road meet Soho Road forming cordons with public order equipped police officers and their carriers (Cordons A-C, Figure 9). Here police officers interfaced with members of the local community who came outside to watch the events which had just unfolded.⁷³ At 00:22 on the Tuesday morning, a few hundred metres to the east along Soho Road at the junction with Thornhill Road (Location 4 Figure 9) police officers and vehicles came under missile attack once again. Less than an hour later petrol bombs were reported to have been thrown on Bacchus Road (Location 5 Figure 9) to the south of the concentration of police at the Soho and Nineveh Road junction.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ (BIR2609113611; BIR2609113612; brit_newsman, 23:54; IVIRTU, 2011c; Anonymous, 2011b; West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 9-10).

⁶⁸ A public order 'serial' is a carrier containing six public-order trained constables, a sergeant and a driver.

⁶⁹ (BIR2609113611; Sangat Television, 2011a, 1:18 - 1:33, 2:11 - 2:13; West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 9; West Midlands Police, 2019a).

⁷⁰ (Sangat Television, 2011a, 14:54 - 16:06; Anonymous, 2011b).

⁷¹ (Sangat Television, 2011a, 17:00 - 17:25).

⁷² (Sangat Television, 2011a, 19:34 - 20:47).

⁷³ (Sangat Television, 2011a, 7:46 - 11:59).

⁷⁴ (West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 10).



Figure 9: Locations of disorder in Handsworth: 8th-9th August 2011

Signs of spread beyond Birmingham

In the early hours of Tuesday morning the first reports of the spread of disorder-related incidents to other parts of the WMP force area began to filter through. At 00:26 the Staveley Road Police Station in Wolverhampton was attacked along with a police vehicle and there were reports of the use of petrol bombs. Half an hour later, in Bordesley Green to the east of Birmingham City Centre, police officers come under attack from people armed with baseball bats. Shortly after this incident in Sparkbrook to the southeast the City Centre, it was reported that the City Council Neighbourhood Office had been attacked and a fire started inside the building.⁷⁵

Tuesday 9th August

Clean up

From early on Tuesday morning, up until the late morning, volunteer groups of people from the surrounding area congregated in the City Centre and began a large-scale cleaning operation. These people had been recruited and organised via social media, particularly through Twitter.⁷⁶ However, whilst these volunteers were cleaning up the damage left from the day before, more groups began to gather again in the City Centre, particularly near to the Dixy Chicken takeaway on Bull Street. These groups began to increase in size from 11:00 onward.⁷⁷

Gathering in the City Centre

That morning a WMP intelligence unit had been monitoring messages circulating on BBM about further disorder in the West Midlands. The first signs of potential disturbance appeared a few hours later at 14:28 with reports of “youths gathering across Wolverhampton”. The threat became more concrete at 14:55 when a police car was attacked in Wolverhampton, marking the start of serious disorder in the area. However, it wasn’t until 15:19 that WMP were made aware of an increasing number of groups gathering in Birmingham City Centre.⁷⁸ These groups begin to coalesce south of New Street, in between the entrance to the Bullring and the Rotunda flats.⁷⁹ This crowd steadily grew, to around 200 people. In addition to this, another crowd numbering around 100 people began to coalesce on Cherry Street.⁸⁰ From about 16:00 some shops began to close early in the City Centre and by 17:00 the Bullring and Mailbox shopping centres had followed suit.⁸¹

Around 17:00 WMP responded by deploying several of their available Police Support Units (PSU)⁸² with officers in public-order equipment and attempted to corral the crowd near to the Bullring. They began by forming a few horizontal ranks of police officers in Hi-Viz uniforms across High Street and New Street. Several PSUs of public order trained officers

⁷⁵ (West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 10).

⁷⁶ (RikkiClarke81, 08:57; BradHawkes, 09:18, tomlennon, 10:43; Anonymous, 2011f; Dale, 2011).

⁷⁷ (BIR181011502; carrott777, 13:28).

⁷⁸ (West Midlands Police, 2011, p. 11).

⁷⁹ (BIR2609113605; LiamAVFCMurphy, 13:32; bt_adams, 11:53; TheHumansUnite, 2011).

⁸⁰ (BIR2609113605; miroslav asztalos, 2011).

⁸¹ (MHVHforlife, 16:02; RadioSeanUK, 16:22).

⁸² A police support unit is a mobile group of police officers who have undergone public order tactical training to Level 2 PSU. A typical PSU consists of three carriers (vans) containing an inspector, three sergeants and 18 constables plus three drivers (College of Policing).

and their carriers were initially kept behind these lines along with large numbers of on-lookers that began to gather. A tense stand-off ensued with the crowd at the entrance to the Bullring refusing to move. Sometime after, police issued a warning to the crowd stating that they should return home else be met with force. This was met with angry jeers, shouting, and some individuals including women physically taunting the officers.⁸³ In response to this threat of force, some members of the crowd attacked the Bullring entrance on St Martin's Walk, smashing the doors and windows and pushing over the makeshift barricades, but not attempting to gain entry.⁸⁴ Shortly after, more than 20 public order officers with short shields quickly advanced on the crowd. However, the crowd was largely unmoved, and a second stand-off ensued.⁸⁵ At this point, other groups were still making their way into the City Centre, with some small-scale looting occurring on Newhall Street (Location 13 Figure 8), near to 'Pigeon Park'.⁸⁶

Spread and control

Around 18:00 public order police forced the crowd of several hundred people around the Rotunda to move via New Street to Corporation Street.⁸⁷ Once on Corporation Street, a number of shops were attacked including JD Sports (sportswear) and Jessops (cameras); both of which had been attacked the previous day.⁸⁸ As the crowd spread further afield, police began making arrests, suffering a number of injuries in the process. When one small group attempted to enter Blacks (an outdoor clothing retailer), officers quickly detained and arrested them.⁸⁹ In an effort to best contain the 'rioting', WMP prevented access to or from the City Centre via the major thoroughfares of Broad Street (to the west) and Constitution Hill (to the north).⁹⁰ Police then closed down Bull Street.⁹¹ Unable to proceed further north to Bull Street, the crowd instead moved south to the Ramp and Stephenson Street, where they broke into Hat Man.⁹² Police again moved the crowds on, this time from Corporation Street and Stephenson Street via Dale End (Location 14 Figure 8), toward Moor Street. During this manoeuvre an attack on Sainsburys was interrupted by public order officers, causing participants to yell and communicate about where to go next.⁹³ This led to a sustained confrontation between the crowd and police officers, and resulted in some police injuries and a car fire.⁹⁴ The crowds then begin to disperse through the city. One group of around 100 people stretched across Jennens Road near to Matthew Boulton College (Location 15 Figure 8) to the north of the City Centre as the sun began to set (from 20:00

⁸³ (Beaches511, 17:09; floraamar, 2011, TheHumansUnite, 2011, 2:40 - 3:40).

⁸⁴ (lauraaaaxxxx, 18:52; David_Lux, 18:59; TheHumansUnite, 2011, 2:28 - 2:39).

⁸⁵ (floraamar, 2011).

⁸⁶ (McCarthy, N., 2011; Tyler & Lillington, 2011).

⁸⁷ (MikeHyde, 17:31; TheHumansUnite, 2011, 4:28 - 4:52).

⁸⁸ (BIR181011502; StephenPick, 19:24; TheRichardALewis, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c).

⁸⁹ (Laura May, 2011; Anonymous, 2011g; McCarthy, N., 2011; West Midlands Police, 2019a).

⁹⁰ (BIR2609113605).

⁹¹ (jorge antonio soler sanz, 2011a).

⁹² (drivertraining2, 19:57; jnylgblogs, 19:54; IVIRTU, 2011c).

⁹³ (arabelladream, 2011).

⁹⁴ (Mark, 2011; West Midlands Police, 2019a; brianlucasca, 20:19; jorge antonio soler sanz, 2011b).

onwards).⁹⁵ In response to the dispersal of the crowds, Police closed down Colmore Row (Location 16 Figure 8) on the north side of 'Pigeon Park'.

Final attacks

As police were securing several areas of the City Centre, a series of sporadic incidents took place. At around 20:00, Super Fi (an electronics shop) was broken into in the Smallbrook Queensway building. The looters, a group of around 20 people, were quickly scattered by police arriving in a carrier.⁹⁶ Just after nightfall (> 20:50) another group of around 45 people began to gather near to the Starbucks Coffee Shop on New Street, only to be dispersed by police.⁹⁷ Smallbrook Queensway was targeted once again when a group of people attempted to loot the electronics shop Richer Sounds (another business attacked during the first day's events). They were prevented from sustaining this attack by the presence of mobile police units.⁹⁸ WMP also successfully deterred the looting of Hugo Boss in the Mailbox by responding to it in good time, causing rioters to flee.⁹⁹ From about 22:00, after this final incident, police put barricades across key exit sites, such as 'Pigeon Park', and begin a process of tracking down and apprehending any remaining looters in the City Centre, accruing a number of minor injuries in the process.¹⁰⁰

Tuesday 9th August - Wednesday 10th August

Late disturbances

Despite the relative level of control exercised in the City Centre area by WMP, two major disturbances elsewhere in the city of Birmingham would occur. The first of these was an attack on the historic Bartons Arms Pub in Newtown. Just before midnight an organised and armed group broke in, set it alight and fired a handgun at a police helicopter which had responded to the incident.¹⁰¹ In the early hours of Wednesday morning, at approximately 01:00, three men were killed in a serious RTC, when a vehicle mounted the pavement and ran them down in Winson Green. The three men were reportedly attempting to protect local shops from returning looters.¹⁰² Later in that day, the father of one of the men killed, Tariq Jahan, spoke out to media outlets about the senselessness of the 'riots' and appealed for them to end.¹⁰³ Following a candle-light vigil in Winson Green on the evening of Wednesday 10th August, no more major disorder events occurred in Birmingham.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁵ (IAmBirmingham, 2011b).

⁹⁶ (BIR2609113602; nwelch01, 21:09; Banoffetwirl, 21:08; davadaun, 2011b; mmakoshi, 2011).

⁹⁷ (rgeaster, 2011).

⁹⁸ (BIR2609113602; robtuby, 22:15; Paulston, 22:09; mmakoshi, 2011; Globmates, 2011; McCarthy, N., 2011).

⁹⁹ (ixn082, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ (BIR2609113605; BIR2609113606; West Midlands Police, 2019a).

¹⁰¹ (Dan Dawson, 2012; Anonymous, 2011d; Cowan, 2011; West Midlands Police, 2011).

¹⁰² (Anonymous, 2011c; Stuart, 2011).

¹⁰³ (youmuslim, 2011; BhamUrbanNewsUK, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ (Sangat Television, 2011b).

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BIR1810110204
 BIR1810110501
 BIR1810110502
 BIR1810110503
 BIR1810110504
 BIR2510110501
 BIR2609113602
 BIR2609113603
 BIR2609113604
 BIR2609113605
 BIR2609113606
 BIR2609113607
 BIR2609113609
 BIR2609113610
 BIR2609113611
 BIR2609113612
 BIR2609113613
 BIR2609113614
 BIR2609113615
 BIR2609113616

Twitter data

No	Username	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁰⁵	Comment
1	LewiBizzle	7 th August	09:24	“@SkylaUKMusic: #Tottenham Raised the Bar For Rioting so the next Riots in #Birmingham Let's do the same lol #Rebel” idiot
2	eight_	8 th August	14:13	there is a nasty rumour going round BBM, that similar rioting will kick-off in #birmingham city centre tonight at 6:00 pm...
3	Tonybatesidex	8 th August	18:56	Police warning to our office to get out of town. Rioting in birmingham at 6pm apparently. #riots #birmingham
4	robbiewinters	8 th August	17:00	Apparently riots have started in Birmingham now, no news reports as of yet though. #Birmingham #londonriots

¹⁰⁵ The listed time is corrected for British Summer Time (UTC + 1 hour).

No	Username	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁰⁵	Comment
5	BrummyInLondon	8 th August	19:21	There has been some small scale looting of footlocker in #Birmingham but there is NO riot! Police have got in early and arrested culprits.
6	charlottegrant	8 th August	18:39	West mids police have advised the bullring to close - tannoy announcement now, customers leaving now #birmingham riots
7	MissSavz	8 th August	18:48	" @clairlampard RT @kiramadeira : Apparently the Bullring is shutting early due to disturbances #birmingham #londonriots "
8	StayFreshJamieD	8 th August	18:09	RT @MeeksSSQUAD: Riot in bullring #BIRMINGHAM
9	Scifikid1008	8 th August	18:35	#birminghamriots . Heavy police pretence, no riot gear yet. More sirens.
10	Scifikid1008	8 th August	18:33	About 100+ black and asian youths gathering outside h+m birmingham city centre faces covered #birminghamriots http://twitpic.com/631hzo
11	asshHole	8 th August	23:58	« @KageyB « @cardiffblogger Adidas store in Birmingham completely emptied. http://yfrog.com/gzpyiinj #BirminghamRiots #Riots »»
12	AaronLinstead	8 th August	19:00	Just got this picture of a guy getting arrested in Birmingham... #UKriots #londonriots http://lockerz.com/s/127818075
13	Oliviaalbx	8 th August	18:59	Police all by mcdonnalds on the ramp by the pavilions #Birmingham
14	monkeysailor	8 th August	19:15	#Birmingham TwitPics: http://yfrog.com/h8362btj http://lockerz.com/s/127795127 http://twitpic.com/631tix http://yfrog.com/kjc9wtdj http://lockerz.com/s/127812328 http://lockerz.com/s/127805716

No	Username	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁰⁵	Comment
15	bozzystuff	8 th August	19:22	Seeing pics on twitter appearing to confirm #birminghamriots ?? Stay safe Brummie friends
16	drmarkglee	8 th August	19:18	Birmingham New St Ramp now closed off http:// yfrog.com/kln2ndoj #birmingham #riot
17	PilkingtonLisa1	8 th August	23:57	Brum Mail reports McDonald's by Brum Cathedral has window broken and eye witnesses report damage in the Colmore Row area #Birminghamriots
18	PilkingtonLisa1	8 th August	23:58	Also reports that The Jessops store on Temple Row is one of the shops looted, as is the Adidas shop in New Street. #Birminghamriots
19	modernemeid	8 th August	21:14	CYBER CANDY #BIRMINGHAM UK HAS BEEN SMASHED IN.
18	cwilliamson1975	8 th August	22:01	What had Cyber Candy ever done to anyone? I know they over charge for a Twinkie but what the fuck? #birminghamriots
20	jocialism	8 th August	22:49	SOMEONE IS SMASHING THE SHIT OUT OF CYBERCANDY ON THE NEWS!! #birminghamriots
21	HelenRoseP	8 th August	22:54	Just seen video of people looting montys. Come on, you're not there for a reason, what u gonna do with a flippin lucozade? #birminghamriots
22	OilandGasRoles	8 th August	21:56	Why? Monty's Is a great sandwhich shop, why break in? Just saw on BBC news! Gone are the days of 99p sausage baps!
23	wreckages [jonsnofun]	8 th August	23:10	CeX Birmingham (by oasis market?) smashed into #birminghamriots
24	Glittercat77	8 th August	22:58	Just watched looters grab a massive tv from Richer Sounds :(#birminghamriots

No	Username	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁰⁵	Comment
25	OldManGlenners	8 th August	23:58	@redbrickpaper The Mailbox is now on lockdown, BBC staff working there are not being allowed to leave #BirminghamRiots
26	RaviPandaParmar	8 th August	22:37	Reports of major violence on Soho Road in Handsworth... #birminghamriots
27	modernemeid	8 th August	23:56	SOHO ROAD LOOTED AND VIOLENCE #birminghamriots #londonriots
28	taiyab	8 th August	23:33	Bunch of young black guys rampaging down Soho road #BirminghamRiots
29	brit_newsmen	8 th August	23:54	BREAKING #ukriots Smoke and flames seen rising from Handsworth, Birmingham
30	RikkiClarke81	9 th August	08:57	Brummies to meet at 10am at The Bull for #riotcleanup to show that #weareBrum . Please RT and help get people there in numbers. #Birmingham
31	BradHawkes	9 th August	09:18	Post riot clean up in Birmingham city today. Meeting at 10 at the bull. #birminghamriots #lovebrum
32	tomlennon	9 th August	10:43	If extra hands still needed for Birmingham #riotcleanup please DM me. We've got some volunteers at work eager to help
33	carrott777	9 th August	13:28	#BirminghamRiots - several friends who work up there reckon its going to kick off again soon - ppl gathering :(
34	LiamAVFCMurphy	9 th August	13:32	apparently its going off again in birmingham by the bullring! #Birmingham #riots
35	bt_adams	9 th August	11:53	The Bullring is closing now as a precaution - various reports of gangs gathering again! @Britainriots #birminghamriots #riots @skynewsbreak

No	Username	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁰⁵	Comment
36	MHVHforlife	9 th August	16:02	Most stores in the Bullring now closed. Only a handful of places still open, Selfridges and office being two of them. #Birminghamriots
37	RadioSeanUK	9 th August	16:22	Mailbox and bullring will all be closing at 5pm #birminghamriots
38	Beaches511	9 th August	17:09	Just started again in the city centre. Newstreet police line formed. Good job by the boys in blue, very quick to control.#Birminghamriots
39	lauraaaaaxxxx	9 th August	18:52	Barriers against the bullring doors 10 minutes ago *notmypicture* #birminghamriots http://twitpic.com/63jacg
40	David_Lux	9 th August	18:59	birminghamriots2011.tumblr.com/ Bullring's barrier didn't work. That's 4 minutes walk from here. Here we go again. #Birminghamriots
41	MikeHyde	9 th August	17:31	Lots of police frantically changing into riot gear by Tesco on New Street #birminghamriots
42	StephenPick	9 th August	19:24	Hey that's next door to my work >:(RT @Isonstine Scrotes looting Tesco, Corporation Steet #birminghamriots http://yfrog.com/klg7kopj
43	drivertraining2	9 th August	19:57	RT @ITVCentral: Hatman on Stephenson St Birmingham is being looted. http://twitpic.com/63k14a #riots #birmingham
44	jnylgblogs	9 th August	19:54	RT @poppyseed_ Hatman has been looted. #BirminghamRiots
45	brianlucasca	9 th August	20:19	@redbrickpaper WM Police official statement says car reported on fire in Moor Street http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/latest-news/press-release.asp?id=2393 ... #birminghamriots
46	nwelch01	9 th August	21:09	Police arrest one youth outside Superfi #birminghamriots

No	Username	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁰⁵	Comment
47	Banoffetwirl	9 th August	21:08	Super Hi Fi in Birmingham just been completely looted by chavs #Birminghamriots
48	robtuby	9 th August	22:15	I am watching 100 youths looting Richer Sounds. no police anywhere #birminghamriots http://twitpic.com/63lm5d via @twitpic
49	Paulston	9 th August	22:09	Radio WM reporting live as Richer Sounds on Smallbrook Queensway is being looted. #birminghamriots

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