

Full triangulated account for the 2011 “riots” in Croydon Beyond Contagion

Roger Ball^{1,2}

John Drury¹

Clifford Stott²

Stephen Reicher³

Fergus Neville³

Sanjeedah Choudhury¹

Linda Bell¹

Mikey Biddlestone¹

Max Lovell¹

¹ School of Psychology, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RH

² School of Psychology, Keele University, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG

³ School of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of St Andrews, Fife, Scotland, KY16 9AJ

The Croydon “riots” Sunday 7th – Tuesday 9th August 2011

Contents

List of Figures	2
List of abbreviations.....	2
1. Methodology.....	3
2. Data Sources	3
3. Analysis	5
Introduction	5
Precursors to the Croydon “riots”	7
The first night (Sunday 7 th to Monday 8 th August, 2011)	8
The second day (Monday 8 th August, 2011)	11
The second night (Monday 8 th to Tuesday 9 th August, 2011).....	16
The northern cordon.....	16
The southern cordon	18
North End – London Road.....	21
London Road	23
Reeves Corner	26
High Street-South End-Brighton Road	28
New Addington, Thornton Heath and Norbury	30
Purley Way Retail Parks	31
Crisis point.....	32
The beginning of the end	35
4. References	36
Guardian - London School of Economics “Reading the Riots” transcripts	36
Twitter data.....	36
Other sources.....	38

List of Figures

Figure 1: Borough of Croydon showing locations of disturbances on 7-9 August 2011	6
Figure 2: Croydon town centre and Purley Way, Sunday 7 th - Monday 8 th August 2011.....	10
Figure 3: Croydon town centre and Purley Way, Monday 8 th August 2011.....	15
Figure 4: Incidents on London Road, Croydon and environs Monday 8 th August 2011	17
Figure 5: Reeves Corner and South End-Brighton Road, Croydon Monday 8 th August 2011..	20
Figure 6: New Addington, Forestdale and Selsdon Monday 8 th - Tuesday 9 th August 2011 ...	31

List of abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBM	BlackBerry Messenger
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CBC	Croydon Borough Council
CTC	Croydon Town Centre
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
MEU	Mobile Enforcement Unit
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NEO	Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PSU	Police Support Unit
SNT	Safer Neighbourhood Team
TSG	Territorial Support Group
UTC	Universal Time Coordinated

1. Methodology

The methodological approach used to analyse the disturbances in the London borough of Croydon in early August 2011 in this paper essentially follows that outlined by Stott, Drury, and Reicher (2017) in their examination of disorders in Tottenham and Hackney over the same period.¹ The main feature of this method is the use of triangulation to substantiate the veracity of the timing, location and content of a particular incident within an event. There are essentially three types of information that make up the triangle: *post-event* accounts by participants and eye-witnesses, real-time media recorded *during* the events, and *physical* evidence of the actions of the crowd. Through directly cross-referencing these forms of evidence and indirectly making reasoned assessments of the quantity and quality of the sources a level of confidence can be determined in a particular incident having occurred and when and where it happened. Validating each incident in this manner generates a solid evidential base for the latter assessment of patterns in the physical movements, actions and reactions of the protagonists in complex group interactions such as urban “rioting”.

Central to the process of understanding complex features of urban disturbance is the creation of a triangulated timeline of incidents within the overall event. This can be constructed from the collection, collation and cross-referencing of discrete pieces of evidence or, as in this particular case, by adding evidence to existing timelines to substantiate, question or enhance their content. The essentially collinear nature of the timeline was overcome to a degree by creating coded parallel paths to account for the decomposition of crowds into smaller independent units and, conversely, intersection of these paths to cover re-composition of groups into larger bodies. The timeline also functions on a spatial level by interacting with two and three dimensional maps, opening an additional perspective on the events.

2. Data Sources

The structure of the event timeline that underlies this account of the disturbances that occurred in the borough of Croydon on 7-9th August 2011 was based on two published reports. The first was a “Croydon” case study, a special section of the overall Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) assessment of the unrest in August 2011 which contained a textual and schematic timeline.² The second timeline, appeared in a report by the Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, set up Croydon Borough Council (CBC) to investigate the disturbances.³ Both of these reports were published in 2012, within a few months of the incidents in August the previous year. Combining these two timelines provided the initial chronological structure which was then populated and triangulated with additional evidence from a number of sources.

¹ Stott, C., Drury, J., & Reicher, S. (2017). On the role of a social identity analysis in articulating structure and collective action: The 2011 riots in Tottenham and Hackney. *British Journal of Criminology*, 57(4), 964-981. doi: 10.1093/bjc/azw036

² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 69-79).

³ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012). The timeline in this report was based on more detailed information, particularly from CCTV operators, Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (NEOs) and Mobile Enforcement Units (MEUs), supplied by CBC in a “Public Disorder Evidence Pack” (London Borough of Croydon, 2011).

Outside of the two specific case-studies a number of other police, government and independent reports reference the disturbances in Croydon but do not cover them in any great detail.⁴ A survey of more than 130 academic papers and articles produced only six with limited references to the disturbances in Croydon. However, two books, *Riot City: Protest and Rebellion in the Capital* and *Mad Mobs and Englishmen? Myths and realities of the 2011 riots* do carry partial narratives of the events.⁵

Local and national newspaper searches yielded more than 20 sources which provided not only objective information as to the location, timing and content of incidents but also some eye-witness testimony. Forty-three online videos were obtained which vary from post-event news reports to CCTV footage and real-time video taken by participants in or eye-witnesses to the unrest.⁶ Along with photographic sources, these were cross referenced using Google Street View to determine their exact locations and, by examining other time-stamped evidence, chronologically catalogued. Timelines and real-time reporting on blogs that were created during the unrest to track events provided additional temporal and spatial evidence.

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” project⁷ was filtered for all instances where the word “Croydon” was present producing a subset of approximately 53,500 relevant tweets. These items were analysed to collect relevant images, to provide evidence for timing of events and to determine prevalence of particular images in social media.⁸

The bulk of participant testimonies of the disturbances were obtained from the *Guardian* & London School of Economics “Reading the Riots” project and comprised 19 relevant interviews.⁹ The project researcher conducted two field trips to the borough of Croydon to gather observational data on the layout sites of disorder including Croydon town centre¹⁰ (CTC), the outlying estate of New Addington and the satellite towns of Addington, Selsdon and Purley.¹¹ Informal interviews were undertaken with two long-term residents of the borough in order to gather perceptions of the socio-economic geography of the area.

⁴ These included (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2011; Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, 2011; Nwabuzo, 2012).

⁵ (Bloom, 2012, pp. 78-81; Reicher, S., & Stott, C. (2011). *Mad mobs and Englishmen? Myths and realities of the 2011 riots*. London: Constable and Robinson.).

⁶ These videos can be found on the YouTube *Beyond Contagion* channel on the play list *Croydon Case Study*: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2E_2-O169cqD_C-4II_hx8WZwArReppY.

⁷ (Procter, 2011).

⁸ Selections from the Twitter database were supplied to the *Beyond Contagion* project in 2017 in collaboration with Warwick University. In the following account these are referenced as the *Reading the Riots Twitter Database* (*Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a). Individual tweets are delineated by the author and a Universal Time Coordinated (UTC) time stamp. It should be noted that British Summer Time is UTC + 1 hour, so all tweets were corrected to take this into account in the timeline.

⁹ (*Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011b)

¹⁰ Croydon town centre, or CTC as it will be referred to in the rest of this text, is loosely defined as the area bounded by the railway stations of West, East and South Croydon and the A236 thoroughfare. This delineation has been made to avoid confusion with the borough of Croydon and to allow sites of disturbances to be more clearly defined.

¹¹ Field trips to the borough of Croydon were conducted in January and December 2017.

Finally, comprehensive data on sites, times and types of crimes related to the disorders in the borough of Enfield provided by the MPS were of particular use in locating events that were less well-reported in other media. In addition, data on arrestees including age, gender, ethnicity and home location allowed demographic surveys of samples of the crowds.¹²

These various data sources were used to flesh out the skeleton timeline and, through the process of triangulation of the original and new material, errors in the MPS and CBC reports were isolated and corrected. In addition, existing incidents were further corroborated, new events added to the timeline and others called into question. This process of evidential enhancement, triangulation and rationalisation allowed a more definitive and comprehensive timeline of the events of Sunday 7th to Tuesday 9th August 2011 in Croydon borough to be produced. It was this improved timeline that formed the basis of the detailed chronology presented in this account.

3. Analysis

Introduction

Amongst the numerous disturbances in Britain in early August 2011 those that occurred in the South London borough of Croydon have the dubious distinction of having the highest number of disorder-related crimes (430) of any lower-tier local authority. In addition, of arguably the 15 most “riotous” local authority areas in Britain in August 2011, Croydon had the *highest* percentage of acquisitive crimes (75%) and the *lowest* fractions of offences of criminal damage (17%) and violence against the person (3%).¹³ These figures suggest that Croydon was the “biggest riot” in August 2011 and from a typological perspective was, of the major disorders, the most akin to the “commodity riot” form. This kind of “riot” is characterised by the primary desire of the participants to appropriate goods, rather than attack the police or engage in expressive actions. According to one commentator it was marked in August 2011 by:

...pre-meditated target selection and organisation...aimed at large concentrations of commercial outlets (such as shopping centres, malls and retail parks), involved significant crowd mobility (including the use of bikes and vehicles to transport “booty”) and avoided contact with opposing superior forces (of police)...Looters operated in numerous but smaller groups than in “community riots”, often travelled significant distances to “hit” selected targets and were not spatially tied to their home locales.¹⁴

¹² This information was provided in Excel spreadsheet form as part of a Research Information Sharing Agreement between the MPS and the Beyond Contagion research team (February 9, 2017). In the following account it is referenced as *MPS August 2011 Disorders Crime Data* (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017) and the location of specific reported crimes determined by postcode is added to the citation.

¹³ According to statistics released by the Home Office in October 2011, the London borough of Croydon topped the national figures with 430 disorder-related recorded crimes, finishing above the cities of Manchester (386) in second place and Birmingham (363) in third (Home Office, 2011) p. 11 Table 2. These figures were incomplete at the time of publishing as arrests for disorder-related offences continued after this point. However, as Ball and Drury noted in 2012, by mid-September 2011 before the Home Office report had been published, the majority of suspects had been apprehended (Ball & Drury, 2012, p. 8).

¹⁴ (“Intakes: Communities, commodities and class,” 2011, p. 6).

By implication this typological characterisation of the Croydon riot via figures for the whole borough assumes spatial, temporal and behavioural homogeneity. However, from a spatial perspective, analysis of the distribution of crime locations and associated arrestees demonstrates that rather than one large riot Croydon borough saw a series of related but essentially discrete disorder events. These were primarily located in and around Croydon town centre but also in the retail parks to the west and southwest on Purley Way, the districts of Thornton Heath and Norbury to the north and the outlying estate of New Addington to the southeast (see Figure 1). Similarly, from a temporal viewpoint, the disturbances did not occur in one discrete period but were spread over several days, with disturbances ebbing and flowing on the evening of Sunday 7th August through to the early hours of Monday 8th August and again from the Monday afternoon through to the morning of Tuesday 9th August.

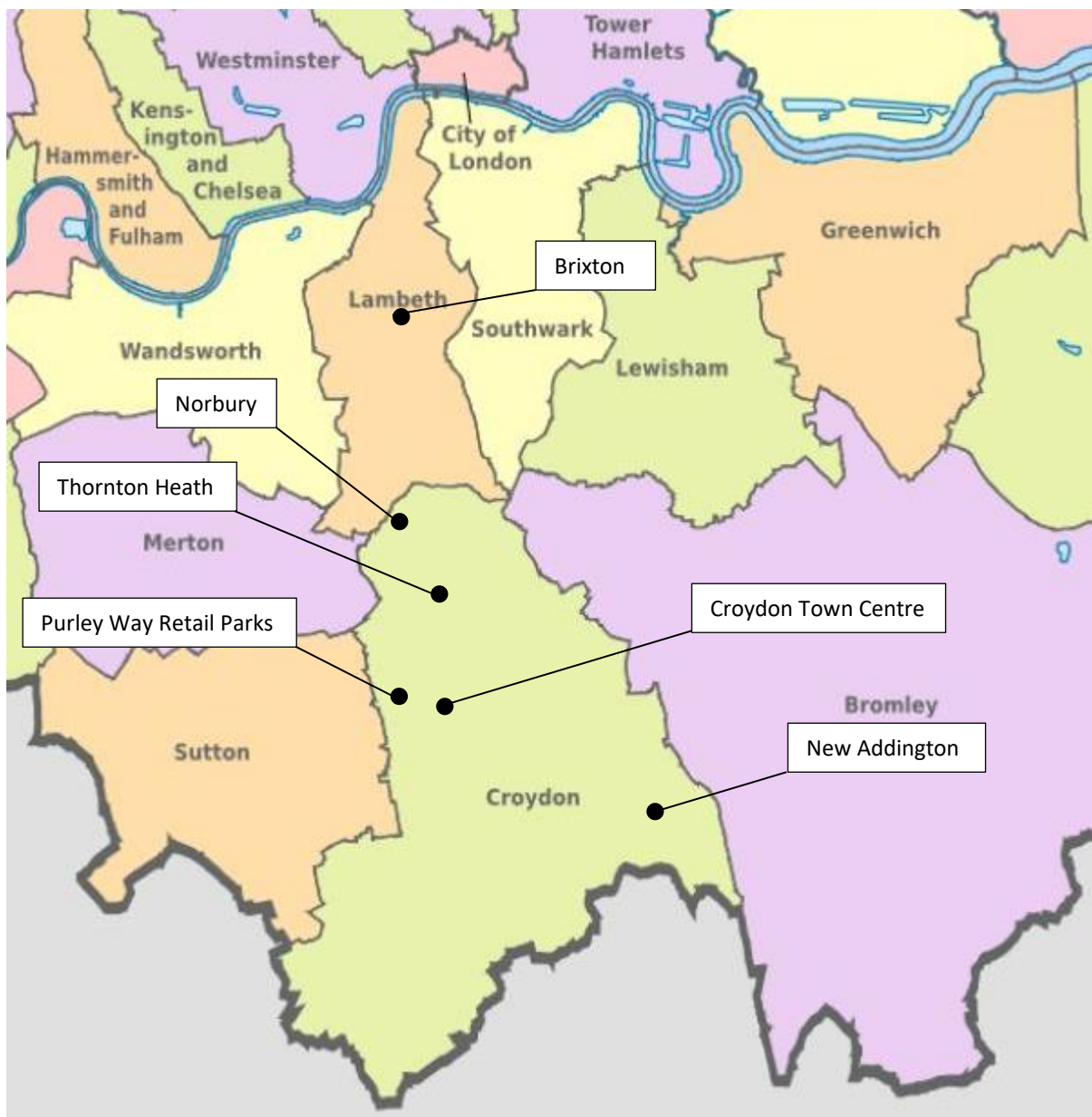


Figure 1: Borough of Croydon showing locations of disturbances on 7-9 August 2011

Precursors to the Croydon “riots”

The death of a mixed-heritage man, Mark Duggan, at the hands of a Metropolitan Police firearms team on Thursday 4th August 2011 in Tottenham Hale, in the North London borough of Haringey, is generally considered to be the precipitating incident for a wave of riots that spread first in the capital and then across some of the major cities in England. In the immediate aftermath of Duggan’s death the unsatisfactory responses of the Metropolitan Police and the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) led to a march and demonstration by Duggan’s friends and family at Tottenham Police Station on the afternoon of Saturday 6th August. In the course of the evening this protest developed into serious collective violence aimed at police officers, arson of public and private properties and, subsequently, looting of major nearby retail centres in Tottenham Hale and Wood Green.¹⁵

The following Sunday afternoon and evening, disturbances broke out in boroughs adjacent to Haringey, notably in Enfield (Enfield Town, Ponders End and Edmonton), Waltham Forest (Walthamstow, Chingford Mount) and Islington. The most serious incidents were in the borough of Enfield. These were characterised by pre-meditated targeting of Enfield Town on social media, large numbers of participants travelling several kilometres from their home locales to take part, and a series of behaviours exhibited including anti-police violence and both expressive and acquisitive crimes.¹⁶ Further afield there were minor incidents in Oxford Circus in the West End of the city and to the north in Waltham Cross in Hertfordshire.¹⁷

The first sign of the unrest spreading across the river Thames occurred late on the Sunday afternoon with reports of outbreaks of violence as crowds dispersed from the annual reggae street festival “Brixton Splash” in the South London borough of Lambeth. Over the course of the evening and into the early hours of Monday 8th August, Brixton experienced anti-police collective violence and incidents of mass looting of retail outlets in the area. At around 20:00, as the disturbance developed in Lambeth, the MPS received the first intelligence reports that the neighbouring borough of Croydon was being targeted on social media networks. At 20:13 a BlackBerry Messenger¹⁸ (BBM) text intercepted by police made reference to a “call to arms in Croydon tonight” and this was followed at 20:30 by a more specific message stating “meeting Croydon 10pm; let’s burn it down”.¹⁹ At 20:45 CCTV operators informed CBC that BBM communications were indicating that they “were expecting some trouble in Croydon”.²⁰

¹⁵ An abridged account of these disturbances can be found in (Stott et al., 2018). The full account is available online (Ball, 2018a).

¹⁶ A full account of these disturbances is available online:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/beyondcontagion/projects/enfieldriot2011>

¹⁷ (*Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011b, p. 16; BBC, 2011).

¹⁸ BlackBerry Messenger, also known as BBM, is an internet-based instant messenger application included on BlackBerry devices that allows secure messaging between multiple users. It was used widely by participants during the unrest of 2011 as other forms of communication by social media such as Facebook or Twitter were regarded as insecure.

¹⁹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72).

²⁰ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 7).

The first night (Sunday 7th to Monday 8th August, 2011)

As the MPS were becoming aware of a potential threat to Croydon town centre (CTC) they began to receive a number of reports of crimes. These ranged from a group of youths robbing an off-licence in Norbury to police officers being attacked by missiles in Thornton Heath. Despite these incidents, at 22:00 the MPS Duty Inspector:

conducted a local assessment of the situation and, mindful of the backdrop of events across London, nevertheless reported the current situation to be more or less 'business as usual' for a busy borough such as Croydon.²¹

About an hour later, a group of 40-50 "IC3 [African-Caribbean] males all wearing hoods and masks" were spotted in CTC by CCTV operators who directed a police unit to the scene. On arrival some of the crowd physically attacked the police car, whilst others scattered. Several arrests were made.²²

According to the MPS, as a result of this incident, Section 60 powers were authorised by the Duty Inspector for the borough of Croydon and police reinforcements were requested from the adjacent boroughs of Merton and Sutton (see Figure 1).²³ Almost immediately police officers began to use the Section 60 powers, stopping and searching "numerous small groups" in CTC and making several arrests in the process. It was at this point that CCTV operators monitoring these activities overheard on police radios that "youths may be armed with hand grenades and will use them against the police".²⁴ However, by around 23:30 it appeared that any significant threat to CTC had been suppressed and the decision was taken to stand down any non-Croydon police units. This decision was also influenced by the multiple requests for assistance from police in the neighbouring borough of Lambeth where the disturbances in Brixton were becoming more serious.²⁵

As far as the MPS were concerned the events in Croydon (at least) were at an end, but as with many incidents during the unrest in August 2011 this was an optimistic view, underestimating the resolve of the rioters to communicate and reassemble at new times and places. The first sign that something was awry in "pacified" Croydon came at about 02:00 when the MPS received information that the message "everyone out to Croydon for

²¹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72).

²² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 7, 18).

²³ Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 allows police officers to order the removal of facial coverings and to stop and search pedestrians and vehicles at will (HM Government; Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 7).

²⁴ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 7). A (false) rumour "that police stations were to be attacked with hand grenades" circulated widely amongst the MPS on Sunday 7th and Monday 8th August 2011. It first appeared at 19:45 on the Sunday during the disturbances in Enfield, with the MPS stating "a disturbing call was received reporting that an individual had been heard to say 'Tottenham is just the tip of the iceberg and there are two grenades in circulation for attacking a police station.' Further information from a different source added corroboration to this intelligence stating that 'Holloway and Enfield police stations are going to be targeted'". The rumour spread through the MPS from north to south London and was used to justify the enactment of Section 60 powers in Wandsworth in the early hours of the Monday morning (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 59, 84).

²⁵ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 7; Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72).

looting” was again circulating through social media networks.²⁶ Immediately after this intelligence was received reports came in of “ten armed males wearing masks in London Road, cars turning up with groups of people and an attempted car-jacking” (Figure 2 Location 1).²⁷ The succeeding hours were described by CCTV operators thus:

From 2.00am to 04.30am we constantly had what seemed to be highly organised groups turning up in convoys of cars of anything from 3 to 7 cars and large numbers of groups on foot anything from 4 to 20+...Groups of cars seemed to meet in 3 locations Derby Rd, Drummond Rd and somewhere in West Croydon possibly Oakfield Rd before coming into Croydon on foot (Figure 2 Locations 2-4).²⁸

The aim of these interlopers became clear within minutes when a group of 20 smashed the windows of an electrical goods shop in the shopping centre close to West Croydon Station before being chased by police (Figure 2 Location 5). Numerous attempts to smash and loot shops in and around CTC led to a game of “cat and mouse” with CCTV operators directing police and security guards to apprehend the many small groups who had arrived in the area.²⁹

By 03:00 it was estimated that 200 youths were in CTC, a situation which led to the MPS making the decision to retain on duty all the police officers present and call for further reinforcements.³⁰ Over the next hour or so the police were largely able to protect the shopping malls in CTC by chasing off groups of would be looters. However, there were reports of sporadic looting on London Road and other thoroughfares on the periphery which could not be adequately policed with the available resources.³¹ This would be a portent of what was to come the following day.

At 04:00, five carriers of Territorial Support Group³² (TSG) reinforcements arrived along with dog handlers. This was just in time for them to engage with two large groups of 20 and 30 rioters who had arrived in CTC (Figure 2 Location 6). The rioters threw missiles at the police before being chased out of the shopping centre by the police dogs. Several rioters were apprehended by the dogs and were arrested.³³ Whilst the CCTV operators and the MPS units had been concerned with securing CTC, other looters had targeted the retail parks situated along the Purley Way, less than kilometre away to the west (see Figure 1).³⁴

²⁶ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72). Participants also noted a second phase of the targeting of Croydon on electronic media, see for example transcript LON281020111313 514-529.

²⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 9).

²⁸ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, pp. 7-8). Derby Road and Oakfield Road lie respectively to the east and west of West Croydon railway station; itself, just to the north of CTC. Drummond Road lies to the west of CTC and connects Reeves corner to shopping centre, see Figure 2.

²⁹ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, pp. 7-8; LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout hits south London, Croydon, 2011).

³⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72).

³¹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 9; " Update: Police on standby for copycat “riots” in Croydon," 2011; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 8).

³² A Territorial Support Group (TSG) is a specialized police support unit within the MPS trained to Level 1 PSU to deal with serious incidents of public disorder. A typical TSG unit consists of three carriers (vans), 18 constables and three sergeants reporting to an Inspector (College of Policing, b).

³³ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 8).

³⁴ The main shopping centres on the Purley Way close to CTC are the Trafalgar Way and Valley retail parks.

Premises at these locations were largely unprotected and at approximately 04:30 the Best Buy computer shop was robbed of laptops, smartphones and similar devices by about thirty people for nearly half an hour (Figure 2 Location 7).³⁵

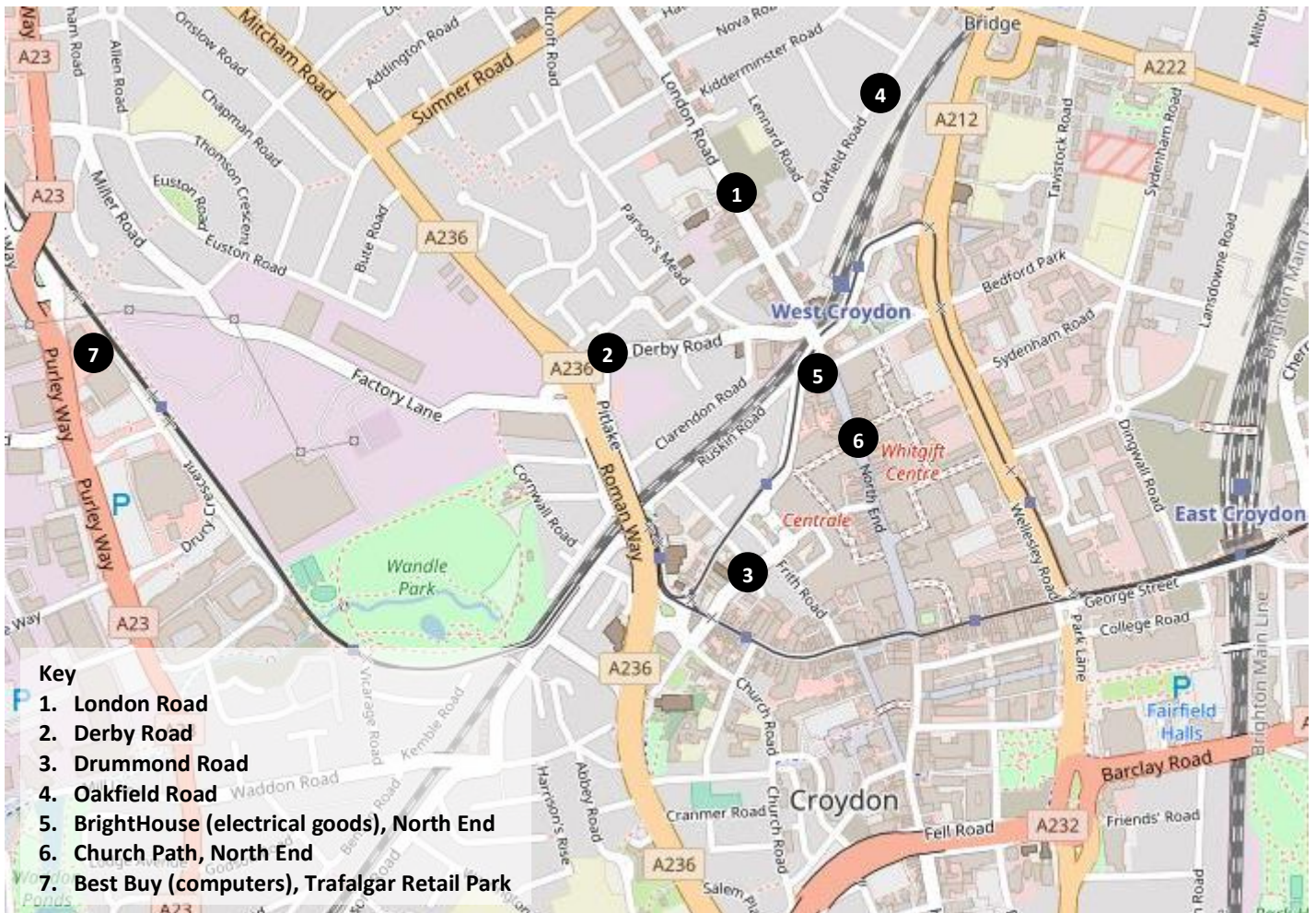


Figure 2: Croydon town centre and Purley Way, Sunday 7th - Monday 8th August 2011

In the aftermath of the Croydon events, the MPS stated that “Croydon Borough [police] thus largely controlled the threats of serious disorder taking place on the Sunday night”.³⁶ This assessment was broadly correct. However, the experience of the first night of the Croydon riots had also demonstrated that the MPS, with the limited resources available, had been barely capable of protecting the town centre, let alone the peripheral commercial thoroughfares and nearby retail parks. On the Sunday evening there had been only one major site of disorder in South London (Brixton). The next day was to see many more disturbances and consequently a much greater strain on police resources both local to

³⁵ (“LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 9; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 8, 18; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 4XT; “Update: Police on standby for copycat “riots” in Croydon”, 2011).

³⁶ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72).

Croydon and throughout the MPS as a whole. This was compounded the following evening in Croydon by the involvement of much larger numbers of rioters and a greater resolve by them to achieve their objectives, over a longer period of time.

The second day (Monday 8th August, 2011)

At 08:00 on the Monday morning a “Gold Group” meeting³⁷ was called by the Croydon division of the MPS in response to the events the previous night and in order to plan for potential disturbances later that day. An hour later, representatives of CBC and Croydon police met to discuss and make decisions on a range of disorder-related issues.³⁸ Of primary importance was intelligence information concerning the targeting of locations in the borough. The MPS were monitoring social networks, including BBM, and stated later that:

the common theme was that disorder was being planned in Croydon around the town centre from 1600hrs that day. The suggested meeting points were JD Sports, North End and later Valley Park at 2100hrs to target the trading estates on Purley Way (Figure 3 Locations 1-2)³⁹

In response to the perceived threat it was agreed by the Gold Group meeting that:

messages of public reassurance be given and that a visible Police presence be maintained in the Town Centre. Arrangements also began to be made to ensure that Police Officers had their “personal protective equipment” with them and that there were enough Police shields available for officers within the Borough.⁴⁰

However, a key issue which was to influence events later that day was the demand by the MPS for borough-level police resources. It was noted in the Gold Group meeting that already “a number of abstractions of Croydon police had taken place... to support the London wide response”.⁴¹ In fact, whilst the meeting was underway Territorial Policing central command, the MPS organisation that deals with day-to-day resourcing, ordered that “local boroughs were to take ownership of a police response to events in London over the past two days”.⁴² The Croydon division of the MPS were now effectively on their own, with the added problem of already depleted resources.

³⁷ According to CBC, “‘Gold’ meetings are given this name by public sector plans for civil emergencies and are so called because they consider the highest level strategic issues. Gold group meetings are attended by the people in charge of public services to plan for or respond to emergencies” (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 9).

³⁸ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 8; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 9).

³⁹ JD Sports, a sports-fashion retail company, was based along the main shopping street (North End) in CTC. Valley Park (or Valley Retail Park) is one of two major retail centres situated along Purley Way about a kilometre to the west of CTC (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72; O'Mahony, 2016; “Croydon's summer riots: One year on”, 2012; Bazargan, 2013). Another source states that at the meeting “there was significant intelligence to suggest that there would be further disturbances later that day – 3pm in the Town Centre was considered the most viable threat” (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 8).

⁴⁰ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 9).

⁴¹ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 8).

⁴² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 72).

Throughout the morning the decisions of the Gold Group meeting were implemented. At 10:30, based on the intelligence information, police units (MEUs and NEOs) were deployed to CTC and the Purley Way retail parks (Figure 3 Locations 2-3) whilst CCTV operators were advised to monitor the entry points to CTC and be extra vigilant.⁴³ There were signs that their potential adversaries were also preparing. Earlier in the morning police had recovered cans of petrol that had been secreted by two youths and around midday reports filtered in of “gatherings of young people and young adults” in CTC. It is probable that these reports influenced the decision by the MPS at 12:15 to activate Section 60 powers for the borough of Croydon once again.⁴⁴ A few minutes later, police received calls saying that “messages were circulating for 500 people to ‘gather at JD Sports’ to ‘F**k the Feds’”.⁴⁵ Coincidentally, about the same time the authorities, in the form of CBC, issued their own public threat to “looters”, via a press release to the local news outlet *The Croydon Guardian*:

STAY AWAY FROM CROYDON OR FACE THE CONSEQUENCES, LOOTERS WARNED
Croydon Council is calling for anyone caught carrying out copy-cat looting attacks in the borough to be met with the full force of the law.⁴⁶

A few minutes after the release of the statement, reports were received by police of “looting and disorder” at the Footlocker store, a sportswear and footwear retailer in the Whitgift shopping centre in CTC (Figure 3 Location 4).⁴⁷ Although this was actually a minor incident, it marked the first sign that the threats circulating on social media that morning might be realised.

At 13:00, with the threat level increasing, a second Gold Group meeting took place with additional representation from the emergency services, British Transport Police and the Surrey Constabulary. Decisions were taken to retain all Croydon police officers on duty, to undertake high visibility patrols in CTC and for petrol stations in the area be contacted to ask them not to sell fuel in containers. In addition, Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) police officers were deployed to key locations and instructed to warn local retailers.⁴⁸ At 14:54 CBC issued an e-mail to update some of its principal officers with the latest developments. It stated:

...details of intelligence reports of further disturbances in central Croydon this afternoon – between 3-4pm. The Clocktower (Figure 3 Location 5) being mentioned as congregating point. JD Sports has also been mentioned as a possible target. Police are monitoring the social network sites and the rumours are developing quickly. The intelligence network is being coordinated by police.

⁴³ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 8).

⁴⁴ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7).

⁴⁵ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 73). “Feds” is a slang term for police.

⁴⁶ Ironically, after issuing a public threat to the looters CBC went on to circulate a “message of reassurance” to Croydon Councillors (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 8; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7).

⁴⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 73).

⁴⁸ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 73; “LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 9).

Locally at Croydon and centrally at New Scotland Yard. There are rumours of further disturbances across all London so police will be stretched.⁴⁹

Along with visits to retailers by SNT officers, at 15:30 Croydon police circulated a letter via a subscription-based alert system to businesses in North End and the Whitgift shopping centre in CTC. This warned them of the threat of looting and encouraged them to be “extra vigilant that evening, to make sure their premises are fully locked and alarmed after closure and that extra security staff have been drafted in as a precaution”. The letter also added that the “shopping centre would remain open to public and staff as normal”.⁵⁰ However, many retailers were already fully aware of the potential for looting that day and the immediate reaction of some to the police letter confirming the threat was to usher customers out of their stores and close their businesses early. By 16:00, several major outlets including a bank in the North End had either closed or had deployed their shutters. Around 50 police officers in high-visibility clothing were present in the area and were exercising Section 60 powers by stopping and searching people.⁵¹

For many people in CTC, the unusual presence and actions of the police in North End, police helicopters hovering overhead combined with the closing of some major stores indicated that the rumours of “trouble in Croydon” were real. Although there had been hardly any incidents of disorder so far that day, the evident actions of police and retailers intensified the feeling amongst eyewitnesses that “something was going to happen”.⁵² Although the police presence in CTC was certainly impressive, it hid a significant weakness in the capability of Croydon division of the MPS. According to the CBC post-event report, by Monday afternoon:

All level two public order trained Police officers had already been redeployed from Croydon to other areas in London, either during the course of the weekend or earlier that day... It follows that the Police officers present in Croydon Town Centre were not level two public order trained officers at this stage.⁵³

Despite this known issue (or perhaps because of it) Croydon police maintained a confident face to the public. The Deputy Borough Commander stated to local news outlets that they had “an appropriate policing plan to tackle any disorder and deal with normal policing across the borough as well”.⁵⁴ A few minutes after this, at 16:32, an e-mail was circulated by Croydon police to the “community stating that it is ‘business as usual’ in Croydon and that

⁴⁹ The Clocktower, a well-known landmark, is part of an arts and museum complex located next to the Town Hall on Katharine Street in CTC (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 9).

⁵⁰ A photograph of the letter is provided in (“LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011; O’Mahony, 2016).

⁵¹ (“LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 10; Corfield, 2011; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, Gareth_Davies09 UTC 14:47:23, JohnLoony UTC 17:06:27).

⁵² This was reflected on Twitter after approximately 15:30 with numerous tweets and retweets referring to the unusual actions of police and retail outlets and CTC apparently being in “lockdown” (*Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a).

⁵³ The report states that: “‘Level two public order trained’ refers to Police Officers that have undertaken a higher level of training on how to deal with public order incidents” (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 10).

⁵⁴ (“LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011).

significant numbers of Police were available in the event of any unrest".⁵⁵ According to the MPS case-study of the Croydon event it was at this precise time that "the picture quickly changed and the disorder and violence was to escalate at an alarming rate".⁵⁶

As the police intelligence information had predicted, from about 16:00 large groups of people had begun to gather in North End. A local newspaper reporter described the scene:

A boy rides a bicycle "at" passers-by in North End in an intimidating manner. There is a heavy police presence. At around 4.30pm, an officer runs out in front of the bicycle and searches the boy. The mood in North End sours. Youngsters with empty gym bags on their backs stand in large groups watching police officers.⁵⁷

The uneasy stand-off continued for over an hour as the numbers gathering in the vicinity of North End grew.⁵⁸ News also began to reach police of attacks on five shops on London Road (Figure 3 Location 6) to the north of West Croydon station, though it appears there was little attempt to try to stop these crimes.⁵⁹ At 17:18 members of the public reported that a group of about 40 youths were putting masks on in a side street close to West Croydon station (Figure 3 Location 7) and that three minibuses "containing groups of youths" had just arrived in Surrey Street market in CTC (Figure 3 Location 8).⁶⁰ By 17:30 most of the shops in North End had been closed early and consequently the majority of shoppers were leaving the area.⁶¹

The problem of police resource in the borough of Croydon was exemplified at 17:26 when information was received from a resident of New Addington, a large outlying housing estate five miles to the south east of CTC (see Figure 1), that their area would be the target of rioters that evening. As a result vehicular patrols on the estate were increased however, due to the situation in CTC, no other police officers were available for foot patrols.⁶²

⁵⁵ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7).

⁵⁶ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 73).

⁵⁷ ("Croydon's summer riots: One year on," 2012).

⁵⁸ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7; Corfield, 2011).

⁵⁹ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10).

⁶⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 73).

⁶¹ ("LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout," 2011).

⁶² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 73; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 11; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 5).

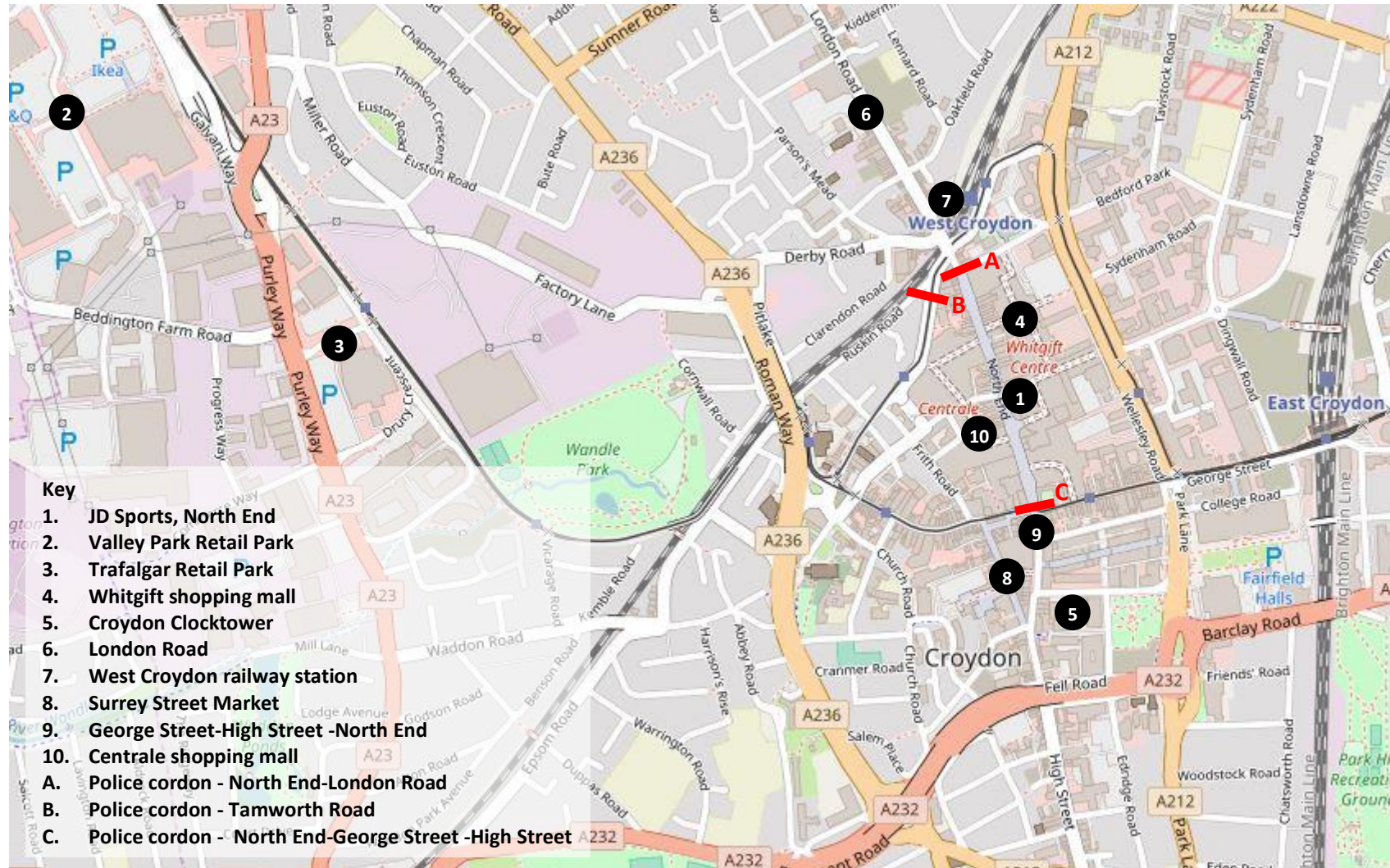


Figure 3: Croydon town centre and Purley Way, Monday 8th August 2011

At 18:15, MEU officers in CTC, reported that there was now a large crowd of youths at the North End-West Croydon station area (Figure 3 Location 7) and that a second group was gathering at the George Street-High Street junction (Figure 3 Location 9). A decision was taken by Croydon MPS to protect the main shopping street by closing it off to the public. Using the available police officers and dog handlers a cordon was formed at the junction of North End and London Road, a second nearby on Tamworth Road and the third to the south at the junction of North End, George Street and High Street (see A, B and C, Figure 3). Crowds began to build up at both cordons as the main pedestrian thoroughfare in CTC was now blocked.⁶³ As police were trying to seal off North End a group of about 15 masked youths ran into the Whitgift shopping centre (Figure 3 Location 4). As they were chased out by police and security guards, shoppers were ushered from the complex and it was hastily shut down.⁶⁴ With most of the shops and retail centres on North End now closed, the cordons in place and hostile crowds of several hundred goading the police lines with shouts of “we’re going to run your town tonight”, a clear delineation between adversaries had been made.⁶⁵ The stage was set for a confrontation.

The second night (Monday 8th to Tuesday 9th August, 2011)

The northern cordon

Police and local authority sources agree that at about 18:25 “large scale disorder” broke out in the North End-London Road area with police officers coming under attack with “makeshift weapons and projectiles”.⁶⁶ It appears, however, that the disorder was initiated by sections of the crowd attacking an electrical goods retailer and a bookmaker on the junction of North End and Station Road (Figure 4 Location 1).⁶⁷ These two businesses were in full view of the police cordons protecting the shopping centre at North End and Tamworth Road (Figure 4 Cordons A and B), though it appears they did not react to this provocation. At the same time a bus was brought to a halt on Station Road by some of the crowd and the driver was robbed.⁶⁸ A few minutes later a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), close to the cordons at the North End and Tamworth Road, was hospitalised after he had been “assaulted by a group of youths... wearing hoods who attacked him with bricks”.⁶⁹

⁶³ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 16, 19; “Croydon riots three years on,” 2014; “ Update: Police on standby for copycat “riots” in Croydon”, 2011; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, greysm0ke UTC 17:27:53).

⁶⁴ (LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout hits south London, Croydon, 2011; O’Mahony, 2016; “Croydon’s summer riots: One year on,” 2012; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, Gareth_Davies09 UTC 17:07:27).

⁶⁵ A number of sources reference members of the crowd taunting police officers (“LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011; “Croydon riots three years on,” 2014; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, Gareth_Davies09 UTC 17:58:50). One even stated “from the flats...a man spat onto a police officer. ‘You’re all murdering scum’, he shouted” (Croydon riots three years on: How our correspondents reported the mayhem, 2014).

⁶⁶ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 73; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10).

⁶⁷ (“LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011; croydonriots, 2011b; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, babycokes UTC 18:10:40; Williamson & Truman, 2011; Gorm, 2011).

⁶⁸ (croydonriots, 2011b; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 2RB).

⁶⁹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 73; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 10; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 1TP).

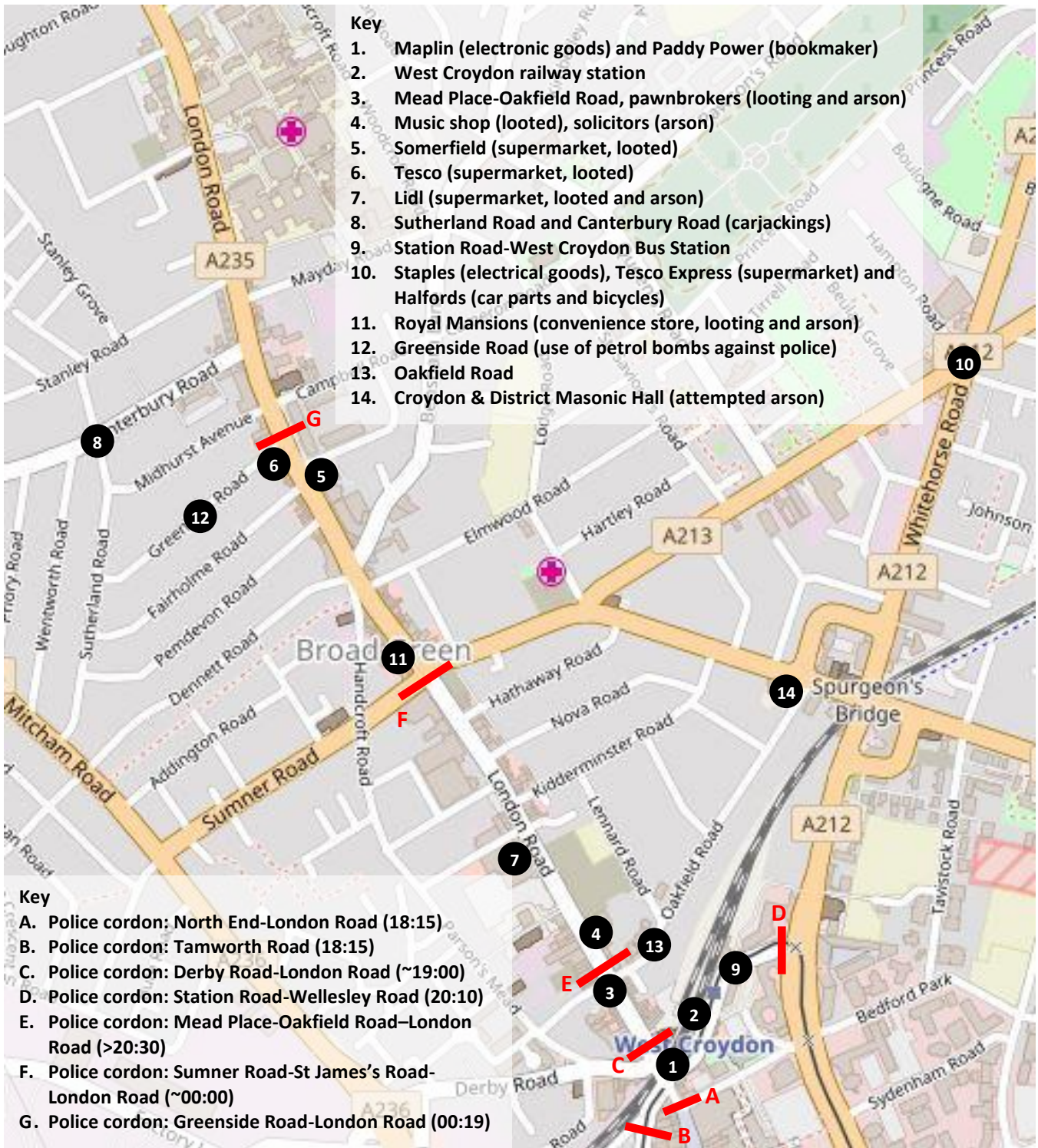


Figure 4: Incidents on London Road, Croydon and environs Monday 8th August 2011

Eight British Transport Police officers were guarding the nearby West Croydon railway station (Figure 4 Location 2). Despite being “heavily outnumbered”, at about 18:50 they charged the crowd with batons drawn, driving them from the junction at Station Road northwards along the London Road. However, this left the entrance to the station between the police lines and the missile throwing crowd, thereby endangering commuters. As a result, just before 19:00, trains were cancelled and the station was hurriedly shut by staff,

trapping around 70 commuters inside.⁷⁰ After the charge by the Transport Police unit, about 20 officers from the North End cordon, a few with large riot shields, moved onto the London Road forming a line across the street at the junction with Derby Road (Figure 4 Cordon C). By this stage the majority of the crowd of several hundred had retreated about 100m north along the London Road, close to the junction with Mead Place and Oakfield Road (Figure 4 Location 3).⁷¹

After the outbreak of violence and injury to the unprotected PCSO, Croydon MPS recognised the gravity of the situation. There was an immediate callout made to all local police stations to obtain more officers and for additional public order equipment to be gathered from across the borough and brought to CTC. At 19:01 a request for public order reinforcements was made to Metropolitan Police Central Command, who activated approximately 90 officers to aid the borough.⁷² However, the police currently on the ground in CTC were largely outnumbered, and few had public order equipment or the training to deal with the situation that was developing at pace.

The southern cordon

Up to this point there had been little violence at the police cordon protecting the southern end of the main shopping street in CTC (Figure 5 Cordon A). Over 100 people had gathered close to the George Street-High Street junction but had not attempted to penetrate the police line and enter North End. However at 19:00, a second large group appeared from Frith Road at the bottom of Crown Hill, and signalled to the former, before heading towards Surrey Street (Figure 5 Location 1). A large section of the first crowd responded. Bypassing the police cordon, they ran down Crown Hill and joined their associates, breaking into a supermarket, jewellery shops and other retailers on Surrey Street.⁷³ A local newspaper journalist, who was an eye-witness, described the scene:

As hundreds of youths smashed their way into a supermarket, I sprinted towards a stationary line of police officers and realised something was seriously wrong. Reaching a dog-handler I pleaded for him and his colleagues, who had formed a line across North End...to intervene...I was stunned by his answer. "We can't," he explained. "There are too many of them." I gave up on persuading the police to help and ran back down the hill...As we turned the corner, cameras in hand, we filmed the looters, many of whom were wearing face masks or bandanas, clambering in and out of stores, carrying away alcohol, food and jewellery. The frenzy was only halted by a burglar alarm, leading to a stampede down Surrey

⁷⁰ (Corfield, 2011; "Update: Police on standby for copycat "riots" in Croydon," 2011; "Croydon was vulnerable," 2011). The testimony of two of the British Transport police at West Croydon Station is given in (Bazargan, 2013).

⁷¹ (Silla, 2011a).

⁷² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 73; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10).

⁷³ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 16, 19; Gorm, 2011) and transcript LON171020111307 122-231, 529-559. An analysis of those arrested for looting shops on Surrey Street in this time period ($N = 24$) showed that 8% were female, and by self-classed ethnicity, 36% were White, 38% Black, 17% Mixed, 4% Asian and 8% Other or Not Given. The median age was 18, the age range 13-27 and 71% of the sample had home addresses in the borough of Croydon (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 1RG).

Street before the youths turned back when it became clear the police were not reacting.⁷⁴

The journalist and his colleague then followed a crowd of about 100 looters, male and female and of mixed ethnicity,⁷⁵ who collectively proceeded to break into the catalogue retailer Argos on Church Street (Figure 5 Location 2), using a large metal trolley to force open the shutters.⁷⁶ Police officers at the North End cordon 150m further up Crown Hill looked on at the looting, apparently powerless to intervene. At this point, some of the crowd grew wary of the reporter and his colleague and attacked them with bottles, fists and kicks, demanding to know who they were.⁷⁷ The reporter was robbed of his wallet, phone and camera before one of his attackers intervened and returned his phone:

He even tried to get my camera back before telling me to “run before you get murdered”. I fled round the corner into Old Palace Road with blood pouring from my nose. I passed a pair of young girls who I warned not to go into Church Street but they just laughed. By this point the looters were attacking Lidl.⁷⁸

At about 19:45 some of the reinforcements requested from MPS Central Command earlier in the evening arrived in the form of a TSG unit. Three carriers drew up at the police cordon on the George Street-High Street junction with North End (Figure 5 Cordon A). Their occupants immediately disembarked and ran down Crown Hill, driving the looters down Church Street towards Reeves Corner (Figure 5 Location 3).⁷⁹ However, the TSG officers did not proceed beyond the junction of Old Place Road and Church Street (Figure 5 Cordon B). Out of sight of Reeves Corner, they halted, formed a cordon across the street and awaited further orders.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ ("Croydon riots three years on," 2014).

⁷⁵ An analysis of those arrested ($N = 17$) for the first phase of looting of Argos on Church Street, CTC showed: 47% were female, and by self-classed ethnicity, 41% were White, 41% Black, 12% Mixed and 6% Asian. The median age was 17, the age range 13-27 and 71% of the sample had home addresses in the borough of Croydon (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 1RH).

⁷⁶ ("LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout," 2011; Bushaway, 2011b; Bushaway, 2011a; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 10, 16; "Croydon riots three years on," 2014; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 1RH; *Guardian & London School of Economics*, 2011a, _beck_ UTC 18:37:41; Gorm, 2011; South London riots, 2011) and transcript LON171020111307 559-647.

⁷⁷ (*Guardian & London School of Economics*, 2011a, Gareth_Davies09 UTC 18:42:14; Bould, 2011).

⁷⁸ ("Croydon riots three years on," 2014).

⁷⁹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 74; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 16, 19).

⁸⁰ (*Guardian & London School of Economics*, 2011a, Dazzle3009 UTC 19:38:07).

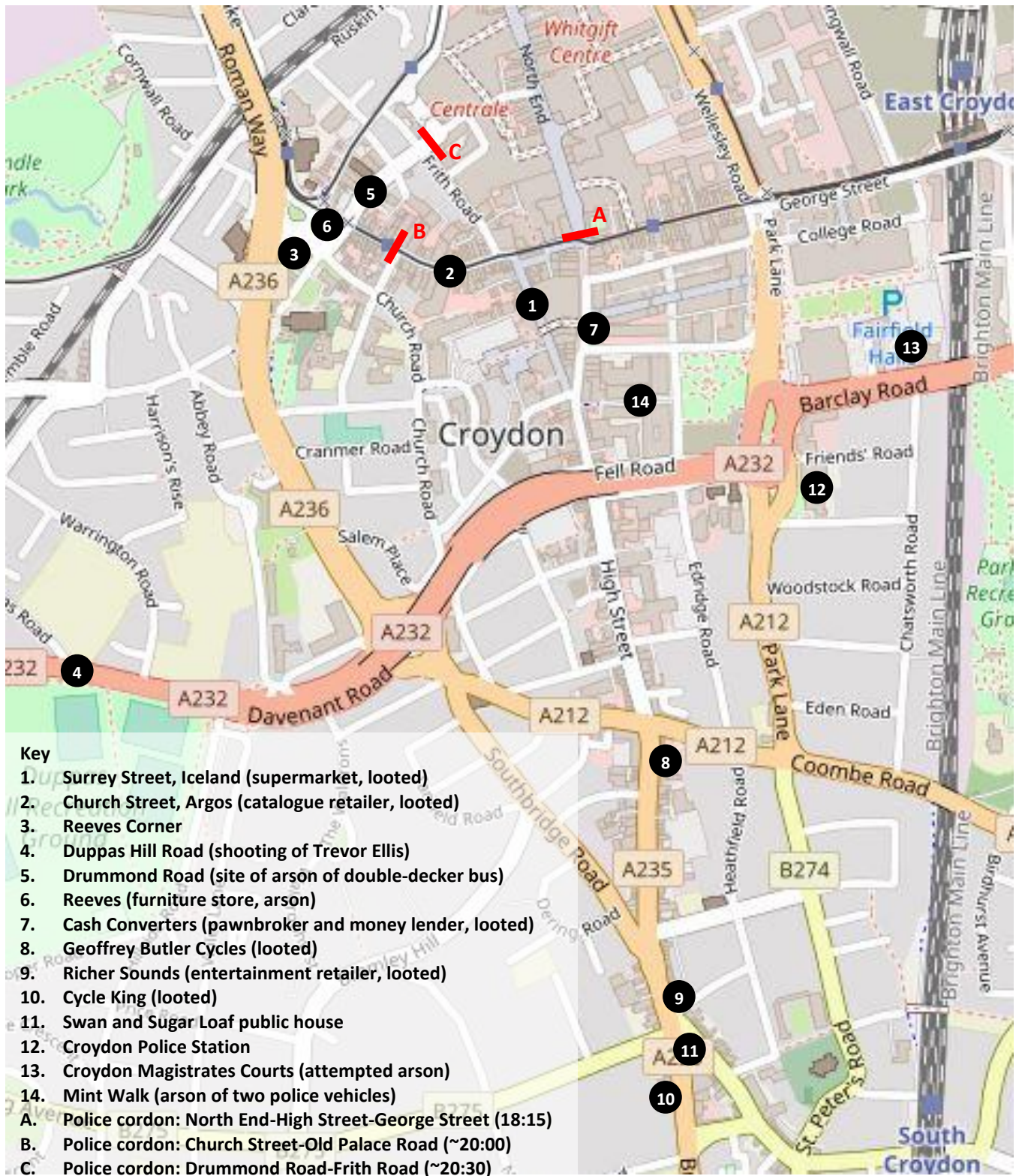


Figure 5: Reeves Corner and South End-Brighton Road, Croydon Monday 8th August 2011

North End – London Road

On London Road, the retreat of the crowd after the initial confrontations around North End and West Croydon station between 18:30 and 19:00 did not signal the end of the disturbance, in fact the very opposite. Although some vehicular traffic, including buses, were still passing through the crowd on London Road, more than 200 rioters were clearly in control of several hundred metres of the thoroughfare. Whilst some sporadically advanced towards the police line at the Derby Road junction (Figure 4 Cordon C) throwing missiles, others smashed the windows of selected shops including a recruitment office, a post office and a newsagent or dragged boxes and bins into the road. Throughout this period, shoppers, including a disabled man riding a mobility scooter and a man on crutches, passed unmolested through the milling crowds.

Eventually, a bus drew to a halt because of debris in the road, part of a makeshift barricade. As it tried to drive off, several windows were smashed by missiles, forcing it to stop.⁸¹ The driver and passengers disembarked, whilst rioters attempted to commandeer it. The driver then attempted to stop them by returning to the cab and, despite taking some blows in a scuffle, apparently drove the bus to safety.⁸² A few moments later several members of the crowd pulled the rider of a scooter off his bike at speed, whilst another seized the vehicle and drove away.⁸³ The attempts to acquire vehicles had a more malevolent purpose than mere theft, as two of the British Transport Police in the cordon at London Road recalled:

At first there was a couple of young lads on a moped and they came right up to the police lines. In my opinion they were counting us. They stood there for a few seconds counted us...span round, went back into the crowd at the bottom of the hill and then the whole crowd began marching up the road with his four-door saloon car as a figurehead. As it approached it came through at full speed, straight at police lines. There's no intention to scare us, they were basically trying to run us over. That was absolutely without a shadow of doubt attempted murder. If we had not jumped when we did, it would have killed us.⁸⁴

After the car had run through the police lines it sped off along the Tamworth Road.⁸⁵

Whilst some of the crowd were attacking the police lines with missiles, smaller groups began to systematically loot selected targets on London Road in the vicinity of Mead Place and Oakfield Road (Figure 4 Location 3). One of the first shops to be robbed was a specialised music store, which lost half a million pounds worth of guitars and amplifiers. Looters wandered nonchalantly up London Road with musical instruments, some playing them, whilst others made a failed attempt to set the store on fire.⁸⁶ Around 19:30, few

⁸¹ (Silla, 2011a).

⁸² (Silla, 2011d).

⁸³ (Silla, 2011e).

⁸⁴ (Bazargan, 2013).

⁸⁵ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 19; "Croydon riots three years on," 2014; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 2RE).

⁸⁶ ("LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout," 2011; Silla, 2011b; ballad anna, 2011a; Jamieson, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 2TB; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a jamb0n UTC 19:12:28; mewzoned, 2011; croydonriots, 2011a).

doors up from the music shop a solicitors office was broken into and was successfully set alight, the first major fire of the evening (Figure 4 Location 4).⁸⁷

At 19:22, as the violence and looting on London Road intensified, the Croydon Police Deputy Borough Commander sent an e-mail to key Gold Group contacts “requesting immediate assistance”.⁸⁸ The desperation of the situation was palpable in the message:

We are having serious problems currently and need you to implement all of the contingencies and plans as discussed at the Gold Group - and maybe even more. We currently have numerous people causing disorder in the town centre...We have asked for re-enforcements but this is not getting here as quickly as we would like - if at all, with the issues across the MPS...One of my officers has been injured and needs to be taken by ambulance. Bricks are being thrown and a bus has been vandalised. I have just briefed night duty who have come on early. I need you to help in any way you can please.⁸⁹

Fortuitously for Croydon Police, twenty minutes later a Chief Inspector arrived to take control of the policing of the disturbance in the role of Silver Command⁹⁰ along with the first of the requested MPS public order trained reinforcements.⁹¹ This was a TSG unit with three carriers, twenty officers and a commander. The unit was split, with a third of the officers deployed to London Road and the rest, with the carriers, sent to the severely shorthanded cordon at the George Street-High Street junction with North End (see p. 19).⁹² The group deployed to London Road joined up with the 20 or so police officers already present to confront a “hostile crowd of over 200 with a further 30-50 in Station Road” to their rear.⁹³ At about 20:00 the situation was described by one journalist on the scene:

Swarms of youths in hoods and masks are confronting the police from every junction to London Road. Bricks, bottles and sticks were thrown at the police line....buses across London Road have been stopped and London Tramlink is suspended between Reeves Corner and East Croydon.⁹⁴

It was here that MPS sources claim that petrol bombs were thrown at police lines for the first time.⁹⁵

⁸⁷ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10; “London riots: The third night,” 2011; Silla, 2011f; Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning, 2011, p. 4).

⁸⁸ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7).

⁸⁹ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 10).

⁹⁰ The Silver Commander develops, commands and coordinates the overall tactical response of an operation, in accordance with the strategic objectives set by Gold (College of Policing, a).

⁹¹ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10).

⁹² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74). The assessment of the division of the TSG unit was based upon a count of the police officers in full public order equipment at each location in the following video (Kakeeto, 2011) and image (*Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, Dazzle3009 UTC 19:38:07).

⁹³ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 74).

⁹⁴ (“LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011).

⁹⁵ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 74).

Up to this point and taking into account their limited resources, the strategy of Croydon Police had been solely focused on protecting the main shopping street (North End) in CTC and its associated shopping centres, the Whitgift and Centrale (Figure 3 Locations 4 and 10). This had left most of the periphery of CTC, London Road to the north, Reeves Corner to the West and Brighton Road to the south, without sufficient warning of the potential unrest and completely undefended.⁹⁶ The majority of retailers in these areas were small businesses, often with their owners living on the premises, unlike those in CTC which were typically large corporate-owned chain stores with little or no residential accommodation. Also, particularly on the London and Brighton Roads, many of the shops were owned by ethnic minorities who would bear the brunt of the looting, arson and in some cases violence.⁹⁷

Although Croydon police had decided to protect the major commercial interests in CTC rather than the smaller shops on the peripheral thoroughfares, this did not deter all of the looters. Despite the police cordons, there were several concerted efforts to reach the more lucrative targets on North End. Just after the TSG reinforcements arrived at 19:45, around 50 people,⁹⁸ broke into the rear of the Centrale shopping mall (Figure 3 Location 10) and proceeded to loot a major department store and a mobile phone and computer outlet. The Centrale security team and two MEU officers confronted the looters carrying goods out of the stores, making several arrests whilst the rest of the group rapidly dispersed.⁹⁹ Less than an hour later, just before 21:00, a more “professional” group of 30 hooded and masked youths stormed the rear entrance of the Whitgift shopping centre (Figure 3 Location 4) and headed towards the jewellery shops inside the complex.¹⁰⁰ Games of “cat and mouse” between security guards, police and would-be looters around the Whitgift and Centrale shopping centres would continue until the early hours.

London Road

On London Road, whilst some rioters continued to attack the police lines at Derby Road (Figure 4 Cordon C), other groups robbed with apparent impunity. Around 50 hooded and masked looters worked persistently and collectively to break through the shutters of a pawnbroker on the corner of Oakfield Road which was later set alight and destroyed by fire (Figure 4 Location 3).¹⁰¹ Others had already begun to head north towards the Broad Green

⁹⁶ This decision was heavily criticised after the event and the feeling by shop owners that these areas had been abandoned by the authorities was exemplified in the difficulty in obtaining the “promised” riot damage compensation payments from the government in the aftermath of the disturbances (O’Mahony, 2016; “Bankruptcy, ruin and broken promises,” 2013; Randall, 2011).

⁹⁷ (Jamieson, 2011).

⁹⁸ An analysis of those arrested ($N = 21$) for the looting of House of Fraser and the Orange shops in the Centrale Centre shopping centre in CTC showed: 43% were female, and by self-classed ethnicity, 48% were White, 28% Black and 24% Mixed. The median age was 18, the age range 16-33 and 62% of the sample had home addresses in the borough of Croydon (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 1TY).

⁹⁹ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 16; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 1TY; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, Dazzle3009 UTC 19:46:16).

¹⁰⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 1UU; “Croydon burns as looters storm the Whitgift centre”, 2011). Of those arrested in this incident the majority came from south-east London.

¹⁰¹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 70-71; Mitcham, Colliers Wood looting.2011; Silla, 2015; Silla, 2011c; ballad anna, 2011a; “London riots: The third night,” 2011; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10; ballad anna, 2011b; “Croydon burns as looters storm the Whitgift centre,” 2011; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, babycokes UTC 19:33:04, KennySkyNews UTC 19:56:20, siobhanmb UTC 19:57:48, CPO4OFC UTC 19:54:17; mewzoned, 2011).

area to find more targets for looting. From approximately 20:00 two small supermarkets, an electrical goods shop and a beauty salon were looted in the vicinity of Broad Green Avenue (Figure 4 Locations 5 and 6).¹⁰² At 20:15 another supermarket on the corner of Montague Road was ransacked and then set on fire (Figure 4 Location 7).¹⁰³ A non-participant eyewitness described the latter incident:

The store was just torn apart. It was unrecognisable...And they were stealing alcohol, that was the main thing, so the food and that kind of thing was still there. Kind of left untouched. Loads of the booze and everything was just ransacked...The irony, you take what you value and a lot of people just took what they thought would keep the party going... It could almost be looked at as a kind of street party I guess, in a funny sort of way.¹⁰⁴

After the initial “smash and grab” for alcohol and cigarettes by groups who had broken into the shops, others wandered in to take more mundane items such as large bags of rice and packs of toilet rolls.¹⁰⁵ Apart from supermarkets the main targets for looting on London Road were convenience stores, pawnbrokers, jewellers, solicitors and motor vehicle shops.¹⁰⁶

Groups of looters were now strung out over more than a kilometre of London Road. They had been in control of this long stretch of the thoroughfare for more than an hour and had not seen any response from the police. The level of control and time this situation presented to participants was reflected in the kinds of activities that were undertaken. According to one eyewitness after breaking into a supermarket one group of looters spent:

about two-and-a-half hours trying to break into the cashpoint outside. Looters were armed with hammers, metal poles, a mallet and what looked like a small axe. Later in the evening they started dragging stock and items out of the store to build a bonfire against a nearby building and set alight an industrial wheelie bin and pushed it into the middle of the main road.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74; Sadface8210, 2011a; Sadface8210, 2011b; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 10; “Croydon riots three years on,” 2014; whotube1111, 2011; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, DennisTweety UTC 19:10:22). An analysis of those arrested ($N = 11$) for the looting of the Somerfield supermarket showed: 28% were female, and by self-classed ethnicity, 45% were White, 18% Black, 18% Mixed, 9% Asian and 9% Other. The median age was 17, the age range 13-40 and 73% of the sample had home addresses in the borough of Croydon (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 2SW).

¹⁰³ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10; Jamieson, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 2RF; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, BishopWeston UTC 19:23:01; Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning, 2011, p. 4).

¹⁰⁴ (Stroh, 2015).

¹⁰⁵ (“Croydon riots three years on,” 2014; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, OrignalBabydoll UTC 19:06:42).

¹⁰⁶ A survey of a sample of properties ($N = 21$) directly damaged and/or looted on the London Road gave the following results: supermarkets (3), convenience stores (3), pawnbrokers (2), jewellers (2), solicitors (2), motor vehicle shops (2), electrical goods (1), hair salons (1), music shop (1), post office (1), tailor (1), charity shop (1), bank (1). In this case ‘directly’ excludes undamaged properties suffering collateral damage due to arson in a different location.

¹⁰⁷ (“Croydon riots three years on,” 2014).

Chain stores on London Road such as the supermarkets, bookmakers and pawnbrokers were closed and empty of staff, thus the break-ins and looting were unopposed. However, small independent businesses often with owner-occupiers were a different matter; in these cases a number of shop workers and proprietors who attempted to stop the looting were assaulted.¹⁰⁸ The wife of one shop owner, who was confronted by looters at their convenience store on London Road, described her experience to a journalist:

The shop owner...and his wife...a nurse, persuaded the looters to leave and pulled down the shutters. They then tried to flee the scene in their...van but only got as far as traffic lights at the end of the street when they were carjacked. Looters threatened to burn them alive if they did not hand over the keys to the vehicle, which was later torched. "A woman punched my husband and left him bleeding. They wanted the van to drive away what they had stolen. He refused so she punched him and screamed 'burn them, burn them'. They stole the £1,000 takings we had with us and my NHS badge. They took my handbag, emptied it and threw it back to me."¹⁰⁹

From 20:30-21:30 there was a spate of armed carjackings by groups of youths in the London Road area, in particular the Sutherland and Canterbury Roads in Broad Green close to Croydon University Hospital (Figure 4 Location 8).¹¹⁰ As the previous eyewitness noted, this was probably to obtain untraceable vehicles to engage in looting and to carry stolen goods away from the scene. Although there were apparently no serious injuries to the attackers¹¹¹ or victims of these robberies, news of these incidents soon reached social media, adding to the fears of some Croydon residents.¹¹²

The use of threats and violence by some rioters and looters was not only directed at the police, intransigent shop owners or motorists in order to steal their property. As the evening wore on a new kind of internecine robbery began to appear with the arrival of predatory criminals. These groups decided not to steal from shops themselves but instead to rob looters of the goods they were carrying, particularly those who were alone or in smaller numbers than theirs.¹¹³ It was such an incident that led to the only death in the Croydon riots. After taking part in the looting of a pawnbroker on High Street (see p. 28), three men

¹⁰⁸ (Jamieson, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ (Jamieson, 2011). The van was abandoned, and burned out on London Road at the junction with Sumner Road (Hamel, 2011a; Hamel, 2011c). Around the corner on St James's Road, a second vehicle was abandoned and torched (Ceasefire Magazine, 2011; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, mrrmatthewtaylor UTC 21:13:39).

¹¹⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 3PE, CR0 3PU, CR0 3PY, CR0 3QG, CR0 3QJ; BBC Radio London News, 2011). Carjackers used a firearm and a petrol bomb to threaten motorists.

¹¹¹ At least one driver when faced with the threat of a carjacking drove directly at the perpetrators. (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 3QG; BBC Radio London News, 2011).

¹¹² (*Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, ZebedeeSue UTC 19:56:30).

¹¹³ The logic of these robberies was that the perpetrators would not have to enter shops or businesses to steal goods, thereby avoiding CCTV surveillance/witnesses and technically committing the crime of theft. In addition as the "victim" of the robbery was a looter they would be unable to report the crime to the police, making the thefts effectively invisible. The main danger, as several respondents allude to, was the possibility that the victim might not be alone, so making a judgement about the right choice of target was crucial. Transcripts LON1210111908 340-369, LON1510110822 372-404, LON2210110830 20-43, 121-136.

including Trevor Ellis, were involved in “an altercation over stolen loot” with nine others on Scarbrook Road, close to Surrey Street market. At about 21:15 this led to a three car high-speed chase which ended with the shooting and death of Ellis on Duppas Hill Road about a kilometre south west of CTC (Figure 5 Location 4).¹¹⁴

At 20:10, at the police cordons at the southern end of London Road (Figure 4 Cordons B and C), the decision was taken to expand the “sterile zone” that had been created between Derby Road and North End. Using short shield advances, a group of TSG officers supported by about 20 Croydon police, forced a small group of rioters down Station Road out of West Croydon Bus Station and into Wellesley Road (Figure 4 Location 9 and Cordon D). Under a hail of missiles from rioters a similar advance was then made north along London Road close to the junction with Mead Place where smoke was pouring from the burning pawnbrokers on the corner.¹¹⁵ Local residents between the rioters and the police lines knocked on the doors to the flats above the pawnbroker to warn them of the impending danger from the fire. The rioters ceased launching missiles at the police lines to allow a group of residents from the flats and their children to cross the road. One or two rioters even assisted residents in trying to put out the flames using fire extinguishers, whilst others around them sporadically launched missiles at the police lines. A few minutes later the TSG officers charged, followed by their colleagues, forcing the rioters back and taking control of the junction with Mead Place-Oakfield Road junction (Figure 4 Cordon E).¹¹⁶

Reeves Corner

The crowd that had originally assembled at the police cordon at the George Street-North End junction had now been split into two parts. The larger group had taken part in the looting on Surrey Street and Church Street before being driven by some of the TSG unit towards Reeves Corner. The failure of the police to advance any further than Old Palace Road (Figure 5 Cordon B), probably because of their lack of numbers, would have significant consequences. At 20:20 an empty double-decker bus was set on fire on Drummond Road, less than 150m from the police line, though out of their direct line of sight (Figure 5 Location 5). A local newspaper journalist at the scene reported that a “large gathering of youths” were watching it burn. About 20 minutes later, at dusk, the fuel tank exploded.¹¹⁷ Whilst the bus was burning, others headed down Drummond Road towards a row of shops and a complex of large furniture stores on Church Street (Figure 5 Locations 3 and 6). An eyewitness recalled the scene:

There were not many people wandering around. Some of them were smiling and cheering, some were scared. I saw small groups of covered-up rioters. A bus was set on fire and more people were attracted to the smoke. 90 per cent of the crowd were watching in confusion, but some of these were happy at how the situation was developing. Soon after, really active rioters appeared and started

¹¹⁴ (Williamson, 2012; “Suspected looter shot dead,” 2011).

¹¹⁵ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74; madtea, 2011; Kakeeto, 2011).

¹¹⁶ (ballad anna, 2011b).

¹¹⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 74; “LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout,” 2011; tlustyblant, 2012; RT, 2011; “Shock and anger as city awakes,” 2011; “Croydon riots five years on,” 2016; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 19; whotube1111, 2011; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, Gareth_Davies09 UTC 19:37:13; Davies, 2011a; Davies, 2011b; Strohm, 2015).

an undisturbed attack on the furniture store. The situation was really confusing...There were by far more spectators than active rioters around the furniture store.¹¹⁸

The eye witness described the rioters as being mostly youths but with some disabled people also involved.¹¹⁹ Some of the crowd began smashing the windows of the furniture store, others entered the shop and a couple of armchairs were pulled into the street. There was little attempt to loot the store, probably because the items inside the store were too unwieldy to carry on foot. At 20:50 an individual set light to a sofa through the broken window and within minutes a fierce blaze had begun. As darkness fell, the first of ten fire engines arrived without police protection. The fire brigade vehicle and personnel were unmolested by a crowd, many of whom watched the blaze develop through the late evening into a major fire, which eventually destroyed the whole block.¹²⁰

All of this activity had been carried out for over an hour in the vicinity of police lines. The furniture store (Figure 5 Location 6) destroyed by arson was less than 100m from part of a TSG unit on Church Street and, in full view of the burning bus (Figure 5 Cordon B), a second police line protecting the rear of the Centrale shopping centre on Frith Road was only 150m distant (Figure 5 Cordon C).¹²¹ The difficulties for Silver Command in Croydon were not just the lack of public order trained personnel on the ground, but also the logistical problems the MPS as a whole were facing due to the outbreak of numerous disturbances elsewhere in London. An MPS report in the aftermath stated:

Numerous officers were being sent to Croydon from other parts of London but the time taken to arrive at Croydon varied, depending on distance of travel and ability to extract from other disorders across London.¹²²

By the time the fire near Reeves Corner had taken hold, nearly two hours had passed since reinforcements had been requested. However, the only unit to make it to Croydon in that time had been the three rapid-response TSG carriers. At 20:34 it was confirmed that:

an advanced public order trained senior commander was resourced from Central London to attend Croydon and a further 4 public order serials (approximately 100 officers) were re-deployed from Lewisham to Croydon.¹²³

To add to the logistic delays, according to one account three Police Support Units (PSUs)¹²⁴ which had been sent to Croydon borough from the Hampshire and Thames Valley police

¹¹⁸ ("New footage shows start of Croydon furniture store fire," 2011).

¹¹⁹ A man on crutches can be seen using one of them to break the windows of the Reeves furniture store in (tlustyblant, 2012).

¹²⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74; "LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout," 2011; tlustyblant, 2012; RT, 2011; Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 10; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, Gareth_Davies09 UTC 20:03:51; Davies, 2012; Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning, 2011, p. 4; Stroh, 2015; "New footage shows start of Croydon furniture store fire," 2011).

¹²¹ (tlustyblant, 2012).

¹²² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 74).

¹²³ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74).

forces were turned away from attending by an MPS supervisor because they weren't MPS units. One of the occupants recalled that they could see the furniture store at Reeves Corner on fire when they were ordered to return home.¹²⁵ To compound these difficulties for the Croydon police, from about 20:00 the disturbances in the environs of CTC escalated and the sites of disorder multiplied in the borough.

High Street-South End-Brighton Road

The manner in which London Road had been apparently abandoned to the looters by the authorities in order to protect the principal shopping centres, was replicated to the south of CTC. One of the first targets was a pawnbroker and money lender less than 100m from, and in full view of, the police cordon at the High Street-George Street junction (Figure 5 Location 7).¹²⁶ Just after 21:00 the store was attacked by a crowd, as one participant recalled:

Cash Converters was right there and someone started trying to pull up...the shutter in front of the Cash Converters, they got the shutter open but it wouldn't go all the way up, so they had two people holding it up, this is right in front of the...line of police. Me and my friend were just like I can't...the, the level of like no respect for the police, like they were right there and yet it had no, no impact on their actions...They had two people holding up the shutter, they rolled it up, someone else started kicking the door, kicking the door, and then the crowd started forming around, the door broke and then it was just a train of people in, out. Coming out with guitars, they were coming out with DVD players, the TV's were coming out...this is all right in front of the police...and they,...all they could do was watch because they...they've obviously got to hold their line I'd imagine.¹²⁷

The inaction of the police spurred looters to head on to other potential targets along High Street towards South End and Brighton Road. This thoroughfare was lined with a mix of specialist retailers and small businesses, including cafes, convenience stores and fast-food outlets. It was the former, however, that were specifically targeted and by two different types of looters. The first signs that South End was under threat came at about 20:00 when a specialist bicycle shop was looted (Figure 5 Location 8).¹²⁸ Half an hour later, around 400m further south on Brighton Road, the systematic robbery of a high-end home entertainment retailer and another specialist bicycle shop took place (Figure 5 Locations 9 and 10).¹²⁹ These thefts were marked by the intervention of "organised criminals" who arrived in vehicles and

¹²⁴ 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, b).

¹²⁵ (Hitchens, 2012).

¹²⁶ (skynewsyourvideos, 2011).

¹²⁷ Transcript LON2110110105 78-95.

¹²⁸ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 8, 11; Randall, 2011; Kirk, 2011).

¹²⁹ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 20; "Pictures: Most wanted UK riots looters," 2011; Jamey's Videos, 2011; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, englishtom UTC 20:45:48, SamMason UTC 21:14:12, lizardlion UTC 21:28:20, Lorna_Wall UTC 21:48:41; Lamy, 2011; DPMANLA, 2011; *The Guardian*, 2012; "'Clean up Croydon' will need more than a dustpan and brush", 2011) and transcripts LON2110110105 112-146 and LON3010111911 91-154.

mingled with those who were already on the street because of the disturbances, as described by one eye-witness:

At about 8.30pm, a red van pulled up, a man got out, unscrewed the number plate, and several people started to try to break into Richer Sounds. As the would-be burglars struggled with the shop's shutters, [the witness] took a photograph. Its flash alerted them and they took off. Some 45 minutes or so later, a larger number of people arrived and this time made a successful entry. "For the next hour and a half it was like watching ants carrying eggs as people scurried in and out of the store and bore away televisions, hi-fi equipment, etc," he says. The thieves included a number of young white women, and a man who seemed to have trouble carrying a large boxed television. He asked for help. None came, so he took his booty from its cumbersome box. As he did so, the scarf around his face slipped, showing him to be, in [the witnesses] words, "50 if he was a day". Only much later did police finally arrive. It was less "looting", more a leisurely burglary.¹³⁰

One participant in the robbery, part of an organised group of mobile looters, explained how their operation worked:

There was [Richer Sounds] that got [taken] like speakers and TVs...We had to stash it you know. We had to stash it in a graveyard...we can't be walking on the road with this so we left it there and basically come back for it in the van...there was three different vans. My uncle was in one with like four of his mates. And they were doing shop crawls and raiding bare [lots of] shops...And then there was another van that was coming back and forth to pick up shit that was getting looted [and had been stashed].¹³¹

The owner of a restaurant close to these incidents and his daughter described the situation on the Brighton Road as the looting was underway:

[Owner] We found it quite intimidating, there was a lot of people...70-80 youths running in and around all this area going back and forth with bikes and TVs and stereos and stuff. It was quite intimidating but after about an hour-and-a-half we realized that they weren't here to harm any locals any other people so long as we didn't we didn't confront them with taking the goods and stuff.

[Daughter] That's what made me angry like people are like animals, that the real animals within people showed that night but then [smiles] young people actually got along, like that feud that exists disappeared. How can that make sense? How can it be that on a negative day people come together rather than on a good day?

[Owner] The most disturbing thing was that we did see parents actually dropping kids off on the main road and...parking around the corner and waiting

¹³⁰ (Randall, 2011).

¹³¹ Transcript LON3010111911 118-138.

for them to pick up TV than the cycles and going to put them in the boot and going home I suppose.¹³²

By 22:00 a large crowd had gathered by *Swan and Sugar Loaf* pub (Figure 5 Location 11), effectively controlling the South End-Brighton Road-Selsdon Road junction with no apparent response from the police.¹³³

New Addington, Thornton Heath and Norbury

The warnings earlier in the afternoon about the potential for unrest in the outlying estate of New Addington (see Figure 6) became more prescient at 20:00 when the first reports reached police of “sporadic incidents of disorder” in the area.¹³⁴ Just under an hour later at 20:50, a small shopping precinct, the Forestdale, about three kilometres from the centre of New Addington (Figure 6 Location 1) was raided by a group of looters in vehicles. An analysis of the arrestees ($N = 16$) showed that they were all male, White by self-classed ethnicity and they all came from the New Addington estate.¹³⁵ About an hour later, the same group attacked and robbed shops in the town of Selsdon about two kilometres further along the Addington Road.¹³⁶ From about 23:30 through to 04:30 the following day, New Addington’s central parade shopping area was subjected to unopposed looting, culminating in arson at a small supermarket.¹³⁷

Outbreaks of looting, both spontaneous and more organised, in areas in the wider borough of Croydon were mirrored in Thornton Heath and Norbury (see Figure 1). In the former, the period 20:00 to 23:15 was marked by a number of incidents of looting, attacks on police vehicles and street robberies of individuals. Targets for looting included a post office, supermarket, jewellers and an electrical goods shop.¹³⁸ In the latter, from about 21:30 till about midnight a similar pattern of crime types took place, with the addition of several attempted and successful carjackings. Targets for looting included a bank, petrol station, an off licence, a computer shop and a post office which was subject to a ram raid.¹³⁹ In Thornton Heath and Norbury sporadic incidents of looting continued until dawn, and it was only in the early hours of Tuesday morning that Croydon police could spare any vehicular units to investigate these crimes.¹⁴⁰

¹³² (The *Guardian*, 2012).

¹³³ (“Croydon burns as looters storm the Whitgift centre,” 2011).

¹³⁴ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 11).

¹³⁵ The median age of the looters was 20 and the age range 17-29 (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 9AS).

¹³⁶ An analysis of the arrestees for this incident ($N = 7$) showed they were all from the same group that had attacked the Forestdale precinct (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR2 8LH).

¹³⁷ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 8, 11; “Croydon riots five years on,” 2016; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 20; “Croydon’s summer riots: One year on,” 2012). An analysis of arrestees ($N = 8$) showed that they were all male, White by self-classed ethnicity and all from the New Addington area. The median age of the sample was 20 and the age range 16-29 (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 OJB).

¹³⁸ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR7).

¹³⁹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 75; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, SW16 3,4,5).

¹⁴⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 75).

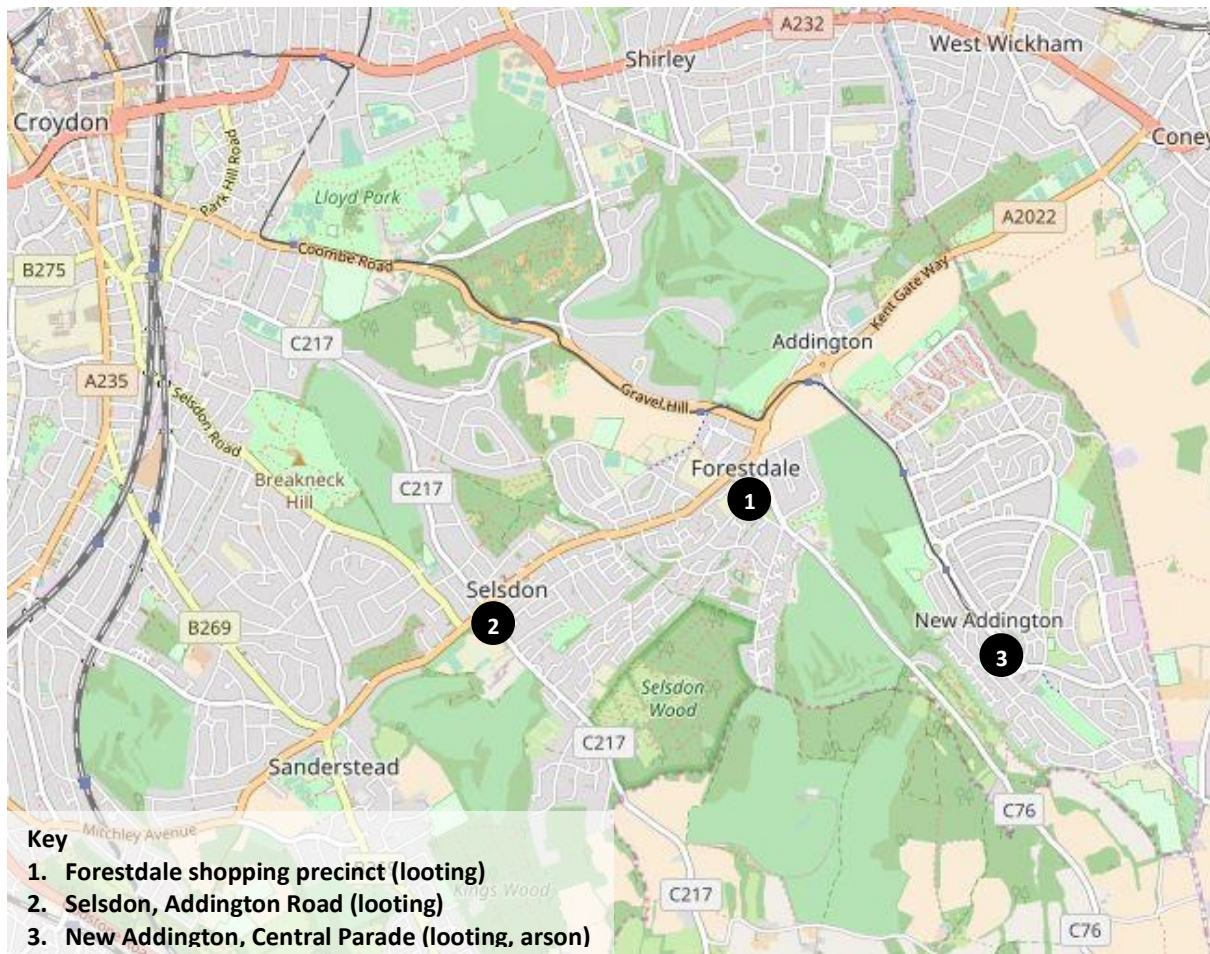


Figure 6: New Addington, Forestdale and Selsdon Monday 8th - Tuesday 9th August 2011

Purley Way Retail Parks

Although the incidents of looting on London and Brighton Roads and those peripheral to CTC in New Addington, Thornton Heath and Norbury were serious, an even greater loss of commodities was to occur in the retail parks on Purley Way. These had already been targeted in the early hours of morning, and it was not long into Monday evening before they once again became the focus of groups of looters. The first reports appear at 20:21 on Twitter as motorists driving along Purley Way noticed unusual activity in the Trafalgar retail park (Figure 3 Location 3).¹⁴¹ One eye witness recalled the scene:

Unfortunately, a few minutes later as I was approaching Comet store, I could walk no further. Traffic on Purley Way had stopped, there were hundreds of people (mostly children and young adults) in hoodies and masks breaking in stores and carrying stolen goods.¹⁴²

The initial targets were Best Buy (consumer electronics), John Lewis (department store) and Sainsbury's (supermarket), followed by Comet (consumer electronics and white goods).¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ (*Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, WannabeYummy UTC 19:21:14, Celia_Dixon UTC 19:35:33).

¹⁴² (Ven Bella, 2012).

¹⁴³ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 10; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 4XG, CR0 4XT).

The largely unopposed looting lasted until 21:00 when a six to eight riot police arrived at the Comet store, causing looters to scatter. However, they just ran about several hundred metres to PC World (computers) and Currys (consumer electronics and white goods), which, along with TK Maxx (clothing), were broken into soon after.¹⁴⁴ It was clear to the police (and the looters) that they lacked the numbers to stop hundreds of determined people from raiding large retail outlets that were spread over a wide area.¹⁴⁵ For nearly two more hours the looting continued relentlessly, until 22:47, when some police officers were dispatched to Comet. They managed to clear the store of looters, making 12 arrests.¹⁴⁶ However, about 45 minutes later new reports came in that Carphone Warehouse, a mobile phone retailer opposite the Comet store, had been broken into and was being plundered.¹⁴⁷ This pattern of action and (under)reaction continued into the early hours of Tuesday morning, with previously robbed targets being revisited by looters. The sporadic looting finally petered out just before dawn.¹⁴⁸

Crisis point

At 21:15 a Chief Superintendent, a member of the Metropolitan Police Senior Public Order Cadre, arrived in Croydon to take over Silver Command of the policing of the disorder.¹⁴⁹ The situation facing the Chief Constable at this point was dire. Reeves Corner was ablaze and there was widespread looting underway on both London and Brighton Roads and in the retail parks on Purley Way. Several properties were burning on London Road in areas still controlled by rioters, so the fire brigade was unable to attend. Reports were starting to come in of disorder and looting in New Addington, Thornton Heath, Norbury and from northeast Croydon where a breakaway group had left London Road and was raiding properties on St James's and Whitehorse Roads (Figure 4 Location 10).¹⁵⁰ News of the shooting of Trevor Ellis in Duppas Hill also came in at around 21:15, making the threat of the use of firearms in the disturbances a reality. An MPS report summed the situation up as darkness fell:

¹⁴⁴ ("LIVE UPDATES: Riot fallout," 2011; "Shock and anger as city awakes," 2011; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 20; "Pictures: Most wanted UK riots looters," 2011; Ven Bella, 2012; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 4XU, CR0 4XL; *Guardian* & London School of Economics, 2011a, DuncanFry UTC 21:03:06, josephcorr UTC 21:12:19; "Father and son looters caught in Purley Way," 2011) and Transcripts LON2110110105 19-26 and LON281020111313 588-607.

¹⁴⁵ A survey of arrestees ($N = 51$) involved in the looting in the Purley Way retail centres, showed 14% were female and by self-classed ethnicity 22% were White, 63% Black, 8% Asian, 6% Mixed and 2% Other. The median age was 20, the age range 13-50 and 75% had home addresses in the borough of Croydon (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 4XT, CR0 4XG, CR0 4XL, CR0 4XJ).

¹⁴⁶ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74).

¹⁴⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 4XJ).

¹⁴⁸ The last recorded crimes of theft and burglary in the Purley Way retail parks were timed at between 04:00 and 05:00 (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CR0 4XJ, CR0 4AA).

¹⁴⁹ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 11).

¹⁵⁰ Consistent rioting and looting spread east of London Road, in the area north of St James's Road/Lower Addiscombe Road along White Horse Road from 21.00, with incidents continuing until around 03.00 the following morning. Targets raided at the junction of Whitehorse Rd and Windmill Rd included Staples (electrical goods), Tesco Express (supermarket) and Halfords (car parts and bicycles); (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 11; Khan, 2011).

Hundreds of calls [were] being received via the 999 system. Assistance was still being requested but such was the scale of disorder that the officers on the ground were simply overwhelmed.¹⁵¹

To make matters worse, although some public order trained reinforcements in the form of PSUs had arrived with the Chief Superintendent, the majority had not yet appeared on the scene.¹⁵²

In response to this desperate situation, and after reports were received of people being trapped in burning buildings at Reeves Corner, Silver Command made the decision to send police officers from CTC to “repel crowd and facilitate access for London Fire Brigade”. This was one of the first actions that marked a different emphasis by the MPS, from the protection of commodities to the protection of “life”. At 21:54 Silver Command issued an instruction “that addressing fires is to take priority over looting”, formally confirming this change in policy. To back up this order, a local ground commander was sent to Reeves Corner and a PSU was deployed to London Road to help facilitate access by the Fire Brigade. In addition, a police helicopter was deployed to Croydon.¹⁵³

Despite the arrival of some public order reinforcements, the resource situation was still dismal. An MPS report noted after the event that:

By this time resources on the ground were becoming rapidly depleted through officers having made arrests, sustaining injuries and maintaining cordons to ensure crime scene management.¹⁵⁴

To compound these problems, groups of rioters and looters were roaming around CTC choosing targets almost at will. At 22:09 CCTV operators spotted a group of rioters armed with fire bombs separate from a crowd in CTC and head towards Croydon Police Station (Figure 5 Location 12). A unit of TSG reinforcements that had just arrived in the borough were sent to intercept them, which they achieved, just before the group launched an attack on the nearby Croydon Magistrates Court (Figure 5 Location 13).¹⁵⁵ As this was happening:

CCTV operators noticed two police cars that were parked and unattended on Mint Walk next to Croydon Town Hall (Figure 5 Location 14). These police cars were set on fire by rioters. With no police officers or fire engines available to assist, CCTV supervisors...left the control room during the shift change period and ran over to the town hall to extinguish the burning police cars with the control room’s fire extinguishers.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 74).

¹⁵² According to the MPS account at 20:34 “a further 4 public order serials [PSUs] (approximately 100 officers) were re-deployed from Lewisham to Croydon” (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 74). It is unclear if they all arrived at 21:15. According to the CBC account “The first level two public order trained police reinforcements began to arrive in Croydon from 9.15pm”, suggested that at least some had arrived (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 7, 11).

¹⁵³ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74).

¹⁵⁴ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 74).

¹⁵⁵ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74; London Borough of Croydon, 2011 p. 20).

¹⁵⁶ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 20).

On the junction of Oakfield Road and St James's Road (Figure 4 Location 14), a petrol bomb was thrown at the front of the Croydon & District Masonic Hall, though the resulting fire was extinguished. Soon after, a second attack was made which again failed to set the building alight.¹⁵⁷ Even areas of CTC that had been previously "secured" were being revisited by looters. At 22:21 in Church Street, Argos, which had been ransacked three hours earlier, was reported to be under attack by a crowd once again.¹⁵⁸

Although earlier in the evening the TSG unit and other police officers had obtained a foothold on London Road, they were still being actively opposed by rioters. Consequently, in conjunction with the constant resource problems, they had made little further progress in securing a significant stretch of the thoroughfare from the rioters. One group that had managed to infiltrate into the parts of London Road that were "controlled" by the rioters and looters were some reporters from the BBC and Sky News. However, just before 23:00, travelling together in a van and another vehicle they were attacked by rioters with missiles, which broke some of the windows, forcing them to retreat down Sumner Road to relative safety. The reporters were withdrawn from Croydon shortly afterwards.¹⁵⁹

A few minutes after this incident, at about 23:00, on the opposite corner (London Road-St James's Road, Figure 4 Location 11) in a block of shops and residences known as Royal Mansions, a fire was set in a looted convenience store. Within 30 minutes the shop was fully ablaze and the fire had begun to spread to the flats above. The MPS public order units on London Road were still several hundred metres away to the south. They were busy dealing with the remaining rioters and the fires set earlier in the evening in the solicitors, pawnshop and supermarket between Mead Place and Montague Road (Figure 4 Locations 3, 4 and 7). At 23:34, the London Fire Brigade asked Silver Command for a police escort but no units were available.¹⁶⁰ The fire in Royal Mansions spread over the next half an hour, destroying a dry cleaner, a motorcycle dealer and a laundry.¹⁶¹ At midnight the danger posed by this particular blaze was recognised by Silver Command who issued an order to commit all available resources to London Road.¹⁶² A fire brigade tender and an MPS public order unit did manage to reach the scene, but by then it was too late to save a large section of Royal Mansions.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ (whotube1111, 2011).

¹⁵⁸ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 74; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, CRO 1RH). A survey of arrestees ($N = 11$) involved in the second phase of looting (22:30-22:45) of Argos in Church Street, showed 36% were female and by self-classed ethnicity 45% were White and 55% Black. The median age was 21, the age range 17-41 and 73% had home addresses in the borough of Croydon.

¹⁵⁹ ("Shock and anger as city awakes," 2011; "Croydon riots five years on," 2016; Corfield, 2011; *Guardian & London School of Economics*, 2011a, JHDavisUK UTC 22:47:19).

¹⁶⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 75).

¹⁶¹ ("Croydon riots five years on," 2016; Jamieson, 2011; Ceasefire, 2011; Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning, 2011, p. 4; Gorm, 2011; "Bankruptcy, ruin and broken promises," 2013; Hamel, 2011a; Hamel, 2011b; Hamel, 2011c; Ceasefire Magazine, 2011).

¹⁶² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 75).

¹⁶³ (*Guardian & London School of Economics*, 2011a, bobwalker01 UTC 23:02:53, bobwalker01 UTC 23:16:16). The whole block, including seven shops and businesses as well as a number of residences, was eventually demolished.

The beginning of the end

According to a CBC timeline of the events, after 23:15 on the Monday evening:

Disorder in Croydon Town Centre is brought under control, with looting and rioting becoming more sporadic.¹⁶⁴

It is unclear whether this was as a result of the policing operation or the withdrawal of the rioters from CTC, or both. The CCTV operators on the scene probably described the situation more accurately in stating:

By around midnight, the rioters began to break up into lots of smaller groups and spread over a much larger area. As the night progressed incidents gradually slowed down with sporadic incidents across the borough reported until morning.¹⁶⁵

This, however, did not mean the policing operation could be relaxed. As the MPS report points out, as far as they were concerned “there was no sign that the disorder was abating”. Incidents of rioting and looting continued in the early hours.¹⁶⁶ Despite the best efforts of police and security guards through the evening to protect the shopping malls in CTC, in the early hours of the morning:

small numbers of rioters were able to break into the Whitgift Centre via the Wellesley Road entrance and into Centrale via the Tamworth Road entrance. Police officers and council dog handlers entered Centrale and arrested a number of looters (Figure 3 Locations 4 and 10).¹⁶⁷

Similarly, on Church Street in CTC (Figure 5 Location 2), groups of looters returned several times after midnight to plunder another supermarket and a jewellery shop, before being dispersed by police.¹⁶⁸ The slow northward advance of public order units on London Road did not go unopposed either. At 00:19, police officers came under attack from petrol bombs on Greenside Road just off London Road in Broad Green (Figure 4 Location 12). Earlier in the evening the breakaway group of looters that had headed towards Selhurst, northeast of CTC were now engaged in largely unopposed looting. A vehicle was driven into the front of a supermarket and there were reports of a firearm being seen amongst the looters (Figure 4 Location 10).¹⁶⁹

Between 03:00 and 04:00 additional PSUs from Sussex and South Wales Police arrived in the borough. These resources allowed Silver Command to relieve local officers. However, there were still reports of over 200 people in the area and a large group congregating in Oakfield Road, just off the London Road (Figure 4 Location 13). According to the MPS these groups

¹⁶⁴ (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel, 2012, p. 8).

¹⁶⁵ (London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 20).

¹⁶⁶ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 75).

¹⁶⁷ (O'Mahony, 2016; London Borough of Croydon, 2011, p. 20).

¹⁶⁸ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 75-76).

¹⁶⁹ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 70-71, 75).

were eventually dispersed “with the help of fresh police resources and control was finally regained” around 04:00.¹⁷⁰

4. References

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LON1110110817_1
 LON1110110817_2
 LON11101110501
 LON1211101908
 LON1310110102
 LON1410110103
 LON1510110822
 LON171020111307
 LON1910110825
 LON1910110826
 LON2110110105
 LON2110110828
 LON2210110830
 LON2210110832
 LON2410110106
 LON2510110110
 LON2710110837
 LON281020111313
 LON2910111912
 LON3010111911

Twitter data

No	User name	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁷¹	Comment
1	Gareth_Davies09	8 th August	14:47:23 [15:47]	#croydon busy at the moment. reasonably big police presence in north end
2	JohnLoony	8 th August	17:06:27 [18:06]	#Croydon North End / High Street full of bored plods standing around not doing anything. Baa-Klee-Zbank closed at 4pm, just in case of riots
3	greysm0ke	8 th August	17:27:53 [18:27]	can confirm shops enforcing early closures.. visible police presence round West Croydon, Maccy D's North End, Whitgift & George st. #croydon
4	Gareth_Davies09	8 th August	17:07:27 [18:07]	Whitgift Centre in #croydon locked down after security n cops chase youths

¹⁷⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 76).

¹⁷¹ The listed time is UTC. The time in parentheses is corrected for British Summer Time (UTC + 1 hour) and is the actual time the tweet was sent.

No	User name	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁷¹	Comment
5	Gareth_Davies09	8 th August	17:58:50 [18:58]	large number of youths taunting police in #croydon town centre
6	babycokes	8 th August	18:10:40 [19:10]	croydon the maplin electronic shop windows cracked can't get any photos as police are in the way #Londonriots
7	_beckk_	8 th August	18:37:41 [19:37]	my brother said alders, mcdonalds and argos have been smahed in already in croydon, its getting worse #londonriots
8	Gareth_Davies09	8 th August	18:42:14 [19:42]	absolute chaos in #croydon .ive just been assaulted
9	Dazzle3009	8 th August	19:38:07 [20:38]	Croydon town centre #londonriots http://twitpic.com/6331wu
10	jamb0n	8 th August	19:12:28 [20:12]	People looting shops on London Road, Greyhound motors and the music shop. AMPS and guitars being thrown at cars/shops. #croydon
11	Dazzle3009	8 th August	19:46:16 [20:46]	Croydon main shopping centre broken into #londonriots http://twitpic.com/6334zw
12	babycokes	8 th August	19:33:04 [20:33]	Pawnbrokers got into #croydon #Londonriot
13	KennySkyNews	8 th August	19:56:20 [20:56]	Jewellers/pawn shop on London Road, West Croydon on fire. #croydon #londonriots
14	siobhanmb	8 th August	19:57:48 [20:57]	Cheque and Pawn shop in Croydon in blaze now #londonriots
15	CPO4OFC	8 th August	19:54:17 [20:54]	Wow here we go! Here's Croydons turn! @Official_CPFC #londonriots http://twitpic.com/6338cf
16	DennisTweety	8 th August	19:10:22 [20:10]	Right, shit has started in #Croydon. Somerfield on London Road being looted and coppers being pelted with missiles in Croydon town centre.
17	BishopWeston	8 th August	19:23:01 [20:23]	Picked bad day 2 go to #Croydon fires & looting West to South lidl Iceland shops now on way 2 purley way suddenly I see a need for army
18	OrignalBabydoll	8 th August	19:06:42 [20:06]	kids knicking rice from Asian food shops on London Road #Croydon smdh http://twitpic.com/632oq3
19	mrmatthewtaylor	8 th August	21:13:39 [22:13]	http://twitpic.com/6346ak - Car burning in #croydon. Trouble started at 7 and has stopped since according to locals.

No	User name	Date (2011)	Time ¹⁷¹	Comment
20	ZebedeeSue	8 th August	19:56:30 [20:56]	Now my old neighbourhood of West Croydon is apparently in flames, with reports of carjacking. Bunch of violent tossers! #londonriots
21	Gareth_Davies09	8 th August	19:37:13 [20:37]	a bus has been set alight and has exploded near me next to church street #croydon
22	Gareth_Davies09	8 th August	20:03:51 [21:03]	building now on fire near reeves corner #croydon. explosions hear
23	englishtom	8 th August	20:45:48 [21:45]	I hear richer sounds in south #croydon is getting raided right now via @tin_tuna #londonriots who works right by it :(
24	SamMason	8 th August	21:14:12 [22:14]	I can see people braking in to like a richersound or something. Loading tvs in to cars #south #Croydon #londonriots
25	lizardlion	8 th August	21:28:20 [22:28]	You can tell what's been done in in #Croydon kids with massive TVs=Richer Sounds. Fleet of kids on sparkly new bikes=bike shop.
26	Lorna_Wall	8 th August	21:48:41 [22:48]	They've made it south :-(" @bagelwelt: #croydon can we have some police in south croydon they Are attacking richer sounds and cycle king!"
27	WannabeYummy	8 th August	19:21:14 [20:21]	Just driven past looters john Lewis sainsburys and bestbuy...#croydon #riots #Wtf
28	Celia_Dixon	8 th August	19:35:33 [20:35]	Looters are in comet Croydon retail park #croydonriots
29	DuncanFry	8 th August	21:03:06 [22:03]	PC World Looted #croydon
30	josephcorr	8 th August	21:12:19 [22:12]	PC World, Curry's and other retail outlets being looted in Croydon at the moment. @lbc973 #londonriots
31	bobwalker01	9 th August	23:02:53 [00:02]	Croydon burning #Croydon http://twitpic.com/635ht4
32	bobwalker01	9 th August	23:16:16 [00:16]	Fires in #Croydon #5live http://twitpic.com/635ns6

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