

SPECIAL REPORT

Burnley Riots 2001: Timeline of events

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WEDNESDAY June 23 marks 20 years since the outbreak of the 2001 Burnley Riots. In this special report we look back on the events and legacy of that weekend of civil unrest.

Here, we look back on a timeline of events as they unfolded and the police response.

THE OUTBREAK of riots in Burnley on a warm Summer's evening in 2001 had been a long time in the making.

The violent scenes that saw cars and buildings go up in flames were the culmination of many years simmering racial tensions stoked by far-right activists from the British National Party and National Front.

The role of the police would also be called into question, both during the course of the two days and afterwards, with the lessons Lancashire Constabulary say they have learned proving to be one of the riots' most significant legacies.

East Division Operations Manager Superintendent Abid Khan said: "In the last 20 years significant work has gone into developing a policing model that best reflects the communities we serve to ensure the resources are in the right place to keep people safe and bring those who commit crime to justice."

Most of the confrontations would be played out over the weekend of June 23 and 24, however tensions would remain high for days afterwards.

How the riots unfolded: A timeline of events in late June 2001:

Saturday

- 5am - A white man is stabbed outside a house in Francis Street, Daneshouse. Nine cars are damaged.
- 5am - An off duty Asian taxi driver is attacked by three white men in Colne Road. He suffers a fractured jaw and other injuries. Police later come in for criticism for allegedly responding more slowly to the attack on the Asian man than the white man.
- 11pm - Police receive reports of Asian youths gathering in Abel Street. Police confront them and missiles are thrown. Duke of York pub comes under attack.
- More than 200 specialist police were involved in the night's operation with two pubs were closed.

Sunday

- 6pm - A white gang gathers near Turf Moor and attacks shops in the vicinity. Police close off the area.
- 7.30pm - Fighting in lower Colne Road between white and Asian groups.
- 10.30pm - Duke of York pub is firebombed.
- 10.40pm - Police form a human blockade around the pub to protect firefighters.
- 11pm onwards - Police report sporadic flare-ups in Stoneyholme but rival groups are kept apart.
- 11.30pm - Further fighting between mounted police and Asian youths. Two cars torched.

Monday

- 8.30pm - Shahid Malik, son of deputy mayor Rafik Malik says he was injured by a police officer while trying to calm youths on Abel Street.
- Violence eases but three late night arson attacks, on Burnley Car Dismantlers' scrap yard in Arch Street, an Indian restaurant in Hapton, and a car in Holme Road, Stoneyholme, are linked with the previous weekend's troubles.
- 22 people are arrested over the course of the night.



Shahid Malik and his father Rafique

In following days, questions would be asked about the police response, with deputy mayor Rafique Malik, whose son Shahid was injured by riot officers, saying that many in the Asian community had been concerned by the slow response to the attack on the taxi driver on Saturday May 23.

Speaking to the BBC at the time, he said: "I spoke to them personally and they were very angry about innocent people and their property being damaged.

"If the police took half an hour to arrive after the taxi driver was attacked, what faith do we have that they will protect our people?"

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However, in the years since, officers say that a significant amount of work has been put into addressing the concerns of diverse communities.

Superintendent Khan said: "We have neighbourhood policing teams embedded in our communities which give us a really good insight into what is happening and allows us to respond early and effectively to concerns.

"We also have strong partnerships across statutory and voluntary sectors that have been built over a significant period of time meaning we are better able to meet the competing demands of our communities."

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