

Halloween rave party turns into chaos as revellers bombard London riot police

Baton charges and arrests as police are caught up in running skirmishes with crowds while trying for six hours to shut down 'Scumoween' event in Lambeth

Press Association

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An illegal Halloween rave in central London descended into chaos overnight as riot police were bombarded with projectiles, reportedly including a petrol bomb.

Police said eight people were arrested after six hours of skirmishes as hundreds of people tried to get into the Halloween event, dubbed "Scumoween", in Lambeth.

Officers were on the scene throughout the night dealing with what they described as "public disorder and criminal damage". Four officers suffered minor injuries, the Met said, and a man was also treated by London Ambulance Service.

The rave was finally closed down at 6am and, while police said disorder had stopped, they remained at the scene moving people on from inside the venue.

Crowds first gathered on Black Prince Road at Albert Embankment before midnight, before dispersing down Lambeth Road on to Lambeth High Street and nearby Whitgift Street.

Police said they had posted officers at junctions to Whitgift Street to "to prevent any escalation" of the trouble.

But footage from the scene showed an angry mob throwing chairs, bottles and an object reported to have been a petrol bomb at police lines as they chanted "scum" and "pigs".

Police said: "During this confrontation a number of missiles were thrown at officers, including one reported petrol bomb."

Bangers were also thrown, a male was seen letting off a fire extinguisher and bins were set alight on some surrounding streets.

Riot police, with dogs and shields, were seen drawing their batons against a charging crowd.

Bradley Garrett, a Guardian Cities columnist, who was there trying to research an article, accused the police of being heavy-handed.

"When I got there, a friend told me about 500 people got into the event then the police

started closing the street,” he said. “They turned up in full riot gear and created a huge bottleneck. There must have been 1,000 people trying to get in. The police turned aggressive very fast. People were trying to rationalise with them, saying it’s better to let people in, otherwise this is going to create a mess in the neighbourhood.”

Garrett filmed a woman being struck in the face with a baton by a police officer (see video at top of page).

“They [the police] were shoving everyone towards the street and she was saying just put your backs to them ...and that’s when she was hit on the head by the baton and I really think that was the trigger [for the subsequent trouble].”

He said he went to three different streets around the venue and saw trouble on all of them, with police charging partygoers. Some people broke into a yard under the rail tracks and came out with pieces of wood.

Garrett said some officers taunted partygoers as they left. “The police were saying: ‘What, you’re going home? You don’t want anymore?’ It seemed to me the easiest solution would have been to let people go into the building to contain it. It was certainly handled badly.”

Scumoween: A Nightmare On Scum Street had been advertised on Facebook to take place in Whitgift Street beginning at 8pm on Halloween night and lasting all weekend.

Of 13,000 invited guests on the social networking site, 4,000 said they planned to attend.

The free event was due to feature music “from the full spectrum of underground dance”.

In a warning on Wednesday to those due to attend, organisers Scum Tek said: “This party is going ahead, stay peaceful, stay calm. Patience and numbers is in our favour. Do not antagonise the police. We don’t need to. At the end of the day we want to leave them remembering our good attitudes, we just came to dance, we are not their enemy.”

A post encouraging people to “keep coming” and “don’t give up” appeared on the Facebook page at around midnight when trouble flared, but police advised people not to go to the area.

The Met tweeted: “We would discourage anyone still thinking of attending the illegal rave in Whitgift Street from coming to the area due to ongoing police op.”

Residents in Lambeth told of their frustration at the disruption overnight into Sunday.

Rhodri wrote on Twitter: “They’re now gathering on my street. There are families here with young kids that don’t deserve this disruption.”

Christopher Kilby said: “I won’t be getting much sleep tonight. Chants of ‘we want scum’ still ringing loudly as protesters continue to confront police.”

Two hours later he added: “I’d really like to go to sleep now. Could the rioters please just give up and go home?!”

Police said criminal damage had been caused to private vehicles and property in the area.

In a statement the Met said: “Shortly before 06.00hrs this morning, Sunday 1 November officers entered the venue stopping the event with powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.

“Persons present in the venue were removed. There were some further arrests.”

Police said the “post-incident investigation” had begun and appealed for witnesses to the disorder or anyone with information to come forward.

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