

LEEDS FESTIVAL VIOLENCE: YOUTH SENTENCED

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The rock wreckers

BY PAUL ROBINSON

AS THE music ended, the violence began.

For the third year running, thugs went on the rampage on the final night of the Leeds Festival, turning Temple Newsam Park into a battleground.

A mob of 200 rioters caused hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage in three hours of chaos.

Emergency services and security staff were pelted with missiles as toilet blocks were torched and butane gas cylinders set alight.

More than 40 people, including a number of police officers, suffered injuries during the mayhem of August 25 last year.

The shameful scenes triggered a major hunt for the yobs whose actions had thrown the future of the festival into doubt.

Using techniques honed during the investigation into 2001's

riots in Bradford and Leeds, detectives trawled through hours of video footage in a bid to identify the key troublemakers.

By October, pictures of 24 suspects had been issued by the Killingbeck-based team set up to bring the hooligans to justice.

Working in conjunction with forces in Scotland, Northumber-

land and Somerset, police eventually made 15 arrests. And today eight of the teenagers who were detained paid the price for their part in the violence.

Council bosses have still to decide whether to give the green light to the festival's scheduled return to the city this summer. Leeds East MP George Mudie has already called for the event

to be scrapped, saying: "Enough is enough. What happened [last year] was disgraceful."

His views have been echoed by Liz Hayes, chair of the Friends of Temple Newsam. She said: "The festival has become synonymous with violence. It must be called off."

However, supporters of the event are equally adamant that

its promoter, the Mean Fiddler organisation, should not be forced to find a new home.

They argue that the festival – which attracts around 50,000 fans each year – provides the local economy with a multi-million pound boost.

And in December the pro-festival camp was handed a boost when Leeds City Council ruled it had no legal grounds for terminating its five-year, £1.25m contract with Mean Fiddler.

But the authority could still decide to refuse the event an entertainments licence – a step it took last year before changing its mind at the 11th hour.

That U-turn only came after assurances that security would be stepped up.

And today, with memories of the violence that subsequently flared still fresh in the mind, it remained to be seen whether Mean Fiddler could talk the council round once again.

Judge blasts drunken louts

From Page 1

Judge Jones said what was filmed by police was disgraceful, but others were engaged in more serious behaviour.

The involvement of the accused teenagers was confined, said Judge Jones, predominantly to the throwing of plastic bottles and empty beer

cans and there was no evidence they had taken part in any stone throwing.

Judge Jones added the action of the accused teenagers could not be equated with recent street disturbances in West Yorkshire.

He described the involvement of the teenagers as

"loutish enjoyment doubtless stimulated by large quantities of alcohol."

The eight youths in the dock had all admitted violent disorder. They were Craig Higgins, 18, of Strathavon; Kevin Brown, 18, of Seikirk; James Cockburn, 18, of Galashiels; Martin Bellamy, 19, of Galashiels; Michael Millar, 18, from Strathavon; Stuart Gunn, 18, of Strathavon, all Scotland; Nicholas Jones, 18, of Acton, Wrexham, north Wales (the son of Chwyd South MP Martyn Jones) and John Bower, 19, of Church Street, Barkston Ash, Tadcaster.

A green light for chaos

Residents' fury at riot sentences

BY PAUL ROBINSON

CAMPAIGNERS today condemned the sentences handed out to youths for their part in the rioting that brought terror to last year's Leeds Festival.

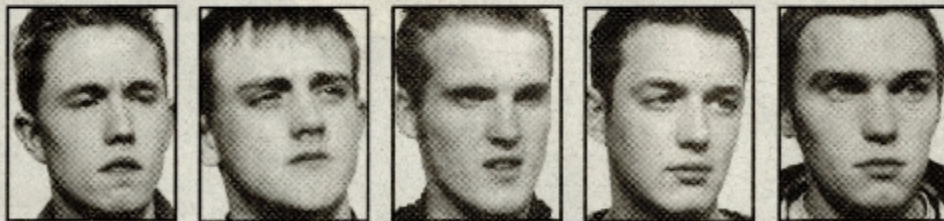
Eight teenagers involved in the drunken violence that disfigured historic Temple Newsam Park yesterday escaped jail at Leeds Crown Court.

And the decision to impose community punishment orders rather than custodial sentences has been attacked by councillors and residents alike.

They accused the courts of giving other would-be troublemakers a virtual green light to cause more chaos at future rock concerts.

Ron Monaghan, vice-chairman of the Friends of Temple Newsam, said: "I am disgusted - these people have practically got off scot free."

Conservative councillor Bill Hyde, whose Halton ward includes the festi-



● RIOT: James Cockburn, Kevin Brown, John Bower, Martin Bellamy and Stuart Gunn

val site, added: "This was a chance to send out a message that this kind of behaviour will not be tolerated in Leeds or anywhere else.

"Of course, it's good that these people have been punished - but many will feel they could have been dealt with more severely."

The eight youths all took part in

disorder on the final night of August's three-day festival, which had featured appearances from big names like Guns 'n' Roses and Pulp.

Toilet blocks were torched, fencing ripped down and emergency services pelted with missiles during three hours of chaos that caused £250,000 worth of damage.

TALKBACK

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- How do you feel about the sentences handed out?
- Call us on the YEP Talkback line on 0113 238 8152. Lines are open 24 hours.
- Or write to: Talkback, Yorkshire Evening Post, Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 1RF.
- E-Mail: eped@ypn.co.uk
- Fax: 0113 238 8536

● RIOT HORROR:
Police in riot gear at Temple Newsam park

However, the Recorder of Leeds, Judge Norman Jones QC, stated that the teenagers in the dock had not been the ringleaders of the disturbances.

He described their behaviour as "loutish enjoyment doubtless stimulated by large quantities of alcohol".

The youths, all aged 18 or 19 and mostly students, were ordered to perform between 130 and 240 hours of community service. They were also told to pay a total of £3,400 compensation.

One of the group, 18-year-old Nicholas Jones, is the son of leading

Welsh MP Martyn Jones. The teenager, who comes from Wrexham, was captured on police video jumping at fencing and pushing over a portable toilet.

Mr Jones, who represents Clwyd South, today said his son had been guilty of a moment of "youthful madness."

The Labour MP went on: "He is extremely sorry for what has happened and that is why he has had the courage to own up and plead guilty in court."

Council chiefs in Leeds are due to meet in the next few weeks to discuss whether to allow the festival to return to Temple Newsam this summer.

● The youths sentenced yesterday had all admitted violent disorder. They were Craig Higgins, 18, of Strathavon; Kevin Brown, 18, of Selkirk; James Cockburn, 18, of Galashiels; Martin Bellamy, 19, of Galashiels; Michael Millar, 18, from Strathavon; Stuart Gunn, 18, of Strathavon, all Scotland; Nicholas Jones, 18, of Acton, Wrexham, north Wales and John Bower, 19, of Church Street, Barkston Ash, Tadcaster.

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Change of pop venue not answer

THE prospect of the violence-marred Leeds Festival shifting to another beauty spot is bound to raise groans of protest.

Hardly had the Mean Fiddler organisation announced its intention to file a request for an alternative site to their recent home at Temple Newsam than local residents in Bramham were voicing their concerns.

Not that they can be blamed, given the unenviable reputation the music festival has gained for itself.

The prospect of 50,000 music fans on your doorstep for the weekend with all the ensuing traffic, disturbance and litter problems that inevitably entails would not thrill many people.

Add to that the real prospect of violence and destruction similar to that which has marred the closing night of the last three festivals and it's no wonder residents in both Bramham and Temple Newsam are edgy.

Quite what is supposed to be achieved by announcing a potential move for the festival on the day that eight yobs are sentenced for their part in last year's chaos is not clear.

Police

Shifting the festival to a different but equally loved and cherished park is not solving the problem, it's just moving it on. How exactly does moving the three-dayer a couple of miles up the A1 help in stopping a few mindless idiots going on a wrecking spree?

That question becomes even more valid when West Yorkshire Police say they are not sure whether they will oppose the granting of a licence for this year's festival - wherever it is proposed to hold it - because of the severity of the violence they faced.

It would be a blow for the city and the thousands of fans who peacefully enjoy one of the country's best music festivals if the whole event was scrapped or moved away from the city.

Surely it is not beyond the wit of the organisers and the council to come up with an agreed venue without causing so much repeat upset. Then, most importantly, all parties in their own best interests must work to ensure security is strong enough to deter those intent on criminal damage.

Yes, residents are right to raise their fears, particularly in the light of past excesses. But the festival is a prestigious event and without it the city of Leeds would be a duller place.

The new-look Leeds can pride itself on its thriving bar, club and restaurant scene, but there is not much to offer in the way of major music venues.

What a shame if the area's only big name rock music festival was driven out because of a few yobs.

VILLAGERS IN BRAMHAM REACT IN HORROR TO THE PROSPECT OF THE

Not in OUR back

The grotesque spectre of bands like Nu-Metal rockers Slipknot hangs over a quiet Yorkshire village today – as the organisers of the violence-plagued Leeds Festival are looking at holding the 2003 event in Bramham Park, near Wetherby. Today we bring the villagers' verdict.

Paul Robinson reports

RESIDENTS in a well-heeled Yorkshire village reacted with horror today after learning that the country's most notorious rock festival could be about to land on their doorstep.

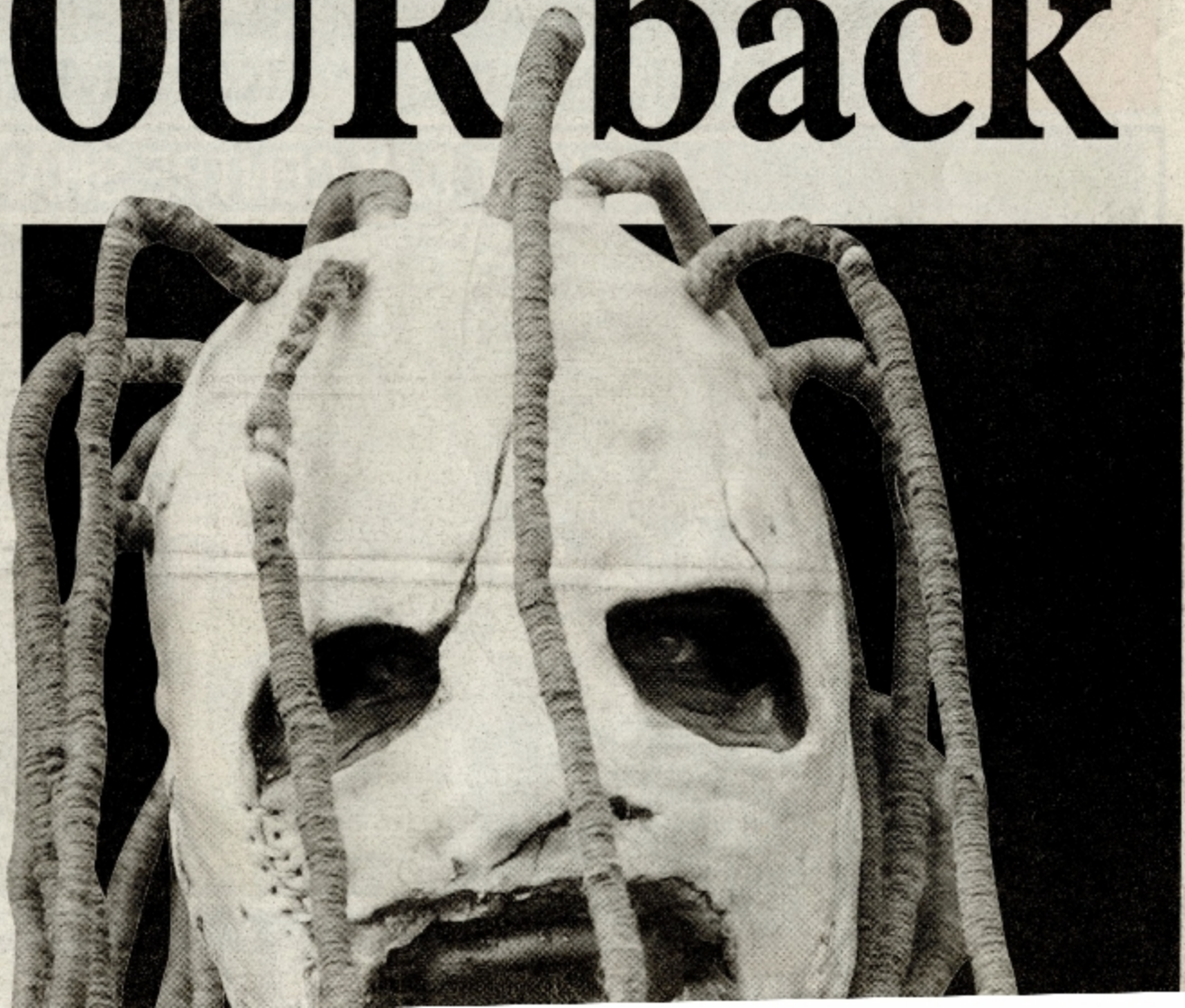
The YEP reported yesterday how organisers of the annual Leeds Festival – which has been repeatedly marred by violence at Temple Newsam Park in Leeds – are lining up Bramham Park, near Wetherby, as a

potential alternative location for this year's event.

The sprawling 6,500-acre site neighbours the leafy community of Bramham, one of the city's most exclusive places to live.

Today villagers told of their anger and disbelief at the news that their idyllic rural home could be invaded by as many as 50,000 music fans for three days this summer.

But the park owner is hoping that Bramham may even become the permanent home of the controversial festi-



Festival organiser Mean Fiddler's £1.25m contract with the city council for the three-day concert runs out this year.

And it is understood that Bramham Park owner Nick Lane Fox is aiming to sign a deal with Mean Fiddler that would definitely bring the festival to his estate in 2004 and 2005 and possibly in the years beyond.

Resident Charles Yarwood, 63, summed up the mood of locals, saying: "I'm disgusted. The litter, the noise, the traffic - it will hit us like a bombshell.

"When you take into account the worries we have about drugs and violence as well, it all adds up to a nightmare situation."

Margaret Greene, 53-year-old landlady of the Red Lion pub, said: "It's been the talk of the village and most people do seem to think it's a bad idea.

"Last night one of my customers said she would just have to lock herself inside her house for three days - I don't think she'll be the only one."

Pressure

Many residents said their concern at the prospect of the festival coming to Bramham Park was being fuelled by memories of an end-of-term university ball held there a couple of years ago.

Retired builder Geoffrey Wood, 76, explained: "There were only about 2,000 people there and the noise was terrible.

"From what I can understand this event would be far, far bigger - I really do dread to think what it would be like."

Festival promoter Mean Fiddler has earmarked Bramham Park as a standby venue for 2003 - and a potential perma-

nent home for the future - should the concert be barred from its usual home at Temple Newsam in east Leeds.

Council chiefs are under pressure to ban the event from that site because of the disorder that has plagued it over the last three years.

Last August a 200-strong mob went on a three-hour wrecking spree on the festival's final night, causing £250,000 worth of damage and leaving more than 40 people injured.

Some villagers in Bramham fear a change of location will

not be enough to prevent a repeat of those alarming scenes.

Nell Carr, a local resident for 20 years, said: "If we could guarantee that the festival would pass off peacefully, then I would have little objection. After all, we are only talking about a few nights.

"It's the thought that some people might not behave themselves that is worrying me and more than a few others besides."

Margaret Turner, 70, added: "When you read about the problems that have happened

"If we could get a guarantee of good behaviour there would be little objection..."

RESIDENT NEIL CARR

before, then it's no surprise that we're not happy."

The views of the locals in Bramham were echoed by city councillor John Procter, whose Wetherby ward covers the village.

He told the *YEP*: "I am appalled. If the organisers have not been able to keep people in line at Temple Newsam, why should they be able to here?"

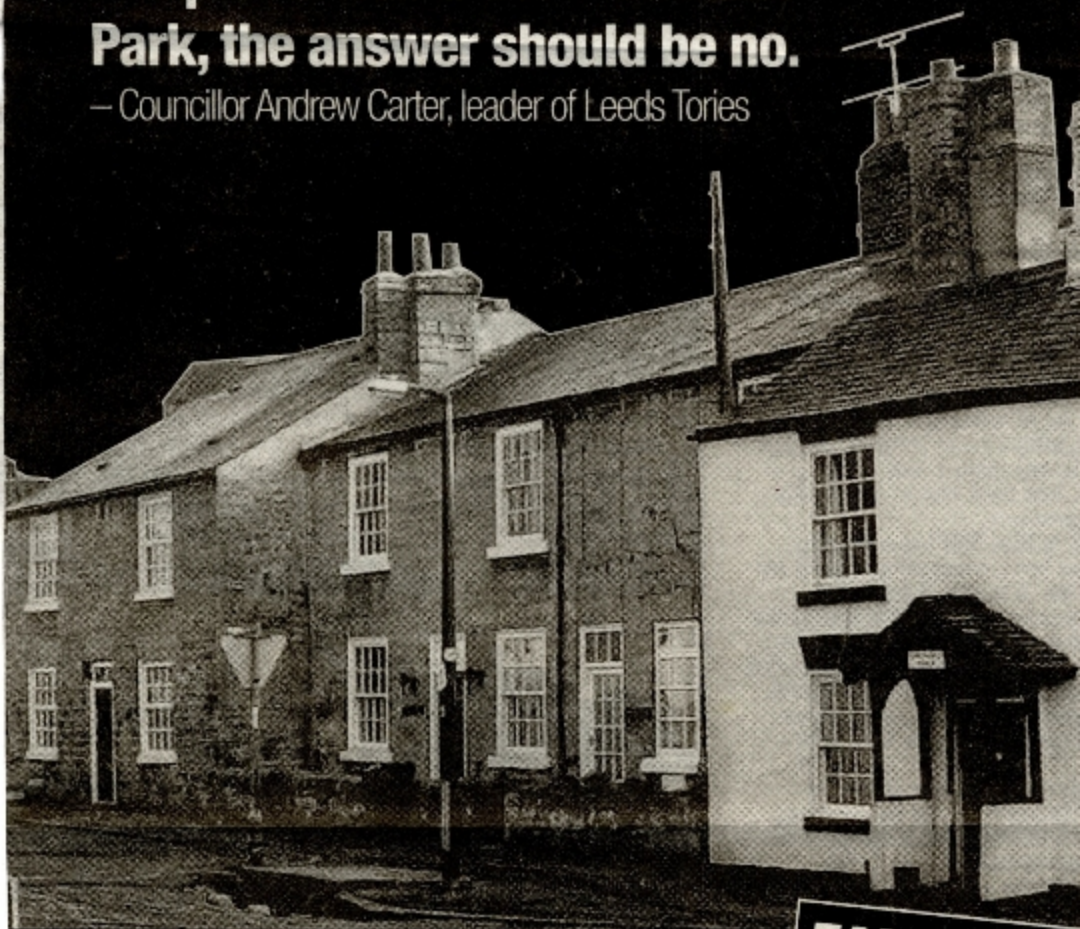
Coun Andrew Carter, leader of Leeds City Council's opposition Tory group, urged the local authority's licensing chiefs to turn down BOTH the Mean Fiddler applications.





**Whether
we're talking about
Temple Newsam OR Bramham
Park, the answer should be no.**

— Councillor Andrew Carter, leader of Leeds Tories



He said: "Whether we are talking about Temple Newsam or Bramham Park, the answer should be 'no'. Any other answer would be irresponsible and unfair."

Meanwhile, Mean Fiddler's bosses are clearly confident the festival will go ahead somewhere in Leeds – they are already selling £95 tickets for the event.

Top US heavy metal band Metallica have also just confirmed that they will be following in the footsteps of past headliners like Guns 'n' Roses,

Oasis and Eminem and appearing in the city.

And today Mean Fiddler boss Melvin Benn was working to address the concerns of residents in Bramham.

He stressed: "This year's application for Bramham Park is as a standby and back up to Temple Newsam only."

Mr Benn also stated that he believed that the site was "unquestionably" capable of staging the event, either in 2003 or at some point in the future.

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TALKBACK

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Villagers dismayed by rock festival proposal

Chris Bond

VILLAGERS have reacted with dismay to the news that a Yorkshire estate could be swapping genteel horse-trial crowds for thousands of rock fans if this year's controversial Carling Music Festival ends up on their doorstep.

Residents of Bramham, near Wetherby, last night expressed alarm after it emerged that the promoter of the festival, which last summer ended in violence at Temple Newsam, Leeds, had applied for a licence to hold the three-day event on the village's nearby country estate.

Bosses of the trouble-torn festival claimed Bramham Park, a few miles north-east of Leeds, was only a back-up site in case their application to hold the event again at Temple Newsam Park was rejected by Leeds Council.

But the news was met with widespread concern by residents and parish councillors in the tranquil village, fearing a repeat of the devastation that has marred each of the last three events in Leeds.

Bramham Park is home to one of the major three-day international horse trials in the equestrian calendar, and its rural setting is synonymous with countryside pursuits.

David Machin, a Bramham Parish councillor, said he was "horrified" at the prospect of the festival, which attracted at least 50,000 revellers to Temple Newsam last year.

"It will give the place a bad reputation and I don't want that as a resident. I don't want someone to say Bramham's gone downhill because of some rave."

He said it would bring three days of noise to the area and also affect neighbouring villages including Clifford, Bardsey and Thorner.

"I hope that if Bramham Park makes a profit that it will put all the money back into the village," he added.

Another parish councillor, Peter Dale, claimed most villagers would be opposed to the festival being held at Bramham Park.

"We are very alarmed about it. We remember when Leeds University students had an all-night



Rocked: An elderly man enjoys the peace and quiet at Bramham's old people's shelter but soon the village may have to get used to something a little rowdier if rock fans like these, pictured at last year's festival at Temple Newsam, left, descend on the area this summer.

Picture, right: Gerard Binks.

party and it was horrendous. We are going to have to have to put up with noise all day long," he said.

"They are talking about having it every year and it will be extremely upsetting for the villagers here."

Nick Lane Fox, owner of Bramham Park, confirmed yesterday that an agreement had been reached with festival organisers Mean Fiddler to use the 6,500-acre park as a potential site.

Mean Fiddler bosses are still negotiating with Leeds Council over staging another festival at Temple Newsam this summer.

This year's event, expected to include heavy metal rockers Metallica, is the last in the existing five-year contract, although the organisers are understood to be keen to continue holding the festival in Leeds.

A meeting is due next month between the council and West Yorkshire Police to discuss the situation, but any application still has to be granted by the council's licensing committee.

Mr Lane Fox said the festival was welcome at Bramham Park and claimed cash made from any rock concert could help safeguard future restoration work on the estate.

"We are very pleased that future Leeds festivals may take place here. We have looked into the problems which the festival has encountered in previous years and had our own people at Temple Newsam last year to see for ourselves what it was like.

"Apart from the small amount of mindless violence at the end of the festival, the crowd were very, very, friendly and helpful."

He added: "In the past the estate has relied on income from farming to maintain the gardens, parkland and buildings, but in the current farming depression that simply is not possible and we have had to look elsewhere."

The estate's owners said if the site was used any profits would go towards much-needed restoration and repairs.

In a statement yesterday, Melvin Benn, managing director of Mean Fiddler, confirmed that a dual application had been submitted for both sites, but claimed it was their plan to hold the festival at Temple Newsam Park again and said at this stage Bramham Park was simply on standby.

He added that Bramham Park was well capable of holding the event this year and again in the future.

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Police vow down conc

Joanne Ginley

POLICE have made a fresh appeal for public help in tracing 10 more men wanted for questioning in connection with violence at last summer's Leeds Carling Festival.

Pictures taken from CCTV footage of the men they wish to speak to in connection with the violence were re-issued by West Yorkshire Police yesterday.

A mob set toilet blocks on fire at the end of the three-day festival at Temple Newsam, Leeds, causing £250,000 damage. On Sunday August 25, at 11pm, following the final act, a number of people in the red campsite pulled down lighting and small fires were lit near the toilet blocks which were then pulled over.

Police were called to assist the festival's security staff and officers came under fire from a crowd of up to 200



r Bramham.

by sal

Rocked: An elderly man enjoys the peace and quiet at Bramham's old people's shelter but soon the village may have to get used to something a little rowdier if rock fans like these, pictured at last year's festival at Temple Newsam, left, descend on the area this summer.

Picture, right: Gerard Binks.



Picture, right: Gerard Binks.

Wetherby

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Bramham rock festival shocker

RESIDENTS in Bramham are facing ten years of disruption after bosses of a riot-hit rock festival declared their long-term intention to stage the event at Bramham Park.

Organisers Mean Fiddler were widely expected to stage the troubled event at Temple Newsam Park, its home for the previous three years, with Bramham villagers getting a reprieve. But they announced the shock switch of venue late on Friday afternoon. The *Wetherby News* understands that organisers have now signed a ten year agreement with the owners of Bramham Park.

Managing Director, Melvin Benn, initially said the decision was based on Bramham Park being "slightly further removed" from local residents than Temple Newsam, but later added that there was also "an assured future" for the festival at Bramham – and claimed the estate would benefit this year and in the future.

But residents and councillors in adjoining villages are in uproar

By Tom Cullimore

that the strife-torn three day festival, due to be held in early August, is to take place every year at a site previously dubbed "totally unsuitable".

"I think there has been a grave misunderstanding of people's feelings. This could be a disaster," said Thorne Parish Council vice-chairman Catriona Laycock. Mrs Laycock was not a member of the parish council when the decision was taken not to object to the proposals to hold the festival in Bramham Park.

"We are considering a judicial review to try and stop this going ahead," she said. "There are lawyers in the village who are offering to help us out. The village shops are very worried and publicans don't know whether to shut and barricade up.

"This simply shouldn't go ahead year after year. We have poor infrastructure and no supermarkets for miles. You can't have 50,000 people

coming to a tiny village – it will be bedlam.

"Looking at scenes from previous events, I can't believe that there will be no trouble. And if there are any problems the event won't happen here again. There is a massive amount of people in the area who are very committed to fighting this.

"If anything, and we mean anything, goes wrong there will be a massive uprising of local people. We are going to have to record the event carefully and see what happens. Nobody wants this event here this year, let alone for years to come.

"I still find it amazing, given the opposition from police and huge objections from locals, that this was approved."

Leeds Councillor John Procter (Con. Wetherby) has already lent his support to the fight, saying High Court action could be considered in a bid to overturn the decision. And Wetherby Town Council

Clerk John Jukes has also expressed his fears for the area.

But Bramham Park owner Nick Lane Fox said the festival was essential if the estate is to fund much-needed repair work.

"In the current farming climate it is simply not possible to rely on income from agriculture to maintain the gardens, parklands and buildings," he said.

"One immediate effect of the festival coming to Bramham Park is that some 200 acres of parkland will be returned to its original state."

In Bramham Village residents and publicans are taking advice from the police. Landlady of The Red Lion Margaret Greené said: "We are waiting until we have had a meeting with the police before we decide what to do."

● *What do you think of the Leeds Festival coming to Bramham Park for years to come? Do you agree with local concerns? Do let us know through our Letters to the Editor page.*

£10,000 festival bonus for two villages

By Sarah Kelly

BRAMHAM and Thorner villages have each been given £10,000 by the organisers of the Carling Leeds Festival, who say they want to give something back to the communities.

At Wednesday night's meeting of Bramham Parish Council, festival organiser and managing director of Mean Fiddler, Melvin Benn, and the owner of Bramham Park Estate Nick Lane-Fox, praised the attitude of Bramham residents and presented the council with a cheque.

Mr Benn said the event had raised

£24,600 from donations made by people with guest tickets, and he would be splitting £20,000 of that money between Braham and Thorner.

He said: "From my point of view, it is money that is there for the community."

The money will be put into the Bramham Village Community Fund – a collection administered separately from the parish council for the people of the village.

Mr Benn also thanked Bramham residents for not listening to the "large amount of scaremongering" he said had been reported by a number of newspapers.

"I have been reminded of just what fever pitch had been whipped up by certain members of the press and other communities near here. It seemed to be a lot less in Bramham," he said.

Mr Benn and Mr Lane-Fox both expressed their pleasure that the event passed without the violence and complaints of last year's festival and reiterated their intention to hold the festival at Bramham Park for the foreseeable future.

The Mean Fiddler boss also reassured villagers that there would be "no resting on their laurels" and that the efforts made to secure the

success of this year's event would be kept up in the future.

After discussing the success of the reduced-price festival tickets donated to Bramham to raise money for the village, Mr Benn said he would consider donating more tickets for next year's event.

Rachel Procter, from Thorner Parish Council and Thorner Action Group, said: "Thorner Parish Council have not been made aware of this donation but it would be for councillors to discuss with residents as the money would not be for the council but for the whole village."

Parish council defends decision to accept music event offer

Village clash over free festival tickets

Chris Bond

PARISH councillors yesterday defended their decision to accept free tickets for the controversial Leeds Festival despite speaking out against the event.

Bramham Parish Council has accepted a number of tickets from the organiser of the three-day rock festival being held at Bramham Park, near Wetherby, this summer.

The news was criticised by campaigners opposed to the trouble-torn event, who claim they have been let down.

It is understood that Bramham councillors are proposing to make the tickets, believed to be around 200, available to residents in the area in return for £20 donations towards parish funds.

The deal comes only a month after the parish council unsuccessfully objected to Mean Fiddler's application to

stage the festival at Bramham Park.

Leeds councillor John Proctor (Con, Wetherby), said many local residents would feel let down.

He said: "I am disappointed that they decided to take the tickets. The police are against the event on safety grounds and I know Thorner Parish Council said in no uncertain terms that they didn't want the tickets because they thought it was inappropriate."

He added: "Bramham Parish Council should be representing the overwhelming views of the people of Bramham."

But Bramham Parish Council's chairman, David Evans, defended the decision.

He said: "We are still very much opposed to the festival being held here, but we have to be pragmatists as well.

"If it is going to happen

then we have to represent the views of everyone within the village and some people have said they are happy it is coming."

Mr Evans would not confirm or deny the number of tickets involved but he stressed the money raised would be used for a "special project".

Nearby Thorner Parish Council was offered 200 weekend tickets - which usually sell for £95 - but turned them down.

The council's chairman, Catriona Laycock said to accept would have compromised their position.

She added: "There was so much opposition to this and we are totally behind the police. To take the tickets would have been saying we are backing the event which I think is going to be a disaster for Thorner."

Mean Fiddler chef Melvin

Benn said the idea was to give the councils funds they could use all year round.

Mr Benn took the decision to switch the festival from Temple Newsam Park, Leeds, after Leeds Council's licensing panel granted applications to use either venue.

The festival has been marred by violence on each of the previous three occasions. Last year around 200 youths went on a rampage causing an estimated £250,000 damage.

This year's festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend is expected to attract 50,000 revellers to see headlining acts such as Metallica, Blur and Primal Scream.

West Yorkshire Police objected to both applications because of safety concerns and the force is considering a legal challenge to the decision to award a licence.

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BY PAUL ROBINSON

PARISH councillors are set to rake in thousands of pounds "selling" tickets for Leeds Festival – just weeks after vowing to fight plans for it to be held in their backyard.

Bramham Parish Council has accepted scores of free weekend tickets for the rock extravaganza from organiser Mean Fiddler, the YEP can reveal.

Councillors are proposing to make them available to residents in the Bramham area in return for £20 donations to parish funds.

The council is refusing to say how many tickets it has taken but the figure is believed to be in the region of 200.

News of the deal comes only a month after the parish council made an unsuccessful objection to Mean Fiddler's application to stage the three-day festival at Bramham Park, near Wetherby.

Today campaigners battling to block the controversial event's move to the country estate said residents could be forgiven for feeling betrayed.

Leeds City Council member Coun John Procter (Con, Wetherby) told the YEP: "I think they have been badly let down.

"How can they believe their interests are being catered for when the parish council is, to all intents and purposes, selling these tickets?"

Bramham Parish Council's chairman, Coun David Evans, defended the decision. He said: "We are still

Parish rakes in cash for controversial pop festival



very much opposed to the festival being held here, but we have to be pragmatists as well.

"If it is going to happen then we have to represent the views of everyone within the village and some people have said they are happy it is coming."

Rampage

Coun Evans refused to confirm or deny that the number of tickets involved was 200.

He also stressed the money raised would be used for a "special project" but said he could not give any more details at this stage.

Thorner Parish Council WAS offered 200 of the tickets – which normally sell for £95 – but turned them down.

Its chair, Coun Catriona Laycock, said: "We are firmly against this event being held here and we feel that stance would have been compromised by accepting them."

Mean Fiddler boss Melvin Benn said: "The idea is to even things up by giving the councils funds they can use all year round."

Mr Benn took the decision to switch the festival from its previous home of Temple Newsam, in east Leeds, after violence flared on the

TALKBACK

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- *Is Bramham Parish Council right to accept the free tickets after officially opposing the festival?*
- *Call us on the YEP Talkback line on 0113 238 8152. Lines are open 24 hours.*
- *Or write to: Talkback, Yorkshire Evening Post, Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 1RF.*
- *E-Mail: eped@ypn.co.uk ● Fax: 0113 238 8536*

● GIVEAWAY: Concert boss Melvin Benn at Bramham

final night of last year's bash.

A 200-strong mob went on the rampage, causing £250,000 worth of damage and leaving 40 people injured.

Around 50,000 fans are now expected to flock to privately-owned Bramham Park this August Bank Holiday weekend to see big names like Metallica, Blur and Primal Scream.

However, West Yorkshire Police are considering mounting a legal challenge to the decision to award the concerts a licence, saying they have become associated with a "culture of violence".

● A public meeting about the festival was due to be held tonight at the village hall in Bramham from 7.30pm.

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Fields turn blue as thousands set up camp

THESE fields are normally home to a herd of cows. But yesterday this was the scene at Bramham Park, near Wetherby, for the first day of the latest Leeds Carling Festival.

Thousands of tents created a sea of blue, the big blue circles marking the stages for comedy and music.

Last year's festival at Temple Newsam in Leeds ended in violence by some crowd elements. But the three-day event this year got off to a good start at its new venue.

Even the congestion suffered by motorists on roads leading to the festival centre on Thursday after the campsite opened had eased yesterday.

And as darkness fell, the police and ambulance services were reporting a quiet day at the event - although it was due to get a lot noisier when the headline act, Metallica, went on stage at about 9.30 pm.

See Monday's *Yorkshire Post* for reviews of the acts and latest news.

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Picture: petersmith.com



Letters &

Wetherby BOSTON SPA
TADCASTER
& SHERBURN **News**

VOICE OF THE DISTRICT SINCE 1857

Festival brings positive benefits

AFTER all the controversy over the Carling Leeds Festival held this summer at Bramham Park it is good to see something positive come from it.

The money donated by Mean Fiddler, the event organisers, to Bramham village has been put to good use for the community. The money will go to local groups, including the village scouts and guides, sports clubs and the school. But the largest amount will go to the Village Hall, a building the whole community uses for groups, meetings and social events.

The festival itself went off peacefully, promises made by the police of a greater presence in the villages were fulfilled and residents were disturbed as little as possible by the arrival of thousands of festival-goers. Hopefully, next year's event will be as successful and Bramham residents can continue to prosper from the event in years to come.

THE number of people who turned out to support Tadcaster's Victorian Fair proved what a good idea it was, not only to treat residents and visitors but give the town a boost.

Initiatives like the fair are a great advertisement for the town. Something different to bring visitors in, persuade them to stay and, hopefully, re-visit the town can only do good in the long run.

Both Tadcaster and Wetherby have active councils and Chambers of Trade who come up with different ideas and initiatives to bring people into the towns. Wetherby's Chamber of Trade organised this summer's very successful Scarcrow Trail which became a talking point for visitors and residents alike. There will be a Community Christmas Carol Service in the Market Place this month which will bring residents and businesses together.

The number of people who turned out to support Tadcaster's event shows how much people want to be involved and be part of a community. It also shows how much hard work people are prepared to put in to make these events happen.

Villagers' relief as festival stays free of trouble

By Sarah Kelly

RESIDENTS of villages surrounding the site of the controversial Carling Leeds Festival have applauded the efforts of police officers who turned out in force at the weekend to prevent a repeat of last year's festival trouble.

Thorner, Bramham, Clifford, Boston Spa and Wetherby felt the benefit of an increased police presence as Boston Spa Comprehensive School became a base for officers patrolling the villages' streets, reassuring residents who feared their homes and shops would be targeted by drunken festival-goers.

Villagers had worried that they would suffer from the theft and vandalism reported at last year's event at Temple Newsam but the majority of the 50,000 revellers stayed within the festival site throughout the weekend.

Chairman of Thorner Parish Council, Catriona Laycock, said residents had been very happy with the police

presence and said she would like to thank them. The clerk to Bramham Parish Council, Colin Pool, added that he thought the village had benefited from a police presence.

West Yorkshire Police Assistant Chief Constable John Sampson said his officers were pleased the event this year had not ended as it had done in previous years with insignificant acts of criminal violence and damage.

He said: "Over the next few days and weeks we need to assess with all those involved in the event what led to this improved outcome. At the moment it is too early to tell."

He explained that the West Yorkshire Police strategy was to prevent crime and minimise disruption to the communities surrounding the festival. Their role was also to support the organisers in meeting their obligation to provide a safe environment for festival goers.

"We believe that we have been successful on all counts," he said.

He confirmed that there had been 28 arrests in total, ten of which were

outside the festival. Arrests at the festival were for offences which included possession of an offensive weapon, theft and drugs related crime.

But the event's success was flawed by an incident on the opening night when 22 people were injured after a crush barrier collapsed. American rock band System of Down were forced to stop performing as security staff and paramedics worked to free the trapped people and move them to an on-site medical tent for treatment.

Mean Fiddler boss Melvin Benn took to the stage to join the band in asking the crowd to move back while the barrier was repaired. Five people were taken to Harrogate District Hospital for X-rays but none were admitted.

Nick Lane-Fox, owner of Bramham Park Estate, expressed his relief and pleasure that the event had seen no sign of the trouble which plagued last year's festival.

He said: "We were pleased that there was no trouble and I am relieved that it's gone well. I'm sure

Police and festival revellers in Thorner after the Carling Leeds Festival. (5)

that the licensing the festival n impressed. 50,000 good time."

Mr Lane-Fox a some of the m charity donation the event could charities, in a l residents.

Organiser Melv Lane-Fox's deli success. He said yellow weaker must go to the publicity, they l