

THE ARCHER



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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Bedford Road Road Outrage



One of the damaged cars in Bedford Road

A fight involving criminal damage and assault has shaken the local community. Two successive incidents that followed a road-rage event between 3 or 4 cars disturbed East Finchley streets. Local residents made 14 calls to the police and the emergency services, but the police never turned up.

On Monday evening 2 July, residents of Lankaster Gardens witnessed a group attack with baseball bats and chains. Later that evening in Bedford Road, an unmarked police car detected one of the earlier damaged cars and witnessed the second fight between the same protagonists. Due to personal safety rules the plain-clothed police were unable to help. They called for back up, but uniformed assistance did not arrive.

Crab meet

The local Neighbourhood Watch called for an emergency meeting on 11 July with the local inhabitants and the police, for which PC Paul Carter, the local beat officer, and Mick Ramsden attended. Sergeant Ramsden had communicated earlier to the Neighbourhood Watch Group that the police were treating this incident as a serious crime and that the CID will be handling it instead.

PC Carter admitted that the lack of police response was one of the most serious mistakes. One caller was told: "What would be the purpose of the police coming down at this time of night?" Another person who contacted 999 told them at 9.30: "I have two victims of the assault in my house. I don't know who they are, please attend." They said they would call back, but did not.

According to the police, miscommunication began between office shift-changes, leading the new officers to believe that the first case was closed. Unfortunately, both incidents were treated as one.

PC Carter said that on average, the police get 172 calls in an 8-hour shift and that on this particular night 40 more calls were made.

He added that only 70-75% of police cars reach their destination within 13-15 minutes, compared to the official charter-time of 80% in 12 minutes. The officer referred

also to their constant battle with Scotland Yard for more resources. Barnet has about 20-25 officers, he said.

Meanwhile, numerous calls regarding the removal of the damaged car were lost in a grey area between the council, which removes 400 cars a month, and the police. The car has since been removed.



PC Paul Carter and Sgt Mick Ramsden at the emergency meeting. Photo by Femke van Iperen

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