

Capital Gay

WEEKLY NEWS
FREE
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A Weekly Newspaper For Lesbians And Gay Men

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At least 20 queerbashed as homophobia shows itself alive and well in Brixton

Bashings mar Pride

THE Pride Trust is coming under pressure to move next year's festival out of Brixton after an otherwise hugely successful day was marred by violent assaults on lesbians and gay men.

One man was knocked unconscious by a gang armed with baseball bats as he was leaving Brockwell Park. He is in danger of losing the hearing in one ear. The gang attacked at least 10 other people in the same street, while *Capital Gay* has received additional accounts of seven other violent incidents.

According to the reports received by this newspaper, at least 20 lesbians and gay men were the victims of violent attacks in Brixton on Saturday. Reports of homophobic abuse screamed at festival-goers on their way from Brixton tube station to Brockwell Park have been too numerous to count.

The most serious incidents occurred in Dalberg Road, which runs parallel to the main road between Brixton tube and Brockwell Park. In attacks widely reported in the national media, two separate male couples were hospitalized after being attacked by a gang of five or six youths armed with baseball bats and truncheon-like weapons. Police have appealed for help in tracing the youths, one of whom is believed to be white and the rest black.

It has emerged, however, that there were at least four and possibly five more, virtually identical, attacks in the same road at around the same time. The assaults, all of which were accompanied by anti-gay abuse, took place at a time when police were supposed to be patrolling the area.

Capital Gay has also identified the following incidents: two gay men were called "bat-men" and pelted with bricks in Rattray Road at 4.30pm; a lesbian was punched in the face in a nearby street at the same time, and a gay man was threatened with a baseball bat; a barrage of anti-gay abuse from local people led to fist fights outside the Tate Library; a gay man was subjected to a homophobic assault in Brock-

well Park in the course of the afternoon;

- a straight man who had attended the festival with gay friends was accosted on Brixton Hill at 8.30pm by a gang of around five youths who asked him if he was gay then punched him in the face;

- three gay men were attacked by a man wielding a thick cardboard tube in central Brixton while leaving the festival.

Although Brixton's senior police officer, Chief Superintendent Bill Wilson, issued a statement at the weekend deploring assaults committed on the grounds of prejudice, most of

the victims complained bitterly about slow or non-existent police responses on the day.

One of the victims of the Dalberg Road gang said officers on the beat were initially unhelpful, in spite of the blood running down his face. One of the men attacked in Rattray Road said a police officer refused to help him, even when he pointed out the house from which the attacker had come.

Officers staffing phone lines at Brixton police station were scarcely more helpful. The straight man attacked on Brixton Hill reported his assault and warned the police that queer-

bashers were operating. However, the officer who took the call did not even ask the man's name, and a police spokesman said on Tuesday he was unaware of the incident.

The Pride Trust, which issued a statement regretting that "a small number of homophobic attacks took place as people were leaving the park", is now likely to face pressure to find a new location for next year's event.

One of the gay men attacked in Dalberg Road, himself a Brixton resident, said his faith in the area as a multicultural centre had been completely

shattered. "I don't think Pride should be here next year. My attack was bad enough, but two days later, I received further abuse when a bunch of teenagers started singing (the anti-gay Buju Banton song) *Boom Bye-Bye* at me. Either we've got to get over this or get Pride out of here," he said.

Last year, a group of gay residents in Brixton held a series of meetings about the perceived rise in homophobic abuse and assaults in the wake of Pride. "It's all very well 150,000 people coming here for the day, having a nice time and going home again, and then telling us

to stand firm against homophobia," one of the group said this week. "We're the ones that have to put up with it for the rest of the year."

A Pride Trust representative said that problems with the authorities controlling the rest of London's parks mean it is likely to be extremely difficult to find a viable alternative to Brockwell Park.

Police are appealing for witnesses to the Dalberg Road attacks. Anyone with information should contact Brixton CID on 071 326 1212 or the gay police liaison group GALOP on 071 233 0854.

Bigger and better than ever

Lots more Pride: see centre spread

PHOTO: GORDON RAINSFORD

