# Driver’s handbrake stunts wreck Bournemouth rugby pitch after travellers breach barriers



A shocking incident unfolded recently in Bournemouth, where a reckless driver transformed a community rugby pitch into a scene of destruction by performing handbrake turns at high speed. This act of vandalism occurred shortly after the pitch was invaded by a group of travellers, highlighting ongoing tensions surrounding unauthorised encampments in the area.

Footage captured on Wednesday depicts the driver, behind the wheel of a blue hatchback, recklessly tearing up the turf at Meyrick Park, home to Oakmedians Rugby Club. The driver’s antics posed a direct threat to two young men exercising nearby. This incident followed the travellers’ removal of large boulders, intentionally placed to block access to the protected site, thus facilitating their entry with a convoy of seven caravans.

The damage inflicted on the pitch is estimated in the thousands, a considerable blow to the local rugby community that relies on the pitch for multiple summer activities, including children's clubs. In a poignant statement, a spokesperson from Oakmedians expressed their devastation, stating, “We are sadly faced with the harsh reality of thousands of pounds worth of damage to our beloved pitches at Meyrick Park after a recent encampment set up here." The spokesperson indicated that the speed and severity of the damage over a mere 48 hours was unprecedented for the club, placing the onus for repairs solely on them.

Reactions from club members on social media reveal a mix of anger and frustration. Jo Keeling articulated the collective dismay, describing it as “infuriating and deeply upsetting” to witness such disrespect towards the club, which is built on the hard work of its volunteers and members. Echoing these sentiments, Chris Hawkins questioned the adequacy of police and local council responses to the recurrent vandalism linked to traveller encampments, urging for more proactive measures to protect community spaces.

Dorset Police have confirmed ongoing investigations into the pitch damage following reports from local residents, who swiftly alerted authorities about the encampment. The police managed to disperse the travellers within 24 hours using the powers granted under a Section 61 dispersal notice, a mechanism designed to deal with unlawful gatherings on public land.

The challenges faced by local authorities are not isolated, as tensions surrounding traveller encampments have come to the fore in various parts of the UK. Recently, a similar situation unfolded in Birmingham, where a group of travellers set up camp at Swanshurst Park, leading to the cancellation of planned community events. Local organisation Friends of Swanshurst Park indicated that they had sought council intervention, aligning with a broader narrative of community frustration across the region.

Previously, the Bournemouth area had experienced several incursions, with past instances seeing caravans occupying parks and public spaces, prompting councils to erect barriers in an effort to deter future illegal encampments. Nevertheless, incidents like those at Meyrick Park and Swanshurst Park continue to highlight the ongoing struggle between community needs and the implications of traveller encampments, a dynamic that local authorities are grappling with as they seek to balance enforcement with the rights of all residents.

As the situation evolves, the Oakmedians Rugby Club and local communities will have to navigate the repercussions of these disturbances, seeking solutions that not only address immediate damage but also foster healthier relationships among all stakeholders involved, while ensuring the protection of cherished community spaces for future generations.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744403/Shocking-moment-community-rugby-pitch-torn-driver-performing-handbrake-turns-travellers-pitched-fields.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23575963.travellers-set-unauthorised-camp-park-bournemouth/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744403/Shocking-moment-community-rugby-pitch-torn-driver-performing-handbrake-turns-travellers-pitched-fields.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/17828945.travellers-set-encampment-meyrick-park/), [[4]](https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23604367.travellers-arrive-patch-grass-bournemouth-neighbourhood/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744403/Shocking-moment-community-rugby-pitch-torn-driver-performing-handbrake-turns-travellers-pitched-fields.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23589122.fears-bournemouth-events-will-cancelled-travellers-stay/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744403/Shocking-moment-community-rugby-pitch-torn-driver-performing-handbrake-turns-travellers-pitched-fields.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23328085.travellers-set-encampment-poole-stadium-car-park/), [[7]](https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23333411.travellers-set-camp-hengistbury-head-car-park/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744403/Shocking-moment-community-rugby-pitch-torn-driver-performing-handbrake-turns-travellers-pitched-fields.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23575963.travellers-set-unauthorised-camp-park-bournemouth/> - An unauthorised encampment of travellers was reported at Meyrick Park in Bournemouth on June 7, 2023. Dorset Police received a report at 6:50 pm and attended the site, liaising with the local authority. This incident follows a previous encampment of 16 caravans at Bernards Mead on May 21, prompting the council to implement measures to prevent such occurrences, including placing large soil banks at park entrances to deter unauthorised access.
3. <https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/17828945.travellers-set-encampment-meyrick-park/> - Travellers established an encampment at Meyrick Park in Bournemouth, comprising eight caravans and 12 transit vans. The council and police were aware of the situation, with assessments being carried out. Witnesses reported activities such as riding pit bikes around the land. The council and police monitored the encampment daily, and eviction proceedings were considered, though no court order for eviction could be made until the middle of the following week.
4. <https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23604367.travellers-arrive-patch-grass-bournemouth-neighbourhood/> - A group of travellers set up an unauthorised encampment consisting of around eight caravans on a patch of grass in a Bournemouth neighbourhood. BCP Council staff visited the site to carry out statutory welfare and educational needs assessments, along with necessary risk assessments to determine the level of support to be provided to the group. Dorset Police attended the site and liaised with the local authority, with plans to remove the encampment.
5. <https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23589122.fears-bournemouth-events-will-cancelled-travellers-stay/> - Concerns were raised that events at Meyrick Park in Bournemouth might be cancelled due to the presence of travellers who had set up an unauthorised encampment. The Oakmeadians Rugby Football Club, based at the park, had to cancel some events and feared others would be axed. The club reported incidents such as a young traveller child allegedly smashing a window with a hammer at the clubhouse. The council and police were involved in addressing the situation.
6. <https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23328085.travellers-set-encampment-poole-stadium-car-park/> - Travellers established an unauthorised encampment in the car park at Poole Stadium, consisting of 14 living units and associated vehicles. BCP Council was aware of the situation and had undertaken a needs and risk assessment. Dorset Police attended the site and liaised with those present, as well as the landowner and the local authority, monitoring the situation and working with local partners to take appropriate further action if required.
7. <https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/23333411.travellers-set-camp-hengistbury-head-car-park/> - An unauthorised encampment of travellers, comprising 14 caravans and associated vehicles, was set up in Hengistbury Head car park in Bournemouth. BCP Council was aware of the situation and had undertaken a needs and risk assessment. Dorset Police carried out visits to the car park and liaised with those present, as well as the local authority, monitoring the situation and working with local partners to take appropriate further action if required.