# Fire disrupts Appleby Horse Fair amid record animal welfare incidents and rising arrests



A fire erupted during the 2023 Appleby Horse Fair in Appleby-in-Westmorland, Cumbria, causing considerable disruption as firefighters battled the blaze that engulfed a tent, stall, and a van. The incident unfolded on Saturday afternoon, with large crowds gathering to witness the event while smoke billowed ominously across the fairgrounds. Videos posted on social media depicted a white van ablaze at the corner of the field, alongside a stall and several tables, capturing the startling reactions of onlookers.

Witnesses reported scenes of chaos as festivalgoers scrambled to evacuate personal belongings from the fire’s path, with some even attempting to assist in dismantling a nearby tent. Police quickly formed a barricade to protect spectators from the advancing flames, amid cheers and shouts as firefighters sought to control the situation. Despite the scare, attendees continued with the festivities, displaying a remarkable resilience; families browsed stalls and enjoyed snacks, unfazed by the smoke trailing behind them.

The Appleby Horse Fair is renowned for attracting thousands from the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller community, transforming the small town's population of around 3,000 into a bustling hub of approximately 20,000 during the event. Despite the rain, traditions continued unabated this year, with many visitors showcasing their horses as children rode ponies around the site. The fair’s historical significance is profound, tracing its origins back over 250 years, with its current format having evolved from earlier livestock trading events.

In 2023, however, the atmosphere was underscored by a significant police presence and several alarming incidents. There were 42 arrests and 20 vehicle seizures reported, reflecting a leap in law enforcement activity. Authorities, including Cumbria Police and the driving and vehicle standards agency, monitored the event closely, while the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group implemented safety measures amid rising visitor numbers. While many activities proceeded without major incident, a notable concern was raised regarding animal welfare, with 288 reported incidents during the fair, the highest since 2015. This included the seizure of nine horses and several other animals.

Adding to the day's tumult, a serious incident occurred involving a 15-year-old boy, who was airlifted to hospital after sustaining a head injury from jumping off a moving vehicle. This incident highlights the risks inherent in such large-scale gatherings, prompting heightened scrutiny from local authorities.

As the smoke cleared, the spirit of the Appleby Horse Fair endured. Despite the earlier disruptions, visitors remained undeterred, proudly donning waterproofs against the rain and showcasing their vibrant attire. From functional outfits to more flamboyant attire, the fair encapsulated the lively culture of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Historical anecdotes remind attendees of the fair’s long-standing traditions, such as washing horses in the River Eden and the original charter purportedly granted by King James II, though more recent research questions the veracity of that claim. Today, the fair stands not only as a staple of tradition but also as a testament to community resilience and celebration amid unforeseen challenges.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790171/Fire-breaks-Appleby-Horse-Fair-gypsies.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790171/Fire-breaks-Appleby-Horse-Fair-gypsies.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-12/appleby-horse-fair-arrests-more-than-double-in-2023)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://applebyfair.org/news-0/2023/warm-weather-sees-another-high-turnout-2023-appleby-horse-fair), [[6]](https://www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/news/national/teen-airlifted-to-hospital-after-suffering-head-injury-at-appleby-horse-fair-4179022)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790171/Fire-breaks-Appleby-Horse-Fair-gypsies.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/> - In 2023, Appleby Horse Fair saw 42 arrests and 20 vehicle seizures, marking a significant increase from the previous year. The fair attracted 1,197 caravans and bowtops, slightly fewer than the 1,231 recorded in 2022. Cumbria Police conducted proactive operations, including a joint effort with the DVSA and National Rural Crime Unit, resulting in over 120 vehicles stopped and more than 20 offences ticketed. The event was largely peaceful, with no significant public disorder reported. ([newsandstar.co.uk](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23583743.42-arrests-appleby-horse-fair-2023-20-vehicles-seized/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://applebyfair.org/news-0/2023/warm-weather-sees-another-high-turnout-2023-appleby-horse-fair> - The 2023 Appleby Horse Fair experienced high turnout due to warm weather, with 1,197 caravans and bowtops recorded. The event saw large numbers of day visitors, especially on Saturday. New for 2023 was the 'Travelling Man' bar, which provided a venue away from the town centre for people to drink. The fair was managed by the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group (MASCG), which implemented various measures to ensure safety and address challenges posed by the high number of visitors. ([applebyfair.org](https://applebyfair.org/news-0/2023/warm-weather-sees-another-high-turnout-2023-appleby-horse-fair?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/> - The 2023 Appleby Horse Fair reported the highest number of arrests and animal welfare incidents since 2015. The fair attracted approximately 20,000 people on its busiest day, with 288 reported incidents of animal welfare, leading to nine horses, two dogs, thirteen puppies, and two chickens being held at the end of the fair. The increase in incidents was partly attributed to hot temperatures and a higher presence of authorities. ([newsandstar.co.uk](https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/24245400.incident-levels-highest-since-2015-appleby-horse-fair/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-12/appleby-horse-fair-arrests-more-than-double-in-2023> - The number of arrests at the 2023 Appleby Horse Fair more than doubled compared to the previous year, with 42 arrests recorded. The fair attracted large numbers of visitors, and the number of caravans and bowtops in attendance was slightly down on the previous year. The Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group (MASCG) implemented various measures to manage the event, including the introduction of the 'Travelling Man' bar to provide a venue away from the town centre for people to drink. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/border/2023-06-12/appleby-horse-fair-arrests-more-than-double-in-2023?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/news/national/teen-airlifted-to-hospital-after-suffering-head-injury-at-appleby-horse-fair-4179022> - A 15-year-old boy was airlifted to hospital after suffering a head injury at the 2023 Appleby Horse Fair. The incident occurred when the teenager jumped off the back of a moving vehicle and hit his head on the ground. Cumbria Police and North West Ambulance Service attended the scene, and an investigation was launched. The family of the teenager was contacted and made aware of the incident. ([lancasterguardian.co.uk](https://www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/news/national/teen-airlifted-to-hospital-after-suffering-head-injury-at-appleby-horse-fair-4179022?utm_source=openai))