

Text 2:

A Real Fry Up!

The café in the park had only been open for 48 hours when I went to visit it.

But already there was graffiti daubed over one side of its wooden frame, and smoke damage from
5 where some people had tried to set it on fire.

I found owner James Battye nearly beside himself with rage.



“I wanted to do something constructive for my family and the people of Manchester,” he told me. “I’ve put a lot of money into opening this café and I thought it would help to revive the area, but
10 I can’t believe what’s happened. It’s not even been open a week and I already feel like closing it down.”

The café in question is James’ pride and joy. The building also doubles up as an art gallery, with the work of Manchester artists both on display and up for sale.

But James had to call the police on the second morning he opened for business.

15 “You could smell the burning stench from the wood. Fortunately, the fire they started didn’t take hold, or we wouldn’t be opening up for coffees, cakes and pictures today.

“The graffiti got sprayed onto the building on that second day as well, but that was around 4pm when it was still light! Can you believe that? They did it in the middle of the day!”

20 There are no witnesses to either crime. The café’s CCTV cameras picked up what looked like youths pouring petrol on the café and setting it alight, but their faces were not visible under hoods so can’t be identified. James also told me how he has had drinks stolen from the café and eggs thrown at the window.

The police won’t comment on how their investigations are proceeding, but there have been no arrests. James says not enough is being done.

25 “The police take an age to get here when you call them and are not much use when you tell them all the facts.

“They will know who has done it. They know all the problem families around here. But without evidence they can’t do anything.”

30 Outside the café, just after the local secondary school finishes, a small gang of Year 10 students gather around an old climbing frame that has paint peeling off.

I approach the boy who appears to be the main attraction, telling stories and making everybody else laugh.

“Oh yeah, I know who did it,” he says, proudly. “Most people in the school do. But am I going to tell you? Of course not! They carry knives with them and I’m not getting involved in that.”

35 Unsurprisingly, he refuses to give me his name. But he does offer a small insight into the minds of those he reckons are responsible.

“They’ve got nothing to do, so they go out looking for trouble. I heard it started as a dare and then before you know it one of them has got some petrol from their neighbour’s shed and they’re setting the café on fire. They’re desperate for attention.

40 “And their parents don’t care. If I was out of the house after 10pm me mam and dad would be going crazy, but theirs don’t care. They’re probably off their faces on crack.”

Our anonymous 15-year-old paints an unhappy picture of the drug-dependent, apathetic lives some youths on this estate lead. The families need help from the police, from the local authority and from the schools. Most importantly, they need something to do; some aim or goal that stops them
45 thinking setting fires to cafés is a good way to win respect.

Some people I spoke to had given up on the young people of this inner-city estate. But not all.

Donna Bleeson lives locally. She told me: “The vast majority of young people who use this park are good natured, but sadly a few idiots let everyone down.”

Donna is a big fan of the new café and hopes young people will use it for its intended purpose.
50 “I come past here every morning when I walk the dog. It’s great to see a new business opening and providing jobs for people, and the coffee they serve is pretty good as well!

“I honestly cannot believe what has happened to this place, I feel so sorry for the owners. It must be devastating. I feel they should throw their arms open to the young people around here and get them to interact with the café. If young folk start to use it, they won’t want to burn it down, will they?”