Political Extremism & Radicalism: Far-Right and Left Political Groups in US, Europe and Australia

Nicky Crane | Searchlight case study
Nicky Crane, was a member (and organiser of the Kent branch) of the extreme far-right group the British Movement (BM) throughout the ’70s and ’80s.

A feared skinhead with Nazi tattoos and a propensity towards racist violence (attacking black filmgoers outside an Odeon in 1980 for example) he was also gay.

He kept these two worlds entirely separate until appearing in a Channel 4 documentary where he openly talked about being gay for the first time in 1992. He died in 1993.

This is part of his ‘story’, told via searching through the Political Extremism and Radicalism: Far-Right and Left Political Groups in US, Europe and Australia archive.
With a headline more akin to reporting a potential dog attack, *Searchlight* reports that Nicky Crane has just been released from a 6 month prison sentence and believes it likely he will ‘return to battle’ as he did after previous prison releases.

They advise that the police should charge him following a postcard they received from Nicky Crane at Christmas stating that he followed the British Movement and admitting his part in an attack on the Hank Wangford band at the Southbank GLC event in the summer of 1984.

The 6 months he spent in custody were not ‘peaceful’ and he lost 3 days remission.
Eyewitnesses report that Crane has been seen stewarding at various London events including anti-apartheid and gay events, with the knowledge of the Labour Party and gay movements.

He also attends a Gay Pride march under the banner ‘gay skins’ and claims to be gay. A claim defended by others but disputed by Searchlight.

He is employed cash in hand by a friend (Mick Mac) who is also known to Searchlight as once organising a ‘reign of terror’. His presence at these events and his employment indicate his ‘clear evidence of his continuing Nazi associations’.

They summarise: “the Labour and Gay movements have allowed a very large Trojan horse into their midst which may well turn out to be a tiger that will devour them”
Nicky Crane | January 1988

Researching Column 88 (a neo Nazi paramilitary organisation) Searchlight uncovers links to this group and the armed forces.

They report their concern regarding the recruitment of soldiers to this group, the territorial army and the National Front and show how the National Front are working with Nicky Crane and other members of the notorious skinhead British Movement to establish a 'street fighting force'.

We also learn that Crane and a colleague Ian Stuart Donaldson leave the NF to create “Blood and Honour, an even more violent street oriented skin movement "and subsequently a glossy neo nazi music magazine
In this article Searchlight publicise the imprisonment of 3 anti-fascists after a fight with Nicky Crane and invite their readers to write to them in prison.

Although they say they don’t endorse the attack on Crane, they state; “anyone removing this psychotic lump of trash from the streets deserves a medal not a prison sentence”.

Political Extremism & Radicalism, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6gBQZ3
Searchlight reports that Nicky Crane was interviewed for the Channel 4 programme *Out* admitting that he was actively homosexual and had abandoned his extreme right-wing views.

The author is sceptical about his abandonment of his political associations and violence.

We learn more about his violent past, his convictions for racist attacks, his involvement in gang attacks and his role as security for the neo-nazi band Skrewdriver.
Nicky Crane | Death 1993

As far as my search goes Nicky Crane’s death was not reported in Searchlight. If it had been it would probably have had similar coverage to the death of Ian Stuart Donaldson with the headline ‘Dead but not Forgiven’.

The only newspaper to report it is Capital Gay in December 1993, in Archives of Sexuality & Gender, with the headline ‘Former fascist organizer dies’.

We learn that he died of an AIDS-related illness and that his friends say he had ‘renounced his former political views.’
Nicky Crane | Posthumous 1998

White Noise, a book written by 2 Searchlight editors, is a book examining the international Nazi skinhead scene.

In chapter 2 Crane’s death is mentioned and his life summarised. His coming out as gay sent ‘shockwaves through Britain’s most violently homophobic movement’
This 2 page article examines ‘whether one can ever reconcile being gay and a Nazi.’

Crane is referred to as a now ‘infamous gay nazi, [who] ...at over six foot tall and extremely violent...was the archetypal nazi skinhead...’

They go on to say that whilst involved with extreme violence including ‘gay bashing’ he was also involved with an older Jewish man.

They finally draw the conclusion that there is no logic to being a Nazi and homosexual, and that to be so is ‘an incomprehensible position’.
Nicky Crane | Searchlight case study

Other resources – 2 audio interviews recalling memories about Nicky Crane in the archive
