

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: LITCHFIELD, LEON ANDREW JAMES

Age if under 18: OVER 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')
MASTERDOR

Occupation: COMPANY DIRECTOR AT MANSE

This statement (consisting of 6 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: L A J LITCHFIELD

Date: 14/03/2018

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

This statement refers to my knowledge/involvement with LB Plastics and Manse Masterdor, in order to assist with the investigation in to the fire at Grenfell Tower London and in particular doors fitted there. In this statement, I will mention Steven MOCKLAW, who worked for Manse Masterdor and was a technical sales representative for the company and, with Mike HUDSON – the sales director for Manse Masterdor, negotiated the contract with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the installation of fire doors that they requested.

In approximately 1932, [REDACTED] Leonard and [REDACTED] whose name I do not know, incorporated the company Litchfield Brothers, which manufactured metal pressings and springs. Around about 1953/1954, LB Plastics was incorporated, primarily to manufacture PVC extrusions and laterly PVC injections and mouldings, which was its core business. By the mid 1980's the bulk of the product was to the building industry. In 1977, LB Plastics Inc was incorporated in North Carolina, USA and in the late 1990's, Manse Masterdor and LB GMBH was incorporated. LB GMBH is based in Germany and a subsidiary company was set up in Poland.

Manse Masterdor was originally based in Knaresborough North Yorkshire and was initially a window company and then developed a door business which developed quite rapidly but ended up going in to administration. LB Plastics was a supplier to Manse Masterdor and the company ended up buying Manse Masterdor, when it went in to administration. All these companies were part of the Litchfield Group, but

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were held under LB Plastics. Upon purchasing Manse Masterdor, [REDACTED] – Leon George LITCHFIELD was the overall chairman of the business and I was a director. My role was mainly managerial – reviewing budgets, financial performance and sales performance. The day to running of the business was mainly conducted by the associate directors, of which Mike HUDSON had the lead role. As part of my role, I wouldn't necessarily know where all the doors being made were going to, or the contract details.

Due to expansion, prior to 2008, the company opened a second manufacturing plant in Derbyshire. Post recession, with a decreased market, a decision was made to rationalise production to the Derbyshire plant and close the Knaresborough operation. The management structure remained the same with a handful of the manufacturer staff moving across. The Derbyshire plant was bigger and more modern, so it made more commercial sense to operate from there.

Manse Masterdor primarily manufactured doors, with 3-4 core types, which varied to the customer and the specification required. The bulk of the production was initially the Masterdor, which had a timber door leaf and a secondary door product was then introduced – the Suredor – which had a GRP skin and foam core, in a PVC frame. The Masterdor was a timber blade in a PVC frame. The bulk of our sales went to the local authority/commercial sector as the design generally suited and was aimed at that market. The company manufactured fire doors on the request of customers who were using Masterdor products on low rise properties.

In my experience, most fire doors would be a fully solid door, rather than having a glass option, as the glass option tends to cost more. The general size of the inner leaf of the doors was 55mm. The timber blank was brought in from a company called Pfielderer, based in Germany, and a company called Distinction Doors provided the core for the Suredor. The Masterdor was composite, with a rotary peeled timber. The grain runs horizontal rather than vertical. The blank is then delivered to our manufacturing plant and is cut to size. The ends are capped with a high quality cedar product and ply is put on to make the door waterproof. The intumescent strips are ordered in from a separate company – the bulk of which came from Envirograf and are hung in the frame. The bulk of the locking mechanisms were supplied Winkhaus in Germany and on some occasions these were specified directly by the customer. Remaining ironmongery was sourced from other companies, but fitted by us. If glass was required, Pyroshield was generally the type used and was sourced from elsewhere but fitted by Manse Masterdor. Any door closers

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were ordered by us but fitted on site, rather than at the plant, in order to reduce damage to the doors during delivery.

The door frame was steel reinforced to hold its integrity in case of fire. All frames are manufactured at our plant. Once completed, the doors are sent out and generally fitted by our own staff or supervised sub contractors. Generally the bulk of the doors sold are complete leaf and frame but on rare occasions just the door blade is sold.

In the case of most local authority contracts, Manse Masterdor were required to carry out the survey or verify an existing survey – which is essentially measuring opening sizes. Not all opening sizes are the same, which is why doors need to be made to measure. The major requirement is that the door fits the opening. In the majority of cases, Manse Masterdor staff completed the survey – normally done by contract managers who would take responsibility for the survey. Once the survey was completed, the door specifications requested by the customer are manufactured, supplied to site and fitted. A sign off process by the clients representative would then take place, either partially or on the completed job.

Generally the specification would be agreed prior to the commencement of contract, along with time scales, pricing, health and safety and working practice. Not all contracts were subject to tender process and this depended on EU tender legislation, the scale of the project and whether products had been specified by a third party, such as the LHC.

Quality control was subject to the relevant British Standards, which covered manufacture of the actual product and the quality process within the company.

I was not aware that Manse Masterdor had supplied fire doors to Grenfell Tower or that there was a contract with Kensington and Chelsea borough. It was not common for me to be aware of the contracts the company had. I do subsequently know that Steven MOCKLAW dealt with that particular contract and will have knowledge that I don't have.

In November 2014, Manse Masterdor was sold to Synseal. In December 2014, the original holding company was put in to a Creditors Voluntary Arrangement (CVA) – the reason for doing this was to liquidate the remaining assets to pay off remaining creditors. The option of putting the company into administration was not taken. The other reason for this option was to make sure employees were not made redundant. All the records for Manse Masterdor reside with Synseal and I no longer have any documentation for the company.

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