

IN THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF MARY FOLAN

**I MS MARY FOLAN OF [REDACTED] Testerton Walk, Lancaster West Estate, W11 1WQ WILL
SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

1. I make this statement in support of Phase One proceedings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry
2. I make this statement based on my own knowledge save where stated otherwise in which case it is to the best of my knowledge and belief.
3. I was born in County Galway in Ireland [REDACTED] and grew up on a smallholding.
4. I have four siblings and I am the second youngest. I went to the local primary school and was taught in Gaelic and spoke Gaelic at home so English is my second language. However, I did not need an interpreter. I left school aged 12 years old and helped my mother around the house.

Signed.....*Mary Folan*.....

Dated.....*21-8-18*.....

5. I went to Galway city when I think I was around 16/17 years old. I worked there for a year in the hospital kitchens and lived in accommodation provided by the hospital.
6. I then decided to come England with my cousin also called Mary as we had some distant family already living in London. We came to Kilburn Lane, and we shared a room whilst we looked for work. It was easy to find work in those days.
7. I worked in a McVities factory in Harlesden where I packed chocolate biscuits for a few weeks then I moved onto another biscuit factory in Kensal Road called Askeys who made pink wafer biscuits and ice cream cornets.
8. I worked there roughly from 1963 and I got married in 1965 to William whom I met at a dance. My husband worked in the building trade.
9. My husband and I got a 2 bedroom flat together in St Charles's Square, in W10.
10. I stopped work when I had my daughter Kathleen in [REDACTED] and we were living in St. Charles's Square then I had my son Stephen in [REDACTED] so there was 4 of us living in a 2 bedroom flat.
11. I cannot remember exactly what happened but the council offered me a three bedroom flat in the Walkway. The flat we live in was the first and only flat offered to us. It was newly built.
12. We moved into Testerton Walk in May 1976. Please see the attached plan.
13. I had my son John in [REDACTED]

Signed *Mary Shan*

Dated. *21-8-18*

14. During this time, I helped out in some local households with domestic work but was essentially bringing up my children.
15. I was very happy to move here, to have the room. It was a higher rent than before. There were other families with young families being moved onto the Estate which was nice for my children to have someone to play with. We were all new together.
16. It soon filled up over time. The children all played together on the Greens. There was a corner shop for food essentials but there were good buses and tubes to Hammersmith where I did most of shopping.
17. My children went to primary school in [REDACTED], and my daughter went onto [REDACTED] which is a girls' school in [REDACTED].
18. I got to know people whose children went to the same school as my children and went to the local catholic church on Sundays round here which is called [REDACTED].
19. Everyone is quite busy with their own lives and families but we got to know people and I still do on the estate. It is a friendly place and I feel safe and its quite quiet.
20. My daughter got married and moved out of the property and lives in [REDACTED] with her husband and two sons.
21. My husband unfortunately suffered from kidney failure in the last years of his life and was on dialysis and needed quite a lot of support and help.

Signed *May Helen*

Dated *21-8-18*

22. My son Stephen works full time [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] but my other son John worked flexibly in order to help look after my husband as I can't drive and he needed driving to the hospital and back, he wasn't well enough to go on public transport as he wasn't steady on his feet. He sadly died in July 2006.
23. My son John re trained as a self- employed driving instructor so he would assist me by picking up things from the shop for me in between lessons.
24. I began to cut down on my work outside the home as began to feel tired and didn't really want to do it any longer as I was in my early 70's.
25. My health began to decline a bit so I had more hospital appointments to go to and my son John came with me to them he acted as my unofficial carer as my memory isn't as good as it was.
26. I was very pleased to get a new kitchen bathroom and WC after 40 years in the property and this was done over the Summer 2016.
27. On the night of the terrible Grenfell fire, we all had had supper at home as usual and went to bed I think it was around 11pm.
28. The Saturday of the week before my left foot had gone to sleep on me when I was sitting on the sofa watching television so I got up and I fell over and landed on my left shoulder and arm.

Signed. *Mary J. L. ...*

Dated... *21.5.18*...

29. I had to go St. Charles Hospital to the urgent care Centre to have an x-ray which revealed I had a fracture so I got it strapped up. My son John drove me there.
30. It was uncomfortable and painful so I had problems going to sleep as I had to sit up in bed. I always listen to LBC on my radio before I go to sleep and I was listening as usual to it.
31. I was dozing in my room, which is next to the front door by the communal area and I heard Police saying it was the Police 'Get out there was fire'. I heard them banging on all the front doors facing onto the communal areas.
32. Normally its quiet at night and it was about 12.30 am when I looked at the alarm clock on my bedside table and there was lots of noise, people talking, walking and there was an air of panic and people seemed very anxious, asking questions and angry that they were being woken up in the middle of the night.
33. Stephen came up to my room and said there was a fire in the tower block. I was in my nightdress and I think my son John helped me with my bad arm getting into a coat or jacket before we all went out to the bench area which is outside the walkway blocks [*please see pictures in Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2*]. It was around 1am. I wasn't wearing a watch but I had my phone in my pocket. I just took my handbag and keys that's all. It was a rush.
34. We all sat out on the benches and by the brick wall and we were talking to neighbours who we hadn't seen for a bit. By chance, it was quite a warm night and quite light it being high Summer and there were some street lights on.

Signed. *M. J. John*

Dated. *21-8-18*

35. We all very shocked and we were just horrified sitting there watching and there was some talking the block burn, although the trees were in full bloom so not a full view but I saw the reflection of the blaze of the left side of the tower in the glass in Hurstway walk. It was a very high blaze and black thick smoke. They were both above the train line.
36. We could hear crackling sounds which we assumed were like windows breaking, cookers falling apart and exploding, we could see bits and pieces of all sizes falling off the building at all levels. I couldn't see what they were because of the leaves on the trees in front and there was a lot of shouting and panic going on from the people outside the flats.
37. There was loads of uniformed Police on the scene checking the three finger blocks to see if everyone was out I presume out of the blocks. I thought they seemed to be worried that the main block might fall over. Everyone was quite shocked in the crowd. The fire carried on burning and was not put out and was getting bigger and bigger we could see by the reflection. The flames were growing and the fire was getting worse.
38. We could hear people shouting for help and I felt sorry for them. We couldn't see any firefighters from our viewpoint as they were all by the block.
39. We were allowed to come back in, in the early hours of the morning and was told to get any medicines. I got dressed.

Signed... *Mary Jordan*
Dated... *21-8-18*

40. We then went back out to benches and the Police checked no-one was in the flats and then people from St. Clements and other local businesses bought water, sandwiches and biscuits for us.
41. We just sat out waiting to be told what to do as there was people there but no-one came to speak to me so I just sat out on the benches with the rest of my neighbours, whom we passed the time just chatting about the situation. My sons were with me out there as Stephen couldn't get to work as he had been up all night so he couldn't come to work and was anxious about the situation and nor could John as he couldn't access his car.
42. We were told we could go to St. Clements if we needed anything. We went there my arm was looked at as it was very painful. They gave me something for the pain and they re-tied my sling and tightened it up a bit and made a bit more comfortable. I told them that it was nothing to do with fire, as lots of people asked me and assumed it had been.
43. It wasn't very clear if we could go back into the flat or not so they said they could organise somewhere for us to stay but in the end my son had a friend nearby whom I knew a bit who had a spare bed so John and I went to stay with her at about 7pm.
44. I wasn't very keen to go simply because of my arm being so painful so I couldn't actually lie down so I would have been happy to carry on sitting on outside on.

Signed...*my. Helen*...

Dated...*21-8-18*...

45. I wasn't very keen to go simply because of my arm being so painful so I couldn't actually lie down so I would have been happy to carry on sitting on outside on the benches but my sons didn't think that was a good idea.
46. I really wanted just to go home as I knew I would feel more comfortable there in my own surroundings but it was nice of John's friend to put us both up.
47. My sons had gone back to our flat before me, and John then came to collect me I think around 10 am on Thursday morning.
48. Then we saw it on the news when we had some tea and we found voice messages from Ireland and America on the phone and other neighbours who knew we lived here.
49. People came round to see if we needed anything I don't know who they were precisely but there was lots of knocks on the door to see if we were okay.
50. I hadn't had much sleep so I was just sitting on the sofa watching the news. Stephen went to work as usual, but John couldn't as his car was in the garage very close to the Tower block and he couldn't get it as the all roads round us were blocked off and there were Police everywhere outside the block and at the top of the roads. They were blocking the roads off.
51. I just had a strip wash like we did in the old days as there was no hot water. Post wasn't delivered for a whole week I remember as I was expecting a letter from

Signed... *Mary John*

Dated... *21-8-18*

the fracture clinic.

52. My memory isn't that good so I don't have a very clear recollection of when things happened or for how long.

53. We had no hot water nor heating but that didn't really matter in the Summer about the heating.

54. About three weeks later they put in a temporary boiler at the end of our block

55. I know that on 1st August the gas to our block, Testerton, was cut off because they were renewing the pipe. As we cooked on gas, we were given a camping stove, two hot plate by to cook on for a couple of weeks but then it became clear the gas would be off for much longer so in bigger households it was difficult to cook on this. We were offered a new full sized electric cooker which they put in the place of the gas one. It wasn't very clear who was organising this we think it was a company called Cadent. They suddenly appeared

56. The road was closed at the top of Bramley Road because of the gas works and people came round every day for different reasons and knocked on our doors which was kind of them.

57. Particularly some people who lived here are on their own or in wheelchairs.

58. Nine months on it is noticeable that there are a lot less lights on in other flats as lots of people are still in hotels or B&B's or living elsewhere so it feels quieter round here.

Signed. *M. J. Helen*

Dated.. *2-1-18*

59. We had a lot of people with cameras coming to ask questions which I didn't feel comfortable about. I said no to people either trying to interview me or I walked away if I thought they were reporters.

Signed. *May L. L...*
Dated. *21-8-18*

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe the contents of this Statement to be true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed *Mary Shun*.....
Dated...*2.1.8* - *18*.....

**EXHIBIT 1 &
EXHIBIT 2**