

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: GOULBOURNE, PATRICK

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 23 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.

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Date: 05/07/2017

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

I joined the Fire Brigade in 1997 and my first posting was to North Kensington. I was posted there for about 3 years. I can recall attending a fire at Grenfell Tower back then. From memory it was just a bog standard fire that we were able to put out as normal, nothing out of the ordinary at all. The only difference that I can say is that back then there was no cladding on the block at all. I can't remember much also about the block in terms of what the block carried in relation to firefighting equipment and so on as it was a long time ago and the fire we dealt with was nothing out of the ordinary.

From North Kensington I moved to various posts including Tottenham, Stoke Newington, Edmonton, East Ham, staffed the A/C for a year, back out to East Ham, a spell as Station Manager HQ, Group Manager, North East area, Borough Commander Islington and my current role is Borough Commander Tower Hamlets.

On Monday 12 June I was recalled to duty at 17.00 hrs to attend the CT POR at Cobalt Square. I was relieved from there sometime between midnight and 1am and then I was engaged in my usual role the following day. I had a couple of meetings during the day and then I attended a cadet meeting in Shadwell as we had some outside funders attending. I believe I got home from there at about 9.30pm. I should have been shown unavailable after I had finished my recall on Monday night but this appears to have been missed as at 01.45am on Wednesday 14 June I received a pages message and a call from the Watch. The control operator I spoke to sounded like she was distressed. I recall her saying "We've paged you, are you going?". I replied "Going?, not too sure I'm supposed to be on duty". She replied "No you are on duty. There is a 20 pump fire, multiple FSG/s, Grenfell Tower". So my reply was "I'll go".

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As I said before North Kensington was my first ground and I had been to Grenfell before so I knew the block.

I booked myself mobile, didn't need to look it up and set off. I have a job car on lease so I have a portable light for the roof, one on the dash and "bells" fitted. I turned on my portable radio and the radio traffic was unbelievable. The volume of calls was phenomenal. The controller was realing of lists of calls from people who were trapped.

FSG stands for Fire Survival Guidance. It is a policy for dealing with a fire. For example pre the fire a Grenfell the predetermined number of pumps to a high rise would be 4. However once on scene if it is determined that this is an FSG situation a further pump, Station Manager and Command Unit are also dispatched. Due to the scope of the fire at Grenfell it was a multiple FSG call out.

As I pulled onto the Marylebone Road I recall hearing Rocky Welsh take over as Incident Commander. I heard it called make pumps 40. This was a major incident.

At that point I remember thinking whatever this is, it must be unprecedented. I had a thought in my mind "what am I about to see". I have only ever known one other 40 pump fire in my entire service, the one at the factory unit at about the time of the Olympics.

As I came off the Westway I looked up, I couldn't believe what I saw. There was fire from the lower floors all the way up to the top. I remember thinking "What is that". I was gobsmacked. There were people out on the street from a mile away; stopped in the street looking up. I managed to park my car but I couldn't say where. I quickly got into my kit and managed to grab a lad who was able to guide me to the flats as I had no clue.

Straight away I had my business head on. The fire was from bottom to top with vertical and lateral spread. I remember thinking is it the facia, is it scaffolding, is it netting. I then saw that this was not a building under construction.

The spread of the fire was odd with random outbreaks on all floors.

I went to the Command Unit and Dave O'Neil was being briefed by Andy Loughlin who was the incident Commander. Sector Safety had been given to Dave. I asked who was doing the search Sector and Fire Sector and was told that Rocky had both fire and search. Because I knew the ground and know the crews I wanted to be in there so I got myself put in with Rocky.

I would say that from my turning up and getting to the Command Unit was less than five minutes.

It seemed to me that there was fire on floors 4 and 5 but that higher you went the more extensive the fire was. I recall passing a pump and the Paddington Turntable Ladder and a group of fire fighters under the

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Westway waiting to go in. There was debris falling from the building and recall one of the lads calling out to me to watch myself and offering to “spot” for me going into the building.

The building itself has a lobby on the ground floor and a sort of mezzanine area. From memory the first residential flats are on the second floor. The lobby itself was pretty quiet, there were firefighters and kit there. I continued walking up and as I did so people were walking down, their eyes streaming, fully blackened faces, screaming, crying. I recall have to move to one side as crew passed me on the stairs with a person. As is standard practice in any fire a bridge head was established. This is usually two floors below the established fire. In this instance the bridgehead was situated on the 3rd floor. It was packed with firefighters. I recall Richard Welsh and Gareth Cook being present as well as Louisa Da Silva (G34 – Chelsea) and Brian O’KEEFE (G33 – Kensington).

In the bridgehead is the BA board. This shows which crews are deployed with breathing equipment, where they are, how long they have been deployed and so on. I could see from the board that we had BA crews committed to the third and fourth floors. I spoke to Rocky who had been to see what was going on. His eyes were streaming from the smoke. He told me that there were what we call snatch rescues taking place on some of the upper floors with crews making their way down with people. Some had got up as far as the 20th floor but were unable to connect hoses to the outlet risers due to the fire.

Each floor has outlet risers and as firefighters deal with a fire on a particular floor they should be able to connect their hoses to the risers to obtain the water to put the fire out. Because the fire had already taken hold this was not possible. All the while there were FSG’s coming in reporting persons trapped. We got a crew into one of the lower floors and I think it was the 4th as well as a call to the flat on the 9th or 11th. The bridgehead was compromised by smoke so we decided to relocate to the lobby.

I have drawn a plan of a tower block and shown the bridgehead on the second floor as an example of how things would usually be run. As I said in the bridgehead would be the BA board and then Fire Sector Command and search sector command. The floor below the “seat” of the fire would be contained, the floor the fire was on and the floor above it to contain to the upward spread. I exhibit this sketch as PAG/1. We had also received a call to FSG on the 3rd floor so while the bridgehead was being relocated to the lobby, myself and Cooky took an enforcer to the door of the flat but it was in fact empty. We then waited on the 3rd floor until the crews had been cleared down. I then walked up to the 4th floor to clear the crews down from there so we could regroup and start again.

In the stairwell at Grenfell Tower you walk up 5 stairs then there is a sort of mezzanine then up another 5 stairs making it 10 stairs between floors.

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It took all of a matter of minutes to relocate the bridgehead before we were up and running again.

I provide a sketch of the lobby of Grenfell and how we set up the bridgehead within the lobby. I exhibit this sketch as PAG/2.

The lobby covers the ground floor and is set up as follows:- there is a door leading into the block that faces towards the Westway. As you enter that door the FSG was set up to the left. There is a separate room off the lobby which also has a door leading outside to a grassed area, with a further side room off that. As you enter the lobby there is also a door on the right which leads to the stairwell. This door was manned by Nick Myatt who was the conduit for resources. I manned the BA board which I positioned at the bottom of the stairs. There was also a recovery area for firefighters and a casualty handling team situated in the stairway.

I will now explain two acronyms SDBA/EDBA/SDBA – short duration breathing apparatus which allows about 30 minutes compressed air EDBA – extended duration breathing apparatus, which allows about 40 minutes compressed air.

We had 20 SDBA and 30 EDBA available to deploy. These were on a rolling programme being back filled from crews who were on standby to replace those extracted so I had a continuous supply of firefighters. The crews were held outside to refill and then back inside after a short break of maybe 30-40 minutes. I deployed crews to the 2nd floor mezzanine and the 3rd floor to help with the hose, whilst crews of 4 were committed to floors 5,6,7 and 8.

As we were getting notified of FSG's on every floor I decided on systematic searching and which floors to commit crews to at any given time. At this point casualties were still coming down the stairs, some being brought down by firefighters, others walking down. I could see debris falling from the front of the building and realised it could cause further injury, so all fire crews entered and exited by the back door.

At this time I wondered where the ambulance staff were as I realised I hadn't seen any ambulance staff to direct the casualties to. I left the building to find ambulance control - HEART SUPERVISOR. He was situated past the turntable ladders. I said he was too far away for the casualties to get to and asked if he could come nearer. He replied, 'Not a chance'. He stated it was too dangerous for the ambulance personnel. I asked if they could move up to opposite the green but again was met with the same response. I returned to brief Andy Wharton and Rocky of the situation and that is when we decided to put 4 casualty handlers in place in the position next to the stairwell as per my sketch PAG/2.

As part of my remit I also ran an F.I.B – Forward Information Board, Louisa Bryan ran this for me. This was so I could note the location of the FSG's and where people were trapped what floors, flat numbers,

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who was allocated and so on, so that when people were rescued and crews were out I could mark it on the board.

As the F.I.B was not big enough to cope with the volume of FSG's coming in. I decided to utilise the wall so that I could clearly see who was allocated where, where the FSG's were and who had been brought out.

On average it can take about 1 hour to put out a fire in a 5 room flat. Grenfell Tower had approximately 6 flats per floor and on some of the lower floors 2 or 3 flats were alight. It wasn't possible to put each fire out in each flat so I made the decision to put two crews of 4 in SDBA to fire fight the 4th and 5th floors holding the fire back to protect the access and agress route on the stairwell. This then enabled me to push EDBA crews through to work the floors above the fire to the lowest floors where FSG's had been identified. This strategy was outside policy, it was purely practical firefighting. I made sure that I spoke to each crew to ensure they understood what was being asked of them, that they were willing to press on and that they understood they should not try to go above the floors to which they had been assigned. This way I could be sure that I had cleared each floor.

I was also seeking ways to obtain another jet and asked if anyone could get me on arial outside as a dry riser. I had a number of officers on hand to deal with tasks and I remember asking Gareth Cook to sort this for me as he was a Paddington Officer and I knew he would be able to source this for me. Every floor was alight and so I was looking for alternatives.

We were still using the outlet risers on floors 3 and 4 so we used extension hoses to allow the fire to be fought higher up. This allowed the hoses up as far as floor 7/8. This mean that everything was protected up to the 6th floor but I wanted to get another extended jet: We couldn't achieve this however because the whole of the outside of the building was alight, debris was falling and it was impossible to get a crew in to achieve it.

It was about this time that myself, Rocky, Matt Cooke and Mick Mulholland decided that we would ask Dave O'Neil to place a spotter on each corner of the building so that if it was going to fall they could relay this back to Dave O'Neil. We decided that if the command to leave was to be given it should come from Dave and it would be his voice alone to tell us to get out. We would then get as many firefighters out as we could but were aware that we may not make it out ourselves. With this in place and sat in our minds we were then able to carry on with the job. It was almost like we decided if we had to die trying to get people out, we would.

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As I mentioned previously I ran the BA board. On what we would term a bad job I would have two boards running. On this job there were four. Each board has a capacity for 12 BA wearers. The BA runs on telemetrics. It tells you what pressure each officer has in the BA, duration left, time to whistle and so on. The BA works on the premise that each officer should only go as far as leaves them the same amount of 'Ba' to return ie: time to whistle. They should be back at the control by that point. After that time they may only have 12-15 mins left before they are in red trouble. In addition there is an integrated automatic distress signal which sounds a pre-alarm if an officer does not move for 30 seconds and a full alarm a further 7 seconds after that.

I had been notified fairly early on that there was a casualty on the stairwell that was causing crews a problem. She was a bariatric casualty and was blocking the stairwell on the 11th floor. I asked my crews to establish if she was still alive and it was established that she was not. We then sought to try and move her out of the way – not only for her dignity but for the sake of people trying to access the stairs – so I asked the crews if they could bring her down. It was only possible to get her down as far as the 9th floor and unfortunately she was obstructing a hose. I went up to the 9th floor to see if I could assist. It was a very difficult call to make – whether to leave her on the stairs which was not a very dignified place to leave a person to rest – especially as we continued to need access to the stairwell to fight the fire and extract what casualties we could – or to try and place her inside the 9th floor which I knew meant she would be cremated. In the end I made the decision she should remain on the stairs and we would move round her as best we could.

En route to the 9th I also stopped at the 6th floor. Whitechapel and Shoreditch crews had been helping with the hose running and indicated to me they thought a crew had gone into the 6th floor without BA. I opened the door to the 6th and it was thick smoke. Seconds after I shut the door crew came out with breathing apparatus and said all the crew were coming out. We all dropped to our bellies while they were extracted as smoke filled the stairwell. As soon as it dissipated we were able to continue on and all the crew in the 6th were in fact wearing BA.

About an hour into the incident we lost comms. Our radios went down and then we lost the telemetry. This meant the BA board no longer worked.

As officers go in and out of the fire they leave what is called their tally on the board. This is another way of us knowing who has gone in and who has come out.

At one point we were left with one tally on the board belonging to firefighter Hill.

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By rights when the comms were lost we should have called a tactical withdrawal but each time you do that everything stops and this gives the fire a chance to get a hold again. We were happy that the crews were safe, we knew where they were and so decided to push on.

Equally when we discovered firefighter Hill was apparently missing in action we decided to check all the bases first, check the floors, check the recovery area and so on and after about 5 minutes firefighter Hill was found.

The SDBA crews were covering floors 5-9 and the EDBA crews were pushing on up to floors 9,10 and 11.

At some point we managed to get hoses attached to the risers on floor 9 and so the EDBA crews were firefighting on those floors. In addition we had managed to get a further two hoses into the building and up the stairwell via a lightweight pump at the front and a pump at the back. The fire on floor 11 was fierce, horrific.

All the time casualties continued to be brought out, some walking, some carried in a variety of states. – unconscious, not breathing, burnt, naked. There was one chap I recall being carried out by two firefighters naked except for his shorts, which had also fallen down thus exposing his buttocks. I remember this as I felt for his loss – both of dignity and life.

Debris and people continued to fall from the building.

We received FSG's stating that there were 10 people in one flat on the 16th and 11 people in one flat on the 18th floors. I wanted to get up there to get them out so I asked a trusted officer to go up as far as he could and report back. The 7th and 8th floors, all flats were on fire. The 9th and 10th floor lobbies were on fire. The whole of the 11th floor was on fire. He felt we could get as far as the 12/13th floor but after that you could go up but you wouldn't be coming back. I had to accept this was the case.

During this time I was informed there was still one FSG on the 11th floor and one FSG on the 10th floor. Oriental man on the 11th, blind man on the 10th, who managed to get them out and I believe they were the last two to be rescued.

A crew from Tower Hamlets were up on the 9th or 11th floor and didn't come back past that time. With the BA down we could only guess. Ordinarily we would have been able to use the BA to signal them to come down. It transpired that they had been using their crews in pairs to conserve their compressed air this giving them longer which is why they had not descended in their allotted time. This stuck in my mind not least of all because one of officers Pav Singh is due to retire in the next couple of weeks and I had said to him "don't die up there, you're due to retire".

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I must have been there since about 2.00am. The commissioner came to see us at the scene along with Andy ROE. AT that point the fire had been burning for about 5/6 hours. You could see she was anxious for us. At this point the number of FSG's had dropped. She asked if we were still doing rescues because once all life is saved, should we remain as we are or change tactics. I replied that I was and that I had a plan in place. She asked if I was sure and how long it had been since my last rescue had taken place. I told her it had been about half an hour when a shout came up from the mezzanine floor "casualty". She then said "Carry on, I trust you".

I need it to go on record that the TSG were top draw. They come into the lobby at the back spotting for the fire crews with their shields. I needed to go out and look at the building. It was still going. I was looking across counting floors. There was fully developed fire across all floors. The floors looked better where we had been at 17 but the upper floors were just raging.

Possibly from the 18th floor upwards it was fully involved compartments.

A flat is termed a compartment/concrete box.

At one point there was also a loss of water pressure. This was due to falling debris cutting the hose of the augmented supply at the front of the building. I think that took a couple of minutes to fix.

We also had a problem with jets of water pouring down the stairwell from the 11th floor. This was caused by the hose bursting causing a torrent of water to flood back down the stairwell. This caused a problem for the guys trying to get up the stairs as the water pressure was pushing them back. They in turn were getting soaked which was hampering efforts to look for people on the 12th and 13th floors.

In addition the water flooded down as far as the 9th floor which caused further issues in relation to the bariatric patient laid there.

Once again we were able to fix the hose and continue out work. At about 10am if not 11am John Graham arrived and shadowed me looking to take over. At this point we moved the bridgehead back up to the 3rd floor.

I remember coming out of the building and laying on the grass looking up. I think it was about 12 noon. I was too tired to move so I just lay there for about an hour. I remember shaking hands with the crews and accepting two cheese sandwiches from the Salvation Army.

I was just lying there trying to process what had gone on. What the death toll was, how many lives had we saved. I remember someone saying that this made Lackenhall look like a small job and the enormity of it hit me. There had been 13 FSG's there, the most we had ever had. I subsequently found out there were 171 FSG's to Grenfell.

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I was able to carry two children out – one child was with both parents and I remember them repeatedly saying thank you. That child was about 3 I believe. They were on the mezzanine between floors 3 and 4 in the stairwell.

I think this family were South American / Latino in origin

The second family I helped was a mum and her child. I think they were Asian in origin. I don't know what floor they came from but I helped them down from the second floor.

Both families were taken away by the casualty handling crews.

I was also told that a colleague had been hit by a person falling from the building but I did not witness that for myself. It was Sean Murphy, crew manager for Islington Reds. Where the stairwells were protected by the fire doors leading off the lobby of each floor the smoke containment worked alongside the fact that we were knocking the fire back on each floor. This meant that up to the 11th floor the smoke was held back. Where we had occasion to open the lobby doors some smoke did escape into the stairwell but dissipated. I have provided a sketch to illustrate the floor layout which I exhibit as PAG/3.

This shows the position of the risers and explains why we weren't able to access them on many floors. Where all the flats were ablaze it just was not possible to gain access to them which is why we could not get hoses attached.

I have been back to Grenfell Tower since, the night of the candlelit vigil but I didn't really speak to anyone there other than for them to shake my hand and to say thanks. It was really just for me to pay my respects to the wall of remembrance and to confirm the force of the fire in my own mind, to reconcile that we really did do all that we could. One thing I did notice upon my return was that there was some sort of service shaft running alongside the lift shaft that appeared to be behind some plasterboard. I have no idea what cables or conduit was behind it, what it serviced or what it was for, I just recall seeing it.

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