

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: BEALE, STUART KENNETH

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 15 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:

Date: 06/07/2017

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

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I make this statement in relation to my knowledge of the fire at Grenfell Tower, overnight Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

I am employed by the London Fire Brigade as Watch Manager B for Soho Fire Station. My individual call sign is A241 and I'm in charge of Red Watch. I have been in the Fire Service for 22 years.

Soho Fire Station has a Station Manager who is Sam KAZMANLI then 4 watch managers each designated either Red, Blue, Green or White.

Red Watch has 12 Fire fighters and 3 crew commanders all of which are under my supervision. The station has 3 appliances 2 of which are Fire Engines and 1 turntable ladder. (However on the night in question instead of a turntable ladder we had an ALP (Ariel ladder platform).

On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 I started my duty at 8 pm due to finish at 09.30 the following day. It started like any other duty with an initial rollcall followed by the division of each officers roles and responsibilities for that night.

On this particular night I designated out the following roles

ALP – Assigned to crew Manager Frost and Firefighter King.

Pump – A241 – Assigned to myself, Firefighter Saunders who was also the driver. F/F Johnson, F/F Desforjes and F/F Staveley

Pump A242 – Assigned to Crew Manager Pearcey, F/F and driver Orchard, and F/F Mitchell and F/F Roots

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After rollcall we all had dinner together at 9.30 pm and then A241 including myself attended other calls for assistance in our local area.

At approximately 00.30 hours on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June I went to bed at the station. This is an allowed practice where between midnight and 6.20 am officers are allowed to sleep unless they are required to attend a call.

Just after 1 am ALP or A245 as it's otherwise known was mobilised to a call. I was in bed at the time but the call taken by control is alerted to us in the station by a loud tannoy and lights coming on in the station. I realised that it wasn't my crew (A241) being called so I went back to bed. I was still aware of the ALP mobilising but at this time I had no idea what they were attending.

I later learnt that a request had been made for 8 pumps and 2 ariels. It just happened that our ALP had been chosen as one of those ariels.

The control room uses a system called "Vision" and basically this is a geographical mobilisation system which locates the nearest appropriate appliance.

I went back to bed after ALP had left our station until we then received a further tannoy for both out appliances A241 + A242 to attend the same incident. I believe the time now would have been around 01.30 am and I was informed that the fire was at Grenfell Tower and 20 appliances had been requested. I knew from this information that it would be a serious fire as it is very unusual to request that many appliances and the "Tower" aspect would always add complications.

Each crew got into their appliance and we started to head towards Grenfell Tower. We had the paper printout generated by the call which details the location but we also have MDTs in the vehicles which should also have a mirror of those details and this also allows us to register our "on route" status.

For some reason the MDT in A241 wasn't working so crew manager Percy called control to just confirm our attendance and check the location. It was confirmed we were still required and that the location was correct.

I was not previously aware of Grenfell Tower and to my knowledge had not been there before.

I checked the A-Z map on my phone and saw it was close to Ladbroke Grove, also one of my officers F/F Johnson drives black cabs so he also knew where to go.

Our route took us out of the fire station to Shaftsbury Avenue – Picadilly Circus – Hyde Park Corner – Park Lane – Cumberland Gate – Bayswater Road – Notting Hill Gate – Holland Park Avenue – Ladbroke Grove – Cornwall Crescent – Clarendon Road – Dulford Street – Walmer Road – Bomore Rd then finally into Grenfell Road.

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As we drove into Walmer Road there were already several appliances going in that direction so we tried to find an alternative entrance via Grenfell Road. Despite this there were also several appliances already in Grenfell Road and we got as close as we could but had to remain in Grenfell Road due to other cars parked on both sides and appliances already stopped blocking our way.

On route to the fire I was aware of lots of radio traffic and heard calls of FSG which refers to "Fire Survival Guidance". This said to me that people were trapped as FSG refers to people trapped in a burning building or neighbouring building likely to be effected.

As a result of these calls I started to already prepare myself mentally and my crew for what they were about to face. We have procedures in place to tackle high rise building fires, so I went over that in my head.

I could see the fire from the moment we entered Grenfell Road. At that point from looking at the building I could see it was a rectangular shape with 4 Flat sides. Each side appeared to be split into 3 sections that ran upwards from ground level to the very top. I will refer in this statement to the left of these as section 1, the middle as section 2 and the right as section 3. From the point that I first saw the fire it was between the 4<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> floor on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Section these 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> sections were untouched. I would also add that between floors 4-8 the fire appeared to have engulfed the inside of the flats as well as the outside.

Very quickly I saw the fire spread across at the top onto the 2<sup>nd</sup> section and then downwards.

I'm not 100 % sure of our arrival time but we left about 01.30 and our journey time was about 10 minutes.

At the time we arrived the incident was just being handed over from a North Kensington Watch Manager to an incident commander. This would automatically occur at any incident with 6 pumps or more. I told my guys to get their BA stuff (Breathing apparatus) and all convene together.

A242 did the same and followed us towards the tower. I then gave them all a briefing which was quick but in essence I told them to look out for each other, stay safe and not to do anything stupid. I also emphasised that each one needed to report back to me each time they left the building and just asked them to do whatever they could to help.

I saw both crews leave my location and make their way towards the main entrance to the tower located on the South side. I was then designated as OIC in charge of Sector 4 which was the East side of the Tower. I had attended the Command Unit set up which is in a mobile truck stationed on Grenfell Road. Here I provided the command unit officer with our role board which is a list of officers assigned to my team.

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During this time crew Manager Percy remained with me and we then both walked back towards the tower.

On our arrival I had seen that my ALP (245) was situated on the East side of the building but quickly identified that it had no dedicated pump or secure water supply. Adjacent to us was a T/L (Turntable ladder) from Paddington Station and this was positioned only about 10ft from the building also on the East side. They had a F/F in the cage up to maybe the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> floor height and were putting water onto the building.

I could also see various F/Fs going in and out the building main entrance with BA kits on.

The crew from my ALP called me over to update me regarding their lack of water supply so I decided to send 2 M/Ds (Motor Drivers) to find me an engine and bring it to our location.

The fire continued to develop, moving across and down Section 2 on the East side almost in a diagonal line from the top right hand corner towards the bottom left. This is an unusual but not improbable scenario with most fires heading upwards not down. It was apparent to me that the cladding was playing a major role in that and I was aware that pieces of the cladding were falling to the ground in various sizes. The extreme heat being generated was also causing there to be molton plastic and aluminium pouring down the outside of the building.

I briefed the ALP crew to be ready for water and saw them prepare the appliance by activating the hydrolic beams, move the jacks into place and ready their harnesses.

I was aware during this period of people up at the windows across various levels and sections on the East side. Some were signalling with torches, others were waving items of clothing out the window. I'm sure they were all shouting but I couldn't hear them.

There were a number of trees blocking my direct view of the first 4 floors but I could see the rest of the East side and a lot of the North side very clearly. I saw people at the window waving frantically then moments later their flat would be engulfed with fire. I had no idea if they managed to move to another part of the building or if they were taken by the fire.

The two MDs returned with A241 which just happened to be my appliance and they set to work getting a water supply set up from a nearby hydrant. To do this they connect a standpipe into the water mains and then run that to the appliance which then connects to the ALP.

There were a number of dangers to the ALP most notably the falling debris which was unpredictable but we also had the trees both of which prevented it from getting to close to the building.

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Crew manager Frost went into the cage and F/F King was the ground operator. Both work as a team and regularly communicate with each other. I told C/M Frost to go up as high as he could but I also knew that the ALP has sensors which indicate any instabilities and will stop the movement to reduce any further risk. As we were not able to get close enough to rescue anyone from their window I just wanted to get water on the building to restrict the fires movement and save as many lives as we could.

Once in position it soon became apparent that the ALP did not have the required water pressure needed. It should use 2500 litres per minute but the monitors showed that we only had an output of 383 litres per minute. We were not close enough for that level to even reach the building so we needed to think of an alternative plan.

I did not know exactly why the pressure was that low but it could have been for a number of reasons and there was nothing I could do at that time about the mains water pressure.

This was completely soul destroying for me because I could see the fire continuing to spread and engulf more and more flats where people had been at the windows.

I then became aware of problem with the ALP itself. C/M Frost was still in the cage and very close to the burning debris still falling down. Normally the ALP has 2 speeds and they would use the fast speed to manoeuvre away from danger. For some reason only the slow speed was working which meant that it took ages for them to move out of danger and back down.

I could also see that the Paddington T/L was forced to move back and again this was because of the falling debris. The molten liquid falling from the top of the tower was igniting the flats below only increasing the speed at which further flats became effected.

I directed the F/Fs to run a covering jet to extinguish the falling debris and the nearby trees which were also alight. We also operated a hand held branch from A241 which uses a 45 mm hose to support the Paddington crew and put out anything they could reach. I became aware of a resident who had been at his window for a long time. This window was on the East side about 11-13 floors up on the 1<sup>st</sup> section.

I had seen a family to his right before their flat became fully involved in fire and I was determined to do everything we could to stop the fire reaching this male.

I directed to set up a ground monitor which is bigger than a hand held branch but smaller than on ALP. Once again we were hindered by the water pressure.

As well as trying to prevent the fire reaching this male I also sent a runner to give his location to the bridgehead, which is the command point within the building set up below the fire.

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The options we had tried were clearly not being effective, mainly due to the low water pressure. We needed to think of an alternative option so C/M Percy and I decided to strap a reel branch to the ALP. This was a smaller hose meaning the water pressure would be higher and by strapping it to the ALP we could manouvere it closer to the fire without it needing to be manned. The reel branch uses 75 bar to pump out 230 litres a minute and finally this started to work and the water was able to reach the building. We focused on the area above where the male we had seen was and this had a good effect in preventing the fire from spreading.

As this method was working we continued for what felt like hours moving the ALP around with the reel hose attached.

At one point the Ops Commander came to our location which was the first time I had spoken to him. He told me that a BA Crew had been sent towards that resident we identified and I later heard from the same commander that this male had been rescued.

The Ops commander designated me as safety officer for the East Side. This basically meant I was in charge of the East side still, like I always had been.

It must have been about 4-5 am when Thames water turned up and they had with them all sorts of kit to test the pressure. I was hoping that they would be able to increase the pressure somehow but in fact they were concerned that it would only reduce further once residents in nearby towers / house started using their water supplies.

We just continued using the hose reel and sprayed water onto the building. Although by this point much of the fire on the East side was either burnt out or put out, there was a part that just continued to light up and the flames looked blue which made me think that perhaps there was a burst gas main. This seemed to be between the 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> floors on the East side.

From walking around the sides of the building closest to my positon I could see that the North side was burnt completely top to bottom. The south was burnt from the top down to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and I was not able to see the west side at all. From the radio traffic, it sounded like the west had been the last side to take hold and many residents had moved to that side to escape their own flats.

At one point A241 had been running for so long that it ran very low on diesel so we had to get some more brought out to us.

One by one my firefighters returned to me and fortunately all were uninjured. We congregated by our ALP and stayed there till about 2-2.30 pm. An ALP from Leatherhead then arrived to take over and they set up the same as us.

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We collected our role call boards from the command unit then went to Paddington Fire Station to write up some notes. There were also people there from counselling and wellbeing.

We returned to Soho Fire Station about 16.30 and then all went out to get some food and debrief ourselves as a team.

We then handed the appliances over to blue Watch and all went to bed at the Station although I couldn't sleep at all.

I was then back at work at 8pm for the night shift during which we had 13/14 incidents that evening, until I finally made it home around 11 am on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>. There are just a couple of further point I wish to add.

When we first arrived in Bomore Road there was a large crowd of people that were congregated. A large number appeared very distressed and quickly realised they were family and friends of loved ones trapped in the tower.

Many of these people were trying to hand us mobile phones and asking us to speak to their loved ones who were inside.

We tried to tell them that we needed to get to the Tower and that they should call 999 and provide as much detail about their location as possible.

I have been asked about my knowledge of fire alarms and sprinklers in the building and all I can say is that I wasn't aware of either from my position outside.

As described earlier I made some original notes after the incident and I can produce a copy of these as exhibit SKB/1.

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