

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: WILSON, ADAM

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 8 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: ADAM WILSON

Date: 16/01/2018

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

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This statement refers to the time I attended the Grenfell Tower fire on WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017 during the early hours.

This statement is an account of an audio recorded interview I gave to DC Dave PEARL and PC Terry SOUSTER on WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2017. Also present during the interview was Ross NEAL from the Fire Brigade Union (FBU). During this interview I referred to my contemporaneous notes that I made on 14/06/2017 and exhibit as AJW/1. I also referred to a black and white google map A4 which I exhibit as AJW/2 and also an A3 colour map which I have marked with various details relating to the incident and also used for directions that I exhibit as AJW/3.

I have been a fire fighter (FF) for 7 years and I am classed as competent, based at Peckham Fire Station E37 Red Watch where I have been since finishing training school. At the fire station we perform training drills in the tower in the yard and also at various locations outside where we have scenarios. We also receive lectures on various topics. If the Fire Brigade refresh a policy or procedure they issue you with a lecture and training which is then delivered by either the Crew Manager or Watch Manager in our mess area. We generally have lectures every other week. We practise basement procedures, high rise procedures, basic firefighting skills, and compartment firefighting. This is generally completed every other month. There are quite a lot of high rise buildings in Peckham so we look at them a lot as it is a key

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focus for us. We have discussions and PowerPoint presentations, training for high rise buildings is every other month, 2 months at a push as it is a very looked over policy for Peckham. 'Lakanal' was across the road from Peckham Fire Station and that is a case study as well. The brigade issued it as a lecture point and it goes through how the fire started and how it progressed, what was learned from it and basically put a training package together.

My last experience dealing with a fire at a high rise block was also my first in 2011 at the Marine Tower in DEPTFORD where I was part of Casualty handling. I am trained on Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA), the Pump Ladder, and Search and Rescue (S&R).

From DEPTFORD I have never heard of Fire Survival Guidance (FSG), that is quite a newish thing. I wasn't taught this at training school as it is more of a focus for control staff. Now what happens is if you get an incident at a high rise where there is actually something happening then it will state on the call slip Fire Survival Guidance in progress. Unless they put persons reported on the call slip then Fire Survival Guidance put on the call slip will indicate someone in danger. My understanding of Fire Survival Guidance is control telling the person in the incident what to do and how to behave. If they can get to a safe point or if it feasible for them to exit the building then they will give them the safest way to get out. It is control talking the person through the fire and what to do to keep them safe/family safe.

I will mention a number of people within my statement who are: Watch Manager Paul MEYRICK (WM), Crew Manager Tom SHARP (CM), firefighter Duane HARRIS (FF), and firefighter Jim GEAPIN (FF). I will also mention the casualty that jumped from the tower and the casualty I saw in the stairwell of Grenfell Tower while completing my tasking.

Before the incident I had no knowledge of Grenfell Tower and was not aware of any preprepared firefighting plan for it.

TUESDAY 13th JUNE 2017 was my first night shift which started at 2000hrs and finished at 0930hrs. I was assigned as driver of appliance (fire engine) E371 which had the 135 pump ladder. From what I can remember it was fairly quiet, maybe 2 shouts- fire alarms possibly. I went to bed about midnight, sleeping in the locker room which is in conjunction with our Watch Room and the printer which is in conjunction

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with our appliance bay so if a call comes in I am first to get to it and then get the fire engine ready. At 0150hrs a call came through. I went to the printer and retrieved the slip which provides details of the incident we are about to attend, telling me in was a 40 pump fire at Flat 16 Grenfell Tower and fire engines already assigned. I can't remember where the rendezvous point was or the road but did see Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) under the address and not at the bottom. I then told the guys what we had and initially we thought that this was a relief which is when additional appliances are requested to go in and relieve crews that are already working there. Generally I think it is normally 3 or 4 hours working time before you need to be relieved to keep it fresh. It wasn't until we were on the fire engine that we realised we are part of a 40 pump fire.

I had never seen a 40 pump fire before. I then checked the map for the best route but (WM) MEYRICK knew the area as he works around there and he knew the way to go without referring to a map until we got there because we realised roads had been shut off and then it was map references to the tower. (WM) MEYRICK sat next to me in the front of the fire engine in company with (CM) SHARP, (FF) HARRIS, and (FF) GEAPIN. (FF) HARRIS and (FF) GEAPIN are both SDBA trained. There was a discussion in the back of the fire engine as to what the incident was and they were looking at the A-Z. I don't know if I have blocked it out but I didn't hear too much 'comms' on the radio.

The route we took was to MAYFAIR where the roads were absolutely clear until you reach MAYFAIR and then I remember the A40 where the road was absolutely dead just after 0200hrs. There is a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) that is a little computer screen at the front of the fire engine that will put up any additional information that we need to know or anything else that is happening at the incident since we have been assigned to it but generally the information comes across the radio as it's the quickest way. The closer you get the more pumped up you get because you know you will be there in a matter of minutes. When we hit the A40 you could see the glow and you could see the smoke. When we went up the slip road and we hit the flyover it was just there in front of you, it's like a towering inferno and your emotions are about the people in there and you have already made the conclusion that you won't be able to reach everyone and that there will already be people dead.

There was a big flaming 'V'. Two sides of the building were on fire as we got closer. The 'V' was sweeping across which was causing that shape and coming from the top and met in the middle. There was

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talking in the back of the fire engine as to what equipment we think we need to bring up and what we were going to do. I vaguely remember going down LADBROKE GROVE as the route we had planned that was going to take us directly into Grenfell. We passed another fire appliance coming towards us that said it had all been shut off and we needed to find an alternate route. I have never been to that area so I couldn't tell you what roads we took as a detour but we ended up on SIRDAR ROAD that was directly in front of the tower and you can see as a whole what is going on and how many people were working. We turned up at Grenfell at about 0220hrs and 2 sides of the tower were on fire and I remember the radio being dead quiet for something major like that. I don't remember talking and interactions. The scene on SIRDAR ROAD was busy with fire engines trying to park. SIRDAR ROAD is quite a narrow road so you've got residents parking and you are trying to put your appliance wherever you can fit it. If I remember rightly, SIRDAR ROAD goes off slightly and is separated by bollards. I parked by what looked like a bit of greenery in front of us which if you walked over the tower was there.

We then got off the fire engine and had a discussion with our Watch Manager, the plan was that he will go off and find the officer in charge and then come back and detail us with what he wants us to do. We all then decided to go as a group. The driver is normally left on their own but that night we went as a group as you don't want to have to come back to your crew to tell them they need certain things, so we just grabbed it and get told what to do there instead of walking back. We took as much hose as we could carry, additional BA sets, first aid kit, breaking in gear, and anything they thought they could use. We did have to go back to the fire engine for additional equipment and members of the public were swearing at us, "Where the fuck do you think you're going. The fire's that way?"

My very first memory is seeing people at the windows flashing their lights and shouting, residents in the houses on SIRDAR ROAD shouting at us that they need help and some people telling us what they have seen. Walking wounded that have come out of the tower and walked down SIRDAR ROAD where members of the public had got them and assisted them by bringing them into their houses. As we continued walking and turning into GRENFELL ROAD which didn't take long, a Middle Eastern male in his 30's early 40's stopped me by grabbing my arm, phone in hand and telling me that 7 members of his family were trapped inside Flat 205 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor. The man had a panicked expression but was calm, thrusting the phone into my chest saying, "speak to them". I could hear screaming on the phone. I didn't speak to them but told the man that I would pass the message on to the Command Unit which was

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positioned on GRENFELL ROAD by garages on BARANDON ROAD, then relaying the message to an officer standing in the doorway of the Command Unit what the gentleman had told me. I didn't go in the Command Unit but saw the officer write what I had told him on 1 of 2 white boards inside. It was very busy inside the Command Unit with loads of people and I could see people were taking FSG. The Command Unit rides 3 and can seat 10 people at a push. It is the core of the job and is where the decisions are made. It is an information hub where there is a computer and a radio unit where a dedicated person uses it to relay messages to control.

My reaction from GRENFELL ROAD was that everything was on fire. I could see that the 'V' was on the SOUTH & EAST sides of the tower and that the SOUTH side was heavily damaged. There was an Aerial Platform Ladder (ALP) positioned on the EAST side on the grass and I could see that the damage on the SOUTH side was lower to where the ALP was.

My crew continued on as I stopped so I had to catch them up after. I remember I was having a conversation with (FF) GEAPIN and thought maybe this was a terrorist attack as it wasn't until after the incident I started to hear various causes of the fire. We were then told by an officer at the Command Unit to wait at the holding area which was by the leisure centre where we stayed for about an hour with approx. 100 other firefighters. Everyone turning up to the incident was being detailed to the leisure centre. A senior officer would come up and explain to us what was going on and what they wanted, telling us to put our BA sets on and make our way to the WEST side where the playground was. We spoke to other guys that had come out of the tower. I felt scared as you could see it on other people's faces. See it in their eyes. From there I could see flame, loads of smoke, and people on the lower level that hadn't been effected by fire looking out of windows. I could see people turning their lights on and off to get attention just the same as id seen on the SOUTH side when we pulled into SIRDER ROAD. We saw loads of police officers in riot gear turn up and we were initially told that the residents that had come out of the tower had started fighting but this wasn't the case as the police were called in to assist us getting into the tower. Waiting at the leisure centre is when we saw police officers turning up in riot gear. The first thing I could see of someone in the tower was someone directly in line with the ladder by the basket waving something white and the fire is 2 floors above him. I could see a gentleman hanging out of the window just below the ALP.

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On the EAST side of the tower about 2 floors above the ALP it was all flame and I could see where the gas main was popping because every now and then you'd get a big explosion of blue flame. I heard 2 little pops and could see blue flames popping all over the tower. We were watching bits of burning debris falling onto the ALP, falling onto the floor below, you could hear the crashing of it hitting the floor and screaming. There were small bits of debris falling and large window frames, double window frames, we watched one of them from the top come down and severing all our hoses because you saw an explosion of water on the SOUTH side. There was debris on the floor, molten plastic and glass, and where debris had fallen on cars some of them were crushed and some had caught fire. Firefighters were working as close as they could get. There was a mash of noise but the overriding image is the top of the tower on fire.

An officer then came over and requested BA wearers, PECKHAM putting themselves forward along with a couple of others, (CM) SHARP, (FF) HARRIS, (FF) GEAPIN, 2 others unknown to me from a different station, and myself. We were then pulled forward to the entry control board which was situated inside the tower at the bottom of the staircase. The tower entrance was the initial entry point before it became too dangerous to use. There was a board which then moved round to where the playground was. It was then said that the next lot of firefighters to be committed were to go to the WEST side of the tower which is in open air and wait there. We walked without the help of the police to the front of the tower and waited at the entrance because they deemed it not safe for us to carry on going at one point.

We had got to the front just as someone had jumped out of the tower and I am pretty sure that is the main reason why they weren't putting us through. We waited at the front for 5-10 minutes. I saw the body on the floor and saw a detached leg away a little from the body. I was told by someone in front that the person had hit the canopy covering the main entrance.

From the SOUTH side you could see the WEST corner and casualties coming out with firefighters and being led away by police officers and firefighters. Whilst I was standing at the front of the tower I could see firefighters going in and out and that is the first sight of the Police and their involvement in shepherding firefighters and officers in and out with the riot shields by holding the shield above the firefighter's heads and on the command leading them into the tower. The SOUTH side was heavily filled with debris. We were then ushered through an enclosed walkway and out through a side door into the playground. A fire brigade officer led us into that point. It was all garages and car parking and there are

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doors leading off to certain places and if you take the wrong door you are going to come back out and around so there was someone standing on the door directing you the right way.

We then stayed there not as long, half an hour maybe forty minutes before we were committed in. The suggestion was that our SDBA which is standard duration and only about half an hour air time weren't getting firefighters high enough in the tower and they wanted EDBA which is Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus and specialist because I think they get just under an hour air time so they will be able to push further. We were just sat around in the playground waiting to be committed until they ran out of EDBA wearers then they started to pull us in. I could see loads of smoke and people in the tower trying to get our attention by turning lights on and shouting. The whole top half of the building was on fire. I was scared. From the WEST side I could see more fire and it seemed from the WEST there was more debris falling down, it was a continuous flow of debris. You could see bits falling off still on fire and hitting the guys on the floor. There was a group in the playground firefighting, directing hoses up as far as they would reach and at several points they just downed the hose and ran because things were falling on top of them. They were then eventually moved just out of the playground but still debris falling down around enough for them to move us out of the way. There was a raised walkway and ladders had been placed on the SOUTH WEST side from the walkway onto the tower but I don't know what they were used for and they were all covered in debris as well.

We were then led into the lobby area on the ground floor by the police with shields because of the falling debris. The lobby area is all covered and it is where the stairway is directly in front of you and the entry control point. Debris had fallen into it and it was flooded, coming up to my ankles with loads of firefighters and officers in there. An officer then came along and picked out the crew that he wanted and told them what he wanted them to do. To my left was a little holding room where we were put into which was empty and I don't know what its day to day usage was, and to my right there was the original entry point to the tower before it became compromised on the SOUTH side. We stayed there for 10-20 minutes maybe. The Entry Control Point (ECP) is where the BA board is and where an officer in charge controls it and doesn't leave it. The officer will detail the BA wearers of the job/task that needs to be carried out, not the entry control officer who is just a firefighter. BA crew then relays this info to the ECO who notes this on the BA board. ECP will then take the Tally off our bodyguard and write the time we have gone in, how much air we have, and then you are sent on your way to do whatever you have to do. From there, and on

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this particular incident it was charged by a senior officer and you have a radio comms person at the BA control board who is dedicated just to talk to you or the crews in general in the incident so from the top you are relaying what is going on, what you have seen, what you have done and then they relay that to the man on the outside who then talks to the Command Unit.

The guys that were coming down that had already been up were coming in and passing on some words of what was up there and what they had to do. They were saying how hot up there it was and how you couldn't see anything because it was pitch black with smoke. It was mainly the heat intensity where you get to a point and it hits you making you feel really uncomfortable and you get to a point where you just turn around. There was also a lady on the stairs who we were told was a man blocking the stairwell so people were finding it difficult to get further. While I was in that room every crew that came out said about the person on the stairs and that you have to step over them to get through. I believe and from what I have heard is that person had been moved down the stairway apparently from the top part of the tower, crews had gone in and pulled her down but run out of air. They were dedicating crews just to get this person down the stairs and I think it got to the point that where they were left was deemed Ok because it was still visible and the smoke hadn't got down to that level so people could still see that person laying there. The hose on the stairs was blocking a lot of the stairwell and they had all sort of become entangled with each other, tangled around the bannisters so footing wise it was quite treacherous up the stairs. I didn't speak to anyone personally but was in a group that was being spoken to.

An officer then came into the little holding room and called me and another firefighter from LAMBETH and detailed us because they thought a Branch had been left on which was why the stairs were being flooded, so to go up and find the Branch and turn it off and if we still had enough air to carry on going as far as we could and do whatever we could. I was eager to get in and help. There was an air of fear. I'd seen firefighters coming out especially in that playground passing out in front me because they are exhausted and some of them are burnt. When they are refusing you know it's bad and it's your turn to go in. You have seen all of that and now it is your turn to go in and you are thinking that while you are climbing the stairs. We then reported to BA and gave them our brief with them giving us a little bit more information about BRIXTON'S crew being in front of us and if we could go past them to carry on to do what we were doing because BRIXTON'S crew of 4 had been detailed to go up and try and bring that person down who was already dead. All the way down if they could. I then signed in and we went up the

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stairs as there was no lift. As you go up, I think it is 2 flights and it comes out in a landing where you go across the landing and do a little right and then you are back on the stairs. On that landing is where I saw the Asian man that was hanging out of the window and he was being led out by firefighters. From there we were told to carry on going up. I had my radio on and it was working fine when I went in.

As we continued up the stairs there was visibility until about the 5<sup>th</sup> floor where it became a little bit cloudy but you could just see your hand in front of you. The 6<sup>th</sup> floor is where it starts to get darker but you can still just about see your hand in front of you, but by the 7<sup>th</sup> floor you could see nothing, even squatting down. On our bodyguard there is a little light that is the communication between you and the BA board and you have another light on there so you can read your readings but even bending down and turning your light on you still couldn't see. We had our torches on but you still couldn't see anything. You had to feel your way, doing your safe movement up the stairs and you could just about hear. You can feel the hoses in the way and you are putting your feet in where you think it is safe but it's not because you are wrapping your foot around the hose. All the way up to the 9<sup>th</sup> you couldn't see and you could just about hear because there are people on the stairway shouting. You are aware that there are people there but you just can't see them. In that environment the stairwell felt tiny because your senses are out of whack and you don't know where you are. It just felt really really narrow but when you go back into the light you can see that it is wide enough for 2 to go up and 2 to go down.

To the 5<sup>th</sup> floor the walls had been marked by someone to indicate what floor they were on because the number plates were missing so firefighters going in were counting floors and marking what floor they were on. We could just about make out the 6th but from there you had to count what floor you were on. As you go up you could see the number and what floor you were on. When we got to the 3rd floor we noticed the water coming down the stairs and by the time we got to the 9th it was flooded. We got to a point where the hoses had gone up through the bannister and were being vertically run and as my partner got there one of the hoses burst and the pressure was intense, throwing my partner into the wall and down on me. We had to climb over that stream of water to carry on going but as we turned left that was where BRIXTON'S crew were working with the person on the stairs. I never ever saw the person, I saw the salvage sheet that they had managed to put the person on in the hope that it would make it easier to bring them down the stairs. I saw a foot of that person and that was it. Our task wasn't completed as they thought that there was a Branch open and it wasn't as it was hoses that had burst above and were flooding

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the stairway. We couldn't get any further because of BRIXTON blocking the stairway so from the 9th my partner and I made the decision to go back down. He was low on air and I was getting to a point that if I'd have carried on going up another floor then I would have run out of air. In this process there were 2 or 3 more crews coming up behind us and we relayed to them what was in front of us and carried on going out. I never ever went into the flats but was aware on the stairwell that the doors to the corridors were open as I could feel the heat from the corridors.

We then got down to the BA point and told the officer there that the stairway was completely blocked and the guys behind us probably wouldn't get past them either. From the BA point to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor it felt like minutes but when the visibility and the senses go and you are not aware of what is going on around you it felt like we were stood on the stairs quite a while. From us going up to the 9th turning around and coming back down again we had probably been in the tower 20 minutes. I was then told to go back to the holding area in the playground and speak to the BA officer who was (WM) MEYRICK in charge of the BA crews in that holding area at the WEST side of the tower. We reported back to him and gave him a brief explanation of what we had done and what we had been told to do by the officer in the tower that we were to go back and change our cylinder then go back to the leisure centre to then get called back again. Everyone that came down after me was getting told to change their cylinder as everyone is getting at least two wears.

When I got to the leisure centre my partner and I were approached by another officer who asked what we were doing. It was then established that I was PECKHAM'S driver so the officer asked me to put my BA set back on my engine and then move the engine to a convenient place as it was blocking an entrance point for relief crews to come in. Looking at the tower from the WEST side I could see that it was still burning and smoking, the fire damage that I saw on the way in was completely different from when I came out. While I was in there the whole side of the tower had burnt away.

I then went and moved the fire engine onto MARY PLACE about 100 feet further behind my original parking area before returning to the leisure centre where I was told by a different officer to go back and get my BA set. On my way back I encountered and started talking to (FF) HARRIS, (FF) GEAPIN, and (CM) SHARP. Looking at the tower from the EAST side I could see the fire had burnt down further than where the ALP was originally. It was about 1100hrs when we were then approached by the same officer

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who had told me to move the fire engine and it was again repeated that we wouldn't be wearing again and recommitted as they were looking to get people away. We then made our way back to the fire engine and the crew got on but (WM) MEYRICK was talking to someone before telling us that we all had to go back to PADDINGTON Fire Station to write our notes. We got to PADDINGTON just before 1200hrs and from there made our way back to PECKHAM where we arrived at 1630hrs.

I have suppressed it all for 6 months and blocked it out. Days after I was a mess. I had never been in anything like that in my life. I spoke to the brigade counselling team and initially made an appointment with them but cancelled it because I thought I could deal with it on my own. Until now I haven't spoken or thought about it. I have never spoken about it in depth like this.

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