

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: MCARTHUR, ANDREW

Age if under 18: s1785 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 10 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: ANDREW MCARTHUR

Date: 23/02/2018

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

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I am making this statement regarding my involvement in the Grenfell Tower Fire which took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 at Grenfell Tower, Lancaster West Estate, W11 1TG. I have been spoken to regarding my account of the events on those days by Detective Constable Amanda Webster and Police Constable Emma West 29th January 2018 at Bexley Fire Station.

I understand that this statement is a full version of what was said on that day. Also present during this interview was my LFB Union Representative Simon Hall. During the interview I referred to my original notes regarding the incident which I wrote on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and I produce these notes as exhibit ACM/1. I also referred to and made notes on a map of Grenfell Tower and surrounding streets, this I exhibit as ACM/2.

I have been a fire fighter with London Fire Brigade for nine (9) years and am currently in my tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) year having joined in 2006. On joining the LFB I undertook basic training at Southwark which was an intensive seventeen (17) week course. This included all areas of Firefighting, theory and practical. Upon successful completion of my training I was posted to Erith Fire Station, at this time I was a Firefighter in development and my training was on going. I was able to carry out all areas of Firefighting but was mentored by a more senior Firefighter and also required to complete a work book before I could be signed off as a competent Firefighter. This process took approximately three (3) years which is a bit longer than normal, this was only due to injuries which I sustained during that time which delayed my completion of

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this part of my training.

During this part of my training where I was required to complete a work book I was also required to undertake 7(2)d visits. These visits require the Fire Brigade to visit premises on their specific ground and make an inspection of any relevant information. This information includes things like the position of fire hydrants, dry risers, escape routes for example. This information is then downloaded to the mobile data terminal system and can be accessed by firefighters attending a fire at that location. I have conducted checks like these at old tower blocks such as Thamesmead, I have never conducted such a visit at Grenfell Tower.

I remained at Erith Fire Station as a competent Firefighter until about two (2) years ago. At that time due to budget cuts, Erith Fire Station was required to lose a pump and as a result I moved to Bexley Fire Station on Red Watch. I have remained at Bexley for the last two (2) years. Bexley Fire Station has a Pump and also a Fire Rescue Unit (FRU). I regularly ride on the pump ladder at Bexley but am also able to ride and drive the FRU.

The FRU requires Firefighters to have additional skills which include Water rescue, Hazmat, animal rescue, Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA) as well as Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA) and a higher level of driving skill. I undertook a two (2) week FRU course based at Park Royal in order to obtain some of the skills required to ride on the FRU pump. I also undertook a four (4) day course at Ilford to qualify in the use of Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus.

On 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 I was due to work a night shift at Bexley Fire Station. This shift begins at 2000hours and is scheduled to end at 0930am the following day (14<sup>th</sup> June 2017). At the beginning of the tour we always have a role call where everyone receives their specific duties for that night. On this day I was posted to ride in the back of the Fire Rescue Unit call sign E286.

Once specific roles have been identified I would then conduct an inventory of our vehicle ensuring that all equipment is present and in working order, this includes checking my own breathing apparatus set and checking the condition of the appliance.

Also on duty on FRU E286 were a Firefighter from Chelsea fire station who was posted as the driver of

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our appliance. I do not know this firefighters name as he was a “standby” which means he was sort of on loan to us, his normal fire station is Chelsea I have not worked with him before, during this statement I will refer to this officer as FF Chelsea. Carl RAMSEY was our Crew Manager (CM) and Firefighter Neil FRANKLIN was also posted to the back of E286 with me.

Once role call and inventory checks have been carried out normally on this shift we would have a lecture. On this particular night I cannot remember what the subject was but we would have had some sort of learning input.

I cannot remember any calls prior to Grenfell Tower on this night, it is possible that we went to a call but if we did, I do not remember. As a general rule the FRU has less calls than the pump. The FRU does not carry any ladders, hose, pumps or water. The FRU deals with vehicle entrapments which requires cutting gear, water rescue which requires a boat and tow lines and specific specialist rescue. Because of this it is likely that I would remember a call if we had had one.

I was resting when the bells went down and the call came out. The call was for our pump only which was E286. I was the second person to get dressed and down to the pump, FF Chelsea was already in the office area and had the call sheet, it is normal for the driver to get down first as they want to know where they are going and plan a route. FF Chelsea said “it’s a four (4) pump fire”. I thought this was unusual as the FRU would not normally be called as relief or as an initial response to a fire. I looked at the call and said “it’s a forty (40) pump fire”.

I couldn’t believe the number of pumps required, I have been to a twenty (20) pump fire before, but these are normally for warehouses, not residential buildings. I got my phone and googled the location and saw the events been reported on either BBC or SKY news. I was stunned, I have never seen a forty (40) pump fire before.

FF Chelsea either handed the call sheet to CM RAMSEY or maybe CM RAMSEY looked it up on the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT). I think the call came in at about 0330 am or maybe 0400am. We were required to attend an RVP which was in Holland Park Avenue. FF Chelsea knows that area really well and was able to plot a route without any assistance and we made our way to the RVP on blue lights.

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Because I was on the back of our appliance and also because I wasn't required to help with the route I cannot be sure of the route we took. I remember that we missed the turning to Holland Park Avenue because there were lots of people stopped on the flyover looking at the Tower and also most of the appliances were just going direct to the Tower. I am sure there was radio traffic on route but I can only recall our appliance been called directly by control to see where we were and our expected time of arrival at the RVP.

As we drove over the flyover which is close to the Westfield Shopping centre I had a really good view of Grenfell Tower, It looked like a film scene, make believe, it just didn't look real. The whole building from top to bottom from that angle was glowing with flames. In my original notes which I made on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 (exhibit AMC/ 1) I described the building as a rectangular fire ball and I stand by that description, the scene was unimaginable.

We doubled back in our appliance in order to arrive at our RVP which was Holland Park Avenue, once we arrived we showed our appliance as "status 3" on our MDT which just means we had arrived. The RVP was a private housing area; it was quite posh. We had no difficulty in parking our appliance as most of the other appliances appeared to have gone directly to the Tower and I think ours was the only appliance there.

We were met by a Station Manager who I don't know and he told us to make our way on foot to a briefing area which was outside Kensington Leisure Centre. This Station Manager told us to take all of our Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA) with us. We collected all of EDBA but didn't take any other equipment with us and made our way on foot towards Kensington Leisure Centre. I remember this was quite a walk, it took us about ten (10) minutes and took us through an area of housing which looked to be council property and less up market than where we had parked. I recall that we locked our appliance which in itself is unusual, normally we just leave the appliance unlocked as we are never normally that far away from it.

When we arrived at I think Bomore Road CM RAMSEY handed in our nominal role board (NRB) and we waited outside the first holding point which was Kensington Leisure Centre (marked as 1 on exhibit

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AMC/2). This is where we were first detailed. We were simply told to move to the next holding area which I have marked on exhibit AMC/2 as 2.

It was early now and the day was starting to get light. There were members of the public out and about by this time. I remember seeing people who I assume were residents from Grenfell Tower sitting and laying out on the grass with blankets over them to keep them warm, most of these people were injured but conscious and been tended to by the London Ambulance Service (LAS). There were blue tents here which were the Police and I believe they had injured people inside. Also a lot of LFB appliances at this staging area.

This staging area was on the East Elevation (marked as 2 on exhibit ACM/2) and I had a clear view of both the East and South Elevations. There was a lot of fire and smoke but also debris coming down from the Tower in an almost constant stream. Some of the panels were coming down whole, some of them were alight and some were burning embers. We remained here for a very short time, maybe only for a couple of minutes before been rushed forward to the next holding point.

We walked to this next area through an underpass, there was an ALP (aerial ladder platform) at this location which we had to pass to get to the holding point on the West Elevation (marked as 3 on ACM/2). This was a playground and it had a lot of firefighters in SDBA waiting to go in, they were all sitting down waiting to be called forward. There was also a crew with a jet reaching to the first (1st) floor of the Tower. This crew were also trying to cool the debris which was falling down off the tower.

There are no words to describe what the tower looked like on this elevation. I couldn't see anybody inside and the building was alight from the fourth (4<sup>th</sup> floor up).

This holding area looked to be well managed, there were two (2) or maybe three (3) Station Managers (SM) controlling the firefighters going into the Tower. The Station Managers were calling crews forward and then trying to pick a good moment to run from the playground area into the Tower without the crews been hit by the debris falling down. There were Police Officers using long shields above their heads and the Firefighters heads to protect them as they all went in. The ground underfoot in this area was very unstable due to all the debris which had already fallen.

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We were only held at this point for about two (2) minutes before we were called to the front of the line to go in. We were escorted by two (2) Police Officers to two (2) firefighters. We had remained as a crew and went in in two groups of two fire fighters and two Police Officers, I can't remember who went first. I remember the crew that went in before us had a near miss when a whole panel came down off the side of the Tower. When we ran in I remember the shields been hit with debris.

We went in to Grenfell Tower through a double door with only one (1) of the doors open, once I got inside I waited for the remainder of our four (4) person crew to enter the building. The room we found ourselves in was on the ground floor, it was about one (1) foot deep in water. There were some other crews already in there, one crew of EDBA and one of SDBA and some more people in the lobby area ahead of us. I remember it was a lot of people for the size of the room, one area was being used for fresh crews and crews who had already been up inside the tower were in a different room.

We moved straight through to the lift shaft area and were told to sit down and wait to be detailed. I don't remember who told us this, but he was wearing a white helmet. We waited in this area for about five (5) or ten (10) minutes. I remember while we were waiting that I could hear the debris falling down outside, I recall thinking "hold up" having seen the outside of the building it struck me that I was now inside a building that could fall down. I remember the building creaking and thinking about 911.

After what I mentioned was a short wait we were detailed, I do not know the name of the officer who briefed us but I believe he was a DAC. I remember he said "I need you to get up to the eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) floor and conduct search and rescue, there are people up there, do what you can." Once we had been briefed I forgot any concerns I had about the condition of the building. During this detailing we were also warned about the hazardous conditions inside the building, we were warned that a bariatric casualty was causing an obstruction on the stairs and that this person was deceased. We were also warned about hose, debris and dead bodies which we may encounter inside the building.

We were working in a crew of four (4) which is unusual as normally we would be working in a three (3), also we had a crew of SDBA wearers backing us up. I can't remember how many firefighters were in this SDBA crew but they were tasked with bringing hose for us to use. This was also unusual as due to the

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type of work the FRU normally conducts we wouldn't work with hose. It is also unusual to have a SDBA crew carrying out the lifting of kit for an EDBA crew, this is for the obvious reason that they (SDBA) have less air in their breathing apparatus and will likely need to return before an EDBA wearer. For this reason, you would normally have an EDBA crew with an EDBA back up and an SDBA crew with an SDBA back up. However, we clarified the situation and decided that we would carry the branch and the SDBA would carry the hose, this was a fluid and flexible situation and it wasn't practical to do things the way we normally would.

We made our way to the Bridge Head which at this time was on the ground floor at the bottom of the stairs. There were four (4) entry control boards at the Bridge Head but they were all full up. The wall behind was covered in china graph with the information written on it, it was obvious that the entry control officer had given up on using the boards and resorted to using the wall for the information he would normally put into the boards. We handed the entry control officer (ECO) our tallies and gave him our station but we didn't give all the information to him that we would normally give. We just said where we were from, that we were EDBA going to the eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) Floor. I remember the Bridge Head had a lot of senior officers in it, maybe three (3) or as many as four (4) which is way more than you would normally have.

I will always remember when we were at the Bridge Head two (2) or three (3) Firefighters came down the stairs with a resident, I remember him because he was wearing swimming goggles. I knew there were still fire safety guidance (FSG) calls coming in but I was shocked to see a live survivor given the conditions inside the building.

We were all already under air from the time we were briefed by the DAC. All we needed to do before leaving the Bridge Head was put our flash hoods on, turn our BA sets on and fit our gloves. I also needed to fix my "Barry" set. This is a radio which transmits through the bones in your head, I was wearing one while I was at Grenfell Tower but throughout the whole time I was there all I could hear was a bleeping noise. Our hand held sets seemed to be working but the "Barry" was no use to me.

We proceeded up towards the staircase, the Bridge Head was at the bottom of a set of stairs that led up a gantry and then onto the internal staircase. We moved along the internal staircase in single file, at this

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time I could see fairly well but we stayed close to the right hand side holding the rail. We were moving slowly because we were wearing kit which is heavy.

Conditions in the stair well got worse the further we ascended the stairs. There were repeaters on the stairs and a lot of hose. Repeaters are a bit of kit we use to assist with radio transmissions. I could see the floor numbers up to floor four (4) but after that it was all just soot and a lot of smoke. I believe that we made it to the eleventh floor but there was no visible number and from floor four (4) I was counting floors.

We came across the bariatric body which we had been told about, there was a lot of hose over the body and underneath this body. I would guess that the body was female but it was difficult to be sure due to the conditions in the stairwell and the amount of hose over the body, all I could really see were the hands and feet, I know the body had no shoes on and I think they were lying on their back because I recall on the way back down seeing the feet of the body pointing upward so I guess they must have been on their back.

We had been told during the detailing that if we came across anyone above the fourth (4th) floor up then we should presume they were deceased due to the conditions inside the building. We passed at least one (1) dead dog once we had passed the bariatric body. The conditions were bad, on a scale of one to ten I would I would say it was about a five, I could still see my hand in front of my face but that was all, that changed when we got to the eleventh floor (11<sup>th</sup>).

By the time we reached what I believe was the eleventh floor (11<sup>th</sup>) it was just our four (4) person EDBA crew. The crew of SDBA wearers had stopped on a lower floor to do something else, this wasn't a problem for us as we had a branch and there was so much hose lying around that we didn't need them to carry any for us. The four (4) of us conferred and decided that myself and FF Chelsea would remain on the eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) floor and the remaining two (2) members of our crew, FF Franklin and CM RAMSEY would descend to the floor below to connect the hose to the dry riser. When they arrived at the tenth (10th) floor we communicated by shouting between the eleventh and tenth floors. Either CM RAMSEY or FF FRANKLIN were having difficulty locating the dry riser. I opened the lobby door onto the eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) Floor.

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I couldn't believe the conditions inside this floor, it was completely black and I couldn't see anything.

The heat was scars the hottest I have ever known a fire. It was obvious that we couldn't proceed without water onto this floor. I didn't know the layout of the floor so was unable to even conduct a basic search. I retreated back into the lobby area.

Eventually I managed to take a hose which was on floor eleven (11) which was connected to the dry riser. Because there was so much hose I then had to run it up to the next floor and loop it back down to the eleventh so that we could work with it. I attached the branch, opened the lobby door with the intention of using the hose to enable us to work on the eleventh (11th) carrying out search and rescue and firefighting. I opened the branch and nothing, there was no pressure and no water.

We had no comms with the Bridge Head and were unable to contact them to make them aware of the issue with water pressure. I could feel the heat on the back of my neck and I could not see a thing. Our crew had no choice but to descend down to the Bridge Head to try and resolve the issue with the water pressure.

When our four (4) person crew arrived at the Bridge Head which was still on the ground floor, we informed them of the issue with the water we were told that a piece of debris had hit the ALP and burst the hose, this had caused the loss of water pressure. We were all ready to go back up but we were told by the Bridge Head to exit the building and return to the holding area. We left Grenfell Tower by the same entry/exit point that we had entered through. It was daylight when we came out of the Tower.

We were directed to go back to the grass area outside of Kensington Leisure Centre, I can't remember who told us to do this. We walked a long way, past a church and back into Bomore Road, I think it took us about fifteen (15) minutes. There were a lot of people and news crews about and someone got a photo of our CM RAMSEY which was later splashed all over the papers. The Police had cordoned off some areas and there were members of the public looking at the Tower and us. We were really dirty and could just about stand up. The Tower had balls of smoke coming out and was still glowing, you just couldn't stop that fire.

We returned to the area outside of Kensington Leisure Centre, the tents had gone from this area now and

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it was now an area for the Brigade. We changed our cylinders over, removing the empty used cylinders and replacing them with fresh ones. This is outside of policy as under normal circumstances you would only wear inside a hostile environment once at an incident. We kept our sets close to ensure that we had everything we needed.

We sat together as a team for about ten (10) minutes resting. We were keen to get back inside the tower and walked back around to the West Elevation, a Station Manager stopped us on route and said that there were still fresh crews who hadn't been inside under ED & SDBA and that they would be going in next. We were told to rest and try to keep fresh. We returned to the Green outside of Kensington Leisure Centre, everyone there had dropped their sets and looked exhausted.

We rested for a while and went back to the Church to use the toilets and get some food. Then went back to the Leisure Centre again. In total we had been waiting for about two (2) hours. We were keen to get back into the Tower and work so after about two (2) hours we made our way back to the playground area on the West Elevation and waited at the far end of the playground where firefighters were waiting to go into the Tower. After about thirty (30) minutes we were moved back inside the Tower. We entered through the same entry point as before and arrived in the Foyer where we remained for about another two (2) hours.

There was our crew of four (4) with EDBA and another crew of four (4) EDBA from Lewisham waiting. It was apparent that SDBA was been used more than EDBA at this time. This is more normal as EDBA is more frequently used as an emergency backup rather than an initial response to a fire. I do recall that this time while we were in this area there was a generator working.

A Station Manager came over and detailed us, we were told that he needed us to drop our EDBA and work clearing hose, there was too much kit in the stairwells and we needed to clear and regroup. He also told us that the volume of FSG calls had slowed down significantly.

We dropped our EDBA sets and in company with the four (4) Firefighters from Lewisham made our way to the Bridge Head. The Bridge Head had now moved to the fourth (4) floor and a Crew Manager named Simon Vincent was in charge of the entry board at the Bridge Head. We were told to wait inside a flat on

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the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) floor and await a briefing. I do not know what flat number we were in but the flat was flooded and had no fire damage.

We were waiting in this flat for what felt like a long time. Crews from Blue Watch were been tasked and used to clear hose. While we were waiting one of the firefighters from Lewisham became quite frustrated, in fairness he was tired and I think this is what caused his frustration. A Station Manager came into the flat to speak with this firefighter, when the Station Manager realised that we were Red Watch he told us to go and get our EDBA sets and relieved us.

We made our way out of the Tower and back to the green outside Kensington Leisure Centre. We all dropped our sets and got something to eat. I remember the blue tents were now back on the green. A Vicar or Priest came over and chatted to us.

Eventually our Crew Manager collected the NRB and we were dismissed, we were told that we had to attend Paddington to write our statements and speak with a counsellor if we wanted too. We walked back to our appliance which hadn't moved since we left it and made our way to Paddington where I wrote the notes which I have referred to in this interview and statement.

From Paddington we drove back to Bexley. I think we got back at 1915hours, we were told we could go home if we wanted to but all of our crew wanted to stay. We rested and went back on the run at midnight.

I have never had reason to visit Grenfell Tower before the night of this incident and I have not returned to Grenfell Tower since I left on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

While I was inside the Tower I was unaware of any smoke management system, fire lift, sprinklers or fire alarms. I was unaware of any issues with the gas supply to the Tower and I was not aware of any fire fighters posted to observe and relay information about the outside of the Tower to officers on the Bridge Head.

While I was inside Grenfell Tower I was aware that Fire Safety Guidance calls were still been received. This means that persons trapped inside the Tower were talking to an operator who would normally give

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the advice that the trapped person should remain inside the building close to a window and await rescue from the Fire Brigade. Because these calls were still being made I knew that people were still trapped inside the building.

This policy is known as the “Stay Put Policy”, under normal circumstances it is the safest way for a person to escape a fire. Obviously, since FSG calls were still ongoing then I know that the Stay Put Policy was in use at Grenfell Tower. The Stay Put Policy is the safest policy because normally a fire in a block like Grenfell will stay within a compartment. What I mean by this is that if a fire is in one flat then it will be contained within that compartment (flat) or room. By remaining in a safe place this limits the ability of the fire to spread outside of the compartment and the persons inside other compartments can be rescued.

With regard to this incident it was like nothing I have ever seen before. To this day I think that if the London Fire Brigade had run the incident according to policy it would have been a lot worse. We were able to get set up in the best way we could to tackle the fire and manage the incident, following strict policy would have slowed that process down. I don’t know what else we could have done or had to assist us on this day with this fire.

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