

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: POULLAIS, DANIEL

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 5 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: DANIEL POULLAIS

Date: 03/03/2018

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

This statement is a summary of a recorded interview which took place on 5th December 2017 at Wembley Fire Station. On this day I was interviewed by PC Abhay DESAI and DC Paul PHILLIPS from the Grenfell Tower Fire investigation team. I am a fireman, currently posted as Crew Manager at Hendon Fire Station, and I attended the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017. I have never been to Grenfell Tower before although I have done Section 7(2)d visits to other similar high rise blocks on my station ground which also involved watch based training and exercises. I have also attended high rise fires in my previous brigade in Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue, the procedures are the same so I am fully aware of high rise procedures.

During the interview I referred to my contemporaneous notes. I made these notes on 14 June 2017 at Paddington Fire Station. I exhibit these notes as DAP/1. I have also signed a consent form agreeing for my statement to be shared with the London Fire Brigade investigation, the public enquiry into Grenfell Tower and with the Fire Brigades Union.

In this statement I will initially discuss my working history within the fire Service. I will also mention Lee WILLESSEN who was the other Crew manager at Hendon Red Watch.

I have been a Fire Fighter for 14 years. I Joined the London Fire Brigade in August 2016 having moved from Hertfordshire Fire brigade. My current rank is Crew Manager at Hendon Fire Station although on

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the night of the incident I was deputising and in charge of the station.

On Tuesday 13th June 2017 I came on duty at 2000hrs. We did a role call at the start and a Fire Fighter called Steve Chadwick had not turned up for work so someone from blue watch stayed on. After 10 minutes I rung and reported him late for duty. I also called the police as we were concerned for his welfare. We were then called out a few times whilst waiting for the police. The police then arrived at the station and we searched his locker looking for clues as to where he could be.

At around 0120hrs we were alerted, to the Grenfell Tower fire, via our Mobilising system which printed out the details of the call. We were told to "standby at G27". G27 is North Kensington Fire Station. The details of the call came out on the tele printer, pager and the MDT (mobile Data Terminal) on the appliance. We had two appliances at the station - A401 and A402. I was in charge of Pump ladder A401. Also on that appliance were Fire Fighter Dave SMYTH who was driving, a fire fighter from Mill Hill called Adam BUCKNALL and Fire Fighter Mark HILLDITCH.

Crew Manager Lee Willesden was in charge of pump appliance A402. Also on that appliance were Fire Fighter Tom NEARY who was driving, Fire Fighter Shaun POWELL and Fire Fighter Piers FOSTER. Everyone thought that both machines being put on standby was strange. We had a serious job in Golders green a few days previously where there were a few rescues. That was considered a big fire at the time so the crew were on a little bit of an edge.

As we pulled out of Hendon Fire Station we switched the radio on and I heard the FSG (Fire Survival Guidance) calls. The amount of calls made me realise that something quite serious was going on.

During the FSG Calls I heard floor numbers being listed on the radio. I heard high numbers and low numbers and heard a lot of calls although I couldn't hear what was being said.

As we went down LADBROKE GROVE and crossed over HARROW ROAD I could see a huge jet of flames going right up to the top of Grenfell Tower. I initially thought that this was a building under construction or that it was made of wood. It looked like the Towering Inferno. The amount of fire spread correlated with the pattern of Fire Survival Guidance.

As we pulled into the forecourt of North Kensington station we were mobilised to the fire. The RVP then

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came through on my pager stating RVP BOSMORE ROAD. I booked in attendance at north Kensington and then both A401 and A402 we were then sent straight out. On the radio I could hear several RVP's being given out. I listened to what ours was and then looked at the map. I then confirmed the route with the driver of A402 and we both proceeded on blue lights and bells towards Grenfell Tower. Control told us to RVP on BOMORE ROAD W11. We then went down LADBROKE GROVE towards BOMORE ROAD but we couldn't get into BOMORE ROAD as it was full of other fire engines and ambulances.

We then parked on WALMER ROAD W11 as that was as close as we could get. We essentially joined a traffic queue. I then told the crews to take SDBA (Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus) sets, hose, branches, TIC (Thermal Imaging Camera) and breaking in gear. The SDBA sets last around 30 minutes although it depends how hard you are working. The EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) lasts around an hour. We then walked around to BOMORE ROAD, and then down a path towards Grenfell Tower.

Crew Manager Lee WILLESSEN took the two nominal role boards to the control unit and handed them in. The Nominal Role boards list the crew members in attendance from both appliances. Lee then came back and told us to make our way to the tower as they need BA (Breathing Apparatus) there.

I also spoke to an unknown officer and he also said to go the tower. As I made my way to the tower I spoke to members of the public who were coughing and crying. It was apparent that some people had self-evacuated. I could also hear people screaming, people shouting for help, running water, and a sooty burning smell. The front face of the tower was engulfed in fire. I then assisted people by directing them to the LAS triage area. No one really stands out.

I then made my way to the base of the tower and we lined up in pairs with my BA set on ready to enter the tower. There were around 10 pairs. It was difficult to get into the building as there was debris falling. There were two Fire Fighters spotting for falling debris which then enabled us to run into the Foyer.

As we entered the foyer I just stood around with my BA set on. I was told the BA staging area was on the mezzanine floor. I stood there for a while just waiting for my brief. I had no briefing there and my BA mask was not on at this point. There were numerous people coming down the stairs which I helped with. I

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had no idea if the lift was working and I did not try and use it. I did not see any sprinklers. Station Manager Pete WOLFENDEN was drawing a map on the wall and marking where people had come from he was in charge of FSG. As we were in the lobby waiting for instruction they then moved the Bridgehead to the ground floor. We were then moved from the foyer into a side community room as it was too dangerous to go back outside. We stayed in the community room waiting to be deployed onto whatever floor they needed us on.

Whilst waiting to be deployed from the Community room I assisted numerous crews by taking casualties from the BA wearers and helping them out of the building towards the ambulance crews. In order to exit the building someone had made a hole in the community room which enabled people to escape the building. This hole was then made bigger by Piers and Adam using RTC kit and breaking in gear. This was on the left-hand side of the building.

Of the people I helped down the stairs there are two people that stick in my mind. One was that pregnant lady that was on the news that had the still born baby. She was unconscious coming down the stairs and I remember remarking to Tom that she was heavily pregnant. She had a dressing gown on and her face was covered in soot. The other was a little boy who I stopped and asked what floor he was on and what flat number he came from. I think he said he came from the 18th floor. I asked if anyone was with him and he said "only my brother but he's dead so don't worry about him". He was Mediterranean looking, around 6 or 7 years old, and smoke covered. There was a conveyor belt of people coming out. Someone would shout casualty and we would direct them and if unconscious help carry them to the door.

At some point I was informed, I cannot remember who by, that all SDBA wearers were to exit the building as they now only required EDBA wearers. This was because the first couple of floors had already been searched so a longer wear time of BA was required. We then moved outside to wait in BA I then went to wait in sector 2 to the left of the building. Whilst waiting I was helping people to the triage area. I was stood outside for around 10 minutes and when I looked up at the tower I saw people waving white blankets and people with the lights on phones flashing S.O.S. Eventually the windows that people were stood in would become engulfed in flames. The fire spread from the front of the building to the left face (if stood looking at the front). The fire spread vertically and horizontally. There was also bits of burning cladding falling from the building. I was watching people die in front of me. These were from floors 6 -10.

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t going to be used. I then dropped my set and the officer said they need people to assist with casualty handling. I then went to the first floor and helped people down the stairs. I remember one black guy whom I took to the ambulance and the ambulance personnel said there was nothing they could do for him. I, along with many others then stayed in the stairwell helping casualties down the stairs. I also assisted Fire Fighters who were coming down and who were very hot. The stairwell was very wet and there was a lot of hose all over the place.

I then received reports from the Bridgehead that the water pressure was low. I, Adam, Piers, Tom and some other crew managers then got rid of some hose that ran into the wet risers on floors 1, 2, 3 and 4. We then ran new hose to an appliance that was pumping outside and put the hose to floors 3, 4 and 5. We then put enough water pressure into the hose to get up to the 7th floor. I then removed some of the hose that was not being used and then tied some of the working hose to the handrails in order to free up the stairs. I then informed Group Manager Pat GOLDBOURNE what we had done.

This was to make sure that BA crews had working water and that I knew which hose was connected to what appliance and whether or not it worked. me and Piers then went on floors 3 and 4 making sure no one was still up there, ensuring we disconnected the hoses and to ensure the wet riser was turned off. We shouted and made noise asking if anyone was there. Some of the flats were burnt out and we could not enter them. We also closed several doors to stop the smoke spreading. I cannot remember exactly which ones. It made it more breathable for us in the stairwell as we were up there without BA. Any crews that then came down and passed us casualties we then took them outside.

I must say the radios were terrible as people were asking the BA main control questions over the radio but nothing was coming back. I and several others then started running messages between the fire fighters and the Bridgehead.

I was informed that all of the Fire Fighters were struggling to get past floors 13 and 14 as it was too hot to bring casualties past that point. I remember a crew of 4 fire fighters informed me there was a bariatric lady on the 9th or 10th floor and should they be bringing her out. I then went down to Pete and asked him what to do. Pete said to leave her as we haven't got the recourses to lift her out. So, they left her in the stairwell. I had no idea what condition she was in, whether she was alive or dead. The crew then went up the stairs and subsequently brought other people down. We then ran new hose in order to tackle the fire

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on floors 9 and 10.

I can't remember what time it was but we were all exhausted. I was soaked through and was feeling claustrophobic so I told the crew that it was time for a break.

I was Liaising with General Manager Pat GOLDBOURNE about hose. He then informed me that a light portable pump was to be taken to the 9th or 10th floor. The crew doing that relieved us. We then came out of the tower at around 8am and it was daylight and the building was still alight. I then went to the church with Tom, Adam and Piers. We had some food and water there. My radio was soaked through and wasn't working. I remember the time as a woman couldn't get past the cordon and commented that she would be late for the school run.

I then went to the Salvation Army van and met up with Lee and his crew. All 8 of us were now back together and all were safe and well. I then found my BA set then we all sat together on the grass. I was sat on grass for 30 minutes. We then went back and assisted outside carrying anymore casualties that were coming out. Command then stated they needed more BA wearers so we sat down in BA near the leisure centre. It then got to around 10am and an officer came around and said any crews that were together we want you to go. I informed him that we hadn't worn BA yet. He then said that we could either resume wearing BA or leave as Command were looking to remove appliances from the scene.

Our appliances were blocking in Euston. They had to leave so we moved our appliances and then left the scene. We then made our way to Paddington fire station to make our contemporaneous notes. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Another colleague, on the night, hurt his ankle on the stairs. I do not believe that anything more could have been done on the night. The building was badly designed and its design affected how the fire spread.

I am aware of the stay put policy around fires. Staying put inside your flat if there is a fire in another flat should offer you protection from the fire for around 60 minutes. The floors and the fire doors offering greater protection. Staying put also stops people running down the staircase. I am not aware about the decisions made about the stay put policy on the night nor decisions regarding the withdrawal of it.

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