

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: SHAW, GRAEME

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 7 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: G SHAW

Date: 22/02/2018

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

This statement refers to my version of events from the Grenfell Tower fire that took place on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

On 3rd November 2017, I was interviewed at Paddington Fire Station by Detective Constable Matt LONGDEN and Detective Constable Graeme HALLE of the Metropolitan Police Service. The interview was audio recorded. Also present was LFB Union Representative Tim ROEDEL. Below is a detailed summary of the interview.

After the fire, I made contemporaneous notes at Paddington Fire Station. I exhibit these notes as GAS/1. I may refer to these notes throughout my statement.

I have been a firefighter for 24 years. I spent the first 4 years with the MOD before moving to the London Fire Brigade. On joining the London Fire Brigade, after training school I was initially based out of West Hampstead Fire Station where I spent 13 years, before moving to Kentish Town for one year. I have spent the last six years based at Paddington Fire Station.

On the night of the Grenfell Tower fire I was in the role of a firefighter assigned to pump A211 from Paddington.

Signature: G SHAW
2018

Signature witnessed by:

During my career, I have attended numerous incidents at high-rise buildings. With regards to training around high rise buildings, we have had a lot of training since an incident in Hertfordshire 6-7 years ago. We have intensely completed high-rise training with many high-rise buildings on our ground. The officers run the training we have, which normally consists of lectures, tower based training and section 72D visits on certain buildings. Lectures are at least every two days on various topics, and every couple of weeks with regards to high rises just to keep ticking over with any new equipment coming in. At Paddington Fire Station, we have a seven-floor tower in the back yard which we use for training. We use it once per tour (a tour consists of two day/two night shifts). We do some familiarisation-based training using that tower in between jobs, and we comfortably use it twice per month depending on how many call outs we get.

My last training on high rises was a couple of weeks before this interview.

As a firefighter, I have been to many incidents in high-rise buildings, flats and other buildings. These incidents are regular and there a lot of high rise buildings on our ground.

I mentioned 72D visits. These are Familiarisation visits to buildings that we regularly conduct on the ground, at least once every two tours. On a familiarisation visit we look at various things such as the structure of a building, where the dry riser is, the location of the hydrant to judge distance and see how close our truck can get to the rising main, the floor layouts and other things. This is all to familiarise ourselves with the building so when we attend there on a call out, we know where things are to assist our firefighting. If we receive a call out to our ground, we generally know what type of building the call is to. I have no previous knowledge of Grenfell Tower and have not attended the tower in the past. It is off our ground and am not aware of any pre-prepared firefighting plan there.

I will now talk about events on the night of the Grenfell Tower fire. The night of Tuesday 13th June 2017, I started my night shift at 2000 hours, based at Paddington Fire Station. The first call was at 0102 hours for pump A212 and within about 30-45 seconds, my pump, the ladder and FRU were also called to the tower. They were making the job an 8 pump fire at the time (eight working fire appliances). I was riding A211 as a BA wearer. We made our way to the location to the area via Westbourne Park and you could certainly see the tower in front of us. I did not notice any information on our MDT system. When I first saw it from a distance it looked like there was a flashing of flames going up 20ft on the outside of the tower. Someone mentioned that it looked like some meshing was alight, which we thought we could deal with quite quickly. Meshing is normally something that is around a building when scaffolding is up. It did

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2018

Signature witnessed by:

not look as though flats were alight. Access to the area was tight with parked cars, couple of trucks and small roads. We arrived there quite early on and parked relatively close. Our driver, Steven Mills parked in a position to allow a turntable to go past us if it needed too. We parked around 100m from the tower. I think we arrived to the tower at around 0116 hours, but not sure.

When we arrived on scene we grabbed our sets and as much equipment as we could. We took some breaking in gear, a longline (30m bit of rope) and a thermal image camera. A thermal image camera is carried on a pump ladder, pump and Fire Rescue Unit. No everybody has one but the BA team would generally take it.

We got in towards the building and noticed that the flames were coming out one of the floors, possibly the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors. As we got into the lobby area we made our way up to a small balcony on the floor above.

In a small corridor area there was a BA Control Centre already setup and they were urgently sending people into the building. You could clearly see that we had a major incident at this time and I knew there was a fire in a flat that had spread.

Conditions at that time in the lobby were manageable. It was busy, but organised, and people knew what they were doing. It felt as though it was clean air there. I did not notice any alarms, just voices and shouting.

I was with FF Jim CUTHBERT, CM Guy TELLINGSON, FF Jim WOLFENDEN, FF Harry BETTERSON.

The guy at BA control I believe was Station Manager Brian O'KEEFE. He said that he needed a crew of five to go up and see roughly what we got up there at the moment. We got split up. Guy went in with Jim and Harry. Me and Jim Cuthbert were in together. We were going to go in as a group of five but said they needed someone to search and rescue floors 4 and 5. Guy, Harry and Jim went off up in to building. Me and Jim handed in our BA tallies and went up to the 4th floor. BA tallies gives a record of how much air we have left. When it is put into a board, it will tell the BA controller how much air we have left.

As we walked up to the 4th floor using the stairwell, conditions were not too bad on the stairs. I didn't have a Thermal Image Camera on me. We should have, but we didn't. We opened the lobby door and it

Signature: G SHAW
2018

Signature witnessed by:

was jet black, the heat was intense and we decided to do a right hand side on the floor. A right hand search is a safety mechanism that we use where we feel the walls to get around a floor where we cannot see. At that point I had no idea of the layout of the lobby or flats. We did not have any media with us, only a sledgehammer to get into certain flats. We started on our right hand side, checking all the flats as we were going through. I cannot remember flat numbers. As we made our way around, flats that were locked I knocked the door in with the sledgehammer using some force to open them. We went inside these flats where conditions were clear. These flats were on the right hand side of the lobby and they were empty.

We found two gentlemen in one flat on the far left corner of the lobby. They were by the window and told us that they had just come off the phone to control where the operator told them to stay in the room, giving fire survival guidance. The advice given in an FSG call is to 'stay put' in the flat if it is safe and await rescue from fire crews. It could potentially be more dangerous in other areas for people.

Both gentlemen said they were fine in the flat. I genuinely thought they was safe in the flat with the clear conditions and clean air. I opened the window when I was in the flat and saw a turntable ladder outside the window. I discussed it with Jim and we said to the men to stay in the flat as was not worth coming out into the lobby with the smoke/intense heat and dangerous conditions. In our view it was safer for them to be in the flat with clean air and no fire affecting them, but if there were any problems the turntable ladder was there outside the window to help.

I was not aware of any decisions to withdraw the 'stay put' policy at this time and believed it was safer for them to remain where they were, sticking to the advice given by the control room staff.

Both gentlemen were youngish, maybe in their 30's. Probably Arabic or Asian. They were both very calm.

We left their flat and continued with our right hand search, going around the floor knocking on the flats. I could not get into one flat and I was exhausted because I was using the sledgehammer. I swapped with Jim and he could not get in so we decided to move onto the next one because we were using more and more air, and wanted to get as far as we could. We wanted to conserve our air.

We then made our way up to the 5th floor using the stairwell. On going up the stairs, firefighters were going up and coming down. There was a lot of shouting and noise. We got onto the 5th floor and went

Signature: G SHAW
2018

Signature witnessed by:

through the lobby door. It was silent in there. The 4th floor was extremely hot which I could understand as that's where the fire had started, but the 5th floor was even hotter. The heat had massively intensified. In my head I couldn't understand why it was getting more and more intense. Maybe I was feeling hot, but Jim confirmed that it was 'fucking hot'. We did the same right hand side search on the 5th floor, going through the first three flats to the right. I knocked on one door and got in. Another door was bolt locked and I used the sledgehammer to get in. No one was in these flats and the conditions were clear inside. The flats looked untouched by fire. We also found the bin room in the lobby area that was totally clear and had no smoke inside it which massively surprised me. If only we had told people to go to the bin rooms. As we were searching on the 5th floor, Jim's whistle then started to go. The whistle gives a pre warning sound telling us we have roughly 12 minutes of working time left in our BA sets, depending on conditions. Another high pitched whistle goes a few minutes later and is basically saying we should be out of the building. That second whistle should not be going off inside the building. We immediately started to go down the stairwell from the lobby on the 5th floor. As we were coming down the stairwell was congested with firefighters both coming up and going down. Other people who may have been residents were going downwards.

As we got down to the 4th floor, on the stairwell there was a woman just standing there on the stairs and I thought 'Where the hell have you come from?' and was quite surreal. She was in her 40's or 50's, possibly Asian and wearing a dressing gown. She was very calm and said was that she had lost her cat. I did not really speak to her, just helped her down. The conditions at this point had worsened in the stairwell where the lobby doors were opened, allowing smoke into the stairwell. We escorted the woman downstairs to BA control where there were paramedics, and handed her over to them. I think Jim went back for the cat but cannot be sure. BA control was very busy at this point with loads of firefighters coming in. I remember relaying the information as to where we had gone and what we did.

I cannot remember who we passed the information onto.

We then went outside as our cylinders were virtually empty so we went out to reattach new sets to go in again. We must have been in the building for 20-25 minutes.

On getting out of the building from the main entrance there was things falling off of flats. Me and Jim turned around and I couldn't believe what I was seeing. The whole side of that building was alight with a lick of flame. The wind was catching it and you could hear the flame trying to lip round the side of the

Signature: G SHAW
2018

Signature witnessed by:

building. You could feel the heat coming from that side of the building. At that point I knew why the heat had generated so much inside, and it shouldn't be like that.

Myself and Jim went back to our fire truck and changed our cylinders. Our truck was in the same place as we had parked it initially, but at this stage there was more people arriving in BA sets and a lot more trucks parked up.

After changing our BA sets, we went back to the tower and met up with a lot of other crews. We were then queuing up to get back into the main entrance of the building but at this stage a lot of the debris was falling off the building. It was raining debris, burnt out bits of rock or coal. There was a Watcher keeping an eye of the building and debris saying "clear, go, clear go" when it was safe to go into the building. Police officers were using riot shields above their heads ushering us into the building, which was great. This was to stop us from being hit by any falling debris. That entrance was very tight but the lobby itself was getting filled up with firefighters. It came to a stage where somebody said about using the entrance on the other side of the building. A small group of us walked around to the other side of the building, round to the left. It was myself, Jim WOLFENDEN and a few people who I knew from the past. On getting round to the other side we were waiting to be detailed, was told to sit down and wait to be called forward. The flames on the building had now gone lipped round the top of the building on to the side where we were sitting.

Whilst waiting we were told that they were now only committing Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA) wearers. I cannot recall who told us. I am a trained EDBA wearer, so myself and a couple of others took off our standard BA sets and went off to find some EDBA sets to put on. It took a while to find one. A lot of the FRU's have EDBA sets but there was nothing spare. We did a walk all the way round asking a Command Unit by the Railway Pub. The Command Units are vehicles and control centres that holds all the information. They told us EDBA sets had arrived but did not know where it was, so we walked back around the building and found some sets by the University Centre.

On finding the EDBA sets we went back to where we were sitting by the little entrance. Time went by, maybe an hour or so. We then said we would go back into the lobby area where there were other EDBA wearers ready to go in. We were eventually detailed to go up to the 11th floor in a crew of four.

The instruction was that there were no Fire Survival Guidance calls past the 13th floor, so go up as far as you can to the 11th floor and fight the fire. There was a couple of hoses up there as told to do what we

Signature: G SHAW
2018

Signature witnessed by:

can. Pat GOLDBOURNE gave us this instruction. It was a straight forward instruction and was just told to do our best.

We walked up the stairwell to the 11th floor. I was not aware of any fire lift, nor did I see a lift at any point. As we were making our way up to the 11th floor, I remember there was a burst hose line on the 9th. The noise was quite intense from where it had burst and there was a branch of water coming out at some pressure. The stairwell was tight, it was smoky, hot and difficult with all the water coming from this burst hose. Firefighters were coming down, people were coming down, the comms were shit and we were just looking after our own four people.

There was a casualty in the corridor on the 9th floor. I know now it was a lady but was not sure at the time. She was a large lady and all the hose lines were over her. We tried to move the lady but it was clear she was deceased. We couldn't move her so had to climb over her being careful not to step on her. With the burst hose line in your face, it made it very difficult conditions to work in.

We got up to the 11th floor where there were little pockets of fire in certain areas. It looked as though the 11th floor had burnt out. You couldn't recognise it. A lot of the smoke damage was intense, everywhere was burnt and crisp. Majority of the fire had gone out. We split up into pairs and found two hoses to start making our way through the floor. The hoses were by the lobby entrance door, but it was virtually all open plan on the floor as the walls had burnt through. I was with Dean, Ben and Jeff. It was a small area so we could all see each other on the floor.

We covered all the hotspots with the hose as much as we could see. The hotspots were small bits of light and fire that could ignite further. The other crew that was behind us went up to the 12th floor and I assumed to the same task. We went into some flats on the 11th floor. The whole flats were burnt out, some more than others. You could certainly see the flats had been alight at one point. I don't think I saw anyone on the floor.

Another crew then came up to the 11th floor and said that we have to leave and that everybody was to withdraw. That crew then went straight up to the 12th floor and tell the other crew. All four of us went down the stairwell leaving the hoses in situ. Conditions were the same as when we came up, smoky, hot, tight. We got back down to the Command Point and told them what we did. A message was relayed to us that we were withdrawing from the building, so we picked up our tallies and left the building to change our sets.

Signature: G SHAW
2018

Signature witnessed by:

We asked why there was a withdrawal, and I heard that they believed the building was not safe. This was around 7-8am. We recharged our EDBA cylinders ready to be committed again, and had a bit of a break before going back round to where everyone else was gathering to the side of the building on the grass verge area waiting for a short time for further instructions. The whole building was engulfed in smoke at that point, with small pockets of light on certain higher floors towards the top.

Our Governor Watch Manager Steve COLLINS then radioed one of the boys and told us all to meet at the Salvation Army station to get ready to leave. My radio battery was dead by that point. It should last, depending on how much I use it. I normally I have a spare, but on this night I didn't take a spare. We went to the Salvation Army and meet the rest of our Watch. We grabbed as much equipment as we could (hoses and BA sets), then try and get ourselves away. The area was a lot of congested with cars, fire trucks and ambulances. We needed to move a few trucks and after around 30 minutes we managed to get away. We went straight back to Paddington Fire Station. When we got back we were instructed to make a statement and see a Councillor before leaving. I cannot recall the exact time we got back to Paddington, but it was possibly around midday. I had a shower and completed my statement.

I did not sustain any injuries during the incident, and did not receive any medical attention.

With regards to the fire itself, I would have expected better communications through the radios. There was so much radio traffic going on and the noise meant that I could not hear anything. This meant it was very difficult to send a message to control or liaise with other firefighters whilst we were inside the building.

I have nothing further to add at this time.

Signature: G SHAW
2018

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Statement of: SHAW, GRAEME

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Page 9 of 9

Signature: G SHAW
2018

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