

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: EVANS, GRANT

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: GRANT EVANS

Date: 14/02/2018

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

This statement refers to the 14 June 2017 when I was on duty at WIMBLEDON Red Watch as a Crew Manager who attended the fire at the Grenfell Tower, London. This is my typed statement taken from the audio recording I provided to DC Graeme HALLE and DC Sally DANIELS at MITCHAM fire station on 5 January 2018

I am Crew Manager (CM+) Grant EVANS based at WIMBLEDON fire station (H34). I have been with the London Fire Brigade (LFB) since 14 June 1993, a total 24 years and I am competent in my role. In my role as a CM+, I can be based in various stations where needed but on the night of the incident, I was based at WIMBLEDON. I would be the Officer in Charge of a crew on a fire appliance and would assist with the running of a Watch at a fire station. I can operate a number of appliances-I am trained to use the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) for 6 years of my service, trained to use the Hydraulic Platform (HP) for 15 years, trained to use the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) and I am a Crew Manager+. We incorporate training for high-rise buildings in our regular training at WIMBLEDON. We have a dummy tower that we use for our training and train a couple of times a month on the tower with the ALP. The ALPs are tested every day to ensure they are operational as there are only about 7 ALPs across the LFB. We also train using the FRUs as this has line equipment that trained firefighters can use. Generally, high-rise building training is hard to do properly as the dummy towers are not true to life, sometimes staircases are not included and we use ladders but we ensure we practice safe systems of work. We try to train for every eventuality but it is hard to do it properly with what we have so, in WIMBLEDON, we regularly have training through

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lectures and practical exercises. It is important for everyone to know their safe systems of work. In my experience, I have not dealt with many tower fires but no amount of training could have prepared us for the fire at Grenfell Tower.

In the statement I will be referring to the crew I was working alongside comprising FF Paul MEDINA who was the driver to the ALP. I will also refer to other firefighters also from WIMBLEDON who arrived with my Watch Manager, Andy McKAY on the Pump Ladder appliance. I received my ordering from the Command Unit at the Tower and I worked with FF MEDINA while I was there. I will also refer to a Station Manager (SM) who I spoke with when I arrived to be SM Mick MULHOLLAND; I used to work with him and I saw him just by chance when I was looking for the Command Unit. I will also refer to a female Police Officer who was standing by some railway arches who I spoke to when I was trying to gain access to the Tower and a London Ambulance Service (LAS) Supervisor who was on Bramley Road. I did not take either of their names. I will refer to the Watch Manager (WM) Stuart Beale who was Sector Commander of SOHO's ALP, call sign A245.

From the area around the Grenfell Tower itself, I will be referring to the members of the public. Some were helpful helping me move parked cars out of the way to allow my ALP to drive down roads. I will also refer to some members of the public who were abusive towards me as well as members of the public who wanted to shake my hand as I left the scene. I will refer to a driver of a BLACK taxi who lead my ALP through the streets to the back of the Tower. There was a large presence of members of the public near the Tower and two (2) people who were looking for family members approached me. A female approached me by the railway arches and she was talking to her dad on her mobile phone. Her dad was a resident in a flat on the 23rd floor. This female was WHITE, approximately aged in her early 20s, with long dark hair. She was with a male who I believed to be her boyfriend. The other person who approached me was a male looking for his Uncle. He approached me when I was returning to the ALP to leave the incident. His Uncle was a resident on the 20th floor, aged 50 years and was diabetic. I advised this male to contact the advertised helpline but the male believed his Uncle had died. This male was of Middle Eastern appearance.

From inside the Grenfell Tower, I will be referring to the residents who I could see in their windows. To me they looked like silhouettes against the dim lit background of their individual flats. I will also refer to

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a Chinese male who was rescued by some of my crew from a different appliance from WIMBLEDON. I was involved in assisting the SOHO ALP discharging water onto the 11th floor of the Tower, the water descended onto this male's bedroom window where he was rescued.

I will also be referring to the location of the fire incident to be at the Grenfell Tower, LONDON. Grenfell Tower (the Tower) is a large residential tower block in Kensington that is enclosed by surrounding streets and homes. During my service, I have been on standby in North Kensington but I have not been to the Tower before. I was unfamiliar with the Tower and the area around it. I just knew of the leisure centre that was nearby. I did not enter the Tower and did not see the conditions inside however; other firefighters at the scene and my crew informed me when I was overseeing their welfare after the incident.

On 14 June 2017, I was at WIMBLEDON fire station. It was my first of two night duties in my set of shifts for the week. My shift started at 20:00pm. My crew and I had our routine briefing and then checked the breathing apparatus and inventories of the equipment on the vehicles. At approximately 20:30pm, we normally do a training lecture, some of the crew go to the gym but everyone is normally in bed by midnight. That shift I was to ride and be in charge of the ALP with FF Paul MEDINA as the driver. Our call sign was H345. The ALP is a quiet machine and it is not usually called out as often as the other vehicles. Since the Grenfell fire, this has changed and the ALP is called for more frequently. I was woken up at approximately 01:30am by alarms at the fire station to attend North Kensington fire station on standby. This was unusual and I have not had it on an ALP before. The call itself did not reveal any details; it was just of the ALP's call sign, H345, to attend North Kensington on standby. The ALP is not usually called to attend a station on standby. During my service, I have never received a call like this, especially to a station so far away. Normally calls such as this happen when there is a large incident on the ground of a neighbouring fire station. FF MEDINA and I travelled in H345 to North Kensington. While we were travelling, we were unaware what the incident was that was building at the time. We did not hear any radio traffic about the incident. As we were from a station based in South West London, our radio channel is channel 2, North London stations use radio channel 3. I recall querying to Control about our attendance to the call as we did not have a lot of information, the wording of the call was weird, vague and did not seem to be right. I think I was expecting my pager to go off and it did not, I cannot quite remember. However, we continued towards North Kensington.

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When we were about half way on our route to North Kensington fire station, we were ordered via our Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) to attend the scene of a fire at the Grenfell Tower that was, at this time, a 20 pump fire. I asked on my radio whether the information on the MDT was correct and it was confirmed. We were told to attend the rendezvous point (RVP) at Sirdar Road. As we do not have satellite navigation on the ALP and being unfamiliar with the location, I looked at a map on my personal mobile phone. We travelled towards Shepherds Bush roundabout, took a right to Holland Park Avenue but unfortunately missed our turning for Sirdar Road. We went to Ladbroke Grove to turn the ALP around and to our RIGHT, I saw the Tower for the first time. I could see the right hand side of the Tower was alight but it was not all the way to the top. The building reminded me of the tower in the film the Towering Inferno. The fire had not gone up or dropped down the Tower at that point; it was just on one side. In my time in the LFB, I have never been to a fire that bad at such an early stage. FF MEDINA and I continued in the ALP turning right into the RVP on Sirdar Road. On Sirdar Road, there were quite a few fire brigade appliances already on the road and due to roadworks; the road was blocked at the NORTH end, resulting in no access from the RVP. It was apparent, that we would have to manoeuvre the ALP and find alternative access. In my opinion, I do not believe Sirdar Road was the best location for the RVP, as access was limited I saw firefighters leave their fire appliances carrying their breathing apparatus and run towards to the incident. I was informed later that firefighters from my crew from WIMBLEDON had to park their appliance about a mile away from the Tower in LADBROOK GROVE and run with their breathing apparatus to the scene. Luckily, we stopped our ALP opposite the junction with Mary Place that was a right hand turn off Sirdar Road. I got off the ALP, leaving FF MEDINA and could see there were now even more fire brigade appliances behind us. I ran towards the incident along Sirdar Road to locate the Command Unit and see where they wanted us. I ran approximately half a mile towards the Tower.

It was now about 02:00am. Again it seemed chaotic, as there were many members of the public outside the Tower who were on a higher level, I'm not sure if they were on steps or if the ground was raised. There were residents flooding out of the Tower, emergency services everywhere and probably about 100 members of the public watching a bit bemused by it all. I did not look up at the Tower; my aim was to find the Command Unit or a Senior Officer who I could report to. I ran past lots of Command Units, I reported to the first one I came to but they were dealing with Fire Survival Guidance (FSG). The procedure is that you are to report to the Command Unit for your ordering of where they wanted us and not to the Incident Commander. I kept on looking and found a Station Manager I used to work with called

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Mick MULHOLLAND who he works at WANDSWORTH now. I know him to be very sensible and good on the operational ground but even he looked stunned. We were standing under a covered walkway close to the entrance of the Tower. As I was standing with him, I saw some firefighters walk past me with the body of a male who I believe was deceased.

I eventually found the Command Unit that was at the front of the Tower near the FSG Command Unit I had originally attended, I just needed to walk a bit further. The ordering I received for the ALP was brief and was simply to get my ALP round the back of Grenfell and see if I could get any access as there were people on that side of the Tower. It was very basic. I presumed that I was to set up my ALP, project water onto the building and assist bringing some residents down using the cage on the ALP. On receiving my ordering, I ran back to my ALP and I saw by then FF MEDINA in the ALP was completely blocked in. With about 6 or 7 members of the public, I was moving cars out of the way by hand so my ALP could turn into Mary Place. FF MEDINA was eventually able to manoeuvre the ALP and we turned into Mary Place. As we were unfamiliar with the area, I saw a black taxi so I stopped him and said 'We need to get round the back of Grenfell. Can you lead us the quickest way to get round the back?'. He took us all round the back roads and he eventually pulled over by Ladbroke Grove pointing telling us to go down a road to our LEFT, which would take us to Silchester Road. We turned LEFT and drove the ALP along Lancaster Road, which became Silchester Road and then we turned LEFT again onto Bramley Road. On Silchester Road, there was debris everywhere. It was ash and reminded me of debris that I imagine would be around if there had been an explosion. I believed the debris was from the Tower and some of it was still alight. The debris was BLACK in colour and I believe it was the cladding. I think I looked at the Tower again and saw holes on the outside of the Tower which with hindsight I believe to have been where the cladding burned off but I was just in disbelief by what was happening. I understand it was the debris that affected the dry riser and as bits fell off the Tower, it kept bursting the hose to the dry riser. I remember saying to FF MEDINA to be careful as he drove and I did not know if some of the debris was human remains. Silchester Road, leading to Bramley Road was eerily quiet with no members of the public around.

I stopped FF MEDINA again on Bramley Road as we had come to some railway arches. On our LEFT I got off the ALP to see if we could gain access. I asked the members of the public 'Do you know a better way round the back?' but they just gave me verbal abuse in reply saying 'Well you're the fire brigade,

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you should know where you're going'. I tried to explain to them that we were from in WIMBLEDON and we did not know where we were but they did not listen to me. I walked to the railway arches and saw they were locked. I saw there was a female Police Officer on the other side by the gate so I called her over asking if I could look to see if we could get access. She let me into the area. Unfortunately, I did not take any of her details. I walked under the arches and the railway was above me. I stood next to the Police Officer and for the first time up close, I looked up at the Tower. Some of the flats still had lights on in the Tower. I could see from about floors 9 to 18 the lighting was dim, I did not see any fire on these floors and I could see people at the windows. They were like silhouettes and I imagined they were families as the silhouettes were of different shapes of people. The top of the Tower was well alight. That is when I thought 'Oh my God, I can't help these people, I can't get to them'. I looked at the Police Officer and saw she was now crying. I walked towards the Tower to which was about 50 metres away. I know that from the ALP, the projection of water to go out sideways is approximately 22 metres and the further away you are from your target, the projection decreases so I knew just by looking at the distances, our ALP was not going to get anywhere near the Tower. I walked back to FF MEDINA and told him 'We're going to have to find another route'. More members of the public were giving us abuse shouting 'Why aren't you running, there's people in there' and 'This is what you get paid for'; I ignored them this time. I saw there were now more fire brigade appliances present as well as vehicles from the London Ambulance Service (LAS). I spoke with a person from the LAS who seemed to be a Supervisor and explained LFB needed to use the road to get into the Tower. The LAS Supervisor informed me the LAS were using Bramley Road as their main entrance and exit to the Tower. I accepted that their need was as great as ours was and they needed to get the casualties out.

As I came out from under the railway arches onto Bramley Road a young female who was with her boyfriend approached me. The lady was a WHITE female, in her early twenties and she had long BROWN hair. She was holding her mobile phone in her hand and said 'I've got my dad on the phone, can you talk to him?'. She told me 'He's on the 23rd floor and his flat is alight' but he was still talking to the female. I didn't talk to him and the female told me that her father could have got out two (2) hours ago but was apparently told by the LFB to stay in his flat. I explained to her that it was procedure for people to stay in their flats. I believed, with this information, he must have been receiving FSG and I assured her that we were doing our best to rescue her dad. When I looked up and could see floor 23 it was orange and on fire. I knew then her father may not make it out. The female told me her father was telling her on the

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phone that the fire was all around him. I stayed with the female and tried to reassure her, she was obviously distressed as this was her dad. This also upset me. She then blended back into the crowd.

I walked back to Silchester Road where the leisure centre is and I saw the ALP from SOHO fire station was already there on the grass verge. It took about an hour to get there and our ALP was parked by the school. I liaised with the Sector Commander, Watch Manager (WM) Stuart BILL, asking them how FF MEDINA and I could help in any way. I could see from the controls to the rear of their appliance that the water pressure was extremely poor at that particular time. I watched as the SOHO ALP discharged water onto the 11th floor and could see the pressure of water coming out was ridiculous; it was dribbling down to the lower floors. We could see a male at the window in a flat on the 9th floor facing the leisure centre who I now know to be a Chinese man who other members of my crew from WIMBLEDON rescued. This crew arrived with WM Andy McKAY with the Pump Ladder appliance at approximately 4am. When we first saw him, we thought he was going to jump out of the window as he placed a towel there and kept walking away. This crew were able to get to his flat, put the fire out that had consumed his whole flat except for his bedroom where he was and led him down. The crew later informed me the male was partially sighted and was tripping up on things as they walked him down. I believe that the little bit of water that was running from the 11th floor and onto his bedroom window on the 9th floor saved him. Problems with water pressure is a recurrent problem we have now when we attend tower block fires. Water pressure is affected by height, distance and frictional loss, which is the pressure of the water running through the hose. All I could do was stand there with the WM Beale and watch.

The time now was approximately 0300am. The whole of the Tower at this point was alight. I recall that information had reached us that a decision had been made to try to put a dry riser along the side of the Tower but as the water pressure was so poor, this did not happen. I do not know who made this decision. I understood that as EF MEDINA and I were on the ALP, which is considered a special appliance, we were not allowed to wear any breathing apparatus to enter the Tower; we had to stay with our aerial appliance in case it was needed if the SOHO ALP failed. We were on standby. FF MEDINA remained in the Wimbledon ALP as I recognised he was struggling emotionally with the incident and he regularly had to move the ALP. I looked at the state of the building and was surprised that our crews were still entering the Tower. I do not know who was making the decisions. While I was watching, Grenfell Tower reminded me of the World Trade Centre, there was even more debris falling down at this point. My

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personal risk assessment of the situation at that time was that there were firefighters in the Tower, if the building were to collapse, they would not get out. I thought if this comes down, where am I going to run to?' As dangerous as the incident seemed to be, if I was not on the ALP and was ordered to enter the Tower, I would have, that is my job. It was not nice seeing firefighters writing their names on their helmets before they entered the Tower though.

We decided not to get our ALP set up to work because there was no room on the grass next to SOHO's ALP. The water pressure was so low that it was a struggle to supply one ALP with water let alone get our ALP too, so we assisted the SOHO crew. I saw the rest of my crew from WIMBLEDON were on the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU). They told me they had entered the Tower with breathing apparatus and described how grim it was inside. They told me the Police had to hold riot shields above their heads to stop the falling debris from hitting them.

I continued to look at the Tower from the outside. I could see the gas main had gone as I could see a GREEN flame. That indicated to me that gas was alight, it would not be this way if the gas were turned off. I would not have been involved in the decision to turn off the gas but then I do not know if the gas pipe had been ruptured. I saw from approximately floor 10 and above, every flat was alight. I felt helpless. I met up with the Pump Ladder crew, the rest of my crew from WIMBLEDON. They informed me they entered the Tower a couple of times as I spoke with them, they were exhausted. I know that in LONDON, other areas need to be protected with cover from the LFB. There were so many appliances from the LFB at the Grenfell Tower that SM PAYNTON told my driver to leave the incident with the ALP. It was approximately 0930-0945hrs when we were sent away as the ALP was required for fire cover elsewhere. FF MEDINA was struggling as well and I needed to look after his well-being. I did not want to go back and leave the incident; I was not happy as I wanted to stay with the rest of my crew but FF MEDINA told me over the radio to get onto the ALP.

As I was walking back to the ALP, another male member of the public approached me and told me 'My Uncle is in the flats'. This male was of Middle Eastern appearance. It was daylight then at 9:30am I asked him 'What floor?' he said the 20th I looked up and that floor was black. I reassured him advising him to contact the helpline for missing people from the Grenfell Tower. He said 'My mum's over there, what am I going to tell her? He's diabetic and 50 years old'. I again reassured him saying 'He might have easily

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got out and gone to hospital so just ring the hotline and see what they say'. I gave him the hotline number that I found on the Internet using my phone. The male then said 'Oh he's dead isn't he?'. I again reassured him saying 'No, he might not be' but what do you say to the public? You just have to say hopefully they will be out, you've got to. I watched Sky News two days after the incident and a person being spoken about who was from the Grenfell Tower reminded me of this male's Uncle. I only recognised him as they said 50 years old, diabetic who had sadly passed away. I do not know if it was the same person, it may have been a coincidence.

FF MEDINA and I arrived back at WIMBLEDON fire station at approximately 1030am. As we drove the ALP through the streets by the Tower, members of the public were shaking our hands, calling us heroes. I didn't feel like a hero. I didn't feel like I had achieved. On the journey back, the mood was sombre in the ALP as I did not want to go back. I was going back for the well-being of the driver and fire cover but felt like I had let the rest of my watch down as I was not there. After this shift, I went home. When I got home, my wife asked 'How's my hero?', I did not say anything, made my way to the garden, and cried. It has never happened before. I think seeing all the families at the windows affected me but I did not see the grim things that a lot of my Watch saw. The closest I got to the Tower was about 20 metres. Partly I am thankful; partly I wish I was in there helping as well. I returned for my next shift at 0800pm that night.

I struggled for about 3 weeks focusing on things and did accept counselling that was being offered by the LFB but I felt it was offered to me too late and after the time when it may have helped. I thought I was okay at first, but then I was in my car with my family and the Grenfell song was playing on the radio and that upset me, I realised that I had been affected. Initially the well-being team spoke to me on the phone and then when I had to attend our Headquarters about this incident, the well-being counsellors were there too. When I spoke to one of them, he was only interested in how I felt in the last 7 days, it was useless. I had another meeting 3 months after and again they only wanted to know how I had been in the last 7 days. I told him to just tick all the boxes to say I was okay; I had no interest in them.

In my opinion for the time I was there, I think the crews present done a remarkable job in the most testing of conditions and are a credit to the LFB. It would have been good to have had better water pressure for the appliances that were there to deliver water to the fire at the Tower. Water is our primary resource and it was sadly lacking. We can ask for water pressure to be increased but this is not an instant thing and

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still takes an hour after it has been requested. Unfortunately, we do not have the equipment to have reached the upper floors of Grenfell Tower. They have those types of aerial appliances in America, but not here. Nevertheless, you would need firm ground to use any aerial platforms. I know an aerial appliance that can reach higher than the LFB aerials did attend but not until the daylight hours of the 14 June 2017. Three corners of the Tower were inaccessible, like by the railway arches. You only had the front of the Tower to gain access and from what I have heard, only one staircase in use that was compromised but residents, casualties and firefighters.

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