

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: CUTHBERT, JAMES

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 16 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: JAMES CUTHBERT

Date: 13/03/2018

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

This statement refers to my attendance at the GRENFELL TOWER fire on WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017 as part of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) response to this incident.

After leaving Grenfell Tower and returning to PADDINGTON FIRE STATION I completed some notes in relation to this incident. These notes were made contemporaneously on 14 JUNE 2017, which I now exhibit as JWPC/1.

The people that I will mention in my statement are: Steve MILLS, driver of A211; Watch Manager Steve COLLINS; firefighter Graham SHAW, crew manager Guy TILLITSON; firefighter Jim WOLFINDON; firefighter KEANE; watch manager Brien O'KEEFE; DO (borough commander) Pat GOLDBOURNE; Firefighter from Brixton Meth (surname not known); Chris BACHELADOR, a firefighter on a fire survival call at the tower; and a crew manager, Paul (surname not known).

Other people I don't know by name but will mention in my statement are: Two (2) Middle Eastern gentlemen in the fifth (5th) floor flat; the lady from the third (3rd) floor distressed about her cat; the large black Afro Caribbean lady on the stairwell between the ninth (9th) and tenth (10th) floors who I now believe to be the artist, Khadija (surname not known); the two (2) Mediterranean ladies we rescued from the tenth (10th) floor; and an Arab gentleman outside the tower.

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I joined the London Fire Brigade in February 1997. Between 1997 and 2003 I was based at Plaistow in the east end. I then went to West Ham until January 2009 when I moved across to Paddington. I have never been posted to the fire safety department / investigation team. My rank is Firefighter. I am considered competent in my role.

I came on duty at eight (8) o'clock (2000 hours) on TUESDAY 13 JUNE 2017. I am on red watch and was detailed to ride the pump ladder, call sign A21 1. There was five (5) of us on the truck that night. Steve MILLS was driving and the governor Steve COLLINS was in charge. In the back, crew manager Guy TILLITSON was to my left, firefighter Graham SHAW was on the right in the box. I was spare in the back. I would have been entry control officer had this been a normal small scale call out.

I can't remember if we had any shouts prior. We might have had a couple but I can't really remember as the events of that night overtook all of my thoughts.

We got called out by the mobilising system. It was already make pumps. I went on make pumps six (6). We were about twenty minutes later after the initial time of call. Straight away the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) went out on it, the Turntable Ladder (TL) and then us. I think that was the order. I'm not one hundred percent (100%) sure but that's what I remember.

I had no previous knowledge of Grenfell Tower. I'd driven past it dozens of times but not known it. It's on North Kensington's ground and I had never been there before the night of the fire.

As we pulled out of the station we have to turn left and we turned down underneath the A40 flyover. As we come up underneath the flyover we could see smoke and flame. I always remember Steve MILLS saying 'Gov, I think I've got this. I can see it'.

When we get on, the governor normally reads out what we've got. The governor's on the mobile data terminal (MDT). I didn't get any specific relay of any messages. We were just looking at the fire. The governor was like 'just be careful today'.

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I don't recall the exact route, but it possibly included ELGIN CRESCENT and CLARENDON ROAD but I'm not sure. It was really tight. Millsy won't mind me saying this. He was a fast driver and manoeuvring it around to get us there quickly. How he didn't hit anything I don't know. But we got there. It got really tight around some of the corners but he never stops. Millsy did a great job getting us there without hitting anything. He parked on GRENFELL ROAD close to the junction with BOMORE ROAD. I think we must have got there about twenty five past one (0125 hours) roughly. I have drawn on a map of the area around Grenfell Tower to show the approximate route we may have taken. I exhibit this as JWPC/3.

We thought initially it was a tower block which had scaffolding up on the outside which was sheeted up which sometimes catches alight. I've been out on one of them before. It looks impressive, looks more than it is, that's just going to be sheeting. As we got nearer we could see it was different.

When we arrived, we were something like the sixth (6th) truck there. There were not a lot of trucks there at the time. The turntable ladder, call sign A213, was in position next to the tower. I have marked it on a close up diagram of Grenfell Tower and surrounds, which I exhibit as JWPC/4.

As we parked up there was an ADO (Station Manager) getting out of his car. He said 'they need BA' and we were told 'get your sets on'.

By way of explanation, a breathing apparatus (BA) set enables a firefighter to work in heat and smoke for a working duration of approximately thirty (30) minutes. You're designated a riding position on the appliance every time you go on duty. You're designated a set to check and test, make sure it's in date and make sure you've got enough air in it. It enables you to work in the smoke and irrespirable atmosphere. It has two (2) warnings to alert. We have a pre-alarm, which is if you are not moving it has a little alarm which tweets/beeps at you. If you move it stops. If you don't, for example if you go down and you are not moving, it goes into full alarm so other firefighters can locate you. When you are low on air, you can check your gauge but also you can go on whistle. On whistle you are running low on air so you need to get out. You try not to get to time of whistle because you are taught your turn around time. Say you have got 300 bar in your set, that's roughly 30 minutes working. Once you have been in fifteen (15) minutes you know you have to be back out within fifteen (15) minutes. So that's your turn around time.

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As we got our sets on, me, Graham, and Guy, we headed towards the entrance to Grenfell Tower. We took as much kit as we could, some hose, some breaking in gear, an enforcer, and made our way up to entry control. On our way into the building I looked up. It looked like the outside of the building from about fifth (5th) sixth (6th) floor to about the tenth (10th) floor — a small column of flames going up the side of the building. I noticed that the turntable ladder, A213, was extended and being used when we were going into the tower.

On this initial wear, we came in through the front entrance of Grenfell Tower. There was no smoke in the lobby but you could hear burning, breaking glass and a lot of residents were coming down. I don't recall hearing any alarms but we hear them so often we just blank them out, so I cannot be sure. We got to the entry control point where you get committed to wear your BA. Brian O'KEEFE, a watch manager from Kensington from G331, was in the stairwell. As you went up the stairs there was a little lobby area where the lifts were and he was there. They had set up an entry control board and one of the guys from north Kensington in think, I forget his name, a mixed race guy, I forget his name, he was entry control officer. Brian said to Guy, can you take these four (4). I don't know what their brief was but me and Graham got split up from Guy. So Guy took another crew in. Brian O'KEEFE told Graham and I to go to the fourth (4th) and fifth (5th) floor to do search and rescue, so that's what we did.

We had our BA sets on and started up as he was briefing us. To explain, on the face mask there is a holding button to press down and open the cylinder so the air doesn't leak out. Then when we got into the building, as Brian was telling us our brief, we start putting the face mask on. Then when you breathe, the air flows through the mask. There's a tally on your breathing apparatus set. It's got your name, your rank, and the pressure on the set. So for example, FF Cuthbert, 280 bar. You take your tally out and then they write in your entry time and put it into the entry control board (ECB). They can monitor you so they know how long you've been in the building. So we were starting up as he was telling us his brief. Once we get told our brief, you repeat back to him what he's told you. It was very chaotic because there was residents coming down the stairs as we were doing it and were going up.

We had the big key with us, the enforcer. Some of the doors were open and some were really really difficult to open. We gained entry into three (3) or four (4) flats. We had severe difficulty trying to get into one of them. It was on the fourth (4th) floor in the far left corner, we really couldn't get in to it.

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Graham had comms so he radioed that in to entry control. Then we went up to the fifth (5th) floor.

The heat and the smoke. I've been in the job twenty years. It was crazy. I have never experienced it that intense before. It was really hot underfoot. When we went from the fourth (4th) to the fifth (5th) floors it went up to a totally different gear. The smoke logging in the stairwell was getting increasingly worse. On the fourth (4th) floor initially it was wispy to thick. On the fifth (5th) floor you couldn't really see in front of you in that lobby area.

All this time there were crews coming in and out up and down the stairs. Before we even got into the entry control point there was a resident coming down, a guy my age fifty ish saying 'you ain't going to get them out'. I said 'Sir, we are going to get them out, we always get them out' and he looked at me in the eye and he said 'you ain't going to get these out'. I thought, 'yes we are'. I looked at him calmly and thought, 'I've done this a million times'. I didn't realise the enormity of this until later.

So Graham and I went up to the fifth (5th) floor and was doing a sweep of the floor. We came across a flat with two (2) gentlemen inside. They were of Middle Eastern appearance and spoke perfect English. They were in the flat on the far right hand corner. I have marked it with an "A" on a diagram I exhibit as JWPC/5.

I remember thinking to myself when we went in, the lobby area was really smoky. We were still under air. I think that as we were banging the door one of the guys opened the door to let us in.

When we were in this flat all the windows were open. It was Ramadan at the time so there was food on the table. We were talking to these gentlemen. They were very calm, relaxed and quite matter of fact. One (1) was sitting on the sofa and I think he was even watching telly. He was very calm. It was a very very smart flat. It was like we had walked into a party rather than the situation we were in. Quite surreal. They had the windows open and towels on the door. One (1) of them was on the phone. I think the guy on the phone was drinking a glass of water as well. He was on a fire survival call. He said 'I'm on the phone to the fire brigade'. He told the control two (2) firefighters are here and he said to us, 'they're telling us', the controller 'is telling us to stay put'. He said 'we've been told to stay here'.

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While in the flat I looked out of the window and there was a resident on the ground floor saying 'get up to the floor above'. So I told Graham to contact entry control and let them know that there is people on the sixth (6th) floor. I don't know what the message was back to us.

The flat, it looked fine. There was no fire damage it, it was not smoke logged. They were on the phone to the fire brigade. We knew it would be desperate to get them through the lobby and out. We didn't think we could get them through the smoke and heat in the lobby and down the stairs to bring them out. It may have killed them if we had tried. So we told them to stay where you are. I can't remember if we talked about getting a ladder to their window but we may have. They were calm, they were safe and there was no reason for them to come out of here at that time. We left them in situ.

We thought it would be too dangerous to try and get them out. We just thought even though it only about six (6) or seven (7) metres, it was severely smoke logged and it was really hot. We both didn't think we would get them through that lobby area to find that door and get them down the stairs without them being overcome. We just thought they were much safer here then coming through that lobby area and down the stairs. Much safer. When we left he was like 'see you later' and shut the door. It was a really surreal couple of minutes.

The lobby was really smoky when we went in and when we came out, it was a lot worse. The smoke was really thick, you couldn't see in front of yourself. We struggled to get back to the doorway to the stairs. Our procedures are to hug the wall. You retrace the steps to go back. We did this and accidentally went in to the bin room. Bizarrely, it was very clear. Me and Graham were looking in going that aint the stairwell', then continued on in the lobby until we found the doorway to the stairs.

When we came out, closed down and took off our sets we told entry control, I think it must have been Brien O'KEEFE, that they were there. When we informed him, entry control were still in that area. It was later on that the entry control point was moved downstairs to the main lobby area in the building.

They looked like they were Arab type gentleman. Very smart.

I would describe the male who was on the phone as Arabic/Middle Eastern appearance. He was quite tall

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with black hair. Perhaps six (6) foot ish, definitely taller than me. I am five foot ten (F510). He was athletic build. Probably late 20's or early 30's in age. He looked unshaven but you know the Arab gentleman do have quite a lot of stubble. He was smartly dressed with a shirt on. There was no real panic in his voice. He was very calm and matter of fact. He opened his door to us. He is standing at the door with his phone.

The other guy was calmly sitting on the sofa when we went in and while we were there. He was also of Arabic/Middle Eastern appearance, probably slightly younger than the one on the phone. Late twenties (20's) to early thirties (30's) in age. They looked similar. I don't know if they were brothers or cousins. It was difficult to tell because he was sat down, he may have been slightly shorter than the other one but still taller than me, six (6) foot ish. He had olive skin and slightly less stubble than the guy standing up on the phone. He was very similar build to the other guy, probably a little bit slimmer from what I remember. He was wearing smart jeans.

On the way down we helped a crew carry a woman downstairs. I couldn't describe her. They were struggling. I think it was a FRU crew as I think they had extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA) kit on. They were struggling to get her down so we helped them get her down.

Then I think we were low on air so we went back to the entry control point. We closed down and took our sets off, but the mask is still around my neck. I could hear a woman screaming on the stairwell. She was saying 'my cat', 'my cat'. So I ran back up the stairs with Graham, I had my mask off by then, and it was a lady. I thought she had some learning difficulties and she was going 'my cat is on the third (3rd) floor'. I calmly got her down the stairs and said 'we are going to get your cat'. She kept saying 'I need my cat, I need my cat, I need my cat'. She looked very distressed. We were trying to calm her down. You could tell the cat was her life. I asked her what flat number but I can't remember what the flat number was now. I think it was the middle flat, on the third (3rd) floor, on the left hand side. Graham took her down. I went into the flat without a mask on. I didn't have to force entry, the flat was open. It wasn't that smoke logged at that time. Visibly it was fine but you could taste it. I looked around the flat, under the bed and in the cupboards and there was no cat to be seen. I couldn't find her cat. Unfortunately no cat is going to come to a big firefighter unless it's hungry. Her flat looked kinda chaotic but kinda organised. She wasn't a hoarder but kinda chaotic. It was quite a small flat. When I came back down Graham was there so I couldn't relay to her that I couldn't find her cat.

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I would describe this lady as white British, approximately fifty (50) years old, quite a chubby lady. She had brown hair. She had baggy clothes on but I can't remember if it was a dress or a skirt or what colour it was. I think she had a brown coat on. It was quite padded. The sort of thing your nan used to wear in the sixties (1960's). I thought she may have had learning difficulties and if I have got that wrong I apologise. You could tell in her face she is a well natured lovely lady but was very distressed at the time.

So I came down and then went back out and did a fire ground A test. A fire ground A test is a check on your cylinder on your BA set at the fire ground to get it ready to go back in.

So at this stage it's make pumps twenty (20), twenty five (25) or thirty (30) even. So this must have been about half one quarter to two I think (0130 to 0145 hours). We were sort of queuing up to go back in. We were in the BA chain of being committed in. We were brought into a lobby area underneath Grenfell and then we were waiting there for about ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes. So then they decided it was too dangerous and we were blocking the area to bring people out so we got marshalled back out again.

I was sat by a wall. Sitting outside and you realise the enormity of all this, this whole, it's like something out of a film. It was really surreal. I'm thinking, this is major, proper major. That night during my first wear I didn't realise the seriousness of the situation. I just thought it's a bit of cladding on the outside and we are just going to put it out. We always put em out. We got people out and the woman's cat. And when I came outside and we were in that holding area. It's all alright. You realise you are at the most serious situation you are likely to be in for a long time.

I'm looking around at people I've known for years. Hardened firefighters just in shock. I always remember there was a crew in the children's play park with a covering jet on a window and a guy, crew manager, his name is Paul, I forget his surname. I remember thinking he is a young kid doing a really good job there, doing a massive job.

I remember the chief turning up. It was quite a shock to see the chief. Historically you don't see the chief. She was as good as gold.

Anyway, we were sitting in this holding area and they say 'We need four (4) volunteers'. And I just

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thought, you know what, I've got to do this. I've got to go and do something else. I can't just go and rescue a cat. I've helped a few people down the stairs but that's not all we are here for. So I put myself up. He said 'you've already been in', I said 'I know where I'm going'. He said we need fresh legs. I said 'I know, you have got a specific task and you have got to be able to do it. I know where I'm going'. So it was me and three (3) guys from Brixton. The police shielded us in. This, my second wear, was about half past three (0330 hours) roughly.

We came in through a different entrance this time. There was so much debris coming down that they decided to make this the only entrance, it was safer.

We went up to the entry control point. By this time it had been moved down a floor to the first floor mezzanine. The DO called Pat GOLDBOURNE. He said 'right, you need to go to the sixth (6th) and seventh (7th) floor, there is two (2) women up there, and you need to find them'. I think that is what he said, it's in my notes anyway. You need to go up there as quick as you can and get them out.

Pat GOLDBOURNE was very direct when giving our briefs. This is your brief, repeat it back to me, crack on. There was no time for niceties. This is what you're going to do.

It pains me to say it but the senior officers were working very hard, and very in control, as we all were. There wasn't anyone not working hard.

So, me and the three (3) guys from Brixton. We went up the stairway, there was crews coming in and going out, there was casualties coming down and then we came across another FRU crew who were struggling to get a casualty down. I don't know who the crew were or who that casualty was. It looked like a female casualty. So two (2) of the guys from Brixton said 'we are going to help them' and me and this other guy from Brixton, who's name is Meth I think, he's a mixed race guy, a good guy. It was very quick - they made their decision. We had a brief to do, and this crew was struggling to get their casualty down. It was more important to try and save them so two (2) of the guys from Brixton would help them do that and then come back up, which they did.

Me and Meth cracked on. We went up and started searching the sixth (6th) floor. We checked every flat

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on the sixth (6th) floor. It was smoke logged in the lobby area and less so in the flats. We then went to the seventh (7th) floor where the two (2) firefighters from Brixton re-joined us.

We decided to split into our teams again and we forced entry into half the flats as the others were doing the other half. Seventh (7th) floor. There was no sign of them. We let them know. That's when the two (2) firefighters from Brixton informed us that they were extremely low on air and they were going to withdraw. So they went back down to entry control point. Because they had already been hard working help bringing the casualty down.

The guy from Brixton radioed down and BA control asked for us to change our brief and move to the eighth (8th) floor where the two (2) ladies were trapped in a flat. We checked the eighth (8th) floor and there was no sign of any occupants. We moved onto the next floor, still no sign. All the while crews were bringing more casualties down.

Then they came back on the radio and said that you need to go to the tenth (10th) floor, I think it was the tenth (10th) or eleventh (11th) floor. As we went up we came across a body in the stairwell. Which I describe, it was a large person. At least twenty five (25) stone.

In my statement I said it was a black male approx. forty (40) years old twenty five (25) stone. I said it was a 'he' but I now know that it was a lady who was a friend of the MP David LAMMY. Anyway, so we tried to move this lady but we couldn't. It wasn't well lit because it was so smoke logged, but I could see Meth. I can't remember if it had a light.

By this time we could hear two (2) ladies screaming at us. We heard screaming, 'help', 'help'. We looked up and the doorway to the lobby area was opening and this woman was there. The stairs seemed massively long, it was only one (1) set but I remember thinking at the time it was miles away. So we stopped trying to move the large lady in the stairwell. Our brief was to get the ladies out. We ran up to the next floor, we went into the lobby area and their flat was the second one to the left. As we went through the door into the lobby area on the tenth (10th) floor, that whole left hand side. The flats were alight. The whole place was alight. I was ahead of Meth. One (1) of the ladies was in the lobby area and the other one (1) was just hanging on to the door. One (1) of the ladies was desperate to get out and the other lady was

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just petrified, she couldn't move. We just had to say 'just come with us now and we will get you out'. So we took one (1) each and said 'we are going to get you out', 'we are going to get you down, we are going to run'. We took them down.

By around the fifth (5th) floor the lady who was being led out by Meth, she collapsed. So we decided that Meth had her arms, I grabbed had her legs, and the other one was just hanging on to me, wrapped around my neck, and we just bundled down the stairs. The smoke logging going to kill them. I thought that's why she collapsed because she has taken in too much smoke. We got them to the entry control point and there was firefighters down there that whisked them away. The one that was on my back, she walked out. The other that had collapsed was taken off me and Meth by two (2), a few, firefighters and carried out.

I would describe the first of these ladies, the one who was in the doorway to the lobby area, as having long black hair, very slim, twenty ish, twenty five maybe. She was slim. I think she was wearing a white top and jeans, and was very pretty.

The other lady looked very similar. She was slim and probably my height, so about five foot ten (F510) tall. They looked Mediterranean, maybe Spanish or Italian, and both in their early twenties (20's) in age. Possibly sisters. Spoke English. Smoke had got into the other lady's eyes, she had really red eyes. She had a similar sort of hairstyle and very similar body. I can't remember what she was wearing. It was summer but her arm was wrapped up.

One of the ladies was smaller/shorter than the other one. The one who was petrified was the smaller one. The lady in the doorway was the one that later collapsed on Meth at about the fifth (5th) floor and we carried out.

After the other firefighters took these ladies from us, we decided we were going to go back up and see if we could help move and get the lady on the tenth (10th) floor. We wanted to save her. She was in the way but that wasn't our concern, our concern was trying to get her out.

We got the women out on I think the tenth (10th) floor and this lady was on the floor below, on the corner, so in between the ninth (9th) and the tenth (10th) floor. I thought it was a fella at the time. She

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was face down and her jeans or black trousers had sagged a little bit so the top of her bum was showing. It looked like she was going down and fell backwards, which is odd thinking about it now as her face was down. I have drawn a sketch diagram to show the position she was in, which I exhibit as JWPC/2. We tried to move her up using the trousers but we couldn't. We couldn't move her, we just could not move her. There were crews in that area coming past. I remember people stepping over. At one point the another crew came and helped us try and move this lady. They were low on air, I think they were on whistle so they went back out before us and closed down. I thought it was the Brixton firefighters but it must have been someone else. It was tough, we were four (4) big guys and we just couldn't move her. It felt really bad that we couldn't, we just couldn't. In my head I thought that if we open the airway maybe she'll have more of a chance. We tried to roll her on her side so we could at least get her in a recovery position. We managed some sort of movement but I thought he (she) was dead. I've struggled with it, struggled with not being able to help her.

She did not respond to me in any way. I have seen a few dead people in my time and I thought she was dead, but we are taught we can't decide that. It was the weight of her and non responsive. You got two (2) hairy arsed firefighters rocking her and you're not making a move. Another crew tried to help us. She was in a stairwell face down in a smoky environment. You aint going to survive that. It appeared that she had come down the stairwell and been overcome.

We didn't have built in comms, but Meth, he radioed down. Me and Meth were trying but we couldn't move or help her. By now I was really low on air so we had to go. We went out and closed down. When we got back to the entry control point we debriefed the DO Pat GOLDBOURNE about what we had done and where we had seen her. They were writing on the wall where people were, where they had been found and what was on the stairwell.

She was an Afro Caribbean lady. She had a jumper on. I remember it was so wet. She was on the news afterwards. She was a beautiful lady, an artist, the sort of person you'd like to meet. An interesting lady. I think her name was Khadija from what I saw on the news afterwards.

On this second wear, it was pitch black in the stairwell. Our torches are good and there was some lighting but the smoke was thick. You still put your hand through it but when you went into the lobby areas where

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the flats were, it was smoky and hot flames coming from the flats.

I lost the boys from Brixton then as we went out to the where that lobby holding area and you had to get police officers with riot shields to guide you out, so I lost them there at that point. So I went and got a drink of water. I'd lost all the guys from Paddington by then and I bumped into a guy from my watch Jim WOLFINDON and they were saying can someone go and get them some salvage sheets.

So we dumped our sets. I dropped my set, I don't know if Woffy had a set, and went around every truck trying to get as many salvage sheets as we could. I think this would have been around half past four (0430 hours) roughly. Some of the trucks were locked which really pissed me off, sorry for swearing. It really did our head in. We are at the biggest job we are ever going to be at and you are locking the trucks.

I did think we were going to lose firefighters that night. That did cross my mind a few times including when I was going around to get some salvage sheets. There were resident's saying it's going to collapse. When we were back in there I was thinking that if it does go, where am I going to dive to.

We got escorted back up to the entry control point and I worked there for two (2) hours, two and a half hours (2.5 hours) in that lobby area. I went up as far as the fifth (5th) floor. As far as you could get without breathing apparatus. We had to extend lines of hose from the third (3rd) floor dry riser.

There was a flat on the third floor by then that they were really worried about so me and a couple of guys from Tooting put that out from the inside. I think it was a borough commander that asked us to put that out. I don't know his name. This must have been about six (0600 hours) in the morning. Took us about five (5) minutes and we just doing it in turns. We got a line set in to the dry riser on the third floor which worked. The dry riser was in the lobby area of the flats. We didn't have sets on, me and these guys from Tooting just kept going in and out one at a time, putting it out, handing the hose over.

It was burst hose which was causing so much distraction, it was like a waterfall. So we were trying to sort that out. There was a young guy there with a diamond on his helmet. A diamond on your helmet means that you are a probationer. There was a young guy there and he was knackered. He was trying to sort this hose out and he couldn't. I said 'mate, you're done, you can't do any more, just go and have a breather'.

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About an hour later he came back and he went 'mate, pot calling a kettle now, mate you are knackered, you need to get out, you're done'. And I was, I just couldn't do any more, physically.

As I was on the way out I bumped into a pump, it was pumping a couple of lines of hose that our governor was using as a covering jet to protect this window. The pump operator, Firefighter KEANE, asked me to just do the pump operating for ten (10) fifteen to (15) minutes while he went to the command unit as they were asking for all drivers to go to the command unit.

So I did a bit of pumping and the governor, he had a loud hailer. I couldn't see him but all I could hear was 'Jim, Jim' and must have been half eight / quarter to nine (0830 — 0845 hours) and we all came together and that was what I did. I was knackered.

When we were getting all those salvage sheets. There weren't a brief but we knew what we had to do. So if there was burst hose pissing water everywhere we knew we had to fix that, we knew we had to help feed the lines of hose up the stairwell. They were getting blocked by casualties on the stairwell. So when the crews were going up they were saying check this hose if you can and when you get out let us know what it's being block on. There was about four (4) or five (5) of us doing that for a few hours. Then this flat up on the third (3rd) floor that we had to put out. We were just doing what needs to be done really.

When the governor got us all together, the whole watch got together and we all just had a cup of tea. One of the DO's was trying to get us away and eventually we got away at about eleven ish (1100 hours), I would say. Then we came back to the station and we wrote our statement, our notes. We all then went for something to eat but we were knackered. We came back on duty that night.

I did not go into flat 16 during the incident. I arrived after the fire had spread up the outside of the building.

Since the incident I now realise the person I thought was a 'he' I now believe to be a 'she'. I am referring to the large artist lady from the stairwell on the tenth (10th) floor. I saw her picture constantly because she was on the news a lot. She was a very large lady. I just thought it was a large guy. She had braids and I just thought it was a rusta guy at the time. We do help the London Ambulance Service (LAS) with very

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large people and predominantly they are male. That may have been part of my thinking at the time. I just feel guilty about calling a lady a man in her dying moments. That's quite tough for me. I saw her photo in the media in the days after the fire, of the people who were missing. This woman's hair in the photo wasn't rasta, it was braided. I remember thinking that under my gloves that this is soft hair, because I remember trying to move her head so and that's why.

In terms of the floor numbering in the stairwell. The first time we went in, we had no idea. We counted them. We were going one (1), two (2), three (3). We counted off floors. The second time we went in I noticed that somebody had started to hand write the number in chinagraph pencil on the wall. It was something done by a firefighter. It was in front of you as you went up the stairs near the doors to the lobby areas. I think it was one of our guys Martin that had started to do this. Because he was part of the FRU crew that went up to the top floors with all the line stuff. He started that. Chinagraph is a waterproof pencil like a crayon.

I have never been on a section 7(2)d familiarisation visit to Grenfell Tower. I had done a few of these visits to other high rise blocks of flats including Trellick Tower, which I have been to a few times in the past. While I don't remember specifically the last time I did a visit in a high rise before the Grenfell Tower fire, I think it may be roughly around the beginning of the year (2017). We used to do visits all the time, check dry risers and all that kind of thing. At Paddington we do a lot of training and visits. The governor and Guy are very keen that we keep up to date with stuff.

We drill more than most at Paddington. I can't remember specific days but we have definitely done high rise drills in the yard. It was one of the governor's pet drills. We were forever doing jets, covering jets, take up, bridge head, where we set up.

The most recent high rise training prior to the Grenfell Tower fire must have been within that month before Grenfell. You'd get set a scenario, fire on 5th floor, where do we set up, where do we set the dry riser in, what covering jets do we have etc. It would have been within a month of that.

We do drill every day. Sometimes we get broken up by shouts. Here's a drill, pick. It is what it is. Doing drills breaks the day up.

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My last realistic training in a high rise block of flats would have been about a year before the Grenfell Tower fire. We do it at our firefighting training site, Park Royal Babcock Centre. It's not specifically high rise but it's into a flat, into a room, put the fire out. At the training centre there is a basement, first and second floor so that you can simulate fire in a flat.

I have had previous experience fighting fire in a high rise block of flats. The one previous to Grenfell was in Trellick Tower. I can't remember the date but it was roughly within the calendar year before Grenfell. In Plastow there is a lot of tower blocks. West Hamstead has not so much towers but blocks of flats and rescuing people.

I'm not aware of any pre-prepared firefighting plan for Grenfell Tower. I am also not aware of any pre-prepared firefighting or search and rescue plan when compartmentation failed in a high rise block of flats.

On the night, many of the BA procedures, time to whistle and that kinda thing went out the window. If you did that on a training course you'd fail it. The rule book got torn up really. What we did we were taught not to do but we had to do it. We had to because the seriousness. We were trying to save life, that was our priority, get as many people out as you can. Don't matter how you did it, get them out. I wanted to go back in a third (3rd) time. We shouldn't have been in there but we were. I did think we were going to lose firefighters that night. It did cross my mind a few times. When we went in the first time the heat really got to us, and the smoke. I thought, God, this is dangerous. When I was outside residents were saying 'it's going to collapse'.

We were on the outside in the holding area watching it, people at windows. I didn't see people jumping but a mate of mine somebody landed on him and he told me that.

The seriousness of the whole situation. When you've got the chief officer coming to the lobby area to give you a pep talk you know it's serious shit. Blokes I have known for years were dumbstruck about what's going on. So procedures were kinda gone out the window. We were trying to save life.

When we went back in for the second wear I was thinking that if it does go, where am I going to dive to? I was with the guys from Tooting on the third (3rd) floor and I remember thinking of one of the flat's that

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hadn't been touched and we would go in there. I rang my wife at about half seven/eight o'clock (0730/0800 hours) from inside the building just to say I was alright. I was on the third floor sometime after we had put the fire out in the flat.

As a firefighter I know that everything was being done to rescue everyone we could. I remember at one stage we were moved back from one point in the building to the outside. There was a group of kids sitting down. We knew that our supervisors were taking crews in. You can't just have a thousand firefighters run up and down the stairs, you're never going to get anywhere. We know it was done in a logistical and logical way. It looks like we were doing nothing, but actually we were all waiting to be committed. We knew we were doing everything we could do. So from the outside, just seeing people at the window, people waving their torches on their phones. It will stick with you forever.

It sounded eerily quiet. There was loads of noise but no one was chatting in that holding area. I think a couple of people had a cigarette but we were just waiting, waiting to go in. There was loads of noise because there was debris going everywhere, blue lights everywhere. But the atmosphere was quiet, I don't know, intimidating, if that's the word. Especially when the kids thought we were doing nothing sitting about. We know we weren't. They wanted us to run about. Then the police with the riot shields moved them on. They just wanted to help their neighbours. So when you're seeing kids, their mums, wave their torches that's quite harrowing really. I remember thinking, trying to work out, where the torches were coming from so if I got committed what floors they were on.

I have no idea if the building had a smoke management system.

The doors to the lobby areas were quite solid but the bin room ones were better, in my personal opinion. The bin rooms were clear. When we went back about a week later, even the bin rooms on the higher floors like 22nd and 23rd were clear. I also noticed that the fifth (5th) floor flat where those gentleman had been was gutted.

As best I recall, all the fire doors from the staircase to the lobby that I went through during the incident were physically working and self closing.

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Looking back on it I can't believe how narrow the stairwell was. I wasn't very wide and with all that kit and all those people, it was tight, very tight. The stairwell was the only means of escape from the fire. I learnt after that there were people trying to tie towels and sheets together to climb down but in terms of how the building was constructed, there was only the one (1) narrow staircase.

One of the things I noticed was that it seemed like gas pipes were on the outside of the flats, which seemed odd to me. When I was in that tenth (10th) floor the whole of that floor was alight. It just seemed. It spread. One of the flats had like a gas meter on the outside. I know you have to have a meter but the system, it seemed very antiquated and very old to me.

The burning on the outside of the building had done the windows and gone back in. It seemed that it was the building that failed the residents of Grenfell Tower.

I didn't notice any sprinklers in the building. There was a fire lift but we didn't use it.

I didn't have a thermal imaging camera (TIC) at any time. Our truck had one that Guy was carrying but we got split up when we first went in and Guy went off with different firefighters.

Radio communications were difficult during this incident. It is a sore subject within the brigade. It was very busy on the radio that night. The sheer amount of traffic on the airway and if you are using a handheld radio while wearing your set, it's very difficult to relay the message and hear it back. I didn't have comms in my BA set although I did have a personal radio.

Some of the BA sets have an earpiece. In general terms, on a pump ladder there are five (5) BA sets but only two (2) of these have comms in them. The comms are a fiddly piece of kit to put together and is strapped to the face mask. Sometimes the earpiece falls out if it's not connected properly. There's a skull microphone on the top of your head. So for the truck I was on, Guy being the senior officer on the back will always have a comms set, and the guy who's in the watch room has a comms set (Graham as the junior man in the watch room). The governor doesn't usually go in so doesn't have a set.

Radio channel one (1) is for the fire ground. Channel six (6) is for BA. Then on the handheld radios I

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think the officers go onto channel two (2) and channel three(3).

In the building I would have turned my handheld radio onto channel six (6). I did manage to communicate on my first wear. The second time with the guy from Brixton, the further up you went the more difficult it got. It was very difficult to relay a message from the tenth (10th) floor. We found two (2) casualties and we were bringing them down. I think Meth did send a message I couldn't tell you if he got it or not. On the seventh (7th) floor they came back to us to say get up to the eighth (8th) floor so we got that message. But whether they received, I know he sent the message we got the two casualties but if they received it I have got no idea, I couldn't be sure.

So the incident commander when I turned up I presumed was North Kensington's governor. I would presume he was on the outside directing what's happening, although I didn't see this myself. Then later on when we were ushered in to that small lobby area. There was about thirty (30) of us there and then the chief officer came in with the assistant commissioner who was Andy Rowe. He said he was the incident commander and he gave us a brief pep talk, biggest job we've had since the blitz, you're going to be asked to do things you never thought you would be asked to do, see things you would never be asked to see, just do your best. He's a good guy and he was saying it very American. We knew what he meant but we were being all very British. He was trying to high five us and we were all kinda shake his hand. He meant absolutely well. The chief was there as well. I can't remember her saying anything. Just her being there you knew this was massive.

It's the first time I've ever seen the chief at a job. I've met her 20 years previously. Seeing her on the fire ground, firefighters there have got a lot of respect for her, if that makes sense. She was there. Previous chief officers don't have anything to do with us, don't even come talk to us, and she was on the fire ground making sure that we were fine. It went down very well. It was a massive boost. We have had a history of us and them and in that one move she broke all barriers down. It was a good move. That night we felt there was no us and them. At one point I thought I saw her bowling out a hose. I could have got that wrong but to see her on the fire ground was good.

There was a clear chain of command at the fire that night. Very quickly it was more senior officers taking control of the outside and the bridge head inside. So very quickly it was very well organised. They knew

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what they wanted us to do. Very quickly. There was no winging it. They were good.

Regarding the stay put policy. When we have got fires in blocks of flats and tower blocks, that is what we teach people to do, to stay put. Stay in your flat cause that the safest place for you. So the guys in the fifth (5th) floor that was there safest place. We were walking through that lobby, they could have been overcome, we could have caused them injury. In hindsight it was probably the wrong thing to do. It was the building that was failing them. If the fire was on the outside of the building coming in. Not on the inside going in if that makes sense. That's what we tell people. It's the safest place for them to be but obviously wasn't on this occasion.

I don't know who made decisions on the stay put policy on the night or when that advice changed.

The stairwell was inadequate for a building of that size and the amount of people in there, in my personal opinion.

The fire spread like I've never seen it before. It spread around the building very quickly. It just doesn't and can't compare to any fire I have previously been involved in. The outside of the building was burning, causing the windows to fail, causing the fire spread in the flats. So I've never been to anything like that, ever. The guys in the TL. They were trying the hardest to put it out, they couldn't, they couldn't do it. The rescue people at the same time. It was just, just crazy.

I didn't see anyone being designated to observe the external fire spread but can imagine that was done pretty quickly, it must have been their plan of action. As a firefighter that would have been my plan of action. I'm sure the governor was definitely on the ball for that. In order to achieve it they will have used sector command. Firefighters being designated to go to every side of the building and to relay that back. Common sense firefighting if you will. They will have got covering jets. Unfortunately they just couldn't reach above the fifth (5th) sixth (6th) floor really.

Externally, I noticed that they were using covering jets, the turntable ladder and the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP). Any debris that was falling they were trying to put out with a hose reel. Our governor had a covering jet. The TL was used initially and then it was withdrawn. The two (2) entrances I came through there were covering jets there. Guy was in the playground, him and his crew had a covering jet there.

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There was an ALP from Wembley I think on one side of the building and later on, there was one on the other side of the building from another brigade, Surrey I think.

Access was a problem though. There was no access for TL or ALP on some sides of the building like the playground area because you couldn't get them in.

In terms of firefighting. I didn't fight the fire from the outside. From the inside I was just rescuing. I fought the fire on the third (3rd) floor but I didn't do any firefighting inside, I were just rescuing. Not once in those two (2) wears did I ever have a branch, ever.

I got hit by debris and I took a load of smoke in while I was working in there. I didn't get any first aid at scene but about a week later I went to see my doctor who sent me for a chest and lung x-ray which came back fine.

I did not see any of my colleagues injured or incapacitated but I did see one colleague who was really distressed. Chris BACHELADOR, he was the on the phone. He was doing a fire survival guidance call to a woman. I can't remember what floor. He stayed on the phone for two (2) or three (3) hours. She said my son's just died and then she died, on the call. I saw him just after I come out the second time and he was hunched up against the wall.. It was a really really tough and difficult thing he found himself doing.

In terms of other members of the public I had contact with. I didn't speak to anyone on the phone.

There was always people walking down the stairs in the early stages. That first wear. So we were in our BA sets and we were just telling them to get out as quickly and calmly as possible. There was dozens of them in the early stages.

When I was changing a set outside an Arab gentleman told me that his family were in there on the fourteenth (14th) floor. I remember it well, he was counting them in pigeon English. On the other side, and he had his phone. Then a police officer started chatting to him. I left him with a uniform police

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officer. I didn't get his name or anything.

One thing that always stuck with me from the night is a firefighter, she must be about F503/F504, tall. She had a length of seventy (70) mil hose in her hand and an enforcer and she was literally running up the stairs in BA. That just stuck with me, the effort that was being made by everyone. She was sprinting up the stairs as we were coming down, think it must have been the second time. We were going down and she was running up. Wow. I Dunno who she was and haven't seen her again.

The whole night everyone was working hard. The whole us and them we have with senior officers have gone out the window, It was suddenly all come together. The whole three (3) emergency services, even the buses and community. It was all working together to try and save as many lives as we could.

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