

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: BATE, JESSAMINE

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

Occupation: FIREFIGHTER

This statement (consisting of 11 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: J BATE

Date: 07/06/2018

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

I am the above named person and my details are known to Police. This statement is in relation to the fire at GRENFELL TOWER on WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017.

I will make reference to the following in this statement which I exhibit as:

- JPB/1 – Contemporaneous notes – FF BATE
- JPB/2 – Map of GRENFELL TOWER and surrounding area

I joined the LONDON FIRE BRIGADE (LFB) in 2009. My current rank is Firefighter. I am classed as Competent. Following my [REDACTED] Leave, I returned to EUSTON in MAY 2017. I was there at the time of the GRENFELL TOWER FIRE. I moved to LEWISHAM FIRE STATION in AUGUST 2017, where I am currently based.

My initial training included seventeen (17) weeks at SOUTHWARK. This included two (2) weeks of fitness and First Aid. During my initial training, I completed various modules including further First Aid, hazardous materials, Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA), Road Traffic Collisions attendance as well as pumps and pumping. After training, I was posted to EAST GREENWICH for three (3) years before moving to EUSTON on a detached posting for four (4) months. Whilst there I completed additional training in Fire Rescue. This means I am able to ride the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU). The FRU training included a four (4) week course covering hazardous materials, jacking and cutting. Further to this, I carried out courses in swift water rescue, boat handling and hazardous materials.

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There is annual training for attributes specific to your Fire Station. At LEWISHAM, we specialise in hazard materials, animal and water rescue. There is a pump ladder and FRU based out of LEWISHAM. I took part in High Rises fire drills whilst at GREENWICH. We were able to use buildings due to be knocked down. This was around four (4) years ago. The training was as realistic as it could be and provided an overview of different flats and layouts as well as possible difficulties that may be faced. I have also attended lectures, these take place at regular intervals.

I have attended actual High Rise fires, including a severe fire in DEPTFORD after two (2) years at EAST GREENWICH. There was a fire in a sixteen (16) or seventeen (17) floor tower block. The fire was across the whole of the top floor and smoke had travelled to the fifteenth (15th) floor. I was part of the search and rescue on some of the lower floors. I am aware people lost their lives in this incident. Within the LFB, there are High Rise procedures in place. The procedures include venting systems, back up crews and moving the Bridgehead if required. Normally a fire should stay contained with a flat, however if everything is smoke logged and fire spreads in a weird way we use the same procedures that we are trained in but adapt them for the specific circumstance. The fire at GRENFELL TOWER was a very different case and we were not able to follow our set procedures. We had to rely on our training and experience.

I have completed Section 7(2)(d)s in High Rises local to my base Fire Station. The Section 7(2)(d) details various information about the building including the layout, where the fire lifts are located, fire shafts, smoke alarms as well as floor layouts. The Section 7(2)(d) would also list the exits and entry to the building and whether there are rising mains. Dry rising mains are a way of getting a water supply to higher floors without having to use a lot of hose and clogging up the stairwell.

While at EUSTON, the Borough was trialling the use of plaques outside relevant High Rises and other building with the pertinent information listed. Firefighters would otherwise rely on the tip sheet at the time of the call or the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) in the appliance for Section 7(2)(d) information.

I am aware of the Stay Put Policy. My understanding of the Stay Put Policy is that when residents call the LFB in a fire, advice is passed to the resident. This advice is to stay within the flat or room unless there is an immediate risk. The LFB advise to block the door, stay low and try to find fresh air. Generally, this is the guidance. I am aware that the Stay Put Policy was in place on the night of the GRENFELL TOWER fire. I am also aware that this advice changed at around 0300 or 0330hrs. The residents were then

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advised to immediately evacuate. The decision to change this direction would have been made by the Command Unit, Gold Command at the incident.

Prior to WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017, I had not heard of GRENFELL TOWER or attended the area of GRENFELL TOWER.

I was aware of cladding but did not have any specific knowledge about it.

On TUESDAY 13th JUNE 2017, I started my night shift at 2000hrs and I was based at EUSTON RED WATCH A231. At the beginning of the shift, I was posted to the Pump Ladder. The crew riding the Pump Ladder was Firefighter Nicky MITCHELL, driver, Firefighter Michael POLE, Firefighter Chris CHEESMAN and Crew Manager (CM) Officer in Charge (OIC) Jayden KEARSARGE.

As a crew, we attended other calls that evening including rescuing a dog from a park. We had returned from that call and were located at EUSTON Fire Station. At around 0055hrs WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017 I was in a rest area at EUSTON when I heard the bells come down, signalling a call. I left the rest area and headed to the Pump Ladder. The driver collected the tip sheet from the Watchroom. I did not go to Watchroom. KEARSARGE and MITCHELL relayed the information about the fire and it's location to the Pump Ladder Crew when we all met at the Pump Ladder appliance. The information we had at that time was that there was a twenty (20) pump fire in WEST LONDON. Based on the need for twenty (20) pumps, I knew that it was a serious fire.

My kit was already on the appliance, this included SDBA equipment only. Firefighter MITCHELL was aware of the location of GRENFELL TOWER as he has knowledge of the area due to doing the Knowledge to become a LONDON Black Cab driver.

We left the Station and headed towards the HARROW ROAD, then onto the A40 flyover. I was sat in the back of the appliance. It was dark and the traffic was light. Whilst on the A40, I was able to see from the appliance window, a building on fire. It appeared that there was fire from the fourth (4th) floor. I felt we needed to get people out of the building. Firefighter MITHCELL drove under emergency conditions. The journey did not take very long. There was an MDT in the appliance but I was not aware if this was used. There was radio traffic but I do not recall what was said.

We carried on towards the TOWER. I do not recall if there was an agreed Rendezvous Point (RVP) or if we had been made aware of one. We had no issues parking the appliance, we had arrived quickly and

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there were a couple of other appliances already there that we could see. I recall that there was a grassy area near where we parked on GRENFELL ROAD. This is marked as X (Parked) on Exhibit JPB/2.

We were parked on the SOUTH side of GRENFELL TOWER and were able to see some of the Tower.

The fire spread was unprecedented. There were other appliances arriving, we all started to take our equipment off the appliances. I was focused on what I was doing and carrying the kit so I did not really look at the Tower. We did not know what was needed so we took everything we could and put our SDBA on. I saw some members of the public but there were not many at that point. I did not speak to anyone.

We made our way to the bottom of the Tower. There was about twenty (20) Firefighters all waiting in Breathing Apparatus. An LFB White Helmet shouted to bring more branches and hose. It was explained that we needed more hoses and branches.

We returned to the appliance and gathered up extra branches. We took the equipment back to outside of the Lobby. I could see the fire moving up the building. The fire was jumping from floor to floor externally quite quickly. I had not seen any fires of that size before, I do not recall seeing anyone at the windows but I could see that there was still glass in the windows. In normal circumstances, the fire would be contained inside a building.

Debris was starting to fall from above from the outside of the Tower. I heard someone shout for the Firefighters to go inside the Lobby. There was smoke inside the Lobby area but we did not go under air. My crew of Firefighter MITCHELL, POLE, CHEESMAN and I did not want to waste the air that we had from the SDBA. There was a sense of shock mixed with Firefighters wanting to be committed from the Bridgehead to rescue or fight fire. I was paired with Firefighter CHEESMAN. I became aware that we had become separated from MITCHELL and POLE.

CHEESMAN and I had been told by someone not to go up onto the Bridgehead which was located on the third (3rd) floor. Inside the Lobby, I could see that there was a Mezzanine level floor before the start of the only stairwell. CHEESMAN and I had moved to the first (1st) floor. We were told to stop letting crews go by us into the stairwell. Firefighters were ignoring us and making their way up into the stairwell. There were residents coming down from stairwell, children were being carried out by Firefighters and people were being dragged out unconscious. On the Mezzanine level there were people shouting and screaming.

There were so many residents trying to get out of the building, it was getting harder due to the amount of Fire crews. One (1) woman was stumbling and screaming. I asked her "What floor are you from?" I

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believe she said that she was from Flat 113 on the fourteenth (14th) floor. I recall that she had black hair, dark skin and was aged in her late thirties (30s) or early forties (40s). The children being carried out were coughing and were clearly affected by smoke. I continued to wait on the first (1st) floor. I was wearing my SDBA set but was not under air at this point. I did not want to carry on standing on the Mezzanine floor while Firefighters charged past to start rescue and firefighting. I wanted to be committed and start helping with the rescue.

CHEESMAN and I moved up to the Bridgehead which was located by the lifts on the third (3rd) floor. At this point, I was reunited with the rest of my crew. There was a casualty being dragged down from stairs above. Someone shouted, "Get some oxygen". An IEC kit should always be located at the Bridgehead, so I grabbed the oxygen from this and passed it over. I do not know who the casualty was, as I could not see them. I do not know who carried out the treatment.

Watch Manager (WM) Louisa DA SILVA was in charge of the Bridgehead and briefed that we would be committed as a crew of four (4) to the twenty third (23rd) floor. We were told to take hoses, branches, Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC) and breaking in gear with us. This was initially to be for our own use. We were not aware if a water supply had been set up on the twenty-third (23rd) floor. DA SILVA told us to stop and look at the fourth (4th) floor to familiarise ourselves with the layout of the floors. We went under air and had some fire rescue kit with us. We were not in EDBA as we had arrived on the Pump Ladder; the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) is the only appliance with EDBA.

There was only one (1) stairwell. It was narrow, with two (2) sets of stairs per floor. The stairwell was quite smoke logged and there may have been lighting but we were not able to see anything. I did not see any floor numbers as we made our way up the stairs. We kept moving up to the fourth (4th) floor. I did not see anyone else going up or coming down. We tried to confer as a group the floor we were on, it was very difficult to communicate and we did not use radios. My crew said to keep going to the top floor. I felt that we would not make it there under SDBA.

We got to the fourth (4th) floor. There were four (4) flats; there was no damage that we could see on this floor. We had a quick look but did not want to waste air.

We made our way to what I thought was the twelfth (12th) floor. There was a crew of two (2) Firefighters coming down from higher floors. Both seemed exhausted. One of the Firefighters placed an unconscious female child in my arms. The girl was around nine (9) years old. She felt heavy, like a dead weight. The girl had dark skin and long darkish hair.

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It was hard to hear other members of my crew as it was dark and smoke filled within the stairwell.

Procedure states that you should not separate from your crew or partner, but we were a group of four (4), I knew I could leave with the other crew and my own crew could carry on with their task. It was a very hard decision for me to make though. I tried to communicate with my crew, but it was so hard to hear each other. It was also very difficult to let the other crew go down the stairs, as the stairwell was so narrow. No one seemed to know what was going on, but I knew I had to take the girl out. I started to go down the stairs with the other crew and the girl in my arms.

I recall that a Fire Officer in a White Helmet took the girl from me at around the second (2nd) or third (3rd) floor. I passed her over. There was no communication as to what was happening with the girl. I did not see this girl again. I carried on to the Bridgehead. I tried to get my tally from the Bridgehead but there was so much going on and shouting to get out of the building. The fire was travelling down the building to where the Bridgehead was. The Bridgehead was in the process of relocating to a lower floor so I had to leave my tally at the Entry Control board. Whilst I was inside the Tower, I did not see a fire lift. I did not see any sprinklers or hear any smoke alarms. However, it was very loud and this may have been the reason for not hearing any alarms.

I made it to the Mezzanine level, down to the Lobby. Outside of the Tower, there was a system set up where Police Officers with shields were covering Firefighters as they exited the Lobby. This was to protect from the debris falling from above. I found a Police Officer and ran out of the Tower with their shield for cover. I headed towards the grassy area away from the Tower.

I was very aware that my tally was still with Entry Control at the Bridgehead. This meant that the Bridgehead might have thought I was still inside the Tower. The tally should be handed to the Entry Control when a Firefighter is committed and collected again when the Firefighter exits.

I took my BA kit off and spoke with a Fire Officer in a White Helmet. I explained about my tally, he told me that if it was not important and to just leave it. There were many other crews at the grassy holding area. Louisa DE SILVA was calling me over the radio from the Bridgehead. I replied to her and explained that I had removed a casualty from the building and that I had been unable to collect my tally. I told her that I was outside of the Tower. I do not recall a huge amount of radio traffic at that point so I was able to hear DE SILVA and communicate with her.

Despite speaking with DE SILVA, I still wanted to collect my tally. I headed back to get my tally from the Bridgehead. There was a queue of BA wearers in the Lobby. By now, the Bridgehead was located by the stairs in the Lobby. I saw that Firefighters were still bringing casualties out of the building. One (1)

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group of Firefighters called for help. They were carrying a heavy male who looked to be in a bad way.

Five (5) of us helped to carry this male. I could see that he was wearing very few clothes. He was middle aged or older. We carried him to a triage area on the WEST side of the Tower. This area was close to the Tower near to the Children's Play area. This is marked as Casualty Handling on Exhibit JPB/2.

I walked back around to the EAST side. Someone at the EAST side asked me to put together the EDBA sets that were there and attach the cylinders. I do not recall who it was who tasked me with this. The EDBA sets had been left on a Salvage sheet. As I put the EDBA sets together, I realised that none of them worked. The batteries were not charged.

While I was there, I teamed up with Firefighter Ricky NUTALL from BATTERSEA. NUTALL and I were without crews so we discussed pairing up as a twosome and wearing BA so that we could go in again. We were asked to do fireground 'A' tests and head round to the WEST side. I was reunited with my crew here. They explained to me that they had been to the 18th floor and removed seven (7) casualties.

. NUTALL and I waited for a while but kept asking to be committed again to the Tower. Someone told us that there were enough fresh wearers and that we were not to worry.

We remained at this area. It became increasingly confusing as to whether we would be required to wear BA again. There was little instruction and we were unsure as to whether or not we should drop our BA to start help ferrying the casualties away from the Tower.

There was a lot of debris including cladding that was on fire falling from the Tower. It was starting to build up in the playground area. I had to put my helmet back on because of the debris falling. I was aware from the look of the outside of the Tower that the building was deteriorating. I was concerned that the building would not remain standing. I waited for a while on the WEST side of the Tower and spoke with other Firefighters about the stability of the Tower. I recall hearing that the stability was OK but I do not know how anyone knew this.

Someone came to me and asked if there were any EDBA wearers. It was starting to get light by now. I could see that there was still debris coming down from the Tower. The Tower was less on fire but was blackened and losing external parts. There were now much fewer windows still intact and many without glass. I could see that the interior of the tower was blackened.

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I walked around to the other staging area on my own. I checked for EDBA and any working batteries. I did a Fireground A Test. It was around 0900hrs or 1000hrs. I stayed at the Staging Area with my crew. Two (2) of from my crew had their fire gear removed at the bottom of the Tower. Others from my Watch had been treated with oxygen after leaving the Tower. They were clearly not in a fit state for wearing BA and entering the tower again. One (1) of the FRU crew said that he could wear again, however none of us wore or entered the Tower again.

I was aware that the Incident Commander was Andy ROE. ROE huddled twenty (20) to thirty (30) Firefighters together and spoke with us about not being able to follow procedure. He thanked us all and said that he knew we were doing the best we could. The Commissioner was also there. I spoke with her and she told me to stay hydrated. I met up with Jayden KEARSARGE at the EAST area. Firefighters who had already worn BA and been inside the Tower were sat on the grass.

We waited for a few hours, then just before we left we were asked to go and get any spare cylinders we had on the machine and drop them back at the EAST side. My crew and I returned to the pump. The pump was parked where we had left it and we took what cylinders we had back to the EAST side of the Tower. It was a three (3) or four (4) minute walk back to the pump.

Crews started to be relieved. The crews that had been first to attend were being relieved first. Someone spoke to us and told us that we needed to go to PADDINGTON before going back to our base Station and make notes about the incident. We made our way to PADDINGTON as a crew where I completed my notes and spoke with a counsellor. We then returned to EUSTON. I was on duty again that night so I went home and had some sleep before returning to work for 2000hrs.

Since the fire, I have returned to the Tower. This was two (2) weeks after the incident. I went in a Hazardous Material role and joined with the Rapid Response Team. During this time, I went inside the Lobby and saw the layout but I did not go up the stairs or further inside the tower. I was able to go to the memorial and light a candle. Members of the public were kind and said thank you however on leaving someone threw something at the Fire appliance. This smashed the windscreen of the appliance.

At a later date, I was made aware that the little girl I had carried out of the Tower had come from the eighteenth (18Th) floor. The crew who I carried the girl out with, told me that they had tried to release who they thought was the girl's mother trapped in or under something but I don't know what but couldn't release her.

Looking back at the incident, I feel that better communication would have helped. The actual equipment was poor and I was aware that equipment literally fell apart. I also feel that there should be equipment

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that Firefighters can carry with them to help provide air to casualties if needed. This would residents down the stairs of High Rise buildings without the Firefighters using their own air. Potentially Firefighters could carry a spare mask.

I feel a better strategy for search, rescue and evacuation in terms of Fire Survival Guidance not working. Firefighters were being told to go to individual flats when there were actually people in every flat and maybe we should have been checking and clearing floor by floor. The Bridgehead was located in an area where there was a lack of space. All Firefighters should be able to wear EDBA.

The LFB should not have to rely on another Brigade to provide an Aerial Ladder Platform.

Further, the water supply and pressure was inadequate.

I feel I have attended one of the biggest incidents that I'll ever see in my lifetime.

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