

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: GRAHAM, JOHN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 5 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: J GRAHAM

Date: 24/05/2018

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

This statement relates to the fire at GRENFELL TOWER on the night of the 14th June 2017 and my actions when I attended between the hours of 07:00 and 16:30hrs.

In this statement I will mention the following people:

Assistant Commissioner Andy ROE, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Andy O'LOUGHLIN, Group Manager Richard WELCH, Group Manager Pat GOULBOURNE, Group Manager Brett LOFT, Group Manager Dan ALIE, Group Manager Tim FROST, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Rick OGDEN, Station Manager Sam KAZMANLY, Station Manager Jason FRISBY, Group Manager Neil CHISOLM, Group Manager Paul TREW and John SIMPSON.

I will also mention the following locations:

London Fire Brigade Headquarters in Union Street, EMBANKMENT, VICTORIA, PARK LANE, BAYSWATER, BOMORE ROAD, WITCHURCH STREET, GRENFELL ROAD, GRENFELL TOWER, WITCHURCH STREET and BOMORE ROAD.

I have twenty six years' service in the London Fire Brigade, joining in 1991.

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After completing basic training I was posted to PADDINGTON Fire Station where I spent ten years starting as a Fire Fighter to finally finishing my time there as lead fire fighter, the equivalent rank today would be Crew Manager.

In 2000, I moved to NORTH KENSINGTON Fire Station as a Sub Officer, then after a short period I was seconded to Fire Brigade Headquarters at ALBERT EMBANKMENT where I took up a Command Support role at the Command Support Centre before moving to KENSINGTON Fire Station, when I achieved promotion to Station Officer (Watch Manager). I moved to WHITECHAPEL as a Station Officer before being promoted to Station Manager and moving to ISLINGTON where I spent four years.

I then moved to UNION STREET where I took up the role in the Special Operation's Group, liaising with other emergency services and spent time working with SO15 (Counter Terrorism) within the Metropolitan Police looking at policies and procedures with regard to Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks (MTFA). I was promoted to Head of this department during my time there and this was my role at the time of the GRENFELL TOWER fire, which is why I was mobilised to the fire from UNION STREET Headquarters. I spent three years doing this and then moved to the Borough of GREENWICH in 2017 as Borough Commander.

I have had lots of training over the years and to list it all would be difficult although it is contained within my training record held with the London Fire Brigade. Training is an ongoing process for all fire fighters.

For officers at senior level, training is a periodic evaluation and assessment in Incident Command, it is a weeklong intensive course in operational training and you are training in the different areas of incident management. It starts with a knowledge test that you are expected to study for and tells the trainers what level you are at.

The Fire Brigade manage firefighting by dividing the building on fire in to different Sectors and there is the opportunity during this training to take the lead in all sectors of a fire and manage different areas of it, from managing resources and tactics, water management and marshalling hazardous materials to managing offensively fighting the fire. Some of the scenarios they use for training are either real past events or fictitious scenarios created for the purpose of training. My role during the GRENFELL TOWER fire was to manage the firefighting offensively. A few months before the GRENFELL TOWER fire I completed my training for Group Manager which is a week of very intensive operational training, so it was fresh in my mind at the time. My training is up to date now and was at the time of the fire.

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Every Group Manager has a specialism and mine is National Inter-agency Liaison Officer (NILO) this involves working with other emergency service agencies such as the police and in particular SO15. The training for this role is also very intensive around firearms and terrorism.

My understanding of high-rise firefighting is there is an operational policy to be followed and if any of this policy should be changed there is always a computer learning package to be completed followed by practical training implementing what the learning package includes. My first six years as a Station Manager was based at Head Quarters and I would do my twenty-four hour shifts as Operational Duty Officer from SHOREDITCH Fire Station which is a very busy station, so operationally I am also very experienced and have always had positive feedback on my ability to perform this role.

I was Sub Officer of NORTH KENSINGTON Fire Station from 2000 to 2004 so I did have previous knowledge of GRENFELL TOWER but my memory of attending fires at the location is limited as it was fourteen years ago. I think I have probably attended approximately four fires at the building although I do not remember where the fires were. I also recall we attended fires that broke out in the bin room of the building, which would probably have been caused by what people would have put in the bin shoot. Because it was such a long time ago it is hard to remember specifics.

The type of building GRENFELL TOWER is, means you would have to aggressively fight any fire within it, and trying to, fight fires on multiple levels in a building that is not designed for that is problematic. Having only one narrow staircase and trying to get water from the dry rising inlet situated at the end of one corridor all comes with it problems. These are all things you would consider when going to a tower block like GRENFELL TOWER.

This was before the presence of any cladding to the outside of the building.

The area surrounding the tower I recall has not changed much in the years since I worked there. I do remember the area was quite run down at the time and it would always be the sort of place if you had to attend a call there you would keep an especially close eye on your crew to make sure everyone was safe. I do remember the unusual numbering and lay out of the block with two mezzanine floors before getting to the flats.

I do not recall any familiarisation visits 7 2(D) to GRENFELL TOWER although they would have been done. 7 2(D) familiarisation visits are, in real terms, for crews to gain an understanding of the buildings at

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particular risk of fire and their layout in the area local to their fire station. Only certain buildings believed to be a risk from fire were visited. After the fire at LAKANAL HOUSE, another problematic high-rise fire, the Fire Brigade introduced more extensive high rise familiarisation visits, insisting that all high rise blocks of flats would receive visits from their local fire station. A tactical fire plan would be recorded on the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) systems that are in the fire engines so, on the way to a fire at a high-rise block of flats, fire crews would have knowledge and useful information about the premises of the fire they are attending.

GRENFELL TOWER, I would imagine, would have had a fairly standard plan and although I have not seen one it would have information about the narrow staircase and the unusual numbering of the flats. There are also policies that tell you when you need to go outside of policy in order to tackle a fire. Additionally, the Fire Brigade introduced a tactical fire plan that is kept in buildings, so if a fire crew attended a fire at a high-rise block of flats they were not familiar with; they would find the information within the building. However this is dependent on the local council to introduce this, but most bought into it when it was introduced.

My understanding of the 'stay put' policy is that in most cases of fire in high rise tower blocks the procedure in place is unless you are in the flat where the fire is, it can be more dangerous to leave than to stay and it is rare for a fire to spread beyond the flat of origin. This is because of the way flats are designed to keep the fire in the flat of origin, and if there is smoke spread it would be safer to stay in your flat than enter a smoke filled hallway where visibility could be quite low. It can also hinder the Fire Brigade's access to the building if lots of people try to leave the building because the Fire Brigade will try to get in and valuable time could be wasted in terms of fighting the fire. In my experience as a fire fighter and a senior fire fighter in normal cases, a fire behaves in a flat as we expect, by not spreading any further than that compartment, the policy works. Evacuation of a high-rise tower is rare and is a judgement call.

On the night of the 14th of June 2017, I was on a twenty-four shift. This is two twenty-four hour shifts back to back and I was getting ready for work in order to do the second of the two shifts. I first saw GRENFELL TOWER on the television at home, as I was getting ready to go to work at approximately 04.30hrs. I called my office, at the time it was in UNION STREET and some of my staff were already at work and I was told the duty DAC was calling senior officers, looking for people to relieve those already at the fire ground with a relief plan at 0700hrs.

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I drove to Union Street in my Brigade lease car a [REDACTED]. The journey took approximately half an hour and got to the office a little earlier than usual. My pager went off at 0700hrs instructing me to attend the fire ground in the capacity of Group Manager and not for my specialist tag. I was at UNION STREET at this point and ready to go.

I knew where GRENFELL TOWER was prior to leaving UNION STREET and I recall the route I took. I drove down EMBANKMENT, through VICTORIA, PARK LANE, BAYSWATER and approached the scene from the bottom end of ROYAL CRESENT. I parked my car on TRENDGOLD STREET south of HOLLAND PARK, which was quite a distance from the tower but the road was blocked with a lot of emergency service vehicles and other cars so I decided it would be quicker to walk to the tower. I got out of my car and put my fire gear on and started walking towards the tower taking in the atmosphere and wondering how I would deal with the fire.

I walked south of HOLLAND PARK and walked towards the tower looking for a Command Unit, which is a fire engine set up as a mobile office and where the operations are run. The Incident Commander can also be found there.

The roads on the journey from my car to the fire ground were full of people. It looked like a war zone. I passed through a press line and then I got my first sight of the GRENFELL TOWER when I reached BOMORE ROAD. It looked very much the same as it did when I had seen it on TV, very much alight from top to bottom and there was smoke coming from all sides of the building. I checked all my fire gear and that I had my airwave radio on me and continued along BOMORE ROAD. When I walked up WITCHURCH STREET, there were three Command Units at the scene with different functions, Brett LOFT and Richard WELCH directed me to the Command Unit where I could find AC Andy ROE the Incident Commander.

I saw AC Andy ROE in the Command Unit that was sited at GRENFELL ROAD on the south side of the tower. I handed in my Nominal Role Board through the window of the Command Unit. This is a board I carry in my car which has my name and call sign, car registration and my telephone number on it. Handing it to the Command Unit means they will know I am at the scene and should a role call be necessary I will be accounted for.

AC ROE was giving a brief to the Operations Commander, DAC Andy O'LOUGHLIN, talking about

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having to go out of policy to fight the fire. I think he said "THIS IS NOT GOING TO GET DONE BY FOLLOWING POLICY".

When DAC O'LOUGHLIN saw me, he said "I WANT TO YOU TO TAKE OVER THE FIRE FIGHTING SECTOR". There was not much of a briefing given in the Command Unit, as it was very busy with Command Unit staff, police and members from the local authority. I have known Andy ROE for a number of years and he knows I am an aggressive fire fighter, which means I will not stand back. I will react and do what is necessary within reason to deal with the fire.

I would be relieving Group Manager Pat GOULBOURNE and Group Manager Richard WELCH at the bridgehead in the tower. Normally I would do a hand over with them so they could go but it was suggested I shadow them for a bit to see what they were doing and what was working for them and what had been put in place so that information was not lost. It was approximately 0730hrs when I started shadowing them. Before relieving them I did a walk around the building with Andy O'LOUGHLIN so I could see where the other sectors were and what resources were available to me and where they could be found.

As we walked round the tower, it was noticeable that it was clearly alight from the fifth floor to the top and there was debris that had fallen from the tower which was knee deep on the ground directly below the tower. There was a LFB safety officer managing the debris field. I could see there were issues with getting into the building because of the debris and I saw fire fighters going in to the building under the protection of police holding riot shields.

I was then escorted in to the building under a police riot shield entering the building on the south side which is the main entrance of the tower. As I entered the building fire fighters were bringing what I believed to be the last casualty that was brought out of the building alive. There was still burning debris falling from the building but I believe it was smaller and lot less than earlier in the incident.

On entering the lobby there was approximately two foot of water on the floor that I was told was from a burst length of hose on one of the upper floors. Everything in the room was wet and standing there for only a short length of time, I was drenched. It was clear operations were being impeded by the amount of water cascading down the stairs from the burst length of hose in the floors higher up. It made it hard to write things down because everything was so wet.

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The bridgehead was in the lobby of the ground floor of the building and information was written on the wall as to which flats had been searched and on what floors. I took a picture of the information on the wall, as I wanted to move the bridgehead up as soon as it was possible. I took a picture of the information on the wall so I had a record of it. I wanted to move the bridgehead up to the fourth floor because all floors up to the fifth had been searched and cleared. I did consider moving it up to the fifth but it was too smoke logged and there were still gas main pipes alight.

The lobby area in the ground floor was small and very wet making it difficult to work in and there were two Entry Control Boards (ECBs) running. The bridgehead is the last point of safety for a fire fighter wearing breathing apparatus before entry into a fire. The ECB works via telemetry; a fire fighter can send distress signals from his BA back to the Entry Control and the board can calculate how much air a fire fighter has in their air tank. This is also worked out manually with the officer in charge of the Control Board so the fire fighter knows exactly how long they can spend in the fire under air, and when they need to think about coming out.

The radio signal in the tower was difficult and the transmissions kept dropping out and although a repeater had been brought to the tower (a device used to improve radio signal) it did not help much. The officers in the tower decided to rely on runners to get messages back and forth. Between the bridgehead and the Command Unit, there were two boards running and there was a Crew Manager and Watch Manager running the boards.

The bridgehead was moved to the fourth floor, once the smoke logging had cleared sufficiently. The area we were moved to was small and cramped on the fourth floor, so I decided to take over nearby flats to create more space, using one flat where the Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA) wearers and another for fire fighters wearing Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA). This was so I could organise my resources more effectively. I had Group Manager Dan ALIE in another flat marking off what flats had been searched and on what floors they were from the duplicated information I photographed on my phone. I also detailed the other supporting staff to draw up a plan of the flats from the information I had taken from the original bridgehead on the ground floor. It soon became clear the numbering of the flats was incorrect due to the unusual lay out of the building that I mentioned earlier, however I decided we would search all floors from the bridgehead to the top if it was safe and possible to do so. GM Tim Frost who dealt with logistics whilst I concentrated on fire fighting assisted me at the bridgehead. Initially

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I committed crews to floors 6, 7 and 8 to fight the fire and made sure one crew was dedicated to one floor each.

The burst length of hose and the number of hoses on the stairs was causing problems so I made the decision that we needed to remove the hose from the stairs, draw back and start again with regard to fighting the fire. I ordered all fire fighters back to the bridgehead and gave a brief, stating what needed to be done and started sending fire fighters up tasked with clearing the stairs of hose.

I had also asked for a single length of hose to be laid on floors six to twelve to assist with firefighting on each of the floors. I instructed that at no time were these hoses to enter the stairwell. A lightweight pump was also brought up to increase the water pressure so we could push up further through the floors. At the same time,

GM Paul TREW was on the Ariel Ladder Platform (ALP) outside the building keeping the fire at bay. An ALP is a fire engine with a longer ladder than a normal pump ladder fire engine.

I also knew there was a number of deceased casualties on the stairs. The directive had been not to move any bodies until more of the fire was out. I reasoned that we had progressed with firefighting and knew the bodies needed to be moved to give fire fighters a clear path up the stairs and to provide the deceased people with some dignity. I sent fire fighters up, tasked with moving the bodies we knew about, from the stairwell in to the nearest lobby on the flight of stairs they were on.

Most of my time was spent at the bridgehead tasking fire fighters going in to the building. I looked out the window when I got a spare minute from time to time, and felt very aware that I was inside a building that was burning around me. Concerns about building collapse and the stability of the tower had been raised during the night, but from my experience as a fire fighter with many years' service, I knew that the core of the building was strong and would not collapse - although I could not be sure about the stability of the flat floors from the lobby. I instructed fire fighters going into the building to check the flats from the core/lobby areas of the building and not go into them, as I already knew most of the flats no longer had walls. They could be checked sufficiently by fire fighters keeping within the core of the building.

I had discussions with DAC Rick OGDEN and an Operational Review Team (ORT) officer, GM John SIMPSON throughout the day regarding the stability of the building and I was confident that the core of the building was structurally sound. I constantly reviewed this decision and whilst I knew there was little

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hope of any saveable life left in the building I felt it was important to continue to check and carry on fighting the fire for as long as it was safe to do so.

I was at the incident for approximately nine hours throughout the day and was supported by GM Tim FROST, SM Sam KAZMANLY and SM Jason FRISBY along with a number of Station Managers and Crew Managers providing relief for each other throughout the day. I eventually left the incident at 1630hrs, relieved by GM Neil CHISOLM. I felt everyone gave one hundred percent that day and many of the problems we encountered were not of our own making.

I felt the delay in turning off the gas in the building was a big hindrance as it stopped us from putting out the fire. Fires burning from gas mains could serve to reignite the flat fires.

Since the GRENFELL TOWER fire, I have given a presentation to the police around evacuation of high-rise buildings on fire. The directive is not to evacuate unless the building is covered in aluminium cladding material known as an ACM building. Buildings of this kind have a procedure called a 'waking watch' in which staff are on duty twenty-four hours a day, ready to evacuate the building in the case of a fire.

As the cladding presents a significant risk of fire spread, in the borough of GREENWICH there are twenty five buildings with this kind of cladding, eight of which were found recently and we are still finding buildings like this. Removing cladding is a very expensive exercise, and no one appears to want to take the responsibility to pay due to it being so expensive.

During the making of this statement I have referred to my notes that I made shortly after the incident.

I have exhibited these as JMG/01, seal number: MPSZ13185607

Described as: One (1) copy of notes made within 24 hours of the incident

I have also marked various locations on two separate maps I exhibit as:

JMG/02, seal number: MPSZ13185608

Description: One (1) GRENFELL TOWER map and surrounding area

JMG/03 seal number: MPSZ13185948

Description One (1) GRENFELL TOWER map and surrounding area

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