

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: MURRAY, PATRICK

Age if under 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: P.MURRAY

Date: 15/02/2018

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

I have been asked to make a statement in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire on the 14th June 2017. I have been spoken to via digital media by DC Lou JONES and DC Peta JAMES. I was interviewed on digital media but I understand this statement is a full version of what was said. During the interview I referred to my contemporaneous notes which I exhibit as exhibit reference POM/1. I also referred to a map of Grenfell Tower and the surrounding areas on which I have drawn various things, this is also my exhibit and is exhibit reference POM/2. My Union representative Micky NICHOLAS was present throughout my interview.

I have been a fire fighter for 27 years. I started at Ealing Fire Station where I remained for 12 years. I then went to Knightsbridge Fire Station for 2 years. From there I went to Hammersmith and that is where I have stayed ever since. I am a competent officer and am not in development. Aspart of my role as a fire fighter I part-take in training regularly and this includes classroom based learning and practical scenario's in our towers at the fire station. During my service I have dealt with many incidents and high rise fires.

On the 14th June 2017 I was on duty at Hammersmith Fire Station. It was my first night on Red Watch. I started at 8pm and I was due to finish at 9.30am. I can't remember the exact time but it was after midnight the bells went down for a call. This was to Grenfell Tower. I was assigned to Pump Ladder (PL) G361. With me were Watch Manager (WM) WATSON, Fire-fighter Ben FELTON and Fire-fighter Nick BARTON. I was the driver and WM WATSON sat in the front with me. I turned left out of the station, went up Shepherds Bush Road, turned right into Holland Park Road, then into St Ann's and into Grenfell

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Road. The journey would only have taken about 5-6 minutes. Once we arrived at the incident we were met in Bomore Road by Crew Manager (CM) DAVIES who directed us where to park so we could try to avoid the road getting congested and the access remained clear. CM DAVIES said we needed our breathing apparatus (BA) sets and we were to make our way to Grenfell Tower. The crew got off the appliance with two BA sets whilst I parked the appliance. I grabbed my BA set and went to join my crew at the Tower. When I arrived I made my way inside on the ground floor. I was about to make my way up to what would subsequently become the staging area and the Bridgehead (BH) when a member of public approached me. He was a white male in his mid-late 30's, about 6' tall wearing a baseball cap, shorts and was carrying a fire brigade axe. He said something along the lines of, "You guys got'ta get round the back, there's lots going on there, there's loads of people there." He had a sense of urgency in what he was saying. Between WM WATSON and me, we decided that I would go round and have a look as to what was happening. The incident was still in the early stages at this time and there was only about 5-6 appliances at the scene. When I got round the back (which is Latimer Road Tube Station side) I could see about five or six people, maybe more, at the windows of their flats. At this point I didn't believe the fire had reached this side because there were indications of a fire. There were lots of members of public watching and the crowd was very, very concerned about what was happening. They had friends and family inside the Tower and were very anxious. They just wanted us to get everybody out.

The conditions of the rear side of the Tower which led me to believe the fire hadn't reached that far were: 1) there were no visible signs of smoke at all and 2), there didn't appear to be massive amounts of heat in the flats. I went back to inform WM WATSON of my observations. We decided that I would go back with a loud hailer and I would give advice, reassurance and guidance on what we were doing. Via the hailer I told people to try not to panic, stay where they were, not to worry, the fire was on the other side of the building. I told them we were there and we were trying to extinguish the fire. The people were quite high up in the Tower, over the 10th floor, maybe in the top half. I could see them but I couldn't hear anything being said. I am not able to describe anyone because the light in the flats behind them made them silhouettes. I could see the shape of them and hands but that was it. I kept repeating this advice for about 10-15 minutes.

It was a warm summers' night so people had their windows open. It was at this point I noticed the conditions started to change and escalate. One of the open windows to the left of the rear side of the Tower, which had initially been clear, started to change. I noticed vapour coming out. This would signify

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to me that there was heat coming from the fire at the front. The vapour, however, then changed to a white, wispy smoke. This got darker and darker, which means that something is now burning and on fire. Using my own professional judgement, and years of fire-fighting experience I made the decision to change my advice I was giving on the loud hailer. I felt that from where I was and from what I could see, the fire had escalated immensely. The advice I was now giving was that if people were in a position to get out, now was a good point to do so. If they were unable to do so then the fire fighters would come and get them. I was still advising people to remain calm. I noticed the people who had been at the windows had gone. My rationale for changing my advice was that in 10-15 minutes the rear of the Tower had gone from not looking like there was a fire there to light smoke, to dark smoke. This can only mean one thing and due to the speed the fire had escalated I felt if people were able to get out then they should do that.

I went back to the front of the building to find a senior officer in order to tell him what was happening and what I had seen. It just happened that as I did this another WM arrived at the same time. His name was John, I do not recall his surname, but he was from Wandsworth. We went around the back again and between us devised a plan. We agreed that we needed to try and slow the spread of the fire down. John was on his radio requesting a pumping appliance, crew members to set into the hydrant so we could get water on the fire down the side of the building. More fire-fighters had arrived on scene to assist and Richmond's pump was ordered round which had equipment to help us.

At this point I was standing on the corner of the rear of the block and Station Walk (near Kensington Aldridge Academy). The flames were coming from the front of the Tower round the side by the Academy and towards the rear. If you stood there for 5 minutes the fire would have spread 5-10 feet. It didn't just spread width ways either. It was spreading vertically. I would have expected it to go from one flat to another but this was spreading across 6-8 floors. The colour of the smoke exiting the building was getting worse and the fire was moving very quickly down one side. The debris falling was really hazardous. It was like black snow in the air. So much stuff was burning off and falling down. It was falling everywhere. There was a lot of background noise coming from the member of public watching, fire-ground noise, engines pumping, and our own communications. I do not think I heard any fire alarms though. I was just looking at the building and trying to work on the fire rather than concentrating on the noises around me.

We had set up a water monitor at the side of the building by the Academy (marked W/M on the map). This is a stationary jet which can be left in situ and it was shooting water up to about the fourth floor. This

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was only able to be utilised for about 15 minutes because of the amount of debris falling off the building. There were two other fire-fighters holding a jet, spraying water on the fourth floor. It was my role at this time to be their safety officer. I was watching out for debris and ensuring they were as safe as possible.

My role then changed and I went back to fire fighting. We had managed to get the hoses laid out and the hydrant down Station Walk (marked H on the map) set into. We were trying to slow the speed the fire was travelling with all the water we could but to be honest it was obvious our efforts were not working. The fire was too aggressive. The fire was just going round us. The lower floors were wet but the fire stayed above that. It just went up and round the building.

BA crews were now trying to enter the building from a different entry point which was at the corner of the Walkway and Latimer Road tube station side (marked A* on the map). Our efforts with the jets then focused on protecting these officers entering the building and any casualties or members of the public exiting the building. I probably had about 15 additional fire-fighters with me now. We were fighting the fire at the rear of the Tower and it actually felt like we had managed to slow the fire spread down a little. The speed in which the fire had travelled across the side of the Tower had been really quick but across the rear it didn't feel that fast. There was so much debris still falling off the building that police riot shields were being used above the heads of people being escorted in and out of the Tower. I was holding a jet by the railing fence by the park and I was helping to cover the entry point. I was on and off this jet for quite some time.

At one point there was a massive bang on the floor. Someone inside the building had jumped out of the window. I saw the person come down but initially it looked like a bit of debris, something falling off the building. All the debris falling was very, very dark and this is what the person looked like. It was only when they hit the ground that I realised it was a person. I believe it was a man due to the size but I didn't have any involvement with the body. He landed about 10-15 feet away from me. A couple of fire-fighters ran in to help him. One of these was Wayne ARCHER, the other I do not know. We then focused our jets on those officers and the body to assist in protecting them. A police riot shield was also used to protect them from the falling debris. The body was moved off to my right, to a covered area but I do not know the exact location where they took him.

At some point I went back around to the front of the building. There was a Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) point which had been set up. I was talking to another fire-fighter Billy BRODERICK there. Another

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member of public came up to us and said that there was a person in a flat and our water jets were just missing him; if we moved our jets over a bit then we might be able to help him. I went to the jets on the walkway and informed them of the person in the flat. The jets were then focused on the fire above where he was. I could see the member of public in the window. There were pockets of fire above him. Daylight was breaking at this point and I could see he was in the middle portion of the building. He had short hair but this is all I could say about him. I do not remember seeing any fire in his flat but I do not know what happened to him.

Whilst I was on the Walkway I was asked by a WM to go and help another fire-fighter at the end of the Walkway who was with a casualty. When I arrived I could see that the fire-fighter was Will (no surname) from Ealing Red Watch. He looked distressed, really quite pale and classic shock appearance. I asked if he was ok and he said, "Look." He moved out of the doorway he was standing in and I could see a male of the floor with a defibrillator on his chest. The male was heavy set in build with short dark hair, he looked North African / Arabic African / Tunisian in appearance. He was in his mid-late 30's. I believe he was just wearing underpants or boxer shorts. I could hear the defibrillator repeating, "Advised do not shock, advised do not shock." It was going over and over again. The male was laying on his back and his legs were all over the place. He had obviously suffered massive trauma to his legs and were clearly broken as they had taken on a different shape. Will said, he had been told to wait until the Ambulance service arrived and could declare him deceased. Will told me he had been on a jet or assisting on a jet when the male just landed at his feet. I tried to give him some reassurance but then the Ambulance crew arrived. They assessed the male and checked for signs of life, of which there weren't any. They declared him deceased. I went down to North Kensington's pumping appliance and got a salvage sheet. I returned to the male and covered him up. The Ambulance crew said they would take it from there. We had no part in the movement of the body. Will and I were released from this scene.

I returned to the FSG point and asked Fire-fighter Billy BRODERICK if he had seen my crew. He said they had gone for a cup of tea. I went to meet up with them. The whole incident was now taking a different approach with more consideration of how to proceed. I realised I hadn't seen my BA set for quite some time so I initially went to look for it, without success. I then joined my original crew and had a cup of tea. It was everything I had to keep my eyes open.

We left the scene and all went to Paddington Fire Station to write our notes. It was difficult trying to get away due to the number of appliance there at the incident. I think we would have got to Paddington after

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9.30am. Once we had made our notes we had a quick conversation from the counselling services and then came back to Hammersmith Fire Station. This would have been between 1230-1pm.

I came back on duty at 8pm that night and we went back to Grenfell Tower. We had to make sure that the fires had been extinguished completely and ensure structurally the building was ok. There were people from all services now working inside the Tower and we had to ensure they were safe. My role was one of observation at the rear of the building again. I could see that there were still flames inside the building but this was due a gas mains rupturing. The gas company had not managed to shut it off and it took some time for them to do this because they had to dig up the road. We were ensuring that these pockets of fire didn't reignite. We were safeguarding the people inside.

Prior to this incident I had never been to Grenfell Tower before. As I said at the start of my statement I have fought high rise fires before. The standard policy for high rise fires is to 'stay put'. The compartments should contain the fire and offer protection to residents. Even if the fire does spread to one or two other flats due to windows being open etc. it would be the correct advice for people to stay put. The fire spread at Grenfell Tower was totally unprecedented and the circumstances were not normal by any standards. Brigade policy has been developed over years and years of fighting fires; Grenfell Tower fire had never been seen before. On this night the stay put advice needed adjusting due to the nature of the fires' behaviour.

For the roles I undertook at the incident I felt I had all the relevant and necessary equipment I needed. Part of the problem with Grenfell Tower is the design and surrounding space. It was not taken into consideration that families now have 2-3 cars now. you have to go around the surrounding streets just to get to the rear of the Tower. The area is not fit for purpose. We have to consider the weight of our appliances before we leave them. For example, we would not park on the grassy areas because we would never get off it. When water comes off the appliance the ground gets wetter and affects the ground. The only sides we could access were the rear and the front. Ideally we needed 360 degree access to the Tower with hard standing.

In relation to me, I did not suffer any physical injuries. I had not sought medical attention for any injuries. My coping method is to try and forget what has happened. I try to move on quickly. I latch onto other things occurring in my life so I do not have to think about it. It has been a bit of a shock for me how I feel doing this interview and statement today. I did witness the fire-fighter on the turntable ladder suffer an

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injury from the debris. He was trying to put water on the outside of the building and was getting covered in debris. He had to be ordered back in. I do not recall this officer's name.

I would finally like to reiterate that what happened on the night of the Grenfell Tower fire was a pretty special set of circumstances. The fire is the most aggressive fire I have ever seen. It had bright orange flames, which travelled at a speed I have never seen before. It would then go really dark due to all the burning debris falling all over the place. I try to humanise things and make them smaller in order for me to deal with them, but it was pretty tough to do that this night. I was looking at other fire-fighters who have been in the fire brigade for years and they all looked the same, never seen something of this scale before. The fire-fighters at the scene did everything they could to save life or prevent damage to property. They may have stepped outside of the rule book but they did everything they could. Fire-fighters like to have 'wins' when it comes to fires. I didn't feel like that this night. That's hard to deal with.

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