

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: MEYRICK, PAUL

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 6 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: PAUL MEYRICK

Date: 30/01/2018

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

The following is my account of the fire that occurred at Grenfell Tower in the early hours of Wednesday 14th June 2017.

I have been a Firefighter (FF) for the last 14 years. I started my career at Forest Hill before moving to Bow, then Lambeth, and now Peckham. I was a Crew Manager (CM) at Lambeth Fire Station for approximately 7 years and Since May 2017 have been a Watch Manager (WM) at Peckham Fire Station. I was the most senior FF in my crew at the time of the incident. The umbrella term "Appliance" is used to describe varying types of fire engines. I will use this term throughout my statement.

Prior to the incident I had never visited Grenfell Tower nor did I have any relevant information in regards to the layout of the building.

As FF's we complete various training courses throughout our service. I cannot remember exactly when we last completed training in relation to high rise flats although I do know it is fairly frequently. It must be every couple of months. The training involves various skills, some of these are setting up the bridgehead correctly and in the correct location, using the lift and the water main. We have rising mains in our training towers and train with them. Training that involves high rise flats is quite a big topic within the fire brigade so it is covered relatively extensively. We also have Breathing Apparatus (BA) training courses, I believe the last one I completed was around a year ago. It wasn't specific to high rise flats, it

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was more general around checking compartments. I do not believe we have had any realistic training courses in relation to high rise flats. As a Watch Manager my current status is "In development".

I will also mention the following people: FF Adam WILSON, FF Dwayne HARRIS, FF Tom SHARP, FF Jim GEAPIN and WM John STEVENS. All apart from John STEVENS are based at Peckham Fire Station. John is based out of Brixton Fire Station.

On Tuesday 13th June 2017 I came in for nights at Peckham Fire Station at around 8pm. If I am honest I couldn't even remember what day of the week it was until checking. As far as I can recall it was a relatively quiet night to begin with, I believe we had a couple of calls initially but I cannot remember what they were. I went to bed at around midnight before being woken up at around half 1 in the morning, possibly 2am. I remember being handed the call slip by the duty person who sits in the watch room. The slip had come through on the tele printer, was torn off and handed to me whilst I was in the fire truck. The information I got from it was that it was a 40 pump fire and the location of the call- Grenfell Tower. I was riding a pump ladder Appliance. FF Adam WILSON was driving with myself in the front passenger seat. FF's Dwayne HARRIS, Tom SHARP, and Jim GEAPIN were in the rear of the Appliance. I believe Adam has about 6 years' service, Dwayne about 5, Tom around 12 with Jim on his 2th year of service. So I believe we had a good level of experience within our crew.

I know London pretty well so we went straight out, I believe I knew the best way to get there. An immediate left out the station up Peckham Road down to Camberwell Green, straight over Camberwell New Road. Camberwell New Road up to the Oval. Round the Oval toward Vauxhall cross. Round Vauxhall Cross underneath Vauxhall Bridge up through Victoria. Up the side of Buckingham Palace to Park Lane. Round Marble Arch up to the Edgware Road and a left onto the A40. We absolutely flew through because it was very quiet on the streets at that time of morning. Once on the A40 and up over the flyover we could see Grenfell Tower to the left of us. We came off the A40 at the Westfield Shopping Centre. We knew it would be big when the slip said 40 pump fire so we were sort of expecting it to be rather substantial, but it was still quite an eye-opener coming over the flyover and seeing the building. From the view we had whilst on the flyover I could only see two elevations of Grenfell Tower. It was rather unusual and looked as if the fire was wrapped around half the entire building. It was very surprising to see, multiple floors were alight. It looked as if the fire was spreading from either the fourth or fifth floor upwards, gone around the middle section and up parts of it. The tower was well alight. You usually

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go to a high rise fire and see one flat on one floor alight or maybe even three or four flats but to see so much of a building on fire was very unusual. There was a lot of traffic on our personal radios. I can't remember the detail or content but it was very busy on the radio. As we came over the flyover where Westfield is we took a left into what I think was Holland Park Avenue and up to Grenfell Tower. We didn't have too much trouble finding somewhere to park. The roads are all very little around there but that was about it. I remember thinking to myself that for that time of morning there was a lot of presence on the streets. I cannot remember exactly where we parked but it was quite a few roads away. We knew that our Appliance would not be needed because they had plenty of pump ladders closer. What they needed was FF's in BA.

Once we had parked up we booked on as being in attendance using the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT). I told my crew to come with me and we all made our way to the Command Unit to get detailed on what we would be doing. It took us around a minute and thirty seconds to get to the building. Now that we were closer to the tower you could see it all in a lot more detail. The fire looked pretty much the same although the sounds and sights of debris falling intensified the view. It was relatively clear and quite substantial. At one point I thought I saw a body fall from the building but I cannot say for certain what exactly I saw, although I did hear someone else say it was a body. The closer you get you begin to see lots of building materials crashing down. Like the cladding that's been spoken about so much in the media, window frames, metal frames and other building materials. A lot of glass was shattering breaking and falling down. Some bits of the cladding were absolutely massive. The way the fire wrapped around the building was quite unusual to see and was moving rapidly but it was what you'd expect to see at an incident such as this. Some of the materials were landing on and smashing into parked vehicles. There were a lot of people stood beneath the underpass at the bottom of the building. I could see that the falling of debris would severely hinder access to the building.

Once at the Command Unit, my crew was asked to get BA sets on and come back to the holding area. I wasn't asked to put BA on but was asked to go to the holding area. From this moment in time forward I was separated from my crew. The holding area was only a holding area by title. Nothing had been set up yet and I was detailed to put together a holding area for crews ready to enter the building. From this point on this was my sole role. The holding area was situated on a grassy area on the side of the building that had the playground. I did not leave this position for the remainder of my shift nor did I enter the building

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itself. Essentially I had the area split into three different zones, a casualty handling area, a fresh BA wearers area and FF's who had been inside the building and needed a break sort of area. The way it worked was, we'd have a crew of FF's that were fresh wearers meaning that they hadn't been inside the building yet and we would send them down the pathway towards the building. The police were stood by the entry point with riot shields and escorted the FF's under riot shields to and from the entry/exit point. This continued for the remainder of my shift. At one point there was FF spotters. One was inside the building and one outside, holding the crews back looking up making sure it was clear for people to go inside the building. Letting them know when it was clear with no falling debris making it safe to stop and go respectively.

I recall that initially there was no London Ambulance Service (LAS) in the holding area and it was critical that we resourced this. Luckily an ambulance got blocked by bollards on a service road that I believe was called Hurstway Walk. I managed to speak to one of their senior officers informing him that we needed to set up a casualty treatment area in the holding area. I asked him to get on his radio and get staff here as soon as possible so that I could hand the casualties over to the LAS whilst I took my guys to have a rest and get rehydrated. We could have had a medical emergency with FF's at any point so having LAS in close proximity was essential. The casualty treatment area was set up very shortly after our conversation. I had a couple other FF's with me at this point, one that I know is WM John Stevens from Brixton Fire Station. Later on in the shift we had a Station Manager join us although I do not know his name, He ended up being Sector Commander for our sector, which was the BA holding sector. We had quite a few casualties coming through our sector, being brought out by crews. I'd say there was a good handful of them being brought out to the LAS. All of the casualties that were brought out to us were conscious breathing, although some were half walking with assistance. We had a few with burns but the majority of them were blackened by the smoke. We had a couple of FF's come out who were so exhausted that they had to be carried out by other FF's. They were done. They had done all they could possibly do. Unfortunately, I do not know the names of any of the FF's but one of them was an old guy, a grey haired fellow. Surprisingly we had no serious injuries amongst the FF'S. At a job like this you think to yourself we could possibly lose someone here. John, the WM that I was with did get burnt on his neck area, pieces of debris had gone down his collar and onto his neck.

All the fresh wearers were told to sit and wait in a particular spot until we were ready to send them in.

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This is all outside on the green. If you look at all the pictures on the media there's a few pictures of FF's sat down with their sets on resting, they were all waiting to go in. There needed to be some sort of management of the area because otherwise you would have a lot of BA wearers not being utilised properly. There were a lot of fresh wearers that hadn't been in yet, the Command Unit wanted to get them in first because they'd have more energy and fresh sets. As the morning progressed we turned part of the casualty handling area into an Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA) area. We had FF's wearing two different set types, Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA) and EDBA. As the name would imply, the EDBA's last longer than the SDBA. Whilst all of this was going on I kept getting requests for more numbers from the command unit over my handheld radio. They were actively trying to monitor resources. There was a heavy amount of radio traffic but I could get through when I needed to. When the Station Manager I mentioned earlier joined us he started using his mobile phone to communicate with the other Sector Commanders. They found it easier to contact each other this way, just an easier form of communication.

During the time I spent at that sector, I didn't know what elevation it was at the time but like I said earlier it was the elevation with the playground side that I now know to be the West Side, I was there and there was something that struck me looking up at the windows of the building. There was a few people at windows on various floors waving towels and flashing lights asking for assistance. After an hour or so you'd look back up and see the fire had travelled through those particular flats or that the lights had gone out. All you can think to yourself is I hope they got to those people. There was one particular male in one of the top corner flats, possibly the 20th floor. He was waving a white towel for a long time, possibly a few hours. This same male was brought out of the building by Tom, one of my crew members. I believe he was a Chinese male in his 60's, he was rather short. That is all that I can recall about him. The majority of the people that were flashing lights were on the higher floors. The lower floors had covering water jets on them up until about the 5th or 6th floor I believe. Unfortunately, due to practical limits of use they wouldn't get any higher than they already were.

The side of the building I was on for the majority of the time was on the Westside and the playground is situated immediately in front of the area covered in all the debris. The Southside of the building was covered in water, Grenfell walk had a lot of water in it too, a lot of pooling. There was generally a lot of debris around the whole building as you'd expect. I continued my post at the BA Holding Sector for the

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entirety of my attendance. I believe it was around midday before my crew were relieved by another machine. We had worked right through until the sun came up. I believe it was a Day or Blue Watch crew that turned up as our relief. We were advised that were relieved but told to stay on site for a while to take refreshments and wind down before being advised to make our way to Paddington Fire Station for a full debrief. Usually you are only with your crew from your watch or station but at big jobs like this, we all become one big crew. Everyone that was there was given a job and we all worked together tirelessly to get it done.

We were extremely dirty and sweaty upon our arrival at Paddington. I believe Virgin Media provided a load of clean clothes for us to wear as they had offices near the fire station, which was nice of them. We all met with councillors who made us aware of their services if we were to choose to utilise them. Refreshments were also provided to us at Paddington. We did attend Lewisham Fire Station as a follow up to meet with councillors once again I haven't personally had any follow up sessions with a councillor as I do not feel I needed any although I do

I have been asked about what, if any at all, changes and/or equipment would have assisted us. In my opinion with a bigger Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) we would have been in a stronger position. It would have allowed us to reach the roof. The construction and placement of the building was also a hindrance in that it didn't allow for placement of Appliances. You need a solid foundation concrete floor to set an ALP. A lot of the areas around the tower were soft so even if we had bigger ALP's we wouldn't have been able to place them safely. Even the ones we had couldn't be sited at certain areas as the construction wouldn't allow for it and it wouldn't be safe. Ideally you would want 360-degree access all around the building with a solid concrete base to work from. Having said that another issue was all the debris that had fallen, this again stopped us from being able to plant ALP's.

I do know that the Fire Safety Guidance (FSG) with regards to incidents such as this is for occupants to stay within their flats or apartments. I am unsure if or when the guidance changed that morning. Someone I used to work with was dealing with the fire safety calls at one point. I remember seeing him with pieces of paper on a car bonnet with a list of flats and maps. I believe his name to be Paul Sadler and he deals with a lot of the FSG. The Fire Safety Guidance is to stay in the flat because most modern flats are constructed to contain the fire so that the fire would stay in the flat with plenty of time for us to get in and

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deal with it. It, the fire, shouldn't get into other properties, for example if you were up four floors above a flat fire, you don't want everyone evacuating the building. You would just create a hazard for us going up the floors as the occupants are coming down. That is my understanding of why the policy is for you to stay where you are. I have been to quite a few flat fires in high rise blocks during my service and most of them are dealt with within the flat the fire originated in. We usually set the Bridgehead at two floors beneath the fire and occupants above stay in their own apartments. In relation to the Bridgehead, I was not aware of any changes to its location. I was in constant communication with them but did not know if they had moved. I did see a few senior officers walking in and out of the building toward the Bridgehead but as I didn't go inside the building I have no further information around this.

As we were not far from the cordon a few times members of the public approached us explaining that their friends were up inside the building. We sent them back and in the end the police took over the cordon and the people were able to get sent over to the Command Unit for further information. Later on in the incident we started getting paparazzi or maybe just people with cameras turning up but there was no particular member of the public that I had spoken to. My interactions were solely with some senior officers in my area and the crew that were in my area.

I recall thinking that the flames coming from the building would indicate that some form of fuel was being exposed to the flames. They were very blue which made me think they were being fed fuel somehow although I am not aware of any decisions made around the gas. The only other time I had seen anything similar was at the Lakanal House fire in 2009. Up until Grenfell Tower, Lakanal house was the biggest fire I had ever been to. Grenfell Tower was much vaster in comparison. Lakanal was also the only other time I had seen flames on the exterior of the building. Having looked at a map I can confirm that we parked a few roads south of the building on our arrival. I was not aware of any sort of pre prepared firefighting plan for Grenfell Tower nor was I aware of any pre prepared plan for firefighting or search and rescue in a compartmentation found in high rise flats.

I have been asked about the use of Thermal Imaging Cameras (TIC). Although I did not personally use a TIC at the site of Grenfell Tower, I do know that they were used heavily by crews going inside the building. I believe the recordings for that morning would be kept on the cameras themselves. The cameras need to be manually downloaded, as far as I know a Station Manager went round to all the stations and

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downloaded all TIC's.

Cladding is something that we do not really cover within our training and I am not aware of any policy around cladding. We do undergo training in relation to sandwich panels but these are very different. The way the fire just travelled around the building and up was very unusual. It was quite a fast developing fire. Concrete buildings generally don't burn like that do they so I thought it was something attached to it that was catching fire and facilitating the fire to spread. The structure of the incident and how it was managed constantly changed as it was an involving job and required dynamic decision management to keep up with the demands.

Whilst at my posting I didn't really deal with many members of public but as we were leaving the scene, there were a few being very supportive, saying thank you and shaking our hands.

At the time I provided my statement to police officers, I referred to my Contemporaneous notes which I wrote on the 14/06/2017. I will exhibit them as PDM/1.

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