

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: OAKLEY, SEAN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 7 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: S OAKLEY

Date: 30/01/2018

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

I am making this statement regarding my involvement in the Grenfell Tower Fire which took place on the 13th and 14th June 2017. I have been spoken to on digital media by Civilian Police Staff Ivan AGNEW and PC Emma WEST but I understand that this statement is a full version of what was said. During the interview I referred to my original notes regarding the incident which I wrote on 14th June 2017 and I produce this exhibit as SAO/04. I also referred to and made notes on a map of Grenfell Tower and surrounding streets, this I exhibit as SAO/1, a floor plan of the interior of Grenfell Tower which I exhibit as SAO/2 and finally a plan of all four exterior elevations of Grenfell Tower which I exhibit as SAO/3. I have been a Fire Fighter with London Fire Brigade for seven (7) years having joined in July 2011. My initial training was carried out at Southwark between July 2011 and November 2011, during that time I received training covering all aspects of firefighting including pumps, pumping, ladders, standard duration breathing apparatus, hazmat and Road Traffic Accidents. Once my initial training was complete I was posted to Silvertown Fire Station to continue my training. During this initial time I was able to conduct all areas of Fire Fighting but was mentored and considered a Fire Fighter in training. Once I had completed this stage of my training I became a Competent Fire Fighter, this process took approximately two (2) years to complete. I moved to East Greenwich Fire Station in 2011 when Silvertown Fire Station was closed.

Once this part of any fire fighters training is completed there is an ongoing process of training to ensure that matters of policy are kept up to date. This includes annual training regarding Breathing Apparatus but also in house training which takes place at each Fire Station. This in house training will include scenario

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based exercises where the tower is used to recreate working conditions, RTA training where we will use vehicles, we are also required to attend or deliver lectures on a regular basis to ensure all our skills are kept up to date.

Throughout my career with the London Fire Brigade my training has been continued, I have undertaken specific regular training regarding firefighting in high rise buildings, including regular policy updates. This is in addition to the initial training I did at training school which was specific to high rise towers. Basement training which is specific to the practice and policy with regard to working in basement areas. I have also conducted 7(2)d visits. These 7(2)d visits are performed by the Fire Brigade at buildings on the relevant ground, the aim is to obtain information for specific buildings relating to where hydrants are positioned, points of access, floor plans, sprinkler systems, how many lengths of hose would be required at a certain location. These details are then inputted to the London Fire Brigade computer system and can be accessed in the event of an emergency. I am not aware of any such visits or information relating to Grenfell Tower.

On 13th June 2017 I paraded at 2000 hours at East Greenwich Fire Station and my shift was due to end at 0930 hours on the 14th June 2017. I cannot recall exactly what I did on that day prior to been called to Grenfell Tower however, it is usual that role call would be taken at 2000 hours and all Fire Fighters would be given a specific role for that duty. On 13th June 2017 I was posted to Pump call sign E232, I was riding on the back as a BA wearer, also posted with me on the back was Firefighter (FF) WYBROW also as BA wearer, the Officer in Charge was Crew Manager (CM) JENKINS and the driver that day was Firefighter (FF) WILSON.

Once role call has been done all BA sets are subject to an A test to ensure that they are in working order, then the Firefighter using this particular set writes their name on a tally which can then be used at an entry control board, in this way the entry control officer can monitor any Firefighter who is actively using Breathing Apparatus. I am trained in the use of Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA). There were no officers or fire fighters on pump E232 that day using Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA). An inventory and check of the pump and all of the equipment would have been conducted to ensure all equipment could be accounted for. This information is then down loaded onto the London Fire Brigade computer system.

Once this is done we would normally eat in the mess area and then either undertake a lecture or if the Station Manager had left a note regarding Policy or any actions required then this would have been carried out. At midnight all Firefighters are permitted to rest so most of us will go to bed, I normally go to

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bed at midnight on a shift like this and I see no reason to think I did anything different on that night. I cannot recall if we attended any other shouts on the night 13th/14th June 2017. The pump which I was assigned to is normally busier than the ladder so it is possible that we had other calls but I really can't recall any.

At 0400 hours we received the shout, I remember all the lights going on and the call coming out over the tannoy and I got up and got dressed, at that time I had no knowledge of where we were going. The information for the call had come through in the office on the teleprinter. Normally these calls are no more than an A4 size sheet of paper listing the pumps already in attendance, I remember looking and seeing that this call sheet was about half the length of a standard sized table and I knew then that it must be a big incident. When I read the call I learnt that we were to provide an immediate relief crew for pumps already at the scene of Grenfell Tower. I saw that the initial call had been a forty (40) pump and we were part of a twenty (20) pump relief directed to arrive by 0430 hours.

A relief will normally be considered on this shift after a pump has been at a shout or call for three (3) to four (4) hours. I didn't see any television before I went to Grenfell Tower but Firefighter WYBROW showed me still photos of the incident on his phone. I think the pictures were on Twitter but I still didn't know what it would be like, we were a relief crew due to arrive at 0430 hours, and these photos were taken earlier so I thought the fire would be pretty much out when we got there.

We made our way to the RVP which was Ladbroke Grove, we weren't driving on blue lights because we were relief so there was no need. On the way there at one point we were able to see the actual building, I can't say what road we were on because I was in the back of the pump but I could see the building in the distance still burning. From where we were it looked like the whole building was on fire. There was flame and smoke all the way up the building.

When we arrived at the RVP I remember there were pumps everywhere, but we managed to get our pump in close to the RVP. We were instructed by the Command Unit to go to the 1st holding point (point 1 on SAO/l) I remember seeing Watch Manager Chris HALL on the Command Unit, I knew Chris from Lewisham Fire Station and it was him who told us to take all four (4) sets of SDBA up to the first holding point.

We remained as a pump staying together but left our vehicle at the RVP on Ladbroke Grove and our driver Fire Fighter WILSON took us to the 1st holding point on foot as he knew the way. I remember it was a long walk and looking at the map (SAO/l) I am confident that we made our way along Bomore

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Road and arrived at the holding point outside Kensington Leisure Centre which faces the East elevation of Grenfell Tower.

When we were walking towards this first holding area I thought we were going into the Tower, I remember thinking that I just wanted to get in. When we got to the first holding area I saw just loads of Firefighters and trolley's loaded with SDBA and EDBA. I could see the upper floors and from here I could see through some of the middle floors where the whole floor had just been burnt out, I could see all the way through the building. The whole floor would be burnt out but it was still burning, I didn't know what was still left to burn, it didn't make sense. When I saw the upper part of the building I remember thinking about fire fighters and members of the public in there, I didn't see how you could withstand or survive in conditions like that.

Up until this time I still just wanted to get in, I hadn't given any thought to the possibility of the building collapsing at that point. I remember looking at my Crew Manager, CM JENKINS and he looked a bit worried, I asked him what was wrong and he said "I'm worried about it coming down". That's when I started to think about it too, I actually started to think about 911.

I think we were at this first holding area for about two (2) hours but I don't wear a watch and my phone was on the pump so I can't be sure but it was a long time. Then a Station Manager who I don't know by name came over to us and said that he needed SDBA at the next holding area so all of the crew of my pump volunteered along with Firefighters from other crews who I didn't know. Our pump stayed together and walked to the second holding area which is on the West Elevation of the building (marked as 2 on SAO/1).

When we got to the second holding point facing the West Elevation I remember the building looked different, everything looked burnt, black and melted. There was a 135 ladder leaning against the building that looked like it was stuck, melted to the Tower. There were Jets, ladders and a lot of Firefighters. The upper part of the building was alight, but the lower floors looked unaffected. I have tried to demonstrate this on exhibit SAO/3. The fire seemed to have burnt in a wave like pattern. There was debris coming down from the Tower in big and small chunks, some of it was tennis ball sized and some of it was the size of a football, it was burnt or burning as it came down.

At some point while we were at this holding position I saw two (2) Firefighters carrying out an oriental man from the Tower. It's difficult to say what colour the man was as his face was covered in soot from the fire. The man was been carried in a seated position with a Firefighter on either side of him. The

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Firefighters took him toward Bramley Road where the Ambulance crews were. Other than this male I didn't see any residents either at windows, inside the Tower or been brought out.

There was a wall on a ramp at this elevation with Firefighters cueing to get in. Our crew waited here for a long time, we were wearing our standard duration breathing apparatus ready to go in. Again I can't be sure how long but I think about two (2) hours. Then a Watch Manager moved us to a holding point closer to the Tower where the Police were lined up (marked as 3 on SAO/1). The Watch Manager at this point of entry was using Comms and I guess he was in communication with the Bridge Head inside the Tower and relaying the information from the Bridge Head to the Firefighters outside the Tower. The Watch Manager was controlling the flow of Firefighters going into the Tower so he would have been the Sector Command Officer for this sector and point of entry. The Police had riot gear on and were carrying long shields which they used to cover the Firefighters as they went into the Tower. I was expecting to be waiting here for a long time as well but after about twenty (20) or thirty (30) minutes the Police escorted us into the Tower.

I remember there were two (2) Police Officers for every two (2) Fire Fighters, the Police Officers had the shields held up over their and our heads and I just remember hearing the debris crashing down on the shields as we covered the ground between the holding area and the Tower. I think it was about 25 meters we had to cover.

We entered the Tower on what I thought was a door on the West elevation but which I now know was an entry point made by Firefighters and went into the ground floor. There were more Firefighters in this room and a lot of water, the water was at least ankle deep. I don't know exactly what this room was but it had a little kitchen area off of it and then another door which looked like it had been smashed in, this door led to the stairs. We were told to wait here, I was partnered up with Firefighter (FF) WYBROW and we waited for about thirty (30) minutes. Then we were instructed to move up to the fourth (4) floor which is where the Bridge Head was.

When I and FF WYBROW moved up the stairs to what I would describe as a Mezzanine I just remember loads of water, it was gushing like a waterfall. I remember thinking that this wasn't good as once you're wet if you get near heat you produce steam which really burns, your kit just isn't going to work in heat if your soaking wet. There was also lots of hose everywhere mainly 45m hose and we were told to take it up to the fourth (4) floor.

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FF WYBROW and I made our way up to the fourth (4) floor on the stair case, I'm pretty sure that the stairs had two (2) flights for each floor, I remember it as a standard size, I could fit in it and I think someone would be able to pass me coming the other way.

FF WYBROW and I got to the fourth (4) floor where the Bridge Head was positioned, there were a lot of London Fire Brigade officers here. The Bridge Head had the BA board which the entry control officer works from. The Bridge Head should be positioned two (2) floors below the fire or the floor nearest to the fire deemed to be safe, you would never work past the Bridge Head without BA.

We were told to wait in a flat on the Fourth floor, I can't remember who instructed us and I don't know what flat number it was but I do know that the flat wasn't burnt or smoke damaged. Again I anticipated waiting a long time but a Watch Manager who again I don't know by name came in after about fifteen (15) minutes and said something like "I'm sorry to give you this task but there is a believed deceased person on the ninth (9) floor which is stopping fire fighters from moving up, I need you to move the causality".

During this time on the forth (4) floor I remember been told by an officer, I think the officer who briefed myself and FF WYBROW that the Gas and Electric were still been supplied to the Tower. This was not what I wanted to hear, I would expect as a standard response both of these would be turned off at the main feed during the early stages of any fire for the obvious reason that if the Gas is still on it will keep the fire burning. If both the Electric and Gas are feeding into a building there is a real risk of the electric sparking the gas and causing more fires.

FF WYBROW and I were with two Firefighters who I think were from Holloway Fire Station. I think they were Crew Manager Paul COTHER and Firefighter Tammy WILKINSON but I am not certain that these are their names. The four (4) of us checked our BA, I am not sure if we had a TIC with us, we may have but if we did I was not carrying it.

We made our way up the stairs, I was using my lamp to assist me but I'm not sure if there were any lights on or not. I remember the stairs were like a waterfall and again I was concerned about the water and my kit becoming wet. I don't remember any smoke on the stairs between the fourth (4) and ninth (9) floors. We reached the ninth (9) floor, I think the floors had been marked with a china graph but I may just have assumed we were on the ninth (9) floor because we found the casualty which was causing an obstruction. The body was tangled in hose, there was hose under them and over them. The person was lying at the bottom of the stairs on the landing area to the left hand side. I could see the person was lying face down and there head was turned down toward their chest. I could see bare skin on the persons back which had

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been burnt. I could see the skin was black and where it had been burnt the area was white, burnt in patches. I couldn't tell if the person was male or female but I recall they had long dreadlocks.

The Crew Manager and Firefighter from Holloway moved the hose which was tangled over and under the person and myself and Firefighter WYBROW attempted to move the person. This was really difficult, both I and Firefighter WYBROW are strong but the task was almost impossible for us. First we attempted to lift the person by putting an arm each under the armpit area of the body but we just couldn't lift them, they were too heavy, I would estimate they weighted twenty five (25) to thirty (30) stone. Next we tried to drag the person by taking hold of the upper arm but the skin was coming away so we changed our grip to the wrist area and had to sort of drag the body as far out of the way as we could. We moved the body from its position at the bottom of the stairs into the main lobby area on the ninth (9) floor. (Marked on SAO/2). I found a blue salvage sheet and tried to cover the body as best I could.

I can't really say if this person was male or female and I can't recall what clothing they were wearing, I know I could see skin on the top of the persons back so I don't think they had a top on. I really can't remember anything more about them. I and FF WYBROW were working in difficult conditions and I didn't really have time to pay attention to things like that.

When we had been briefed on the fourth (4) floor to move this casualty, we had also been told that there may be a child on the twelfth (12) floor so all four (4) of us continued to move up the building searching. When we got to what I think was the twelfth (12) floor it was too hot, I could feel the heat coming down on us from the floors above and we had to go back down. We never found any child, we made it as far as the twelfth (12) floor, we were low on air, had no firefighting equipment with us and we were wet. FF WYBROW and I attempted to put a branch on a hose which was gushing water everywhere but the pressure on the hose was too much and we had to leave it.

We made our way back to the Bridge Head on the fourth (4) floor where the entry control officer was, we purged what was left of our BA sets and our tallies were collected. Then FF WYBROW and I were debriefed by the Watch Manager while the Crew Manager and Fire Fighter from Holloway were debriefed by someone else. Once we had all been debriefed the information was collated and written up on the wall so that the information could be seen by anyone who needed it.

As FF WYBROW and I were making our way down the stairs to leave Grenfell Tower, I heard a loud groaning noise from the building. I turned to FF WYBROW and asked him if he had heard the noise to which he confirmed he had. The noise was loud and I thought the Tower might be coming down, collapsing. Both FF WYBROW and I moved down the staircase a lot faster after that. We exited the

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Tower through the same route we had entered and were escorted by Police Officers back to the playground area.

Then FF WYBROW and I walked back to the first holding centre which was outside Kensington Leisure Centre. We took our BA sets off and conducted a Fire Ground A check where we checked the cylinders. Then we both got some food from the Salvation Army people who were there and I used CM JENKINS phone to contact my mother in law and ask her to let my wife know that I was ok, I think that it was about 1330 hours at that time. We all stayed at this resting area until an officer who I can't name came over, took our call sign and then released us.

As we were walking back to our Pump a member of the public spoke to FF WILSON and was asking about a family member, FF WILSON was polite but unable to help them. A reporter kept pestering us, asking questions and in the end I had to be pretty rude to get him to go away. I phoned my wife when I got back to the pump, I knew she'd be sick with worry especially since this was all over the news.

Our crew travelled to Paddington Fire Station. I made some notes which I handed in (SAO/4). We were offered the chance to speak to a counsellor we discussed this as a crew and decided that we were all ok. Personally I was tired and I just wanted to get home. I hadn't suffered any injuries. I have since spoken with a counsellor provided by the London Fire Brigade, once on a one to one basis and once as a group. We decided as a crew to return to our station. We got back at about 1600 hours, maybe 1630 hours. We all took our sets off and conducted a B test which entailed testing all the airlines and cleaning the equipment for the next crew who were due on.

During my career as a Firefighter I have been to other fires in Tower blocks one was in Deptford and the other one was near the O2 centre. It was easier to manage there because we were able to throw a long line out which we then use to get a hose in to firefight with. Compartmentation should mean that the fire is contained to a compartment, like a flat. That is why the Fire brigade will advise anyone inside to stay inside as long as it is safe for them to do so and await rescue from Firefighters. This information is passed on to the crews going to the incident. The Fire Brigade call this the "Stay put policy".

How quickly that fire spreads will depend on a lot of things but mainly the amount of oxygen available to the fire. This can be affected by things like doors or windows been open or closed. There is a lot of preparation when we get to a fire like this but putting the fire out before it spreads should be quick. I don't know if the stay put policy was in place at Grenfell Tower.

I don't know what type of fire safety measures Grenfell Tower had in place. I think there was a dry riser in use but I'm not certain, certainly there was plenty of water pressure as far up as the ninth (9) or maybe

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tenth (10) floor. I didn't see or become aware of a single sprinkler system in operation. I wasn't aware of a fire lift and the only stairs I was aware of was the one I was working on.

I wasn't wearing a "Barry" communication set on this day but FF WYBROW was, I can't speak for him but I don't recall any radio communication above the fourth (4) floor and I am pretty sure FF WYBROW wasn't getting any comms above the fourth (4) floor either. This obviously makes it difficult to communicate anything we need or anything we need to relay to the Bridge Head. We needed far more extended duration breathing apparatus and more standard duration breathing apparatus.

As far as Grenfell Tower collapsing, I'm not aware of any safety measures in place to prevent this. When we arrived at the scene there was a lot of smoke from the top of the Tower, you could see it for miles, by the time we left it looked like the fire had finally died down.

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