

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: VINCENT, SIMON ARMAND

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER - CREW MANAGER

This statement (consisting of 9 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.

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Date: 13/01/2018

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

The content of this statement represents a summary of my recorded interview with DC Ferdie ROSARIO and PC Roger REID, police officers from the Metropolitan Police Grenfell Tower Investigation team. My interview took place on Saturday 13th January 2018 at LEWISHAM FIRE STATION, 249 -259 LEWISHAM HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE13 6NH, between approximately 14:10 and 15:35 hours. Below is a summary of the information I gave in my conversation with Ferdie and Roger. Clint RILEY from the Fire Brigade Union was also present for the duration of my interview. For the full content, this statement should be read in conjunction with the transcript of the digital recording.

I began my career within the London Fire Brigade on April 6th 1992. I started at WHITECHAPEL Fire Station in September 1992 after leaving the Training Centre where I stayed for a couple of years. From there went to GREENWICH for 4-5 years where I applied for promotion to Crew Commander (CC) which had changed from a previous title of Leading Fire-fighter. From there I got posted to DOWNHAM for 10 years where my rank remained the same but underwent a name change to Crew Manager (CM). I took on several bits of temporary promotion by acting up here and there at other stations then I went to DEPTFORD in 2010 and then I've been up in that area ever since, DOCK HEAD and NEW CROSS then eventually I transferred to SIDCUP Fire Station in April 2016 where I am attached to Red Watch E40 as a competent Crew Manager.

In terms of training, we do lectures and stuff where high rise flats are concerned but as for actual hands on

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training, I can't actually remember off the top of my head. I would have to look back through our training drive to see. It would have been within the last six months in the aftermath of what happened at Grenfell Tower.

Depending on what sort of training that we are doing, we may do a combined drill with other stations. We'll go to a premises and talk to the responsible person and we'd organise a drill to use the property. These would normally be dry drills but just for search and rescue purposes and getting all of our policies and procedures. We also have a five-storey drill tower in the station at Sidcup, which involves the use of ladders, BA, there is a Dry Riser on it as well so it's all those sorts of things but on a lot smaller scale.

The last time I had any realistic training of fire-fighting in a high rise block of flats was on a one day BA course I did last year at Becton Training Centre. The course usually involves going to the training centre for the day. They run through some BA topics with you and then in the afternoon, you do a combined exercise with all the other candidates there and it's like a search and rescue real fire training. I have a two day course coming up next month. I've been on Section 7(2) d familiarisation visits on our own ground where we find out how to get in/out of various types of buildings, where hydrants are, get to meet facilities managers or responsible people for the building who are based there and collate all this information which then goes onto our Operational Risk Database which we can access via our Mobile Data Terminals and they tell us if there are any hazards in the building, that sort of thing. It's all information that we gather during visits so we know where we are going and what we are doing to a certain extent. This can be for any type of building where there are a large group of people. For example an Old People's Home.

The last high rise block of flats I attended to fight fire prior to Grenfell Tower is hard to recall but the one I can remember is Marine Tower in Deptford which was seven years ago but there must have been one or two since then but nothing else springs to mind. I have never been posted to the Fire Safety Department nor been to a 40-pump fire before Grenfell; the most I had experienced in attendance was probably 15-20 pumps. Nothing on this scale.

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I started work at 20:00 hours on the night of the 13th June 2017. We had roll call as normal. It was quite an uneventful night from what I can remember up until we got a call at 04:38 in the morning to a multiple appliance ordering. We did not know what was going on at the time because it just said on the tip sheet, multiple appliance ordering and it just gave us that it was a 40-pump fire at Grenfell Tower which is in West London. We were tasked as part of the 20-pump relief. I believe that when we were ordered there were 40 pumps there already and we were ordered on as a 20-pump relief which would then gradually take over from the first machines that were there because I think some of the machines were still there.

Sam WOODHAMS, who is my governor at Sidcup, showed me photos of what we were going to on his phone so we had some idea of what we were going to. It looked like a picture from the Towering Inferno. I think it was a BBC newsfeed photo.

We got ourselves together as a crew and I got in contact with control and asked if they wished us to proceed on the bell (blues and twos), and they said, "No, normal road speed". We left the station E402 which is Sidcup's Pump (no ladder), and made our way to West London. I directed the driver who was fire fighter Graham MOORE because he was not sure where it was. The rest of the crew were comprised of fire fighter Stephen JACKSON (better known as Barry JACKSON), and fire fighter Gary TOOTILL.

I had never been to Grenfell Tower before. I've got a fairly good knowledge of London but I got the A-Z out. Graham got us to OLD KENT ROAD and I took it from there. The route we took was over WESTMINSTER BRIDGE up to VICTORIA, up to HYDE PARK CORNER and then down through KNIGHTSBRIDGE, down to KENSINGTON, turned right which took us up to a road the name of which I can't recall the road name then we turned left then right towards LADBROKE GROVE then towards the junction with ELGIN CRESCENT where we were held in the marshalling area for quite a while by who I believe was an officer from the Command Unit. We arrived on scene at 05:51 hours but could not see the tower at all from where we pulled up. He told us to wait there until we were called forward. That was where our appliance remained parked for the duration at LADBROKE GROVE at the junction with ELGIN CRESCENT, as it was our designated Rendezvous Point and that is where we were told to park. We were in tunics and leggings at first, a more relaxed form of dress as it was at least an hour and a half, maybe longer, that we stayed with our vehicle for. The road was closed by the police and there was little

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traffic. We were talking to members of the public as they came out until we were asked to go forward to the fire ground. It was strange as there was not much to hear. There were lots of people there but it was very quiet. Obviously people were talking and things like that. I think because of the size of it and it was fairly late on in the incident there wasn't lots of running about or lots of screaming and shouting that you normally get early on in an incident. It was quite a placid scene because I think a lot of the fire-fighters who there, especially those who had been in already had been faced, I would imagine, with some quite harrowing scenes so there was a lot of sitting down in silence and taking on water and stuff like that and just relaxing because I think a lot of those were expected to go in again.

Once we were told to fully rig, we got our BA (Breathing Apparatus), sets and made our way forward to the marshalling area on the fire ground. We went on foot. I think it was a 10-15 minute walk to get round there from where we were parked. It was next to the Leisure Centre on the right hand side of the. A denotes the marshalling area on colour A3 map exhibit SAV/2.

When we caught sight of the tower it was from around the corner from where the Leisure Centre was, we could see the South and East faces of it which were both pretty similar in appearance in that they were fully alight apart from the first few floors which were reasonably unscathed. The whole front of the building from the first couple of floors up was well alight and what wasn't alight was burnt out with lots of smoke coming from especially the top of the building. The flames were bright orange and the smoke was black. My initial thoughts were, "Oops, that's not normal". Because of the time we got there it was like, whatever we do now, we'll obviously do something but it's going to be more token effort as such because of what had gone on beforehand and the state of how the building was. By the time we got there it had been going for about five or six hours. It wasn't normal and I was fairly shocked as I've been to fires in tower blocks before but nothing like that.

We had no prior awareness of how the fire had spread to the exterior of the building before we arrived. It was very much a visual thing when we arrived at the Leisure Centre as we approached the tower. When we arrived, the vehicles in use were general pumping appliances and there may well have been an Aerial Pump Appliance. To me it looked like the two appliances, I think a Fire Engine and an Aerial were the only ones that could get quite close to the tower. There were access issues. London Fire Brigade aerials

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go to about 30 metres high. Surrey Fire Brigade turned up with their aerial appliance whilst we were there which was used to put water higher up the building. It went up to about the 12th floor, so about 50 metres.

Many fire fighters who had already worn BA were sitting on the grass area. A lot of them were waiting to be redeployed and all the ones who had not worn BA, like the new crews who were just arriving were waiting on that right hand side of the Leisure Centre, waiting to be used first.

I saw the Commissioner Dany COTTON was on the fire ground when I arrived. I do not know whether she was the Incident Commander at that stage as she was walking around alone as well as with senior officers. She may have taken over or could have been monitoring but I do not know. I know at some point she spoke to my crew because they said she had spoken to them. Any additional resources would be requested by whoever is in charge at the time. The chain of command at such an incident is determined by the size of the fire. As the fire gets bigger you get more senior officers coming along, they monitor the officer who is in charge at the time and if the fire gets bigger then that officer takes over. It is a staggered progression up the ranks until the Commissioner is in charge.

The first person I spoke with at the scene was when I handed our board into the Command Unit but I do not know whom it was I spoke to and then I spoke to one of my colleagues from Lewisham Fire Station who was CM Ian BARRETT. We had a chat about what was happening and he said he'd been in already and they were waiting to be redeployed. Other crew members were talking to other people they knew. That was when we were asked to wait in line to go to the Forward Marshalling Point and that was when I was singled out by a Station Manager (SM), I don't know who he was. I was told to make my way to the Bridge Head. He told me to drop my set around the marshalling area where we were so I left it with colleagues and was told to make my way to the fourth floor to take part in BA Entry Control. By the stage I had joined the incident there was no fire spread on the building as such, because it was from the second or third floor it had spread as far as it was going to spread and had already done its damage. There was still stuff alight but it was not spreading anywhere and there were not many left of what I believe were plastic double glazed windows there when we arrived.

B on map exhibit SAV/2 denotes a pump and appliance.

* denotes where we went in past the underground garages.

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C denotes where the underground garages are located on map exhibit SAV/2.

My general understanding of the Stay Put Policy is where the alarm goes off and they stay in their flats until they are told otherwise, It would be a House Management type policy, whether they are guided by the Fire Brigade or not I don't really know, possibly, but a lot of them are using the Stay Put Policy now so that people are not wandering around in the smoke. The logic is that people are safer, especially if they are not affected by the incident at all. Stay Put policies are for things like Sheltered Housing and stuff like that. They use them a lot there but as for tower blocks, predominantly I would imagine it is a local authority block with maybe some private housing in it so it's a case of each to their own, I think.

I do not know who implemented the Stay Put Policy that night but I would imagine if there were Fire Survival Guidance calls then it would have come from the Control Room. I do not know who made the decision to change the Stay Put Policy to one of evacuation. Decisions like that would be logged on the Command Unit (CU), and up at Control.

The role of the Command Unit is to facilitate and assist the officer in charge at a fire ground. They are a focal point. Generally at a normal incident the officers in charge would go to them, they would hand their Nominal Role Boards in, they would then be told where to go and what to do and then gradually as the incident becomes more and more dynamic, then more senior officers take over. That's where all the decisions are made and logged. They also have facilitators. There are no fire-fighters on the Command Unit. A unit is usually staffed by two or three Watch Managers as that is the highest rank on a Command Unit.

Access to the tower was restricted by the falling debris and the depth of it so we were taken through the front entrance by riot police with their shields for protection. There were quite a few of us there at the base of the tower waiting to go in. There was a SM who I believe was keeping an eye on the falling debris, there were several Metropolitan Police in riot gear with the shields and the Station Manager was saying "Go", "Stop", making sure that it was clear. I believe it was a female SM that was doing the directing but I do not know her name. There was quite a lot of debris on the floor so it was quite hazardous getting in there. The riot shields made it a lot safer. I went in alone and made my way to the fourth floor where the Bridge Head was. There was a Group Manager (GM) there which I can only tell

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you from his rank markings. I don't know his name but I would probably recognise him again if I saw him. He said to me, "Oh, are you my runner?"

I looked across at the BA Boards and could see they were all taken up so I said, "I suppose so" and that was it. That's what happened when I got to the Bridge Head.

I saw two officers that I know who were running one BA Board and there was another officer who I didn't know running the other BA Board. There was one for EDBA and one for SDBA. Due to the lack of communications as a result of the amount of water in the building and it being a substantially built concrete structure, my role as runner was to go up and down to what they call the Forward Marshalling Area which was a room inside the building on the ground floor where all the BA teams were waiting. I was up and down getting the BA teams when we needed them so there were not too many people on that floor.

As we were running two BA boards (one each for EDBA and SDBA), we sent them up generally with about four at a time in each team and then we were swapping them over as we needed them. It was eight to twelve flights of stairs for the four floors and mezzanine floors. It was like going up and downstairs in a waterfall with the torrents of water coming down. I did this for three to four hours in full Personal Protective Equipment PPE. I was soaked and the ground floor was about eighteen inches deep with water.

From the ground to the seventh floor the concrete stairwell was clear of smoke but quite congested with hose. The Dry Riser was working and charged. A rising main is a pipe, generally of about four inches in diameter which runs from the ground floor to the top floor of the building. We have a 70mm hose from the hydrant which couples into the Fire Engine, comes out the back of the Fire Engine and from it goes into the Dry Riser at ground level. The Dry Riser couplings are all male, the female couplings come from the Fire Engine. Each floor generally has an outlet and those outlets are behind a glass door with Dry Riser written on it and they are secured with a leather strap and padlock and they have got caps on the end of them, basically to stop them being abused. Then whatever floor you set the Bridge Head up on, which is supposed to be two floors below the fire, what should happen is, Firefighters are supposed to work their way up and fight the fire from that floor.

Water was just cascading down the concrete stairs and in between them. Each flight was about 12 steps

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with two flights per floor. Radios did not transmit because of the water and the amount of concrete in the building. We tried using Leaky Feeders which are placed in the building to assist the Radio Signal but we only got loads of feedback when we used our Entel Handheld Radios. The radio range varies depending on location and conditions. Senior Officers also have hand held radios but they also have another type of radio, which means they can get messages to and from Control, things like that.

The stairwell was about 4-5 feet wide and initially lit with lighting from the building when we first went in but at some stage those lights went out and then we used portable lighting from the appliances. There was only one escape route which was that single staircase. I did not use a fire lift. I do not know if other fire-fighters did or if one was there, nor did I see any sprinklers in Grenfell Tower.

I did see flat 16 on the fourth floor where the fire originated because it was on the same floor as the Bridge Head. I did not go in the flat to put the fire out.

What I tried to implement was as we were on the fourth floor, there were flats on the third floor, I said, "Why don't we use those so we're not going so far, we can get more people upstairs into the third floor where they're clean and dry as such and then we haven't got so far to go to get them", so we were sort of using that as a Forward Marshalling Area as well, which did work. I can't remember if I could hear any alarms activated from any of the flats, I don't think I did and I don't believe I heard any in the stairwell either. I do not know if the building had a smoke management system.

Then at one point it was decided that we'd move the Bridge Head to the seventh floor in order to get higher up in the building. I believe Rick OGDEN made the decision. He may be a GM or a Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC), if not higher. With the breathing apparatus and because of the amount of work people were doing to get up so far from the fourth floor I think, at the time the twelfth was the furthest anyone could get to from where we were. So they had decided to move it up to the seventh so hopefully they could get higher up. I do not know what time it was when that decision was made.

While we were up there we were having a look around because obviously all the flats had been opened up and then I noticed looking through the window that there was smoke percolating up from underneath us. So I looked out the window and saw that the flat below us was still alight (flames and smoke), on the

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sixth floor so I informed, I believe it was a SM from Soho called Sam KAZMANLI. I said to him, "It's still alight below us". I think they thought it had all been checked. So we then moved the Bridge Head back down to the fourth floor. There were several senior officers at the Bridge Head but the two I have named above were the only ones I knew. I don't know them personally but I know who they are as I have met them before. Stewart CHESSUN a CM from Bromley (SDBA), a CM from Barking (EDBA) who I didn't know but later found out that was where he was from and Watch Manager (WM) VYDELINGUM from Bromley was overseeing them both.

The area of the sixth floor where the flat with the rising smoke was I would describe as, if you came up the stairs, you had the lifts on that floor in front of you, I would say it was in that right hand corner as you're facing the lifts. We were not up on the seventh floor very long at all. It was literally go up there, start getting everything set up, I noticed what was going on below and we just went back downstairs again. I do not know how the senior officers first became aware that the fire had started to spread externally and at the time, I do not think anyone had any idea about what was causing or aiding the spread of the fire so quickly.

I would imagine that the four faces of Grenfell Tower were being monitored but I do not know that for a fact. No specialist training would be required for an observation role but it would be of a certain rank. A Sector Commander can be a Watch Manager but I would imagine by the time we got there they would have been more senior than that, maybe Station Managers.

I was not aware of any pre-prepared fire-fighting plan for Grenfell Tower but if fire-fighting and/or search and rescue fails in a high-rise block of flats we have policies and procedures to follow. Generally, when a compartment fails, we have to deal with it dynamically and if we do not have enough resources, we have to get more resources in and take it from there really. I do not know a precise time for how long a high-rise block is designed to contain a fire nor do I know how long it took to put the fire in the tower out.

I think it was at that point that they put a stop to people going in because of the situation with the hose on the stairs. There was a lot of hose on the stairs which was making fire fighters' lives difficult as they had to clamber over it to reach their destination and it was going every which way. So everything was put a

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stop to and crews were sent in to sort the hose out which took 30-45 minutes. I do not know what time fire-fighting stopped. Apart from the factors I have already mentioned, I did not notice any other factors (internally), which prevented or obstructed fire-fighters' ability to fight the fire or to rescue occupiers because I did not go up any further than the seventh floor. Once the hose was sorted out then fire-fighting resumed. I think Rick OGDEN supervised that process.

While that was taking place we were getting crews up and ready on the fourth floor and also we had crews down in the room on the ground floor. Everyone was prepared so that when we started going again it would be full on.

BA Crews were coming back and saying they were fighting fires in flats where the gas pipes were burnt through and were fully alight but they had not extinguished them obviously because of the danger of extinguishing them. You would see where a gas fire was coming from, as you would see that it was coming out of a pipe and if it was alight then it's going to be gas, probably with a blue flame and a constant flow coming out. From what I saw, there did not appear to be any gas meters in the properties to turn the gas off or any obvious main shut off for the building supply. You have to wait until the utility company have cut the gas off before putting a gas flame out.

After leaving the building later on during the incident we walked around and there was a utility company digging the road up to try and cut the gas supply off.

I think I was on the fourth floor in my role for about four hours overall. I did not take part in any fire-fighting activity even though I had been onto the third, fourth and seventh floors. Nor did I open any doors or windows, as they were all open already. I did not use a Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC). If a TIC was used it would normally be put back on the appliance but at an incident like that they would just get handed over to the next crew coming on and then used until the batteries have run flat and then the batteries will be changed over. I was not wearing a body camera. I believe some of the Operational Review Team have them I am not sure but down at my level we do not have them.

I did not speak to any occupiers while I was at Grenfell Tower or give anyone advice. Once we were eventually relieved, I came downstairs with Stuart CHESSUN and WM VYDELINGUM and we made

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our way out. We didn't go out the way we came in (we came in through the South Side), I believe we went out via the North Side of the tower and we made our way to the left towards the ramp (on exhibit SAV/2), and went to a stall outside a public house (the name of which I do not know), where we were provided with food and refreshments by the people who ran it.

D on map exhibit SAV/2 denotes the exit and E highlights where the public house was. From there we made our way back to the original marshalling area to meet up with our respective crews. My crew had been in the tower and come back out so I met up with all three of my crew. I don't know what happened with the other two officers from Bromley. I think we all just went off and met our respective crews.

I went to the Command Unit. I don't know which one it was. I collected our Nominal Role Board which had our names and appliance on it and we were told we then had to go to Paddington to make our contemporaneous notes then we made our way back to the appliance. We left the tower at about 2pm and left the incident ground at about 3:30pm. We didn't know the area, the roads were small, it was school chucking out time and the whole area was just gridlocked. We got to Paddington at about 5pm and we were asked to go upstairs to an office by Sabrina HATTON-COHEN (she may be an AC - Assistant Commissioner), who had a general chit-chat with us prior to us making some contemporaneous notes. We were all in the room together making them. It was a bit of a proforma type of note to include the incident number, date, time, call and anything you could think of at the time. I confirm that whilst giving my statement on Saturday 13th January 2018 at Lewisham Fire Station I did not refer to the Contemporaneous Notes I made at Paddington Fire Station in the aftermath of the fire. I had read them prior my interview but did not use them on the day. I exhibit my Contemporaneous Notes as SAV/1.

Leaving Paddington went back pretty much the way we came. We were moving fairly quickly. We went over Westminster Bridge, got to the top of Old Kent Road and then we stopped because there was a fatal accident at Deptford Bridge which gridlocked the whole area. We did not get involved in it. We stopped for a while around the New Cross one way system as some of us needed the toilet and others wanted a cigarette so we stopped and got some refreshment and then we made our way back to the Fire Station. We got back to Sidcup Fire Station at about 8:30pm due and were due to have started at 8pm. We were given the option by Sabrina HATTON-COHEN at Paddington to have the night off if we

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wished. Graham MOORE was off anyway. He had booked the night of before the events took place. Fire-fighter TOOTHILL decide to take the night off. Fire-fighter JACKSON and I decided to stay on duty. We were informed when we got back to the station that the Blue Watch were allowed to hang on until midnight so we had a bit of downtime. We could get something to eat, relax and have a shower. We went back on duty at midnight and finished at 09:30 the following morning. The whole thing was like a one off so to my mind it was like a perfect storm. Everything happened all at once and that was it. Will it ever happen again, I do not know. What should have been put in place? Obviously, no one expected this to happen so I do not know really what could have been put in place to help deal with it.

I did not suffer any injuries or near misses and did not witness anyone else who did.

I did not receive any first aid or medical assistance from the London Ambulance Service (LAS), or LFB while at the scene or from the NHS or my GP since. I did not see it but was told that someone had come out of the building. I'm assuming they had jumped as I was told they were lying under a tarpaulin in one of the underground garages. I do not remember who told me that. I think it was just in general conversation and as we walked past the underground garages, you could see the tarpaulin there with something underneath it with blood running out from it.

The only counselling I have had was the initial meeting in the immediate aftermath of the incident. All crews had to have it, which was up here (Lewisham), with the LFB but nothing specific. I believe there were some counsellors here from other brigades as well to assist. I had none personally; it was just a group sort of meeting. We did get spoken to individually but nothing where I said I need counselling.

I did not upload anything such as images or videos in relation to the fire on to any Social Media.

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