

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: PAGE, STEVEN

Age if under 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.

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Date: 23/02/2018

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

This statement refers to my attendance at the Fire at Grenfell Tower on Tuesday 14th June 2017. I referred to my notes made after the event, throughout the statement. I have been a Fire Fighter for five and a half years and I am Standard breathing apparatus trained. I am based at Lambeth Fire station on Red Watch.

My contemporaneous notes made on 14th June 2017 I exhibit as SJP/1

I have also provided a map marked to show various places mentioned within this statement which I exhibit as SJP/2.

A. BA holding area

B. Command Unit 7

C. Windows popped to allow access to the building

D. Ruptured gas main

E. Secondary holding area, by a park

On 13th June 2017, I started my duty at 8pm, coming on to a normal night shift at Lambeth Fire Station on Red Watch, so we had role call where we are detailed on to what machines we are riding on that night I was detailed to ride in the back of pump ladder H221, we did our checks on the machines and our BA sets. The station has two appliances, the pump and the pump ladder. The pump ladder is like a rescue truck, it has more equipment than the pump and goes to fires and RTA's. I was cooking dinner that night so when all our checks were done I went upstairs to the mess and started prepping dinner. It was a quiet night for us as a station and we didn't have a shout. We had dinner, finished it and washed up, then we watched a bit of TV and that was it until about midnight and we got our heads down. I think it was about

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1.20am when the bells went, we got downstairs. Fire Fighter Elliott JUGGINS got on the back of the pump ladder with me, there was Watch Manager SADLER in charge, Fire Fighter WORMAN was driving. Fire fighter JUGGINS was the duty man that night so he had gone to get the call slip which said what the incident was. He came out and shouted to everyone that it was a 25 pump fire, Grenfell Tower. I was thinking that maybe it was a relief because it is such a rare thing to have a fire of that size and still getting trucks on to it. So we got rigged and got on to the appliance. It wasn't on our maps from downstairs, the place was not on our ground so the officer in charge and the driver used the MDT (Mobile Data Terminal) on the front of the truck.

On the way there we heard all the radio traffic coming through about how the fire was spreading through different floors, the FSG calls (Fire Survival Guidance) being taken by control. So at that point although we've only been on the truck a few minutes, you start to create a picture in your head about how big the incident is. I heard people were trapped from the 4th floor up to the 19th floor. Fire Fighter JUGGINS who was my BA partner, had only been at the station no more than two or three months, so I was talking to him on the back saying what equipment we might need. Normally when we get there our officer in charge will communicate with the incident commander to ask what they want from us, but it soon became apparent that we would need our BA sets straight away. I was just talking Elliott through what we can possibly expect, trying to give him a bit of advice and describe how it might be when the pair of us go in as I was detailed to go into a fire with him that night.

As we were approaching the incident, I could see in the distance, that the tower was well alight, I think we were around the Holland Park area at this time. It was night time so it was really dark out there, I could only see the top quarter of the tower on fire, I couldn't see the whole of the building, because of other buildings, it was an orange tower in a black background, I won't forget it, it was surreal, I was thinking we shouldn't be going to things like this, with building regs, fire shouldn't escalate like that, something you don't expect to see in this day and age, it was like a scene in a movie. Fire behaves in different ways, especially on high rise fires but to see a fire spread so rapidly was phenomenal. The initial call came out about five to one, we were probably seeing this about 01:45, for a fire to develop that quickly when a fire door withstands for a minimum of 30 minutes and now in 50 minutes or less you have the top quarter of a building fully engulfed in fire. For a fire to develop that quickly, something somewhere has gone wrong.

The journey took about 15 minutes, maybe less. We had to park a distance away, in Sirdar Road due to the amount of fire engines there already, about four or five fire engines in front of us and ambulances and police. More trucks were pulling up behind us. We grabbed our BA sets (Breathing Apparatus) and with

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Watch Manager SADLER, we made our way to Grenfell Tower. We were a good few hundred meters away from where we parked. We made our way to the BA Holding Area around Grenfell Tower and waited to be detailed. It felt like we waited a long time, I was really keen to get involved. I could see the fire spreading around the exterior of the tower, watching debris fall and I saw residents up at the windows trying to make themselves seen, some people were flashing their mobile phone torches. There were a lot of residents on the street watching. While we were waiting outside I could see the fire spreading, it was incredible to see how it moved. We were still waiting and then WM SADLER was asked to set up the FSG (Fire Survival Guidance) he tasked two of us to go and locate the command unit which was dealing with the FSG calls. So me and Fire Fighter WORMAN made our way from the BA holding area to find the command unit. There were quite a few there so it was just luck that the first one we came across was dealing with FSG. I believe this was command unit 7. Once we made contact with them we then got told the FSG dialogue from the incident ground to the command unit would be on channel 3 on the radio. We then reported this back to WM SADLER. When we got back, the rest of Lambeth crews were being prepared to go up to the bridgehead in Grenfell Tower from the holding area, we were asked to take some sort of breaking in gear with us. There was a little flurry of people grabbing what they could, off of trucks and off of the ground. A lot of equipment had been taken from the trucks and placed on the ground by the holding area. There were sledge hammers and enforcers, so me and Fire Fighter WORMAN got involved in that, I can't remember how many crew they wanted to go through but as we went to go through with the rest of Lambeths personnel we were stopped by Watch Manager BROWN who is the governor at Battersea and he asked me and Fire Fighter WORMAN if we could go and get a FIB (forward information board) board from one of the trucks and draw a sketch plan on it there was a china graphed map on the wall which showed the external layout of Grenfell Tower, so we copied that, on the laminated sheets on the FIB board and returned it to Watch Manager BROWN. I don't know what he did with the board after we gave it to him.

We went back to the holding area. We were feeling a little useless and a little annoyed that we couldn't go with the rest of our crew. A job of that size, it could be someone's last shout. I wanted to be with my crew, I thought that maybe someone's not going home tonight. We were back in the holding area again and there was a vast amount of casualties being rescued and being carried out. It was like a conveyer belt. At one point, I think there were about four people trying to carry a casualty who I believe was female, they were struggling and asked for help so I went to assist them, I helped and was literally just holding a leg only for about 10 feet to the LAS. That was all my involvement with helping them to carry the casualty. It was quite a way from the tower to where we were standing. Someone shouted to get the 135

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ladder off so myself and Fire Fighter WORMAN went to assist taking the 135 off a fire engine which was just by the holding area. I believe there was two of the Wembley crew that were also helping to get the ladder off. We got the ladder off and then we had to wait while one of the turn table ladders was repositioned because it was getting covered in falling debris and it had to be reversed. It was firefighting so it was raised, the debris was falling and I can still hear it now, the person who was up in the cage on the radio was saying 'get me down, get me down' because the debris was falling rapidly. The TL (turntable ladder) was moved, it didn't take very long at all but this caused a gap of no more than two foot between the building and the back of the turntable ladder, we had to squeeze through and manhandle the ladder to get the ladder through. The gap was too small to carry the ladder through as you normally would. Once we got through we then got to the entrance of Grenfell Tower where we were asked to lay the ladder on the floor and await further instruction to be committed to the Bridgehead. Both myself and Fire Fighter WORMAN still had a sledgehammer so we had a bit of breaking in gear ready to go up to the Bridgehead. We were at the front of the queue at what you could call a second holding area. It must have been a mezzanine level of some sort. Debris was falling rapidly to the ground but where we were standing, we were actually sheltered and protected. I could see cladding falling off the building, some of it was alight. There were fire fighters and officers in the building by the entrance and as and when either casualties or crews were coming out or crews were being asked to go in, everyone was acting as safety officers to avoid falling debris, officers were watching and saying 'go' so people could quickly make a dash for it to get under cover.

It was deemed unsafe to use that entrance so we moved around to the left of where we were standing, to another holding area, which was by a park. Someone had either popped the glass or popped the doors off to create another entrance into the tower, I think it must have been a couple of windows as the gap was only a foot wide each side and not big enough for a door, you had to twist yourself to get through while wearing BA sets. This gap was used to get into and out of the building. We were told to go in to the building and wait in the lobby on the ground floor and wait to be committed to the Bridgehead. We were in a room, which had a sink in it, it was a big room with a little kitchenette. There was a kind of corridor, which seemed like it might have had post boxes or something like that, I remember lockers on one side. I was still with Fire Fighter WORMAN, although I was detailed to wear BA equipment that night with Fire Fighter JUGGINS, we got split up because of me and Fire Fighter WORMAN being asked to go and find the command unit FSG. My adrenalin was pumping, we'd spent the last hour or two outside watching the fire develop rapidly and spread around the building and watching crews come out with casualties. We were eager to get involved and help out and rescue as many people as possible.

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The ground floor was now filling up with smoke, it wasn't massively thick but it was smokey and we weren't under air, we were breathing normally. We were still waiting to be told what to do. Then our Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner come in to the lobby where we were waiting and they gave us a bit of a pep talk as such, about the size and scale of this incident has never been seen before and that we just had to do whatever we can to rescue as many people as possible and get the fire under control, which from my point of view was really nice to see, that our chiefs were coming in and saying like, save lives, do what you got to do to get it done.

It was around this point that we heard that the Bridgehead had been moved down to the ground floor, I can't remember why, it may have been because of smoke or the fire moving down floors, I think it moved several times as it's meant to be two floors below the actual fire floor. You don't move the Bridgehead unless it's absolutely necessary. So now it was on the ground floor which meant that we now had to move out from the lobby into a large room, back to where we actually made entrance into the tower, it was the room before you went into the lobby where the stairwell was. We were waiting in that room for a while, it seemed like a lifetime but it couldn't have been that long. You could hear debris falling outside, there were lots of casualties being rescued. Every time you turned around there was someone else being pulled out, families coming down and people getting carried out. There were also firefighters who weren't in BA in that area which would then take the casualties off BA crew and assist them out of the building, covering them with people's helmets because of the amount of debris.

I can't remember if we got moved out again to another holding area or not. We were still waiting, I was getting a bit agitated at this time because every time we seemed to get near and committed, the circumstances would change, like the conditions dramatically changing and it seemed every time we got to the front of the queue we kept getting pulled back so we were now at the back. I think we were outside at this point, by the park when we were asked to go the Bridgehead which was now in the lobby. So under the police riot shields we were escorted into the building, trying to make our way through all the debris, through the window which had been popped out and into the lobby where we waited with numerous crews and then we eventually got to the front.

This time we were joined by two fire fighters from Soho who were at the front with us, we were detailed to make our way as a crew of four, to go up to the fourth and fifth floor of the tower, part of our brief was to protect the egress of the crews working on the sixth floor and we would have been firefighting. We got under air at the Bridgehead, gave the ECO (Entry Control Officer) our brief and call sign, ours was Lambeth Pump Ladder 3, we made our way up the staircase up to I think the fourth floor, the smoke was hazy but visibility was quite good. There was a lot of hose going up the stairs, we made our way up to the

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fourth floor where we located the hose and the branch. Myself and fire fighter WORMAN and the Soho crew made entry from the stairwell into the landing which is where the flats go off of. As soon as we made entry into the landing the visibility was very poor. There was no visible flame as you went into the landing but you could tell that there had been because of the amount of damage that had been done. Myself and Fire fighter WORMAN took the right hand wall and entered a flat, I don't know what number, it was already open so we didn't have to force entry. You could see that it was really badly damaged by fire, there were still pockets of fire in the flat. The heat was intense, really intense. We made a search of the flat as best we could and tried to extinguish the small pockets of fire that we could. There seemed to be a lack of pressure in the hose, for whatever reason, there was a slight burst in it which we could see, but if you can appreciate the size of the job, the amount of hose and twists and turns, corners you have to go around, it's quite easy to get a kink in it, there was a lot of burnt hose. I've never seen burnt hose in a compartment fire before it's a rare thing to see. We extinguished the fire as best we could. We withdrew from the fourth floor and made our way up the stairs to the fifth floor and pretty much did a carbon copy of what we did downstairs on the fourth. We followed the right hand wall and went into the same flat, which I think is the first flat after the stairwell. It was the same as the one on the fourth floor, very badly damaged through fire, pockets of fire still remaining which we tried to extinguish from our position which was kind of still in the corridor. We couldn't get in much further because we didn't have enough hose, for whatever reason, maybe debris laying on it, we just couldn't stretch it so we tried to extinguish the pockets of fire from where we were standing. It was very hot. You could see daylight now from where the windows had failed, it was surreal.

Without knowing the layout, it seemed very open plan in the rooms, I don't know whether there were rooms there or not. It was now getting near to our time of whistle for our BA sets, so we then made the decision to withdraw. We were still on the same floor as Soho, although we had worked as two pairs, we were still a crew of four and we moved up the stairs together. We withdrew and made our way down to the Bridgehead where we informed the ECO of our progress. We closed down our BA sets and we got escorted out of the tower again under police shield back to the holding area by the park. We dumped our BA sets by a wall, stripped off our tunics and rehydrated grabbing as many bottles of water that we could. Myself and fire fighter WORMAN made our way to near the leisure centre where there was a fresh supply of cylinders for our BA sets. It seemed like we had to walk all around the houses to get where we wanted to go, this was purely down to not knowing where we were, not knowing the building or estate. We passed many members of the public, there were people arguing amongst themselves, people asking us questions, I can't remember what they were asking, just about fires of that size, nothing about people in

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there, it seemed like they were just being nosey if I'm honest. There were arguments about people looking at other people the wrong way. It was something we could do without. We asked someone how to get back as it seemed like we were walking through a kind of court yard, a grassed area in between all these flats. They directed us and we ended up back to the area where we drew the plan of the FIB board, we found the FIB board on the floor. We got the fresh cylinders and made our way back again, retracing our steps back past the members of public, we didn't get involved with anyone, just carried on walking. We got back to where we left our sets and it seemed like another holding area had been made for the dead bodies that were being pulled out. They were being put on blue salvage sheets. We did our fire ground A test on our BA sets, so we were ready to go back in as and when we were called. We were now waiting again in the holding area, eager to get back in. The fire had spread all around the external façade of the building. Looking from the outside the fire was just wrapping around the building. By this time, it was daylight. Although when it was dark, it really showed how fierce the fire was, when it was light it was like, it looked like we hadn't made any difference at all.

We were waiting to be re committed and then there were lots of fresh crews which had been ordered. It was like a war zone with all the debris on the floor. I think maybe a gas main had ruptured halfway up the tower judging by the colour and velocity of the flame, it was localised. I have no idea how many fire engines there were at that point, I know when we got mobilised there were 25 appliances there. Earlier on I spoke with friends I know from Brixton who said that they got mobilised to make pumps 40, with the fresh crews that had come in, no idea how many now. After a long wait, we eventually got told that we were going back in again. I was now wearing BA with Fire fighter JUGGINS, who was my initial BA partner and Fire Fighter ROOTS and JOHNSON from Soho, they both used to be on Lambeth red watch so I know them quite well. It's not normal at all to split up from your BA partner but Fire fighter WORMAN was asked to pair to make up another crew. This wasn't an issue because I knew the people I was working with.

We went back to the Bridgehead, which was by the bottom of the stairs. It was now completely different to the first time we went in there, the first time the smoke was quite hazy, this time, all the windows in the main entrance had been broken to allow the smoke to ventilate. There was now 6 to 8 inches of water on the floor. There was a lightweight portable pump in the entrance to the tower which was feeding additional hoses. Myself, Fire fighter JUGGINS, fire fighter ROOTS and fire fighter JOHNSON were tasked to locate a burst length of 70mm hose, which was making conditions very difficult for the crews that were in there. We made our way up to the ninth floor to locate the hose. The lower part of the stairwell, visibility was quite good although there was a lot of water coming down the stairs now. It was

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like a scene in Titanic where you've got all the water coming down the stairs. It was still hot so the water was turning into steam as well. It was still very hot on the higher floors so conditions were very difficult. Once we located the hose, we had the job of tracing it all the way back down to the ground floor. This was a very difficult task in itself due to the amount of hoses in the stairwell. We had to be sure that we didn't lose which hose it was going down the stairs, it only takes one hand to slip and you're on the wrong hose. All four of us traced the hose down to the ground floor and agreed it was the same hose, traced to the lightweight portable pump. So this was an additional hose to the ones that were used in the initial which would have been used in the dry risers. We informed the ECO and Borough Commander Pat GOLDBURN who was there.

We were then asked to go back up to the 11th and 12th floors to evacuate Paddington, Battersea, Lambeth and Wimbledon crews that were working up there because communication was very poor, they couldn't get them on the radios. They wanted to withdraw them so they could shut off the water supply and change the hoses over to try and make conditions more appropriate. They couldn't get through on the radio so we had to go on foot to relay the message. Crews were going up there and getting absolutely drenched, they are then in corridors that are on fire, so they are basically boiling in the bag themselves.

We made our way back up to the floor. We reached the floor and there was a body on the floor of the half landing between the 9th and 10th. It was quite a large body and you could see it was burnt on the top. We took care to go around the body, trying not to tread on it to preserve it as much as we could. We carried on up and reached Paddington's crew, we told them that they need to withdraw because the water supply was going to be shut down. At this point it was only EDBA (extended duration breathing apparatus) which were firefighting because of the distance you have to travel to get there. On standard duration, you wouldn't be up there for long. So we informed Paddington to withdraw, it was still well alight on the 10th floor.

We made our way up searching for Battersea and Wimbledon crews, we found them and informed them to withdraw. We couldn't find the Lambeth crew, this was Fire fighter WORMAN and a fire fighter from PECKHAM. I asked Battersea and Wimbledon have they seen Lambeths crew, they said no they hadn't found them. We now had a problem, we had been told there were four crews up there and we only found three. We were getting really low on air because we'd already gone up to the 9th floor, gone back down and then gone back up again, I think we were on the 12th floor. I was starting to panic a bit, about that thought I'd had earlier about someone not going home, it was starting to get real. We could not find the Lambeth crew. We'd made a search of the 11th and 12th floors as best we could, we had no extinguishing media, because we were just going up to tell them to withdraw. There were still parts of the landing and

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flats that were still alight, visibility was ridiculous, you couldn't see a lot. We thought maybe they were up on the 13th floor, we tried to go up to the 13th and we were met by another burst hose, this time it was a 45mm hose, it was on the mid landing between the 12th and 13th floor. I peered round the half landing and ducked under the water to look up at the landing, the fire was punching out of the door on the landing of the 13th floor. It was breaching the landing of the flats into the stairwell. I made the decision that I couldn't search up there without extinguishing media with the fire as vigorous as it was.

The whistle on my BA set had activated. In normal job or a fire you should be out at that point. It's now telling me you have 12 minutes of air left in your set until it's drained. But that is 12 minutes of breathing at a standard rate of 50 litres a minute and as a crew, I'm now up on the 12th floor and we've now got to get down. We made the decision that we've just got to go. We can't find one crew, we could easily be a second crew that couldn't be found. We started to go back down, the heat was ridiculous and we were trying to keep as low as we could. Visibility on the stairwell from the 13th to the 6th was extremely limited, the smoke, the amount of steam coming off the water, the water itself made conditions not visible in itself. We tried as best we could to trace the 45 mm hose back but we lost it pretty soon after we started, just because of the amount of hose in the stairwell and we couldn't see a single thing. We made our way back down at this point because of the poor visibility we just had to get down. Where we were nice and tactful going up past the body, we had to get down quickly or we could become casualties ourselves. We just had to get down the staircase and so less tactful going down. We would have been but we couldn't see a thing and the amount of trip hazards on the stairs with the hose already we just had to get past it all whichever way you could.

We eventually got down to the ground floor and informed them that we couldn't find Lambeths crew. I then saw Fire fighter WARMAN and his partner from Peckham at the ground floor. That was a huge sigh of relief knowing that they are ok and down here.

We were drenched from head to toe, our boots were full of water just through the amount of water we'd gone through. It was game over for us four now, we were so wet we wouldn't be used to go in again. So we took our sets and went back to the fire engine. We dropped our sets off, took our tunics off to try and cool down and dry out a bit in the sun. Then we met up with the rest of Lambeths crew, including Fire Fighter WORMAN, we then just waited by the fire engine. We were by what I think was a church hall, they were very kind to allow us to use the facilities. We were constantly being offered food and drink from members of the public. At this point there were numerous people coming up to us as a crew asking about family and friends and if we knew if they had got out. We told them that they would have to speak to police. We said that a lot of people had been rescued. One man was asking about a family member,

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Form MG11(T)

who was up on one of the higher floors, we knew some crews had reached higher floors but we didn't have any information. We just tried to reassure them and told them to speak to police. We got food and drinks from the Sally Army van and rested and refuelled, I think it was about 10.30 now, a good few hours since our initial call.

Crew Manager MCALONAN and Watch Manager SADLER appeared at the fire engines and said we were allowed to go. We collected our nominal role boards from the command unit and around 11am went back to Paddington Fire Station where we had a bit of a debrief and wrote our witness statements. We also had to see a counsellor. I think we left Paddington about 2.30 and got back to Lambeth around 3pm where I had a quick shower and then left to go home around 3.30 ish, albeit for a little bit because I was back in Wednesday night at 8pm.

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