

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: BOULTON, WILLIAM

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 11 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: WILLIAM BOULTON

Date: 19/04/2018

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

I am the above named person and my details are known to the Police. This statement is in relation to the GRENFELL TOWER Fire that occurred on WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017.

I have been a Firefighter with the LONDON FIRE BRIGADE (LFB) for nearly eleven (11) years. I have been based at WEMBLEY Fire Station since Christmas Day 2007 and have remained at this Fire Station ever since. On the night of TUESDAY 13th JUNE 2017, I was set to complete a night shift. I do not remember what time that I arrived at the Fire Station. I was posted at Role Call as driver of the Pump Ladder call sign G30. WEMBLEY Fire Station is a Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) station. This means that all Firefighters at WEMBLEY are trained to use Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA) and Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA).

Before giving this statement to Police, I was able to refer to notes I made at PADDINGTON after leaving GRENFELL TOWER. I exhibit these notes as WDB/1.

I also exhibit a map of the area surrounding GRENFELL TOWER as WDB/2.

I joined the LFB in AUGUST 2007. I completed sixteen (16) weeks of training at SOUTHWARK. This included First Aid at SHOREDITCH and Pump and Pumping at SHADWELL. During this training, I

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made use of the yard at SOUTHWARK. The training covers the basics of Firefighting. Every step of what needs to be done on arrival at a fire is covered, from arriving at the job, sourcing the water from hydrants as well as feeding water to each floor. The training covers Breathing Apparatus (BA), how long a wear will last and how to test them. We are expected to read about all the kit we may use. I had initial training on ladders, how to pitch them and heights. There is a test every one (1) or two (2) weeks. The test needs to be passed to progress in the training.

Having completed the initial training at SOUTHWARK, I then moved to WEMBLEY fire station. At WEMBLEY there is training every day where skills are honed by doing different scenarios in the drill yard, using the ladders of looking at problems on a fire ground. We also train on FRU in our own yard with our own appliances or with other Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP) and appliances from other stations. We have practical and lecture based training. Officers plan this training. I have completed specialist training as WEMBLEY has a FRU appliance. This also took place at SOUTHWARK and covered lines, water and hazard material training. At the start of the two (2) week FRU training, I completed two (2) day on EDBA. SDBA consists of one (1) cylinder within the set and a facemask. Depending on the conditions, a wear of SDBA would usually last around thirty (30) minutes. An EDBA set has two (2) cylinders. Like the SDBA, the length of the wear would be dependent on conditions and work rate but would last longer than SDBA. The training for BA included lectures as well as being shown how to wear them. Firefighters then use a BA chamber without smoke or fire. Vision is obscured inside; the Firefighter must manage their air and having enough air to get back out of the chamber.

I completed further specialist training on EDBA at MORTON. The set is worn in a simulated fire. As well as this, I took part in a scenario based EDBA training session at ALDWYCH tube station. This included having to reach an unconscious casualty and bringing them out on a stretcher. This training highlighted the extra length of time the EDBA provides over the SDBA. There are BA refreshers, either one (1) or two (2) day courses. As WEMBLEY is a specialised fire station, I also completed two (2) week training in South London gaining a qualification in Mass Decontamination (chemical incidents). I have also taken part in training for Road Traffic Collision attendance.

Before I attended GRENFELL TOWER on WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017, I had no knowledge of the Tower or of the area I had not attended a large High Rise fire. There had been a large fire in a High Rise

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building on my ground but I had not been on shift that day. I have taken part in training for High Rise fires though. We are aware of how to manage fires on our own ground and others. The training comprises implementing the Bridgehead that should be two (2) floors below the fire. A Crew Manager runs the Bridgehead. We complete training as to the kit we need to carry including hoses, medical packs, Thermal Imaging Cameras and communication equipment from the appliances. We know the actions we need to follow including securing the water, finding the mains outlets, where we can plug the appliances into hydrants and then into the rising main to provide water into the building. An Officer takes the Entry Control Board. The training is as realistic as it can be but it cannot compare to the GRENFELL TOWER fire. I do not recall the last time I had training on High Rise fires.

I am not aware of a Section 7(2)(d) familiarisation for GRENFELL TOWER. I am aware of Section 7(2)(d)s and have completed them on my own ground. Section 7(2)(d)s are carried out by Firefighters on larger than normal buildings. The buildings are visited regularly. An example on my ground is WEMBLEY STADIUM. The Firefighting crews would visit the STADIUM and scope out the access and exits, water supplies for crews to plug into, points of contact, floor plans, vehicle access and potential life risk day and night. The Section 7(2)(d) information is then added by the Officer to the Operational Risk Database (ORD). This database flags on the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) when on route to calls or at premises and is added to the knowledge the Firefighters already have for these buildings on their ground.

The “Stay Put” Policy is an LFB policy that is in place as guidance for residents of flats. The resident is advised to remain in the building if the fire, elsewhere in the building, is not affecting them. This is to eliminate the problem of hundreds (100) of people fleeing a building at the same time, it is therefore advised to “Stay Put”. I do not know if the “Stay Put” policy was used at the GRENFELL TOWER fire or who was in control of making decisions regarding its use or withdrawal. I am not aware of what should happen if Compartmentation fails.

I started a night shift on TUESDAY 13th JUNE 2017. I attended role call and was posted as driver of the Pump Ladder appliance call sign G30. As with the start of any shift, I completed the checks on the appliance that is part of the duties of the driver. I did an inventory of the equipment on the appliance and checked the sets. On a night shift, we try and get some sleep so after I had completed the work I had to do I went to get some sleep. At around 0130AM I was woken by the sound of the shout in the fire station.

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The sirens and lights go off to alert the Firefighters of a shout. I made my way to the Teleprinter. The Teleprinter prints off the location and details of the incident. As the driver of an appliance, I would collect this. When I got to the Teleprinter, the Governor, Watch Manager (WM) Peter CLARK was already there. I cannot remember who tore the sheet off the Teleprinter but I checked the location of the incident on the map that is near the Teleprinter. I do not recall if there was any Rendezvous Point information on the print out. I was not aware of the location, I wanted to know roughly how to get as close as possible. I planned the route of HARROW ROAD then onto LADBROKE GROVE. I knew that I could rely on Watch Manager CLARK for more precise directions as he was riding with me on the Pump Ladder. I made my way to the appliance and met the rest of the crew there. I recall that WM CLARK was the Officer in Charge (OIC) and sat in the front passenger seat next to me. I recall that Firefighter Enrique BELTRAMI was in the back with another Firefighter that I do not remember. I headed out of WEMBLEY fire station with the lights and sirens on. It was dark outside and there was very little traffic on the roads. I took the two (2) major roads as planned, first HARROW ROAD then on to LADBROKE GROVE. I remember going over the brow of a hill and over a bridge across a canal when I was able to see a fire in a tower. I was about one (1) kilometre away. One (1) side of the building was alight and it looked like every window was alight. There were flames on one side. I had never seen anything of that scale before, it looked like a movie.

I carried on towards the incident. I recall that we had been told it was a fifteen (15) pump fire and that there was a need for more pumps. I knew that this meant it was a big fire. I do not know if I was told this en route or if it was before I had left WEMBLEY. We would have received some updates over the radio but I do not remember them. The traffic was not bad until closer to the incident. Watch Manager CLARK guided me using the MDT in the appliance. There were roadworks though and I had to do a three-point (3) turn to go back and find a different way. I do not remember the road that I parked on, I recall that there were fire appliances parked up and it was difficult to park as it was tight with cars. Members of the public were in the road and trying to flag us down. They were screaming at us to help. I did not speak to anyone on Fire Survival Guidance (FSG).

Watch Manager CLARK or another GOVERNOR told us to grab as much equipment as we could. As the driver, I had to put my kit on. I did this then started to grab equipment from appliances parked up. I raided the appliances close by for hose, branches, Thermal Imaging Cameras (TIC) and breaking in gear. I did

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four (4) or five (5) trips, carrying it and dumping it close to where the Turntable Ladder (TL) was parked. This is marked as A on Exhibit WDB/2. This area was covered and sheltered from falling debris. The TL was parked on one (1) corner of the building when I arrived. I saw debris that had fallen from the tower all over the floor. The TL was trying to move out of the way of the falling debris. Some of the debris was the size of a small car with razor sharp jagged edges from where it had come away from the building. The amount of debris increased during my time at the incident. There was orange fire inside the one (1) side of tower that I could see.

After carrying equipment, an Officer in a white helmet told us to go in to the lobby area at the bottom of the tower. I made my way to an entrance. I do not recall if it was a door into the lobby or if glass had been smashed to make an entrance. I had my SDBA set with me and made my way into a small space with a staircase in. The area was around eight (8) metres by eight (8) metres. Entry Control was at the bottom of the stairs, the stairs then led up to a mezzanine level which led on to the one (1) internal staircase inside the tower. I could see a door that lead to where the elevators were. I waited in this lobby area for around thirty (30) minutes with approximately twenty (20) to thirty (30) other Firefighters and a dozen Officers. The Assistant Commissioner of the LFB Andy ROWE spoke to the Firefighters inside the lobby. Andy ROWE told us "We may have to step outside of policy and procedures". I believe that Andy ROWE was the Incident Commander. I do not know if this changed.

I was prepared to go up into the tower, I was under air from the SDBA however we were all asked to withdraw from inside to outside the tower, shown as B (Staging Area) on Exhibit WDB/2. I was unsure as to why we had to leave the lobby. I felt it was either worry about the structure of the building or that there were just too many people inside that lobby area. We moved to the Staging Area which was a safe distance away from the tower but there was still debris everywhere. I could see the top of the tower was affected by fire, it was from the top diagonally down and spreading. I felt, for the first time at this point, that I may not come out from the tower, I thought of the worst case scenario.

There was a Watch Manager, Sector Commander and around twenty (20) to thirty (30) Firefighters at the Staging Area. I heard the Sector Commander say on the radio that EDBA could be used. I thought the Sector Commander was speaking with a larger Staging Area somewhere on the fireground. I told the Sector Commander that WEMBLEY crew were all EDBA trained and that if there were sets we could be

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used. I had been at the Staging Area for around one (1) hour. I felt frustrated that I had not been utilised on the first entry. I was with Mark BEER, Larry PITT and Dillesh DEVANI from WEMBLEY. I saw a crew of Firefighters wearing EDBA sets come out of the tower. One (1) of the Firefighters was tired and looked like he was not able to go back inside the tower. I was quite forward and told this crew that there were four (4) of us that wanted to go in. The crew removed their sets. As they had already used the air in their cylinders, I took spare cylinders from a pile that had formed in the area.

Once Mark BEER, Larry PITT, Dillesh DEVANI and I had on our sets, we explained to the Sector Commander that we were ready to go in. We joined a line of Firefighters waiting to go inside. The line was formed along a wall. There were Police at the front of the line helping to escort Firefighters in and out of the building by protecting them from the falling debris with their riot shields. The Firefighters were in twos (2) with one (1) in front of a Police Officer and a Firefighter behind, with the shield above. A spotter was looking out for falling debris, when the spotter shouted that it was clear, the three (3) would head towards the entrance. There was debris all over the floor so we went as quickly as possible. I entered the tower through a back entrance. This was a different entrance than I had used on my first entry. Entry Control were still at the bottom of the stairs. There was water up to the top of my boots but the visibility was good.

The four (4) of us remained together and we received a briefing with another four (4) Firefighters. I do not recall who briefed us. The briefing was for one (1) group of four (4) to go to the twelfth (12th) floor with the other group of four (4) going to the thirteenth (13th) floor. We were instructed that no one had been further than the twelfth (12th) floor at that point and there was a need for Search and Rescue of any flats as it was believed that there was someone on the twelfth (12th) floor. I do not recall which flats we were told had known occupants but my notes state flats ninety-two (92), ninety-four (94) and ninety-five (95). We also had to relay the conditions back to Entry Control. We were informed of a body on the eighth (8th) or ninth (9th) floor but we were told to ignore the body. We did a communications check and handed our tallies into the Entry Control Board. We then went under air. I was aware that the Dry Riser was charged. I recall seeing a Fire lift but it was not in use.

Mark BEER led us as a group up the internal staircase passed the Bridgehead on floor three (3). Between us we had a TIC, a sledgehammer and an axe. The internal staircase was about one (1) metre wide with

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between twelve (12) and fifteen (15) steps on each flight. We made steady progress up the stairs. There was smoke in the staircase that got worse from the seventh (7th) floor. I recall a floor being marked with a number, this may have been the seventh (7th) floor. We had to count the floors we walked up as there were no markings. There was water coming down the stairs and it was dark. I had been in previous incidents where there was no visibility, I felt fine and I was not exhausted. It was not particularly hot within the staircase. As we got to the ninth (9th) floor, the smoke was thicker. There were no sprinklers that I saw and I heard no alarms. We came across the body we were briefed about on the ninth (9th) floor. We could just about see it in the darkness. We climbed around the body, stepping over it before carrying on up the stairs.

We all agreed that we had made it to the twelfth (12th) floor. A Firefighter came from the floor and confirmed too that it was the twelfth (12th). Mark BEER had his face mask radio on. He tried to contact Entry Control but he got nothing when he tried. Mark BEER was in front, I was at the back of the WEMBLEY crew. I told the crew behind to stay on the twelfth (12th) floor, WEMBLEY would carry on to the thirteenth (13th). The thirteenth (13th) was more smoky and hotter than the twelfth (12th) floor had been. Mark BEER was still in front. He was faced with obstacles like hoses on the stairs first; by the time we had reached the thirteenth (13th) Mark BEER had less air. I decided to go in front and lead the WEMBLEY crew, I had been able to conserve air during the walk up. The door from the stairwell to the lobby of the thirteenth (13th) was open. It was pitch black. I kept right, initially coming across a refuse shoot that I checked and moved pass.

It was pitch black in the lobby. It was warm but bearable. I took the TIC from behind. I then came across the front door of a flat. I could make out the "1 06" on the door. The front door was locked. Larry PITT used the sledgehammer to break the door down but as the door was made of PVC the equipment was just bouncing off the door. I pointed to hit the handle. Larry PITT tried for about thirty (30) seconds and started to make a hole in the door. I then took over. I tried to make a bigger hole in the door so we could get a hand in and unlock the door. After another thirty (30) seconds the hole was big enough to open the door.

The door led in to a hallway. I could see nothing as I went in. Mark BEER and Dilles Devani stayed at the front door. I was on my front crawling. With the TIC I saw the shape of a small body. I went straight

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for this body in a panic but it was a toy. There was a door on the left. I could feel heat from this door. I told Larry PITT that I was going to try and go in. I opened the door and put my head in the room. All I could see was white flame. There was a body in a corner. It was an inferno. I tried to root around but the heat was so much it zapped my energy. I spent seconds in there but it felt like ages. The TIC read "1000 Degrees". Larry PITT and I decided that we had to leave. We spent about three (3) minutes in that flat. I got back to the front door of flat "106". Mark BEER and Dilleish DEVANI were at the front door, they said they had felt the increase in heat when we had opened the door. We quickly discussed about going further. I felt that we could push on more but the more experienced said "no, we needed to get back". We started to leave the area. The heat and the conditions had affected me. I hunched over, with my hands on my knees and supported myself against the wall when I could to try and suck on the mask for air. I was guided back to the stairwell.

It was slow coming down the stairs. Larry PITT and I were struggling. I was stopping to get breaths every couple of flights down. We rushed to get back down to a floor where the visibility was better, either the seventh (7th) or eighth (8th) floor. As a crew we got back to the third (3rd) floor where the Bridgehead was. I do not know who updated Entry Control with the results of our entry. I recall seeing people being led out of the tower but I cannot be sure when this was. I handed my tally back in, then was dragged out and down by Mark BEER to the bottom of the stairs in the lobby as I started to feel dizzy and disorientated. Larry PITT and Dilleish DEVANI were already at the bottom. Someone took my tunic and set off me and water was thrown over me. I was suffering from the conditions. We left the lobby the same way we had entered. I was carrying my set on one (1) shoulder. A Police Officer with a riot shield protected me as I left the tower and headed towards the Staging Area (marked as B on Exhibit WDB/2). I had water while I was at this Staging Area. A Paramedic came and checked on us. I was there about ten (10) to twenty (20) minutes with my crew. I checked my set.

While I was in this area, I heard that EDDBA wearers were still needed. I saw two Firefighters next to a Watch Manager and Sector Commander. I felt OK in myself and sufficiently recovered to go back into the tower. I joined the line of Firefighters who were waiting to go in. Again I was called to go when it was clear and a Police Officer used a riot shield to help me get in to the lobby. I went in to the lobby with the two (2) Firefighters that had been with the Watch Manager and Sector Commander. I was not with any WEMBLEY crew. The Entry Control was still at the bottom of the stairs. Again, I received a

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briefing. I do not recall by who. The briefing was to go to the thirteenth (13th) floor for Search and Rescue.

The conditions were similar to the first entry however it took twice as long to get up the internal stairs due to the congestion. There were Firefighters coming down as we were making our way up. We passed the same body on the eighth (8th) or ninth (9th) floor. I did not look for this body. There was another body a couple of floors above, possibly on the eleventh (11th) floor but I could not see anything. I cannot recall if the obstructions were worse on this climb but I could hear many more Firefighters. I had my hand held radio with me but I did not use this as I had my mask on.

At the thirteenth (13th) floor, the door to the lobby of the floor was open. There was another crew already there. I went right from the lobby door. I told the others to ignore the refuse shoot as I had already checked that there was no one in there. I got to the front door of flat '106' again and realised that was the end of the lobby corridor. I checked my air gauge I had used a lot of air on this climb. I pulled the tunic of the Firefighter in front of me and said "We've used too much air". I was conscious of being low on air and knew that due to the congestion on the stairs it could take longer to get back out of the tower. We started to make our way back down the stairs to the lobby. It did not feel like we were in the tower for very long and felt like a wasted wear. I did not update Entry Control about this entry. The Police once again used their shields as cover when I left the building. I headed back out to the Staging Area and dumped my set. A Firefighter that I did not know asked me if I had finished with my set. I told him that I had but that the cylinder needed to be changed. I did not think I would go back inside the tower again.

I walked from the Staging Area to a Café near LATIMER ROAD STATION. I needed to use the toilet. There were Firefighters there including Paul HARRIS from WEMBLEY. I took his set from him and carried it with me. I felt drained. I found out that there was a SALVATION ARMY van parked up on BOMORE ROAD. This is marked as C on Exhibit WDB/2. I made my way to the SALVATION ARMY van and was able to grab a sandwich and a drink. I then made my way back to where the Pump Ladder I had arrived on was and called my wife. I recall it was around 0730AM WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017. It was daylight and there was less visible flame coming from the tower. I left the SALVATION ARMY van still with Paul HARRIS' set. I made my way back to the Staging Area where I tested Paul HARRIS' set. I was prepared to go back inside the tower again. There was a Station Manager by a wall near the

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LEISURE CENTRE. I saw Watch Manager CLARK and Watch Manager Helen CHRISTMAS from HESTON. They were trying to organise a group of EDBA wearers to go back in. I knew Watch Manager Helen CHRISTMAS so I spoke her and said I would go back in again with the EDBA wearers. The crew was made up of mainly HESTON Firefighters.

We left the Staging Area and headed back into the lobby area at the bottom of the tower. It was more organised this time and there was a more systematic method of getting Firefighters inside. The water in there was still shin high. There were twelve (12) of us waiting in EDBA, with twelve (12) being called in at a time. We received a briefing from Entry Control in a room near the elevators. Our briefing was to manage the hose already on the floors of the tower, plug in to the mains and fight fire. I do not recall who briefed us. While I was/waiting to go up the internal stairs, I heard a call over the radio for "G30 to make way to truck, we are away". A Watch Manager inside the tower asked "Did you hear the radio". I said "No". I tried to reach my Watch Manager on the radio but where I was stood in the lobby I could not contact him. I made my way out of that area nearer the outside of the tower. I told the Watch Manager there that I had been called. It was around 1130AM WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017. I left the tower the same way I had gone in and made my way to the appliance. There were two (2) of my crew already there as they had heard the same message. We waited there about thirty (30) minutes before leaving. I was able to turn the appliance around easily and dive away from the incident. We went to PADDINGTON as instructed to make notes. I then drove to WEMBLEY. I arrived home around 1700PM. I had booked annual leave for the night shift of WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017 so I did not work that night.

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