

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: RIGG, CHRIS

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

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 6 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: CHRIS RIGG

Date: 17/06/2017

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

On TUESDAY 13TH JUNE 2017 I was on duty in full uniform in company with PC440BS as operator of BS801N when as a result of CAD 482 we attended the vicinity of GRENFELL TOWER W10, namely BOMORE ROAD W11. As I recall it was approximately 0100 hours. On route I had heard my colleague PC119BS declare the scene a "CRITICAL INCIDENT" Upon arrival we were met with a scene of what I can only describe as devastating. GRENFELL TOWER was on fire and it looked very serious. The top of the building was completely ablaze and I could see figures at some of the windows. People were running around the area and I could hear shouting and screaming all around me. I walked towards GRENFELL TOWER from BOMORE ROAD along the concourse area outside KENSINGTON LEISURE CENTRE.

As I walked I could see many distressed members of the public running in different directions, I then saw LFB crews and appliances tackling the burning building. I remember thinking at that moment that the fire looked so serious that I could not imagine people were able to get in or out of the building. I decided to look at the best place I could begin to implement a cordon. The place where I started was approximately 100 metres from the foot of the tower, I then paused to look back at the building again, in a matter of moments the fire had taken hold of much more of the building. I was shocked by this fact and I also felt at that moment that there was a possibility the building could collapse and so decided to move the cordon further away to approximately 250 metres within the space available next to the leisure centre. I had to consider being visible to people coming away from the building in order to assist them and also to now

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prevent distressed people from attempting to get to the building. It was then that advice was given to change our radio channel from local link to a LONDON channel. I wrote this down and attempted to get as many colleagues as possible to change channels so that we would not lose contact with each other. I was relieved to hear BS1 on the new channel and awaited further information and instructions.

During my short time on the cordon I was approached by many people and asked what to do as they had contact with people in the building, the initial advice I was able to give was only to reiterate the building fire procedure instructions of "Stay in your home and await rescue" I then did my best to reassure people by explaining that there were a great deal of resources at the location and they were doing their absolute best to save lives. A few moments later 2 colleagues took over on my cordon and I was reunited with PC440BS, he explained that he had just assisted DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDANT WARNETT with a casualty who had jumped from the building, he was visibly shaken and I helped him clean his hands before we set off to find BS1 and receive further instructions.

As we went back towards BOMORE ROAD a member of LAS crew asked if we could find a suitable location to work on casualties and also a place to lay out the deceased. I then assisted colleagues who had now gained entry to KENSINGTON LEISURE CENTRE by venturing into the lower ground level where there was a gymnasium, we propped open the doors and looked for a lighting panel until the LAS crews were inside and making provisions for their work. As I was doing this I could see people outside the leisure centre being given chest compressions on the pavement. There were also now one or two deceased persons laid out on a grassed area outside the leisure centre. At this time I saw LFB crew members retreating from the base of GRENFELL TOWER and coming towards the leisure centre, they generally looked exhausted and traumatised. There was talk of a LFB member who had collapsed and that many of them were desperately thirsty and dehydrated. I assisted 119BS and 314BS at this point to break into a vending machine to urgently gather water and any fluids available for these people. I justify this as we were in a state of emergency and there was no other method of helping people at that time.

I then went back to the RVP on BOMORE ROAD where I had initially arrived to liaise with BS1. He allocated PC440BS and me the task of visiting all the cordons surrounding the scene to gain numbers, status reports and to gauge the feeling and mood of the public at that particular time.

As PC440 and I embarked upon our new task I had a few moments as we walked to consider the events

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unfolding, this made me tearful and I felt briefly overwhelmed at the scale of suffering I was witnessing all around me, thoughts of the people trapped in the building, their family and friends on the outside, all of my emergency services colleagues and the community in general. It was a horrific situation which I will never forget. Some of the most harrowing things for me personally were the looks of confusion and bewilderment on people's faces, looks and expressions that I have never seen before, coupled with the anguish of people desperately communicating with others inside the burning building desperate to be reassured and rescued.

I arrived at the first cordon and gathered information, the mood of the community was sombre, the cordon was peaceful and so we moved on.

We then passed through an area I now know to be VERITY CLOSE where people were wandering around looking confused. They were exposed to a side of the GRENFELL TOWER where people could be seen at windows and I felt we needed to deploy more Officers there when they would eventually arrive. We were very short of Officers generally and quite stretched in the circumstances, thankfully in this particular area of VERITY CLOSE there were Elder community members who greeted us warmly and were doing a great job of maintaining some order in the vicinity, I was grateful and relieved by that fact.

We then moved on into SILCHESTER ROAD where we briefed SERIAL 997A regarding VERITY CLOSE, I understand they were able to deploy two Officers to monitor until more resources arrived.

As PC440 and I then walked along SILCHESTER ROAD towards BRAMLEY ROAD I was shocked to see the whole length and breadth of the street littered with large chunks of unidentifiable debris, many of them still smouldering, vehicles were also covered in this debris. I felt it looked as though there had been a large explosion, perhaps the look of the aftermath of a bomb explosion, it was very surreal to me.

Looking back as I write this I am amazed further fires were not started from some of this material. This image has affected me in some way as in my own street the next day I saw some broken black asphalt in a small pile that perhaps a child had piled up whilst playing and I thought for a second it was the same debris I had seen on SILCHESTER ROAD. I guess it was a flashback.

PC440 and I carried on to the next cordon. As we arrived at J/W BRAMLEY ROAD the atmosphere had

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changed, there were many more people gathered, beginning to line the streets in numbers. The cordon here was still largely peaceful but more vocal. We walked along BRAMLEY ROAD towards BLECHYNDEN STREET where the next small cordon was in place, there was a clear view GRENFELL TOWER from here looming over the railway bridge at LATIMER ROAD STATION, burning violently and spewing more of the strange debris onto the streets below. It crossed my mind again at this point that there was every chance the building may collapse.

There were LAS and LFB crews close to this cordon and although very vocal people were engaging with Police, I did note that BRAMLEY ROAD was a potential area for outbreaks of disorder, this had already been acknowledged with the deployment of LEVEL 2 officers on some of the next cordons along BRAMLEY ROAD. We then turned left into WHITCHURCH ROAD where we walked until we reached TESTERTON WALK, we could see smoke in the underground carpark area and so walked into the green area alongside TESTERTON WALK and opposite BARANDON WALK. It transpired that TESTERTON WALK had just been evacuated and the LFB were aware of the fire risk to this building. Residents of BARANDON WALK were then advised that they were to be evacuated.

During our time on the green space in between these two blocks we encountered a group of approximately 30 people who were focused on looking up at GRENFELL TOWER. They were shouting advice and instructions to a person or persons inside the burning building.

As this was happening, large pieces of burning debris were falling from GRENFELL TOWER onto the area where we were standing. This was a risk to the safety of the group and so PC440BS and I asked the people to move back. Our request resulted in tension and aggression from some of the group, the majority understood the severity of the situation and complied, however there were a small group of males who were shouting at us "YOU ARE DOING NOTHING! WE ARE HELPING THESE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRAPPED!" They then told other members of the group to stand their ground too.

I can understand their high emotion and frustration at the situation as I felt exactly the same, however, in my opinion they were not helping and in fact were putting themselves, the rest of the public in the green area and us at great risk of injury or even death.

PC440BS tried several times to reason with them but the situation was becoming increasingly volatile, I requested the more reasonable people retreat (which they did) and then PC440 and I withdrew for our

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own safety. We then called up GT and requested assistance from a serial as we were concerned there could have been violence directed towards us from the group and we were only two officers.

I was also mindful of the fact that we had been tasked to gain status reports for further deployments of officers and this was paramount to the safety of the entire community and all persons involved in the incident. I could not have justified engaging further with these individuals and neglecting our immediate task in hand. We then walked back towards WHITCHURCH ROAD and TREADGOLD STREET where we found two PC's 531TX and 251TX who had recently arrived to assist. Having briefed them on the situation we had encountered we requested that they held a post at the entrance to the green area in between TESTERTON WALK and BARANDON WALK to monitor the situation and prevent further people entering the area. We then informed GT of their role and position and moved on to the next cordon.

As we progressed to the next cordon I recall GT announcing that advice to be given to any persons in contact with people inside the GRENFELL TOWER was to "Self-evacuate"

I took this to mean there were no longer possibilities for LFB to enter the building, this felt very final and was a poignant moment of the devastating reality of the situation. Another moment which I will never forget. The next cordon was on GRENFELL ROAD J/W TREADGOLD STREET, the situation there was also peaceful and close to some LFB appliances, this area then lead back onto BOMORE ROAD where two more small cordons were also in place to prevent access to the RVP area close to KENSINGTON LEISURE CENTRE. These areas were also peaceful at that time. As we arrived back at the RVP PC440 and I updated a large area map with all of the cordon information.

PC440 then relayed this to BS1 and I was tasked with liaising with Council members to establish where rescue centres were being set up and which ones would require immediate Police assistance.

I walked to the LFB command unit located further down BOMORE ROAD where I met with NICK LAYTON and MIKE RUMBLE who were responsible for arranging and organising rescue centres.

I was informed of 5 locations (see pages 21 and 22 of PNB sn.1150) 2 of which were outside the cordoned area and required Police to attend as soon as was possible. I noted all the locations so I was able to direct members of the public as necessary. This information was then added to our incident map and

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relayed to BS1.

After our first round of Cordon checks were carried out PC440 and I were allocated a task from BOROUGH COMMANDER O'CONNOR to assist the LFB located at the base of GRENFELL TOWER.

She also informed us to be aware of and attempt to look for 3 deceased persons that had been seen close to the area we had just been directed to. Although this was a separate task we were aware of the importance and that other emergency service staff had been made aware of this too.

When we arrived at the base of GRENFELL TOWER there was still debris falling from the building, we took a path via a flooded underpass close to the refuse area as I recall where we met with an LFB member, he took us to meet an LFB INSPECTOR who explained there were at least 3 persons with cameras and large lenses on the balconies of 201-211 GRENFELL WALK directly overlooking the lower floors of GRENFELL TOWER. This area had been evacuated and no persons should have been there, we were required to search for and remove them.

We entered the stairwell and ascended to the balcony level, the balcony was covered with smouldering debris and for the first time I could feel heat from the fire still raging at GRENFELL TOWER which was now only several metres ahead of me. I could also see some of the exhausted and bewildered fire crews below the balcony level now, I think this may have been what the people with cameras were attempting to obtain images of.

I noticed a door had been propped open with a beer bottle, I went through it and entered TESTERTON WALK where I saw 2 males with cameras, when they saw me they looked very sheepish and began to turn and walk away. I stopped them and told them this building was evacuated and that they should not be here, I asked if they were residents and they said no, I believe they were media as when I escorted them from the building they joined other media people who had now gathered in numbers on a green space at the rear of TESTERTON WALK. I secured the door I sent them through by removing a wedge which had been deliberately placed in the door casing to allow free access to these people. I was disgusted by their behaviour and frustrated that we did not have enough resources to prevent this from happening.

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I was later made aware of another person who had breached a cordon and had had the audacity to enter a tent to record images of a deceased person. This was one of many disturbing events which occurred during the incident which have preyed on my mind often since.

Having moved on these people I met again with PC440 who had been looking for other people that may have breached cordons, we then had to move two more people who had attempted to revisit their evacuated homes, this was difficult to explain as they were displaced and distressed and wanted to gather possessions as they did not know if they would ever be able to return to their homes.

We then began to make our way back to the RVP, on route we came across DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDANT WARNETT who was looking for the 3 deceased persons who had been noted by the LFB or LAS, we assisted him in searching areas around GRENFELL WALK and the GRENFELL TOWER underpass. We could not locate them at this time.

We then walked back to the RVP with MR WARNETT.

At the RVP we were once again directed by BS1 to make a second round of cordon checks and update on numbers, start times and crowds. There was nothing of note on the second round of checks, if anything people had dispersed to rescue centres and numbers had thinned, the general mood was confused and subdued. We then arrived back at the RVP and began the task of allocating and briefing fresh Serials to the cordons. We did this to relieve the existing serials and consider dismissals as many of us were tired and traumatised. I walked some of the new serials to their posts so as to assist them in orientation as many of them had never been to our Borough. I took this opportunity to brief the supervisors on the move and introduce them to the supervisors on the cordons which they were to replace.

Upon my return to the RVP I was then grateful to be sent back to KENSINGTON POLICE STATION for a debrief and finally a dismissal.

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