

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: STONE, PHILIP

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

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 7 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: P STONE

Date: 16/04/2018

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

My name is Philip STONE PC 2580CO and I am the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Coordinator for the Metropolitan Police. I am also a nationally accredited DVI trainer and a qualified Scene Evidence Recovery Manager (SERM) by the College of Police.

On WEDNESDAY 14th June 2017 at about 05:30hrs I was at home preparing to come to work when I received a phone call from TDCS Stuart WRATTEN informing me of a catastrophic fire at Grenfell Tower, North Kensington, London, W11. Mr. WRATTEN asked me to deploy to the scene to assess it from a DVI standpoint and report back. I immediately made my way to Jubilee House Putney to pick up the DVI equipment van and then made my way to the scene. The traffic on the approach to the scene was at gridlock so I requested a police motorbike escort from Shepherds Bush Station, which was authorised. I arrived on scene at about 08:30hrs and was immediately shocked by the site. There were fire appliances and fire officers on Grenfell Road leading to the tower and a tower appliance still dousing the flames on the EAST face of the tower. The tower was still alight in places and was shrouded in a blanket of smoke. Debris was falling from the tower onto the surrounding pathways. There was also debris floating in the air which I later learned to be pieces of the cladding which was fitted to the outside of the whole tower. I made my way to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) Command Unit on Bomore Road to introduce myself and was informed that the next Tactical Command Meeting (TCM) would be at 08:45hrs. On entering the meeting I recognised the LFB Scene Commander, Andrew ROE as we had worked and exercised together in the past, who would be chairing the meeting. Other organisations present included London Ambulance Service (LAS), Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO), LFB Investigation and Police Bronze Scene. I

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

made scant notes of the meeting and a brief over view is that there was very difficult access beyond the 12th floor. I was also informed that there were 'Significant Fatalities', numbers of which were not known at this time and that survivability of the incident was decreasing. LAS informed the meeting that there were 8 x P1s, 12 x P2s and 40 P3s that had been taken to various hospitals. They also informed me that there were 6 known fatalities at this time, 3 had been recovered to a tent near the leisure centre, 2 of these victims had been brought out by LAS and one had fallen from the tower. One victim was in the foyer of a flat complex adjacent to the tower, the victim had been recovered to here for the protection of the LAS crew working on the victim due to the debris falling from the tower. One was recovered to a tent on the WEST side of the tower near the tube station exit and one victim had been recovered to a garage block under the mezzanine walkway leading to the tower. This victim had fallen from the tower and his leg had been severed off in the fall, the leg was with him in the garage. I was also informed that if we required any access to the tower this could only be arranged through Julian SPOONER of the LFB who was leading the teams entering the tower. There were real concerns regarding the structural stability of the tower and the fact that there was asbestos in the tower.

Following the meeting I called to update Mr. WRATTEN and requested authority to start deploying DVI teams to the scene which was authorised. I was also informed that DCI Andrew CHALMERS would be the Senior Identification Manager (SIM), DCI Chris JONES would be the Deputy SIM and DCI Matt BONNER would be the Senior Investigation Officer (SIO). Dr Fiona WILCOX (HM Senior Coroner for Westminster) would be the lead Coroner for the operation. As part of the London Region DVI response we work in partnership with British Transport Police (BTP) and City of London Police (CoLP). Bill BRYDEN who is the DVI Coordinator for BTP had seen the news and he and a couple of other DVI officers had already deployed to the scene in anticipation of my needing assistance. Not long after my first TCM, CSM Kelly WARNER from BTP arrived on scene. We had a very quick meeting and she informed me that Bill was still making his way. It was at this time that I started making phone calls to the DVI team to see if they were available to deploy to the tower. After a couple of hours team members started appearing and a basic DVI scene structure was developed. Chief Inspector Duncan McMILLAN would be the lead SERM for the operation PS Alistair HUTCHINS and myself would be the deputy SERMs and I would continue to coordinate the DVI response. Bill BRYDEN would take charge of and set up the Holding Audit Area (HAA). I also requested that DI Howard WAY (an MPS Detective Inspector seconded to UKDVI) deploy to Westminster Mortuary to prepare for the arrival of the deceased victims from the scene. To assist Howard, Byron CHAMBERLAIN of BTP would also deploy to the

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

mortuary. I contacted Nick KETTLE from the MPS Safety & Health Risk Management Team (SHRMT) and was informed that Chris TAYLOR would be my Health and Safety advisor for the operation. I contacted Paul COWLEY and requested him to manage the DVI photography and imaging at the scene. I also spoke to Nick ADDISON from Property Services Department (PSD) who coordinates the logistical response to major incidents including mass fatality events. I asked for 2 refrigerated body storage units and a large amount of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be bought to the scene. I had a tent on my van and enough PPE to get a team started so we could set up an interim HAA.

As the morning went on, a number of DVI trained officers from the MPS and BTP started to arrive on scene. I liaised with the LFB and LAS and it was decided that this would be a multi-agency response to the recovery of these victims. Specialist Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and Hazardous Area Response Teams (HART) from LFB and LAS had started to arrive on scene. We would co-locate our teams on the roadway between the leisure centre and the academy on the EAST side of the tower. This area would later become the main control centre for all agencies except the contractors who developed their own area on Grenfell Road.

I briefed the teams prior to the recoveries with the emphasis on safety. All recovery teams would include USAR and HART members for safety of personnel. HART Paramedics could also pronounce life extinct on any victims that may not have had this recorded officially on the night. I was also very aware that the worlds press had now arrived at the cordons and in accordance with this, I briefed that all recoveries would be made with the upmost dignity and respect to the victims. All victims would be recovered in clean body bags even if that meant double bagging, all would be bought out in body trays which would be carried by at least 4 people. Where possible teams would wear the same PPE to show a professional, dignified response. I also arranged for Dignity Funeral Directors to be on scene with private ambulances to transport the victims straight to the mortuary. Due to a photo of the victim in the adjacent block appearing on social media my initial priority was to recover him from the flats foyer down to the garage area to await the arrival of Dignity to transport him to the mortuary.

As the day developed there were a number of TCMs that I attended and received updates from the various agencies. One of the victims inside the tower had died in the stairwell that was making access up the stairs very difficult for the LFB responders. I directed that this victim can be moved to the lobby on the 9th floor which would considerably assist access and egress to the upper floors. Due to the past training and exercising with the USAR and HART teams, PS HUTCHINS, along with USAR and HART members accessed the tower and facilitated this recovery. When I was informed of this victim I made a

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

note of a possible identity through a Passport number [REDACTED] in the name of Ya Haddy Sisi SAYE, DOB [REDACTED] I do not know where this information came from as I have no note of who told me. PS HUTCHINS did start to fill out a victim recovery booklet with the number PM 44 5844 but this booklet got so wet when trying to fill it in that it was destroyed and when the victim was recovered the following day, a new PM number was allocated.

By the end of day one, all 6 victims from outside of the tower had been recovered under 7 PM numbers, the 7th being the leg found with the body in the garage area. All were taken straight to Westminster Mortuary by Dignity. One of these victims (PM 44 11233) had a large amount of cash on him that was seized and booked into the 66 Book at Kensington Police Station. All floors from Ground up to the 9th floor had been searched 3 times by the LFB and no further survivors were found and no deceased up to that level. Due to the first body being found on the 9th floor it was decided that from the 9th floor up it would be a DVI search for deceased. I had arranged for DVI teams at the mortuary and scene for the coming days and hotel rooms for all DVI responders.

By day 2 the fire was still being doused down by the LFB and in some rooms embers were still burning. The LFB had left ruptured gas pipes burning in the tower for safety reasons. In the first multi-agency TCG of the morning I requested access to the tower to carry out a DVI assessment. Authority was given by Fire Command and a team consisting of 2 Fire Officers for safety, 2 members of the LAS HART team and myself and PS HUTCHINS from the DVI team entered the tower. Due to the condition of the flats above the 9th floor and safety concerns regarding the structural stability of the tower, the search would be visual only. On entering the tower on the ground there was a pool of water about 6 inches deep at floor level. On walking up the levels there was a waterfall cascading down the stairwell and water pouring from the ceilings. There were no lights in the tower for obvious reasons and the only light we had climbing up was from our head torches. The weather was very hot outside but in the tower the heat was stifling. From about floor 9 up to 17 I can only describe the conditions as similar to a steam room. There was a lot of smoke and steam that made visibility very difficult. Above floor 17 the temperature and conditions changed to what I describe as a sauna type of heat. Where the tower had been so hot, the water had evaporated and produced a very dry heat. Coupled with the heat outside, this was going to be very difficult working conditions for the DVI teams. The flats themselves were a scene of utter devastation. Most of the front doors had been burned leaving hardly any flat number to refer to. A system was developed to overcome this. Each floor had 6 flats so the flat numbering system would be the floor number plus the number of the flat, 1 - 6 working clockwise round the tower. Flat 1 on each floor would

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

be out of the stairwell, turn left, walk round and the flat in front would be numbered 1. In the rooms on the lower floors some of the interior walls were still in position. However, as we climbed higher, all of the interior walls had collapsed leaving every flat open planned with only the structural walls depicting the flat area. The rubble in some rooms was about a foot deep across the entire surface, added to this was all the furniture, fixtures and fittings of the flats that was now in burned piles. Due to this, finding the victims was very difficult without a hands on search.

During the DVI assessment I found what I believed to be 30 victims from the 9th floor up to the 23rd, sadly when the DVI recovery operation started, this number grew significantly. Some of the victims were so badly burned and disrupted it was very difficult to see them in the burned surroundings. My findings were as follows:

Body 1 - this was the lady who was found the previous day and moved to the 9th floor lobby.

Body 2 - this victim was found inside Flat 81 (by the number visible on the front door)

Body 3 - this was the body of what appeared to be an adult female on the 13th floor lobby.

Body 4 - this was what appeared to be the body of a child, also found on the 13th floor lobby

Body 5 - this victim was on what appeared to be a bed in room number 152 (according to the number on the front door) there was also what appeared to be animals in close proximity to this victim.

Body 6 - was found on the 16th floor in flat 165 (actual number 135)

Body 7 - was found on the lobby of the 17th floor

Body 8 - was also found on the 17th floor in flat 174 by our numbering system, no numbers from here were on the front doors.

Bodies 9, 10 and 11 - were all found in flat 172 in a room opposite the front door. I also believe that there were animals in that flat.

Body 12 - was found in the stairwell of the 18th floor.

Bodies 13 and 14 - were that of what I believed to be a mother and baby laying on the stairs between the 19th and 20th floor.

Body 15 - was found on a landing as I climbed the stairs between the 19th and 20th floor

Bodies 16 and 17 - were found in room 212 opposite the front door. There was possibly another body in here but it was too badly burned to make an accurate assessment without a hands on search.

Bodies 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 - these victims were found in very close proximity to each other in flat 223.

Again they were so badly burned that on a visual body count I definitely see 5 people however, when the

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

recovery of these victims started it became apparent that the 5 victims that I could see were actually 11 people who had become comingled in the heat.

Body 23, 24, 25 and 26 - were all found in flat 231 in various locations

Body 27 and 28 - were found in flat 232

Body 29 - was found on the lobby of the 23rd floor

Body 30 - was found in room 233.

As we were searching the 23rd floor a radio message came out ordering a tower evacuation due to the fire restarting on what I believe to be the 8 floor. The LFB officers quickly responded to the call and began the evacuation. As I re-entered the stairwell it had filled with smoke. I could just about see the fire officer in front of me as we ran down the stairs. Due to having to extinguish this fire it took another few hours before anyone could enter the tower.

Following this visual search of the tower I updated Mr CHALMERS (SIM) and other senior officers including the Coroner. I wrote an initial Victim Recovery Strategy on behalf of the SIM and this was basically broken into three phases. Phase one would be the recovery of all the victims from the stairwells and lobbies. Phase 2 would be the bulk of the work and would involve the sieving and sifting of each and every flat, the stairwells and lobbies for any human remains that we could possibly find. This included that on the victims that could be seen in the flats, the visible remains would be recovered and then an area of 1 foot around that area would undergo a fingertip search for further remains attributable to the victim. Following this recovery, all of the flat would undergo the sifting and sieving process. Phase 3 would be the clearing out of all the flats where human remains had been found for storage to await a decision regarding a memorial where it is suggested that these remains be buried as part of the memorial. There was a lot of discussion about whether the remains from each flat would be removed to an offsite facility and then sieved and sifted there or whether the entire operation should be done within the confines of the tower. Due to the fragile nature of the human remains it was decided that to move the remains to an offsite facility would be too destructive and would make visual recovery extremely difficult. Due to this all of the sifting and sieving would be done on site. Everything in a flat would be sifted down to 6mm into asbestos bags and stored in the tower to await removal. If no victims were recovered from the flat then the bagged debris would remain on site to await the buildings eventual destruction. If human remains had been found in the flat then all debris would be stored off site. The recovery strategy was a living document and these decisions were made over a number of days and indeed weeks as the recovery operation progressed.

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

The days and weeks following the DVI assessment are now a bit of a blur to me. The operation was now a DVI led operation and the DVI teams worked diligently and with the upmost dignity and respect to recover the victims. Within a few days of the incident we were joined at the scene by a team of Forensic Archaeologists who would form part of the DVI team and it was agreed that a member of the DVI team would be the team leader but due to the condition of most of the victims, it would be an archaeologist led search and they would dictate the pace of the recovery project. We were also joined by teams of Licensed Search Officers (LSOs) along with a Police Search Advisor (PoISA) to assist with the search and sieving and sifting process. All of the different experts came together and worked as a team throughout the operation to achieve the end goal that was, every flat would have been searched through sieving and sifting down to a 6mm, all possible human remains had been recovered and where possible identified at the mortuary.

I arranged for the MPS Cadaver Dog team to come to the scene to carry out a search of the tower and the surrounding area where all of the debris had fallen on the night of the fire and continued to fall throughout the recovery process. Health and safety was paramount and any person working in the surrounding area of the tower had to have a safety officer with them and someone to hold a police riot shield above their head in-case something fell from the tower. The dog teams carried out an extensive and systematic search and highlighted various areas where the dogs had paid some interest both inside the tower and out. These areas would later be investigated by the DVI team and any remains would be recovered for assessment at the mortuary.

There was a lot of negative press going on around the incident, one story that caused some issues was the claim that people had put their young children in the rubbish shoot to try and save them. To quash these rumours, I searched every rubbish shoot from the ground to the top of the tower and dropped a bottle from the 23rd floor which fell out at the bottom of the chute with no hindrance. The bins at the bottom were also searched with a negative result. Another press issue was that there were still 100s of people missing and that there were apparently illegal immigrants within the tower that may be deceased but not reported as missing. This is why it was decided that every single flat was to be sieved and sifted to 6mm, so that we could say categorically that if there was anyone in that building, we would have found some of, if not all of their remains.

Because of the structural safety of the tower and because the ceilings had sagged due to the heat generated by the fire, there were many flats that had been highlighted by the Structural Surveyors that were out of bounds until such a time that they had been propped from below. There was also some real

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

concern around the main structure in the corner of the tower (room 5s) because it had undergone some significant damage and was crumbling. So that work could progress, the DVI team had to prepare an area of the flats in the middle of about 3m² for the propping process to begin and an area 3m either side of the corner pillar. This involved searching the area and then clearing it down to the concrete floor. No sieving and sifting took place at this time, the debris was moved aside and would be sieved at a later date. This operation started just over a week after the fire, it took a long time and held the recovery operation up significantly in some circumstances.

As the phase 1 recovery process went on, most of the obvious victims that had been highlighted from the DVI assessment had been recovered within about 2 - 3 weeks. Once this phase was approaching its completion and due to not having access to many of the flats, work tasks began to thin out. The LFB and LAS withdrew from the site as did many of the police operations including the photography department. The cordons were made smaller and the leisure centre and train station were reopened to the public. The loss of the photographic department caused me some issues as there were still recoveries being made and the majority of the team were not photography trained. I did highlight this to the on scene Crime Scene Manager and the imaging team were authorised to return. PS HUTCHINS was required to return to his day job leaving me as the main continuity to manage the scene. As their diaries allowed, some of the trained SERMs in the MPS did relieve me but this was sporadic and would be a day here and a couple of days there. The PoISAs helped me significantly with the running of the scene and set up command and control processes and protocols. This enabled us to document tasks and team make up more accurately. On 22nd June a school bag was found by one of the search teams in the lobby of the 5th floor. Inside this bag was a significant amount of cash, a school uniform and an exam paper in the name of Naila GUENUNI DOB [REDACTED] This bag and its contents were seized and exhibited by DC Pamela STAVELY.

It's difficult to remember the exact sequence of events but as the time went on there were some significant events that happened worthy of recording.

All of the debris that fell from the building on the night and over the subsequent weeks was searched by a cadaver Dog team looking for any further victims who may have fell during the night. The dogs had a number of indications that were flagged for the attention of the DVI teams to recover. Following this all of the debris was recovered to large hessian bags according to which side of the building it was found. The bags were all marked up North, South, East and West to indicate where the debris was found. All of

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

these bags were put into large storage containers and transported to Deer park Road, Mitcham for long term storage.

During the victim recovery process a number of animals were found in the flats and in the stairwells, all of which were recovered to separate refrigerated storage to that of the human victims. The animals were all badly burnt and some decomposition had started. The condition of the animal remains and the location that they were found made it difficult to identify their owners. I called the RSPCA and Nicole BROSTER arrived with a view to trying to identify the animals by way of the Chip reading device. One of the animals that was found on the 21st Floor stairwell came back with a chip number attributed to a Chihuahua by the name of Simba from Flat 186 (21/6) Grenfell Tower belonging to Miss Helen GEBREMESKEL. 3 animals were found in Flat 2 on floor 15. One of these animals had a readable chip that came back to a Staffordshire Bull Terrier by the name of Jess from flat 122 (152 by our numbering) that coincided to where they were found. The last animal that was identifiable was an unknown breed by the name of Lili found in a stairwell. The identification came back with an address of Flat 183 (21/3) owned by Miss A PERESTRELP. All of these animals were later transported to the mortuary and where applicable, repatriated with their owners or family members.

During the weeks and months of the Grenfell Operation hundreds of people entered the building for work purposes these people included Police, Fire Officers, Contractors and scaffolders to name a few. For the best part of the operation all but 2 of the flats (the crime scene and the opposite flat) were left insecure. Mid way through the operation Kenyons were contracted by the Local Authority to clear out all of the flats on the lower levels that contain salvageable property. The Kenyons team were asked to clear out one particular flat and the owner had specifically asked them to reclaim some money from a handbag in the flat. When Kenyons went to the flat they photographed it and went to recover the handbag but the money was not in it and there. This was highlighted to the investigation team and after comparing early crime scene photos and the Kenyons photo's it showed that the handbag had been moved and lying next to the sofa was a grey package with £5000 written on it. Due to this it was assumed that someone had been into the flat at some point during the investigation and stolen the money from the handbag. There was an investigation into this theft but as a result I had a number of security precautions put into place which included the locking up of all insecure flats, alarms fitted to the scaffolding around the tower and Passive Infra-Red lights fitted to the scaffolding to illuminate the surrounding area of the tower. A random search regime was put into place for people exiting the tower and it was a condition of entry that you would be subject to search on your exit.

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I put a suggestion through to the Family Liaison team regarding a family area near to the tower where families could come and pay their respects. This idea was agreed and after some discussions with the Health and safety on site it was agreed to build an area just outside the inner cordon on the East face of the tower where families could come and spend some time in quiet reflection. The area was furnished and a hole was cut into the hording so that the families could see the tower. This area was used extensively by families who visited the site after the DVI teams had left for the day. Their visit was facilitated by Family Liaison Officers and the SERM of the day.

I continued to coordinate site activity on and off for nearly 6 months. On the days that I was the SERM I facilitated daily meetings with all concerned parties and attended the onsite Gold briefing chaired by Michael LOCKWOOD. I do have notes of the operation from the first day but they are sketchy in places and 9 months on are difficult to put into context in some places. My deployment ended in December when a Debrief Event was held for teams to come and talk about their Grenfell experiences and to try and put some context around other process that were ongoing throughout the operation. From there I returned to my day job of DVI Coordinator.

Signature: P STONE
2018

Signature witnessed by: